

A Life Cut Short

Neil Hamilton (Bob) McBride
Trooper, No. 12 Company
Imperial Camel Corps

Gary John Swayn



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Cover Image

Neil Hamilton (Bob) McBride 1916 - Courtesy of Shirley Swayn (nee McIntosh)

Dedicated to my grandmother, Elizabeth Mary McIntosh (nee McBride) and my mother, Shirley Leslie Swayn (nee McIntosh) who both endeavoured to keep the memory of Bob McBride alive over the years since his death. I can do no less.



Neil Hamilton (Bob) McBride 1916 - Photograph sent to his mother in Bourke
Courtesy of Kellie Warrington (sourced from Ancestry, mauzhyde)

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Abbreviations

AAMC	Australian Army Medical Corps	HQ	Headquarters
AANS	Australian Army Nursing Service	HQDC	Headquarters Desert Column
AASC	Australian Army Service Corps	ICC	Imperial Camel Corps
ADMS	Assistant Director of Medical Services	IWM	Imperial War Museums
AFC	Australian Flying Corps	KIA	Killed in Action
AIF	Australian Imperial Force	LC	Library of Congress (USA)
AM	Auckland Museum	MB	Bachelor of Medicine
AMD	Anzac Mounted Division	MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
ANZ	Archives New Zealand	MP	Member of Parliament
ARAC	Anglican Records and Archives Centre	NAA	National Archives of Australia
ARS	Australian Records Section	NAMNZ	National Army Museum (New Zealand)
AWM	Australian War Memorial	NAMUK	National Army Museum (United Kingdom)
AWOL	Away without leave	NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
BCE	Before the Common Era	NLA	National Library of Australia
BDM	Births, Deaths and Marriages (Registry)	NSW	New South Wales
CCS	Casualty Clearing Station	NSWSA	State Archives & Records New South Wales
CE	Common Era	NZETC	New Zealand Electronic Text Collection
CF	Chaplain to the Forces	NZMCH	New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage
ChB	Bachelor of Chirurgiae (Surgery)	NZMR	New Zealand Mounted Rifles [Brigade]
ChM	Master of Chirurgiae (Surgery)	OC	Officer Commanding
CMCC	Commonwealth Military Cadet Corps	P&O	Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
CO	Commanding Officer	Qld	Queensland
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission	QSA	Queensland State Archives
DDMS	Deputy Director of Medical Services	RFC	Royal Flying Corps
DHQ	Divisional Headquarters	RSL	Returned and Services League
DOD	Department of Defence	SAA	Small Arms Ammunition
DSO	Distinguished Service Order	SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force	SLQ	State Library of Queensland
FA 300	<i>Flieger Abteilung 300</i> (German squadron in Sinai)	SLSA	State Library of South Australia
FWR	Forces War Records	SLV	State Library of Victoria
GHQ	General Headquarters	TAHO	Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office
GSW	Gun Shot Wound	TMAG	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
HAC	Honourable Artillery Company	TNA	The National Archives (United Kingdom)
HE	High Explosive	URL	Uniform Resource Locator (used to indicate a website source)
HKS	Hong Kong and Singapore [Battery]	YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
HLI	Highland Light Infantry		
HMAT	His Majesty's Australian Transport		
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office		

Glossary of Terms found in Egyptian Place Names

MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, *Official History of the Great War: Military Operations Egypt & Palestine From the Outbreak of War with Germany to June 1917*, pp. 430-431

Abd	Slave, negro	Kebir	Great, large
Abu	Father (of); possessor (of)	Kharm	Artificial mound, vinyard
Bir	Well, tank, rock cistern	Qantara	Bridge
El, es	The	Sabakat	Salt lake, marsh, or bog
Gebel	Mountain, hills	Sheikh	Chief, elder, saint
Hod	Depression in sand full of palms, trough	Tel	Mound (especially covering ruins)
Ibn	Son (of)	Um	Mother
Jebel	Mountain, hills	Wadi	Watercourse (normally dry), valley
Kathib	Moving sand dune or sand hill		

Author's Note

Currency conversions to Australian dollars (AUD), have been made at MeasuringWorth.com, and unless otherwise stated, use Relative Purchasing (Real Price) - the relative cost of a fixed bundle of goods and services such as food, shelter, clothing, etc., that an average household would buy. The latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) available in the system (2019-2020) has been used. Where a subsequent conversion has been required between a foreign currency and AUD, [Travelex Currency Converter](http://TravelexCurrencyConverter) has been used applying the exchange rate applicable at the date of conversion. All converted amounts above \$1.00 AUD have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

All other conversions (distance, length, area, speed, weight, volume, temperature) have been made at Convert-me.Com. The British Imperial System of measures in use during Bob's lifetime are used as the primary measure throughout the text, with conversions to current Australian measures added in round brackets ().

Time and date data (historical days of the week, duration between dates and a person's age) have been calculated at timeanddate.com. The Latin term 'circa', abbreviated to 'C' meaning 'around, about, roughly, approximately' has been used to indicate when an exact date is not known. All times of the day have been expressed in 12-hour notation. Where necessary, original sources in 24-hour (military) notation have been converted.

Phases of the moon data (historical phases of the moon 1901 to 2000) have been sourced from AstroPixels.com

Abbreviations and acronyms, with the exception of those in current use as proper nouns, are entered in full the first time they appear in the text, with the accepted abbreviation following in round brackets (). Thereafter, only the abbreviation is used.

Military ranks and units are entered in full. In general accordance with the terminology at the time, the term 'Commanding Officer' (CO) is used for units of battalion or artillery brigade size or above, 'Officer Commanding' (OC) for sub-units and 'Commandant' for the officer in charge of military districts, camps or contingents onboard ship.

Spelling of place names has been aligned with the accepted spelling of the time, with modern equivalents following in brackets if necessary.

Errors in quoted text are intentionally left as they were in the original and are indicated immediately after each error by the Latin term *sic* in brackets, meaning 'thus' – (*sic*). Any additions made to text within quotes to enhance readability or understanding are shown in square brackets []. Any omission of words from within a quote is indicated by use of ellipsis points i.e ... or when the omission comes after the end of a sentence.

Preface

When my brother Lex and I were growing up, our mother, Shirley Swayn (nee McIntosh) would tell us about Bob McBride. She told us that Bob was the 'favourite' brother of her mother, Elizabeth McIntosh (nee McBride) and that he had been a horse breaker in western New South Wales before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force. She described him as a short young man, with dark curly hair and dark eyes. She said that he joined the Imperial Camel Corps, and that he had died of wounds at El Arish after the Battle of Rafa in 1917.

Shirley had only one photograph of Bob, taken in his uniform prior to leaving Australia. It certainly fits her description of him. It is the photograph on the cover of this story. Shirley also said that her father, Stuart McIntosh, had commissioned a painting based on this photograph, and that she remembers as a young girl seeing the portrait hanging in the lounge room of their home in Stockton, New South Wales. It disappeared after Elizabeth's death in 1954.

Shirley also had two photographs of Bob's grave in Egypt, but they were of two different crosses and apparently taken in two different locations. No one knew why this was so.

This appeared to be the sum total of our family's knowledge of Bob's life at the time I began this research. He left no written documents, letters or diaries, and anything his parents may have had was destroyed in the two, and possibly three occasions their homes were burnt out during their lifetime. As a working-class family in western New South Wales and Queensland, the McBride family flew, as so many do, 'under the radar' as far as public records are concerned. None of them appear in 'Who's Who' or history books, and mentions in newspapers are rare. Other than a name on a couple of memorials and acknowledgement at the time in his local newspaper, Bob's death, and the events surrounding it, have passed into the netherworld reserved for those not considered 'important' or 'remarkable' in Australian historical discourse.

Yet he lived. He was important and remarkable to his family. He has been remembered by members of the family now for more than 100 years. Even though we do not know what he actually thought or felt, or what sort of man he really was, we can find out in many instances where he was, what he was doing, what happened to him and who was there with him. By using the limited written 'official' evidence, coupled with the tangential 'evidence of others' who were with him, I hope I have built a much richer picture of the short life of this young man.

Gary John Swayn

July 12, 2021

Acknowledgements

First, my mother, Shirley Swayn (nee McIntosh) for her memories, her willingness to share them and her ongoing encouragement.

Without my brother, Lex, and his editorial skills, all of this would be much poorer than it is. He has an innate ability to simplify sentences but retain the essence and meaning, and to hone in on the right word or phrase when these have escaped me.

A special thanks to Kellie Warrington, my cousin on the spot in Sydney, for researching McBride material in the New South Wales State Archives and Records, in the Sydney Branch of the National Archives of Australia and online.

Last and not least is my other half Loretta for her unerring ability to sort out my tangled sentences and point out passages which are so lacking in clarity that the meaning is obscured or lost. I am particularly grateful for her patience with me while I stare at screens instead of doing many neglected home maintenance tasks, while I bury myself in archives away from the sunshine or while I traipse around cemeteries in the sunshine looking for dead people.

Chapter 1

A Boy in Hungerford

Neil Hamilton McBride was born on Wednesday, October 12, 1892, in Hungerford, in far south-west Queensland near the New South Wales (NSW) border. He was the seventh child of Alfred McBride and Elizabeth Catherine (Kate) (nee Fisk). His second name, Hamilton, was his paternal grandmother's maiden name. On the original birth registration record his first name is spelled as 'Neal', although the only existing subsequent document using this spelling is the Roll of Honour circular completed by his father. Neil clearly signed himself on his Attestation Form as 'Neil'. Perhaps this seeming anomaly is an indication of the isolation of Hungerford at this time, as the birth was not formally registered at the nearest large town, Cunnamulla, until December 20, 1892. The Registrar at Cunnamulla, Christopher Francis, noted on the Register 'Received by the Assistant Registrar at Hungerford within the time prescribed by law but did not reach me until above date'. He also noted that the Informant, Neil's father Alfred, had 'Certified in writing' and that other than the Nurse, Mrs Davis, there were no other witnesses.¹

Neil was known as Bob McBride for most of his life. Shirley Swayn recalls that her mother, Bob's eldest sister Elizabeth (Lizzie), always referred to him by this name, and the *Western Herald* in its 1917 report on his death refers to him as 'Robert McBride' and clearly states that 'he was familiarly known' as 'Bob'. Even 10 years earlier a report on the Bourke Cadets interchangeably refers to him as 'R. McBride' and 'N. McBride', and when he was seven years old in 1900, a report on a Hungerford school function lists him as 'Bob McBride'. It is not known why he was called this, although there may have been some family precedents as his father may have had a younger brother Robert McBride, and his mother had a cousin, Robert Fisk, who was a Mounted Policeman in Victoria from 1885 to 1904.²

Bob's father, Alfred, was a contractor working in towns and on properties in western NSW and Queensland, building, fencing, drilling for water, doing tank maintenance and construction – indeed any contracts he could obtain. After their marriage in Cobar in December, 1879, Alfred and Kate moved around following the work. Their first child, Elizabeth (Lizzie), was born at Balowra Station, south-south-east of Cobar in 1880, then Alice at Double Gates west of Cobar in 1882 and Alfred James at Cobar in 1884. Alfred senior was working on Kallara Station on the Paroo River during 1883, and in 1886 on Jandra Station, south of Bourke, when his second son, John (Jack), was born at North Bourke. Lillian (Lil) was born in Hungerford in December, 1888, and Catherine (Katie) on Talyealye Station, south of Hungerford, in 1890. The final five, Bob, Eileen (1894), Leslie (1897), Irene (May) (1899) and Lenard (1903), were born in Hungerford. It appears that the family finally settled in Hungerford between 1888 and 1891.³

Hungerford in the summer of 1892, not long after Bob's birth, is colourfully described by writer Henry Lawson:

One of the hungriest cleared roads in New South Wales runs to within a couple of miles of Hungerford, and stops there; then you strike through the scrub to the town...you don't see the town till you are quite close to it, and then two or three white-washed galvanised-iron roofs start out of the mulga....The town is right on the Queensland border, and an interprovincial rabbit-proof fence - with rabbits on both sides of it - runs across the main street....Hungerford consists of two houses and a humpy in New South Wales, and five houses in Queensland. Characteristically enough, both the pubs are in Queensland....The post office is in New South Wales, and the police-barracks in Bananaland. The police cannot do anything if there's a row going on across the street in New South Wales, except to send to Brisbane and have an extradition warrant applied for; and they don't do much if there's a row in Queensland....One part of the town swears at Brisbane when things go wrong, and the other part curses



Hungerford's first store (undated)
SLQ Neg 182089

Sydney. The country looks as though a great ash-heap had been spread out there, and mulga scrub and firewood planted – and neglected. The country looks just as bad for a hundred miles round Hungerford, and beyond that it gets worse...The town is supposed to be situated on the banks of a river called the Paroo, but we saw no water there, except what passed for it in a tank. The goats and sheep and dogs and the rest of the population drink there. It is dangerous to take too much of that water in a raw state....There is a Customhouse against the fence on the northern side. A pound of tea often costs six shillings (\$37) on that side, and you can get a common lead pencil for fourpence (\$2) at the rival store across the street in the mother province. Also, a small loaf of sour bread sells for a shilling (\$6) at the humpy aforementioned.⁴

Lawson's somewhat bleak picture of Hungerford was not far from the truth. The town had a hotel, Cobb & Co depot and post office by 1875, but was considered to be in NSW until the border was surveyed in 1879. Even after this, the townspeople looked mainly to Bourke as their regional centre. This conflict was even evident on Bob's sister Lizzie's marriage certificate in December, 1903, which declared the bride's address to be 'Hungerford New South Wales & Q'land Border'. The telegraph line at Barrington in Queensland was only extended to Hungerford in 1890 after 'six responsible persons' were 'prepared to sign the necessary Guarantee Bond' of £450 (\$54,380) against the estimated £4,250 (\$513,600) cost. A coach journey from Hungerford to Bourke in 1898 took around 40 hours and cost £4 (\$540). By 1901, the town had grown to a population of 107.⁵

'Hungerford's great trouble' was water supply. The tank provided on the Paroo, disparagingly referred to by Henry Lawson, together with household water tanks, were the only source of supply. Barely adequate for the townspeople, the water supply was put under even greater pressure by the passage of stock through Hungerford for the Sydney markets. In the month of November, 1886, alone, 3,472 fat cattle, 850 stores and 6,000 sheep crossed into NSW, and even in a slow month (May, 1890), 1,155 cattle passed southwards. The 'great trouble' became even worse as the Federation Drought took hold from 1895. Lasting until 1903, it was the worst in Australia's European history and was unsurpassed in its devastating effects for more than a hundred years. By the end of 1896 the town tank was dry and water for residents had to be carted six miles (9.5 km) from Talyealye Station in NSW. Travelling stock from Queensland to Bourke now had a dry stage of 39 miles (63 km), but by the end of 1899 the situation was much worse. In one instance that year, 600 head of a mob of 870 cattle perished on the Hungerford Stock Route. The prolonged lack of rain was accompanied by heatwaves, dust storms and bushfires, and the decline in water quantity and quality combined with the poor sanitation of the time contributed to outbreaks of disease, including typhoid, influenza and diphtheria. In May, 1902, Thomas Moxham, Member of Parliament (MP) for Parramatta, returning from a visit to the Queensland border, described the country as 'deplorable', with 'not one vestige of grass' from the Hungerford-Mungindi border area to Bourke. So severe was the drought that one correspondent even penned the apocryphal story that at Hungerford 'when it rained last year some of the school children brought some grass into the teacher and asked her what it was. They had never seen grass...during the few years they had lived'.⁶

Local residents had spent £200 (\$25,660) since 1893 sinking private wells, but the water proved to be unfit for domestic use. Attempts in 1894 to sink a bore struck salt water and drift at thirty-six feet (11 m), and an attempt by the Government of NSW to sink a bore 'within the limits of its half of the town' were abandoned in early 1897 after striking pyrites at 850 feet (259 m). In the meantime, the Paroo Divisional Board had approved a tender from Alfred McBride in early 1897 to clean the mud and silt out the town's tank. 'By what he has already landed on the bank', said the *Western Herald* correspondent in March, 'in the way of logs, tins, casks, &c., the work was evidently badly required'. In late 1896, petitions had been sent to both Queensland and NSW Governments demanding that they jointly fund urgent action. A sample of the water was posted to the Queensland Premier. The two Governments eventually agreed to put down a bore at their joint expense. Tenders were called and accepted by November, 1900, but 'the "red tape" that surrounds all Government departments' meant the contractor had still not started work by February, 1901. Despite some heavy rain at the head of the Paroo at that time, by the time the water reached Hungerford it was 'almost as black as ink...not fit to use, and will not clear sufficiently to even wash clothes decently. Cattle drink it under compulsion, there being nothing else for them'. The township people continued to cart water from the tank on Talyealye Station, where they had to share it with 8,000 sheep, and by March, 1902, were forced to travel 15 miles (24 km) to get water from the Waroo Bore. By May, 1903, water that

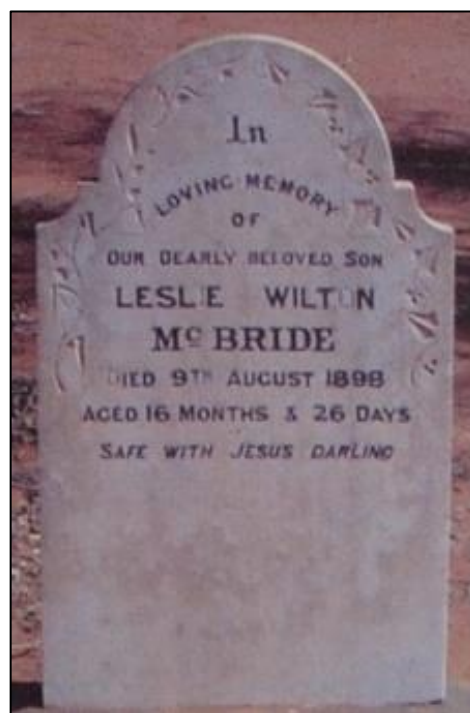
was 'perfectly fresh and very pleasant to taste' was finally struck at a depth of between 500 and 600 feet (152-182 m) in the vicinity of the town.⁷ Until that year, Bob had lived his entire life in Hungerford without access to a decent water supply.

Summer at Hungerford was a particularly trying time during Bob's early years. During a major four-week heatwave in early 1896, some 18 men and women in western Queensland, among them William Lloyd at Hungerford, were reported to have died from 'excessive heat'. During this period, the 'thermometer never went below 90 degrees (32°C) night or day...and just before the end the minimum was 117 degrees (47°C) for the twenty-four hours'. Travelling from Thargomindah to Hungerford and on to Ford's Bridge in March, 1897, a traveller with the Queensland Minister for Lands wrote that 'the weather proved to be extremely hot – at times oppressive', with the 'rays of the sun...intensely hot, and the country...barren-looking and fearfully dusty'. He further noted that 'everybody...appears to be suffering from sore or weak eyes', not surprising given 'the myriads of flies that abound'. On Christmas Day, 1900, Hungerford registered 121 degrees (49°C), with the visiting Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic ministers suffering 'severely from the heat'. A correspondent wrote about Hungerford in *The Queenslander* in February, 1901, that 'all was drought stricken out there and fearfully hot; the three days' shade readings' ranging from 113 to 117 degrees (45-47°C). He further noted that there was 'no fresh meat, only tinned fish and meats. Rather bad water'.⁸

Even on the few occasions that it did rain, a different set of problems presented themselves. In October, 1897, four inches of rain fell at Hungerford, washing away a portion of the border fence, and drowning 3,000 sheep on Brindingabba Station, east-south-east of the town. 'Thousands of fish' were killed in the black sludge that came down the Paroo in February, 1901. Travelling to the Hungerford Races in early May, 1903, a *Western Herald* 'Special Representative' reported that the party of 18 'had a bad time' following heavy rain causing 'the road...to be very heavy'. He further noted that the rain 'had not the slightest affect (*sic*) upon the myriads of flies and mosquitos – the latter with propensities as tenacious as things of the bull-dog breed'. Even with good rain in January, 1904, when 'everything looks fresh and green...there was no stock to eat the grass up' and as a result it was expected that 'bushfires will be the order of the day when the grass becomes dead'. Once the Paroo and other western rivers rose, floodwaters could be up to 'fifteen miles (24 km) wide'. Coaches were cancelled or delayed, at times the roads 'would not carry a horseman' and teams bringing supplies from Bourke to Hungerford could be on the road for seven weeks or more.⁹

In the middle of this terrible drought, tragedy struck the McBride family on Tuesday, August 9, 1898, when Bob was just five years old. The Hungerford correspondent had noted in the *Western Herald* at the end of July, 1898, that 'Influenza has been very bad here. Nearly every person in town, young and old, has a touch of it. Some are in a critical state. It took one old resident away...Mr. J.B. Cameron, aged about 60 years'. On August 12, the correspondent announced two further deaths – the senior Customs Department officer, Mr. J.A. Banks, aged about 43, and 'Mr. McBride's infant son Leslie, aged 15 months'. The correspondent further noted that Bob's young brother Leslie 'had been ill for about a fortnight with influenza which brought on convulsions, and he succumbed to the latter on Tuesday morning'. There was no hospital and no doctor in Hungerford, and the only medical advice available to assist those caring for those struck down with influenza was received 'from Bourke, by wire, every day'.¹⁰

When the McBride family first moved to Hungerford, the nearest school was at Eulo, some 90 miles (120 km) to the north-north-east. In August, 1891, local citizens applied to the Department of Public Instruction for a school, and by November that year, a Provisional School Building



Leslie McBride's Grave Hungerford Cemetery 2009 Ancestry, currie25

Committee had been elected. A Provisional School, as distinct from a State School, was established where an average attendance of between 12 and 30 pupils could be expected and where the local community agreed to provide and maintain a suitable building at their own expense and provide for the accommodation of a teacher. The Hungerford Committee selected five acres of Crown Land (Section 6 of the township), imported building materials from NSW, and by mid-1892 had built a school '25 feet by 15 feet' (7.6 m by 4.5 m), with a verandah at one end at a cost of £110 (\$13,434) – all paid for by local subscription. The committee located a suitable teacher in Sydney, Miss Agnes Bermingham, paid her fare from Sydney to Hungerford and arranged for her to be given full board at the Commercial Hotel for 15 shillings (\$92) per week. Agnes opened the school on Monday, September 12, 1892, with an initial enrolment of 14 pupils, four of whom would certainly have been from the McBride family.¹¹

Many Provisional School buildings initially were quite primitive, although by 1897, government regulations did lay down some minimum standards.¹² Certainly, by the end of 1896, Hungerford community pride in their school had the Hungerford correspondent waxing lyrical that 'I think it is one of the best, if not the best appointed Provisional schools in Queensland'.¹³ Regardless, teachers appointed to Provisional Schools were invariably poorly paid and poorly educated Unclassified Teachers – without any formal teaching qualifications and whose entrance to the profession had been by examination at only Class Five standard.¹⁴

While it is possible Bob may have entered Hungerford Provisional School as early as 1898 on reaching the minimum entry age of five years, he certainly would have commenced school in 1899 when he had reached the age for compulsory schooling of six.¹⁵ Agnes Bermingham had been transferred at her own request at the end of 1895, stating that 'the summer months are so very terrible here with heat, hot winds and dust storms the latter' being 'so injurious to my eyes...most of the time I have been here'. Her replacement, Miss Minnie Keating, was Bob's first teacher. In turn Minnie resigned in October, 1900, suffering from anemia and 'acting on Medical Advice...obliged to leave for the South at once'. The school was then closed until 1901 when Minnie was finally replaced by Miss Norah Clark. In turn, Norah resigned in February, 1903, while under medical treatment in Sydney for ophthalmia (inflammation of the eye). By March, 1903, William Thomas Eric Ridout Woodforde, commonly known as Eric Woodforde, a South African (Boer) War veteran, had taken Norah's place. Eric was Bob's last teacher in Hungerford, and in March, 1904, became his brother-in-law following his marriage to Bob's older sister Alice.¹⁶



Little Lord Fauntleroy
Illustration from the 1900
edition - Internet Archive

School-related functions provided much of the entertainment for children in Hungerford. As part of the Jubilee Celebrations for Queen Victoria in mid-1897, 'the youngsters were treated to a display of fireworks, which delighted them and sent them all to bed in good humor and wishing the Queen would have a jubilee every week'. In early 1899, they were again 'treated to a display of fireworks' following a children's picnic, which had included 'all sorts of games and footracing'. On Thursday, September 13, 1900, a picnic was held for Hungerford school children, followed by a fancy-dress ball and supper in the evening, with 'fully 130 people attending'. Bob's sisters Alice, Lil, Katie and Eileen, as well as his brothers Alfred and Jack participated and Bob also – dressed as children's book character Little Lord Fauntleroy. Christmas sports were held on Boxing Day, 1903, at which Bob excelled in the Boy's 75-yard (69 m) Handicap. Despite a 20-yard (18 m) handicap, Bob won. This was considered to be the 'best contested event of the day, and only won by about a foot (30 cm), all the other boys being well up'.¹⁷

The McBride family would rarely have had the opportunity to travel far from Hungerford, but Wednesday, July 25, 1900, found the family in Yantabulla, some 50 miles (80 km) south-east of Hungerford, where, despite influenza being rampant in the district, Lizzie, Alice, Lil and Jack McBride were confirmed in a service at the Court House by the Right Reverend Dr Camidge, Anglican Bishop of Bathurst. 'His lordship intimated that as a memento of the ceremony he would

present each of the confirmed with a framed portrait of himself as a souvenir'.¹⁸

Problems beset the McBride family in late November, 1902, when a 'cyclone' tore through Hungerford, partially unroofing 'the Customs buildings, McBride's and Jones' cottages, and Logan's Royal Mail Hotel stables', and completely unroofing Maslen's Commercial Hotel verandah and outbuildings. The Federal Race Club Hall was completely destroyed. It was reported that the 'gale blew with terrific force, and the dust was terrible', but 'only 15 points (5 mm) of rain fell'.¹⁹



Commercial Hotel Hungerford (undated)
SLQ Neg 182076

The Federation Drought reached its peak in 1901-1902, but by 1903-1904 conditions were improving. A 'beautiful fall of rain' was reported at Hungerford in early 1903, with 'the Paroo rising here and ...reported to be in high flood at Eulo'. By February, 1904, from Hungerford it was reported, 'we have

had plenty of rain on the Paroo during the last month, and as a consequence everything looks fresh and green'.²⁰ However, this brought new problems.

A plague of mice has been experienced in the north-west of Hungerford. Thousands have been killed in the last few weeks. One firm when unloading a goods wagon killed 1000 rodents, and later on the same night nearly 600 more were destroyed.²¹

Then, on Monday morning, April 11, 1904,

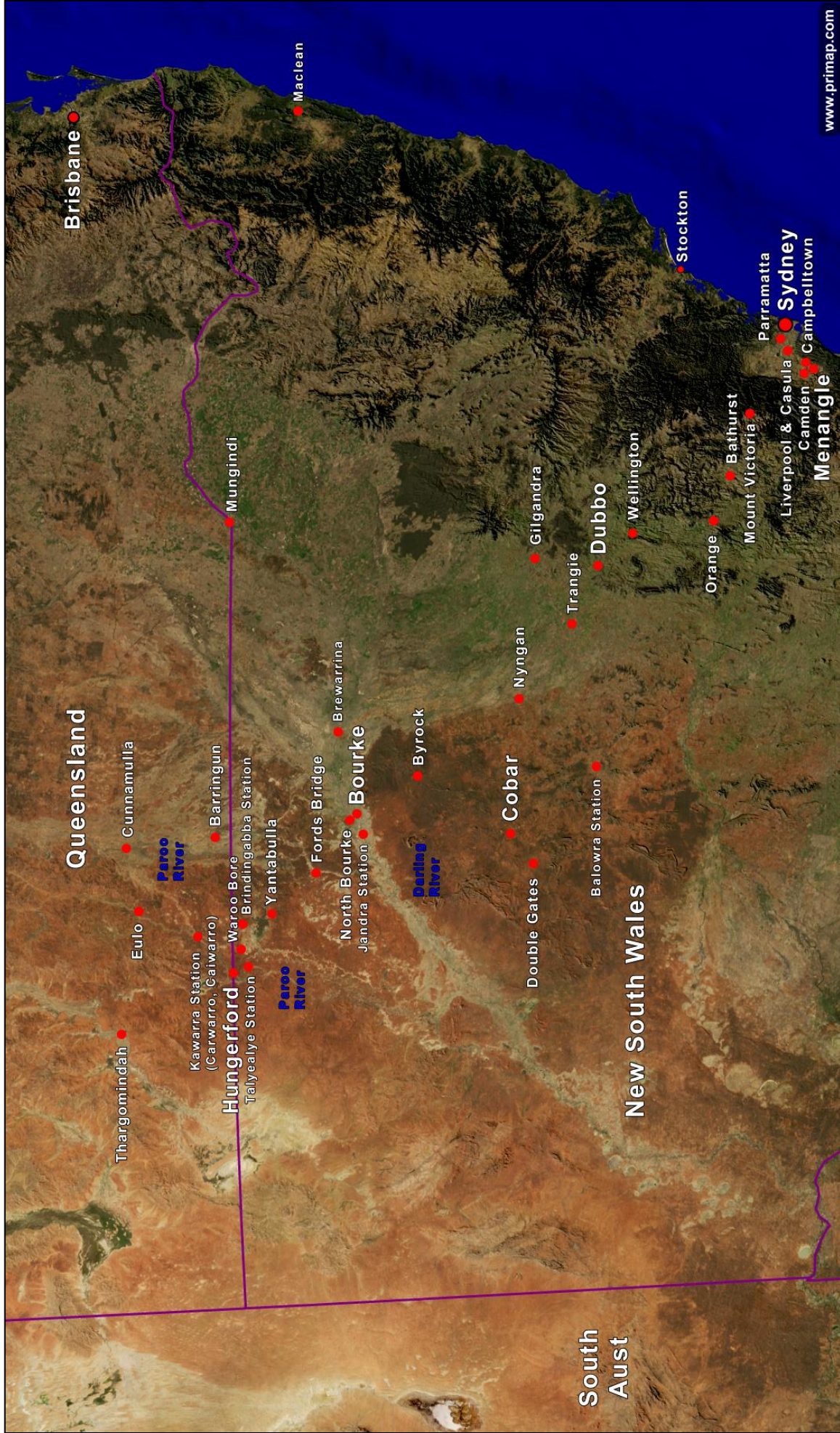
a fire occurred at Hungerford...when a building occupied by Mr. Mackay, stock inspector, and Mr. McBride, was totally destroyed. Mr. McBride and family only escaped in their night clothes. The outbreak is supposed to have been caused by mice.²²

Fire was not an uncommon experience at Hungerford. In August, 1901, the Hungerford Post Office 'with the whole of its contents...was totally destroyed by fire', and in early 1895, Messrs. McDuire and Bevan's cart and timber shed burnt down and damaged two bedrooms at the back of Maslen's Commercial Hotel. 'The fire burnt with such fierceness' that the Hotel and nearby house and store were only saved by 'plenty of willing hands', there being no organised fire brigade.²³ The McBride family was not so fortunate.



Hungerford Post Office C 1891-1901
SLNSW FL759704

Soon after this disaster, the McBride family moved from Hungerford. The town itself was by this time in a steady decline, despite the perennial water problem being solved. Following Federation, the main business in the town, the Customs Station, had closed in September, 1903, and in 1904 Cobb & Co discontinued its service to the township. The mean quarterly enrolment in the Provisional School steadily declined from a peak of 22 in 1898 to 13 by 1906. In his Annual Return to the Department of Public Instruction in December, 1904, the school's teacher, Eric Woodforde, reporting on the decline in attendance, wrote that after the 'first four or five months...many people left the district with their families' and that 'the town is going steadily down'. Bob would have been 12 by the end of 1904, quite likely one of the two boys of this age attending the school in that year. By 1905 however, there were no boys over 12 enrolled. Certainly, by 1907, Alfred McBride had ceased to be listed in Queensland Post Office or Trade Directories as a builder or contractor in Hungerford.²⁴



Bob McBride's Australia

Chapter 2

From Hungerford to Bourke

From the latter half of 1904 to the last quarter of 1907, the exact whereabouts of the McBride family is not clear. By returning to NSW where the school leaving age at 14 was two years more than in Queensland at that time, Bob would most likely have been enrolled in a school. In December, 1917, when preparing the School Honour Roll, the Bourke Superior Public School listed 'N.H. McBride' as an 'ex-pupil' of the school. When undertaking the same task in April, 1917, Cobar Public School listed 'B. McBride' as an 'ex-pupil'. We cannot know for sure if 'B. McBride' refers to Bob, but an analysis of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) records in the National Archives of Australia did not indicate that any other 'B. McBride' from Cobar had enlisted.¹ It is possible he initially went from Hungerford to Cobar, where his parents had previously lived. His grandparents, John and Elizabeth McBride, had lived in West Cobar from at least 1901, and perhaps from the early 1880s.²



The Wharves at Bourke C 1908
AWM P02751.060

Both Cobar and Bourke Public Schools had been upgraded to Superior Public Schools in late 1901 and could offer post-primary education to students over the leaving age, which Bob had reached by the end of 1906. It is not possible to determine with certainty whether Bob attended Cobar Public School, and if so, for how long. What is known from *Western Herald* reports, is that by the last quarter of 1907, he was attending Bourke Superior Public School.³

By the time Bob arrived, Bourke, established in 1862, was the major transport and trading centre for western NSW and south-west Queensland, with a population of about 1,500. At its peak, up to 40,000 bales of wool annually were shipped to South Australia from the town's port on the Darling River. Cobb & Co began services in the 1880s and by 1885 the railway from Sydney had reached the town. The Government of NSW had invested in significant facilities in the town, including the Post Office (1880), North Bourke Bridge (1883), Darling River lock and weir (1897), Lands Department office (1898) and Court House (1900). By 1900, Bourke had become one of the major operating centres for Afghan camel trains servicing outback centres, a position reinforced by the formation of the Bourke Carrying Company in 1895 by Abdul Wade, and the establishment of a large camel cartage base at Bourke Railway Station. By 1905, the company owned about 700 camels and was the largest camel company in Australia.⁴

On his AIF Attestation Paper, Bob states that he had previously served in the 'School Cadets'. If, as discussed above, he attended Cobar Public School for a time after Hungerford, then he could have joined the 'Cobar Cadet Corps' as he had reached the minimum age of 12 by this time.⁵ While there is no documentary evidence of his involvement at Cobar, his cadet service is confirmed in various reports on the activities of the 'Bourke Public School Cadet Force' published in the *Western Herald* between November, 1907 and November, 1908.

Bourke Public School had been an early adopter of cadets, establishing a corps in 1887, two years before the official creation of a 'New South Wales Public School Cadet Force'.⁶ The Bourke Cadet Corps survived the 1893 withdrawal of all support for Cadets by the NSW Government during the depression years of the 1890s, and by mid-1906 had successfully made the transition to the new voluntary Commonwealth Military Cadet Corps (CMCC) established under the *Defence Acts 1903-1904* following Federation.⁷

By November, 1907, when Bob first appears in the *Western Herald* cadet reports, he was 15 – too old for 'School Cadets' aged 12 to 14 under the CMCC Regulations of 1906-1907. There is no evidence of the existence of a 'Senior Cadet' detachment at Bourke; indeed, the requirement for a minimum of 20 enlistments to form such a detachment makes this a most unlikely occurrence in a

small isolated township at a time when its school cadet numbers never reached 40.⁸ However, where there was no 'Senior Cadet' detachment, the regulations permitted the establishment of



Camel team at Bourke with a wagon load of wool bales C 1895
SLSA PRG 1258/2/2171

'school based Senior Detachments', or other arrangements to accommodate 'Senior Cadets attending school'.⁹ As a 'Superior Public School', Bourke Public School was well placed to accept boys of 'Senior Cadet' age like Bob into their school cadet detachment.

To be accepted as a senior cadet, Bob would have had to be physically fit and at least 5 feet 2 inches (157.5 cm) in height. An amount of seven shillings and sixpence (\$48) per annum for the supply of uniforms 'of the authorized pattern' in each state

was provided by the Federal Government to battalion or detachment commanders for each senior cadet who had completed the prescribed 'musketry course'. School cadets were required 'to be drilled twice a week, each drill not to be less than half-an-hour, or once each week of three-quarters of an hour's duration'.¹⁰

Expectations were firmly expressed in the Cadet Standing Orders of 1907:

the constant duty of a cadet is to respect the uniform he wears by becoming conduct on all occasions, strict silence and steadiness in the ranks, and implicit obedience to orders....Obedience is the first duty of a soldier, young or old.¹¹

This standing order well illustrates the transition of public perceptions about cadets occurring during Bob's time in the corps from the colonial 'social development' view that cadets were 'taught practically the value of discipline...many boys will be thus kept from forming bad associations and pernicious habits at a critical point in their lives'¹², to a more strictly military view, well expressed by the Governor of Tasmania in 1907: 'the cadets of today are the foundation of the future army of Australia, a branch of the great Imperial system of defence, on which the continuation of the British Empire is dependant'.¹³ Locally, editorials in the *Western Herald* echoed this trend, in 1908 and 1909 accepting that 'Military training...helps the moral code', but emphasizing that cadets 'in four or five years...will form a well drilled defensive force....and there need be then no fear of invasion from any enemy yellow or white'.¹⁴

It is not surprising then, that the majority of references to the Bourke cadets in the *Western Herald* at this time reflect the public's 'great enthusiasm for rifle shooting'.¹⁵ Bob first appears in an October 30, 1907, report on the Bourke Cadets' second practice shoot held about a week or so after his 15th birthday. Shooting at both 100 and 200 yards (91-182 m) at a target with a 6-inch (15 cm) invisible bull's eye, without a sighter, Bob scored within the middle range of results on the day. By the third practice shoot on Thursday, October 31, 1907, shooting over 100 yards (91 m) at a similar target, Bob achieved a score of 23 out of a possible 30, beaten only by two other cadets on 25. On Monday, November 11, 1907, in hot weather at a prize shoot on the King's Birthday holiday at the Bourke Rifle Club's range¹⁶, Bob did well. In the Sturt Handicap Event, five shots over 200 yards (182 m), Bob, off scratch, scored 16 – the third highest score, and in the Bourke Aggregate (total scores for the day), Bob, on 34, was only one below that achieved by the top four scorers.¹⁷

By the time of the next reported shoot, target practice on Monday, April 6, 1908, the Bourke cadets had been issued some of the new .310 Westley-Richards rifles, which were intended to replace the existing .230 Francotte rifles. Supply and quality problems plagued the issue of the Westley-Richards rifle. There were only ever enough for about 90 per cent of the cadet establishment, and in NSW they were issued on the basis of one per two cadets. Furthermore, as reported in the *Western Herald*, 'ammunition...proved defective, about 10 per cent of the cartridges being useless'. Despite this, at the first practice shoot using these new rifles, Bob scored 18, only four below the top score on the day. By the time of the next prize rifle shoot on Wednesday, April 22, 1908, it had

been decided that 'Competitors may use either the Francotte or Westley-Richards rifle. The latter is the better weapon, but the ammunition is not so reliable. No allowance will be made for a supposed defective cartridge'. The majority of the cadets sensibly chose to use the older Francotte rifle on this occasion. By this time, Bob had been given a handicap of one point (handicaps ranged from scratch to 10 points). Shooting seven shots over 200 yards (182 m), he achieved equal first (with two other cadets) in the Championship Match. First, second and third prizes totalling seven shillings (\$43) were 'divided amongst them'. This was Bob's best reported performance. By the time of the 1908 King's Birthday shoot on Tuesday, November 10, 1908, Bob was still working off a handicap of one, but success in terms of prizes eluded him.¹⁸



Cobb & Co Coach outside Bourke Post Office C 1910
SLSA PRG 1258/2/2149

While rifle shooting certainly gained the most local attention, the Bourke Cadets also continued the strong 'colonial era' focus on 'ceremony' during Bob's time with them. On Easter Monday, 1908, the Bourke cadets, 'looking smart and trim in their well-fitting uniforms', participated in the 'imposing spectacle' of a procession down Mitchell Street to the Sports Ground 'to the strains of martial music', where a sports gathering and social had been organised by the United Friendly Societies' in aid of the Bourke District Hospital. At the British Empire Day celebrations on Monday, May 25, 1908, the cadets, under Mr Redmond, the officer-in-charge, saluted the unfurling of the Union Jack in the park by 'presenting arms', firing 'three good volleys' and then joining the crowd in singing 'God Save the King'. Churches used the cadets as well, with the Methodist Church inviting them to 'attend in uniform' a 'Patriotic Service' at 7.30 pm on the preceding Sunday. At the Bourke Public School's Annual Concert on Friday, October 2, 1908, during the 'actively illustrated song "The Boys in Blue" ... the cadets, headed by a sturdy little drummer boy Master Cooper performed evolutions, while crowds of girls on each side sang the chorus'. On the following Monday, at the Eight Hour Day Concert in aid of the Bourke District Hospital, the cadets were once again engaged by 'appearing on stage during the last verse' of 'Australia Fights for Britain's Rights' sung by Mr H. Walker.¹⁹

Engagement in events further away however, was sometimes problematic for the Bourke cadets. The Bourke detachment was part of the 11th Battalion, and on Monday, March 16, 1908, 29 cadets, described then as 'almost its full strength', travelled from Bourke to join more than 500 others at the annual Encampment at Bathurst. There is no evidence that Bob attended this camp, but regardless, he would have been caught up in the general excitement that such an event caused locally. The Bourke cadets at camp experienced the rigors of military life under canvas with reveille at 5.30 am, followed by parades, inspections, 'manual exercises', company and battalion drill, including skirmishing drill, and lights out at 9.45 pm. A whole day was devoted to shooting, with separate matches for the Westley-Richards and Francotte rifles. The Bourke detachment also took the opportunity to visit the town, where 'boys who had never been out of Bourke before gained an experience they will never forget'. When it came to one of the most significant events in NSW in 1908 however, the visit of the American 'Great White Fleet' to Sydney Harbour on Thursday, August 20, 1908, where 'cadets were present in their uniforms and corps...from every district round', the State Government refused to bring country cadets to the metropolis. The *Western Herald* thundered that 'State and Federal Governments seem to be at one in their blundering treatment of the defence question...and this discouragement of the youngsters is only one of many false steps'. It was to get worse. Reduced funds for the CMCC meant annual camps were curtailed in 1909 and by 1910, there were often not enough funds even for Bourke cadets to attend Battalion shooting meetings.²⁰

By this time, it seems certain that Bob had left both school and the cadets. On his AIF Attestation Paper, he stated that he had spent three years as an apprentice draper in Bourke with Mrs Rodda. Under the provisions of the *Apprenticeship Act 1901*, a child could not be indentured as an apprentice under the age of 14. Bob could conceivably have taken up this apprenticeship as early

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Striped Flannellettes at 4½d, 6d, 7½d,
and better. Pink or Cream Flannellettes at 4½d, 6d, 7½d, up to 1s per yard. 28 inch Good Flannels, Special Value, at 1s per yard.



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BLANKETS and RUGS
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Ladies' Wool Singlets and warm underwear, Ladies' Golf Jackets, Children's Sweaters and Jerseys, and all winter requirements.

A Large Stock of Men's Sweaters, Cardigan Vests, and Football Jerseys in all Club colors. Men's Warm Singlets and under-pants, Under-Flannels and Crimean Shirts.

All kinds of Ladies', Men's and Children's
BOOTS AND SHOES.

Top Quality. *Bottom Prices.*

RODDA'S IXL EMPORIUM.

IXL Emporium Advertisement 1909
Western Herald (Bourke) May 29, 1909, p. 5

as November, 1906. However, the evidence that he was still in 'school cadets' up to November 1908 is strong, and given the fact that many of the reported cadet events occurred on week days and the fact that apprentices at this time could work up to 48 hours per week, leaving little time for other pursuits such as cadets, it is likely Bob commenced his apprenticeship after November, 1908, when he was 16 years old.²¹

Annie Amelia Rodda took over the proprietorship of the IXL Emporium in Mitchell Street, Bourke, following the sudden death in Sydney of her husband, George James Rodda, in November, 1894, when he was aged only 37. George and Annie had established the business in 1891, specialising in drapery, dress materials, dressmaking goods, millinery, clothing, boots and shoes, 'novelties' and toys and dolls for children. Annie's Emporium was 'burnt to the ground' in a catastrophic fire which destroyed seven Mitchell Street shops in February, 1905. Fortunately, she had the 'stock insured for £2,500' (\$331,800) and had saved 'her books and money'. Two further blows occurred in late 1907 in succession. In November, Annie's brother, Clarence Cowling died of meningitis aged only 26 and in December her private residence and all its contents were 'totally demolished' in another fire. Resilient both personally and as a business woman, Annie was well and truly back in business in her new premises on the corner of Mitchell and Richard streets by the time Bob started his apprenticeship.²²

In the early 1900s, a drapery apprenticeship was viewed as one 'no lad will be sorry for serving his time at'. It was a trade that 'has never shown signs of declining', and unlike other trades, required no tools beyond a 'lead pencil, a tape measure and a pair of scissors'. Indeed, Mr. C. Edwards, manager of David Jones Limited in Sydney in 1907, waxed lyrical that 'in this business more than any other...the top is open to every boy who enters the door', and 'there is no trade under the sun in which the possibilities are greater from an employee's point of view'. It was generally acknowledged that 'in the country and in the smaller shops a hand gets a more general grip of the drapery business' than those in the 'large city houses'.²³

Life for an apprentice draper was no picnic, even after the *Factories and Shops Act 1896* and the *Apprenticeship Act 1901* had reduced the previous 'unmerciful' hours of labour of up to 12 hours a day to eight. A working week was still six days, with hours from 8.15 am to 6.00 pm each day, although it was 'usual for apprentices to come in half an hour earlier in the morning in order to get everything ready'. The only relief from these long hours was that the legislation had made it compulsory for half-holidays in all shops to be given either on a Wednesday or a Saturday 'to relieve the monotony of the shop assistants' existence'. Hours were not compensated by wages either. A drapery apprentice received five shillings (\$30) per week in the first year, rising to seven shillings and sixpence (\$45) in the second year and 10 shillings (\$60) in the third year. In comparison, the earnings for counter staff and window dressers at the time ranged between £2 - £3 (\$244-\$366) per week.²⁴

When Bob commenced his time with Annie Rodda, he may have served the three months' probation period set down in the *Apprenticeship Act 1901* before signing his 'indenture of apprenticeship'. His signature was binding on him 'as it would have been if [he] had been of full age at the time'. Drapery apprentices usually commenced their time doing duties such as acting as a light porter, dusting and

cleaning counters and show cases and being on 'sentry duty outside the shop front' to ensure goods on display were not stolen and 'price tags are not blown off the goods'. After he became used to the work, the apprentice was 'admitted behind the counters' and then experienced one department after another 'until he is thoroughly well up in all'.

Bob's opportunity to work in this trade almost ended before it began. On Friday, January 1, 1909, 'one of the biggest fires ever witnessed here' broke out 'in the galvanised iron store at the rear of Mrs Rodda's store'. While the Fire Brigade was quickly on the scene, 'at one time, it looked as if half the street would be consumed'. 'Splendid efforts by the firemen, assisted by willing helpers' ensured that Annie's store was only slightly damaged, even though the main store 'had already caught'. The other store, which only contained empty cases, and an acetylene gasometer, was 'completely destroyed'. It is quite possible Bob was one of those 'willing helpers'. In the same year, fire again inflicted itself on Bob's employer when for the second time Annie's private residence 'burned down'.²⁵



View of Mitchell Street Bourke looking east C 1914
NLA PIC 8089/1

Bob's three years as an apprentice with Annie Rodda in Bourke would have ended by early 1912 when he was 19 years of age. It is not known where he lived or what his occupation was between 1912 and 1915, when he turns up again in Cobar. His oldest sister, Lizzie, told her daughter Shirley that Bob was at one stage a 'horse breaker'. He was certainly experienced enough with horses to be accepted into the Light Horse, so perhaps it is in this three-year period that he gained that vital experience.

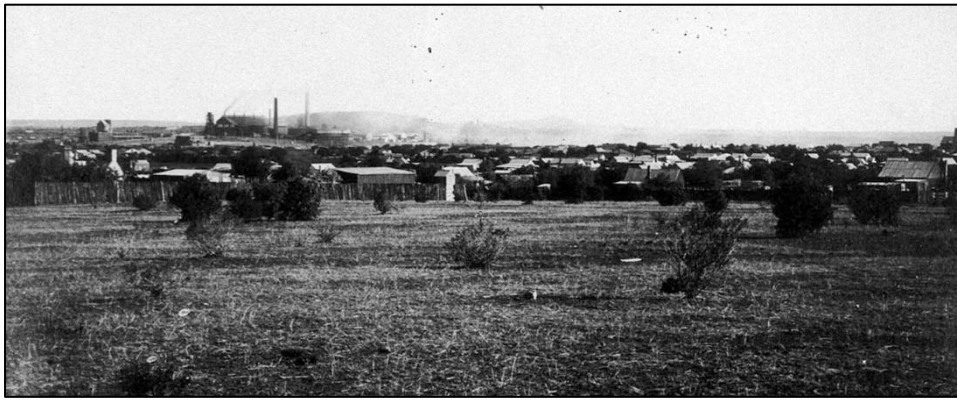
This indenture, made the _____ day of _____, one thousand nine
 hundred _____, between _____, son of _____, of _____, and
 hereinafter designated apprentice, of the first part ; _____, of the second part (as
 consenting hereto) ; and _____, of _____, carrying on business as
 at _____, and hereinafter designated master, of the third part : Witnesseth that the
 said _____ puts himself apprentice to the said master to learn the trade, art, business,
 or occupation of _____
 and everything relating thereto, for the space of _____ years, and for so many
 additional days as is hereinafter provided for—such term to be computed from the
 day of _____, one thousand nine hundred _____. And the said apprentice
 hereby agrees and engages with the said master, and his executors and administrators, that
 during such term he will faithfully, diligently, and assiduously serve and obey all lawful
 commands of his said master, and his said executors and administrators, or those he or
 they may please to set over him in the said trade, art, business, or occupation : that he
 will at no time absent himself therefrom without proper consent ; and that he will not
 be accessory to, nor commit or permit any hurt or damage to his said master or his
 property, nor conceal any such hurt or damage if known to him, but shall do everything
 in his power to prevent the same ; and that for every day's absence during the said term
 from attention to the said trade, art, business, or occupation, without such consent, he shall
 serve one day at the end of each year of his apprenticeship, and such year shall not be
 considered complete until the said additional day or days shall have been served. And
 the said master hereby agrees, engages, and binds himself with and to the said
 apprentice, and his executors and administrators, that he, the said master or his executors
 or administrators, shall, during the aforesaid term, duly teach and instruct the said
 apprentice, or cause him to be taught and instructed, in the trade, art, business, or
 occupation aforesaid, and do his utmost to make him skilled and expert therein ; and
 shall also make payment to the said apprentice at the following rate of wages per
 _____, during which he shall diligently and faithfully labour in the said trade, art,
 business, or occupation, that is to say :— _____ shillings per _____ for the first year ;
 _____ shillings per _____ for the second year ; _____ shillings per _____ for the
 third year ; _____ shillings per _____ for the fourth year ; _____ shillings per _____
 for the fifth year ; _____ shillings per _____ for the sixth year ; and _____ shillings
 per _____ for the seventh year from the said _____ day of _____ one thousand nine
 hundred _____. The said apprentice further agrees with his said master that he will be
 responsible for all tools, patterns, and other property that may be in his charge or under
 his care ; and that in the event of any such tools, patterns, and other property being
 damaged or lost through his neglect or default, it shall be lawful for his said master to
 deduct a fair charge for the same from the wages above mentioned. And that in all
 respects he will conform to the reasonable rules and regulations for the time being in
 force in the establishment of the said master. And the said _____ and _____,
 each for himself, his executors and administrators, covenants and agrees with the other,
 and his executors and administrators, that he shall in all respects well and faithfully
 observe and perform all the covenants and agreements contained in these presents on
 his part to be observed and performed.

In witness whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto set
 their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

Signed, sealed, and delivered by the said _____
 in the presence of _____

Chapter 3 Cobar Days

By the second half of 1915, Bob was living in Cobar, working as a labourer for Francis George Kynaston, a produce merchant with premises in Linsley Street from which he had been conducting a thriving business since about 1904.¹ Bob still had family in Cobar at this time. While his grandfather, John McBride had died in January, 1906, and his grandmother, Elizabeth, had been committed to Paramatta Hospital with senility in September, 1914, his older sister Katie had moved to Cobar around 1914 with her husband Roger William Maitland and their one-year-old daughter Dora May. They had another child, Ronald Roger, a nephew to Bob, at Bradley Street in Cobar in October, 1914. Bob's aunt, his father's sister, Maria Atkinson (nee McBride), had been living in Becker Street, West Cobar, from early 1913. Bob's cousin, Elizabeth Graham (nee Gill), daughter of his father's sister Elizabeth Gill (nee McBride), also lived in Cobar from 1911.²



View of Cobar and Great Cobar Copper Mine from the west June 1912
SLNSW IE1712349

By February, 1914, Cobar was in crisis. Drought had reduced the water supply at several local mines to such an extent that they had to close with 1,000 men thrown out of work. The township water reservoir, which supported some 9,500 residents, was also 'rapidly falling', with the gauge measuring nine inches (22.5 cm) and falling an inch (2.5 cm) a day. It was estimated that 60,000 gallons (272,765 litres) of water per day was required to be railed 80 miles (128 km) from Nyngan just to keep the Great Cobar Copper Mine to the immediate east of the township operating.³ This mine, which for years had dominated the skyline sending 'smoke drifting across the sky and a spectacular red glow to light the night', had been experiencing a gradual decline in profitability since 1913, and in early April, 1914, was placed into receivership and shut down, with a further 1,000 men affected.⁴

At the time Bob was living in Cobar, the mine was still closed, many men were out of work and local businesses were struggling. Some suggestion of a mine re-start began to emerge in March, 1915, following a 'phenomenal rise in the price of copper' due to the war, but protracted negotiations between the Receiver, debenture holders and the NSW Government meant that until the Government agreed to a guarantee of £40,000 (\$4,194,000) in September, the mine remained closed. 'Unwatering operations' commenced on Friday, October 8, 1915, but the mine did not recommence operations until at least a month after Bob had left Cobar.⁵

Previous years of prosperity meant the township Bob arrived in boasted street lighting and some houses and businesses even had gas or electric lighting. The streets however, were unsealed and dusty and, when it did rain, flooding was still a major problem. The town was well serviced with shops and hotels, and for recreation there was a billiard room, picture theatre and a stadium where boxing matches were held. Most buildings were of wood and iron, but there were many substantial brick buildings which still stand today including the Court House, Public School, School of Arts, Band Hall, Masonic Hall, Railway Station, St. Paul's Anglican Church, St. Lawrence



Becker Street Cobar with School of Arts on left C 1905
Stingemore, Kay, p. 8

O'Toole Catholic Church and the Great Cobar Copper Mine office. There was little 'natural greenery', and water, or the lack of it, remained 'an ongoing cause for concern', which for Bob, coming from a childhood spent in Hungerford, was nothing new. While sanitary records at the time show that the health situation was much improved by 1915, typhoid remained a threat to the community.⁶

Despite the depressed state of the township, Cobar citizens responded with 'unselfishness and patriotism' on the outbreak of war, with contributions in June and July, 1915, to the 'Australia Day' fund to support wounded soldiers reaching £600 (\$62,900). The Cobar Recruiting Association was formed on Wednesday, July 14, 1915, and the Cobar Soldiers' Red Cross Association on Thursday, August 12, 1915, to arrange suitable farewells for recruits and welcome home functions for wounded soldiers. Both organisations were chaired by the Mayor, Alderman Michael Joseph Duffy. The Recruiting Association divided the township into seven districts, with four committee members in each to canvass 'door-to-door'. Michael Duffy set the scene for this work, saying that up to this time they had been 'too lackadaisical', and that as 'every eligible young man in town was known to those present, and if they did not go now the time would come when they would be shamed into going'.⁷

Six days after the formation of the Recruiting Association, a well-attended public meeting was held in the Masonic Hall in Barton Street. 'Flags of the Allies' adorned the stage, and patriotic speeches implored the young men of Cobar to 'show their backbone', and that 'there was only one man unworthy of the name and that was the young man who was not willing to go'. Four men 'mounted the platform and signified their willingness to enlist'. On Saturday, August 7, 1915, the Masonic Hall was once again the scene for a 'stirring address' to a 'very large public meeting' by Charles Stuart Fern, the Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Cobar. Charles had been the MLA for Cobar since December, 1911 and had been very active in support of the township and its unemployed workers during the previous 18 months. He enthusiastically supported recruiting in the state, and although married with four children, announced that he was enlisting himself and said: 'What are you going to do about it boys? Who'll come with me?' Two volunteers came forward.⁸

The pressure on young men like Bob in Cobar to enlist was unrelenting. Less than a fortnight later, the *Western Age* railed:

to see the number of able-bodied and apparently healthy young men standing about the streets of Cobar, with nothing to do but idle away time, no one would imagine that the Empire was calling aloud for just such men as these to protect her from the assaults of a foreign bully.

In its report to the Premier at the end of the month, the Cobar Recruiting Association considered that 'there are a large number of men in this town eligible in every way and without encumbrance, but so far the efforts of the association have not been successful in inducing them to come forward'. The Committee's initial view that 'one volunteer was worth ten pressed men' now wavered and by September, 1915, they had publicly taken the view that 'a compulsory system should take its place'.⁹

What finally motivated Bob to enlist will never be known. He would have certainly known some of the men who had already volunteered from Cobar. His employer's son, Walter Clive Kynaston, had



Former Masonic Hall Cobar (built in 1893) 2017
Author's photograph

enlisted in February, 1915, aged only 18, and served with the 6th Light Horse at Gallipoli until evacuated sick with dysentery and influenza in late September, 1915. James John Benedict Kinkead, Bob's future officer in the Imperial Camel Corps (ICC), had enlisted in Cobar in August, 1915, and was also serving with the 6th Light Horse. During October, the Cooe's Recruiting March from Gilgandra to Sydney gained much local publicity. Although it did not pass through Cobar, it had reached Dubbo by Wednesday, October 13, 1915, where two men from Cobar joined 'the marching army'.

Another six Cobar men joined at Mt Victoria on Thursday, November 4, 1915 – Robert and Walter Mitchell, Andrew Lennox, Norman Francisco, Hilton Wallace and Tom Grogan. The first four of these were farewelled on Thursday, October 28, 1915, at a 'Complimentary Smoke Social' at the Court House Hotel. Was it the examples set by some or all of these October volunteers that finally persuaded Bob?¹⁰

Charles Fern returned to Cobar for another recruiting meeting on Friday, October 29, 1915, to a 'large audience' at the Masonic Hall. He had been granted leave from the AIF to conduct one final recruiting campaign throughout western NSW. He 'appealed to the young men to do their duty', and in reference to a British nurse executed by the Germans, he urged them to 'help revenge [Miss Cavell's] death'. Adding to these pleas, he called for men 'to do as he did – enlist', 'to cut the apron strings and go', but it was all to no avail as no volunteers came forward. Michael Duffy, in thanking Charles, said 'it was scandalous to think that married men like Private Fern had to go, while many young men would not'. Perhaps it was these final exhortations by Charles Fern and Michael Duffy that persuaded Bob to enlist, as he completed and signed his *Application to Enlist in the Australian Imperial Force* the next day, Saturday, October 30, 1915.¹¹

Original.
Duplicate.

APPLICATION TO ENLIST IN THE AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

To the Recruiting Officer

at Dubbo

(OFFICIAL STAMP.)

I, Neil Hamilton McBride
 hereby offer myself for enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force for Active Service
 Abroad, and undertake to enlist in the manner prescribed, if I am accepted by the Military
 Authorities, within one month from date hereof.

POSTAL ADDRESS. Cobar Signature N. H. McBride
 Occupation Labourer
 Date 30th Oct. 1915

(For Identification purposes the above space should be filled in personally by the Applicant.)

CONSENT OF PARENTS OR GUARDIANS. (For Persons under 21 years of age.)
 I HEREBY CERTIFY that I approve of the above application, and consent to the enlistment
 of my ^{son} ~~ward~~ for Active Service Abroad.

Statement regarding Death or Absence of
 either or both Parents. Father's Signature _____
 Mother's Signature _____
 or
 Guardian's Signature _____

PERSONAL PARTICULARS.
 Age— 23 yrs. 1 mos. Height— 5 ft. 3 in. Chest Measurement (fully
 expanded)— 35 inches.
 Married. Widower. Single.

PRELIMINARY MEDICAL EXAMINATION.
 Decision of Medical Authority { FIT for Active Service.
UNFIT for the following reasons:—

Place Cobar Date Nov. 1-15 H. B. Fletcher
 Signature of Medical Authority.

I Concur
 Place Dubbo Date 5-11-16 Edt Burrows capt
 Signature of M.O. at Central Recruiting Depot.

CERTIFICATE OF RECRUITING OFFICER.
 I CERTIFY that I have this day provisionally ~~REJECTED~~ ACCEPTED this Applicant for enlistment
 in the Australian Imperial Force.
 (Signature) W. W. Day Capt
 Place Dubbo Date 5-11-15
 Recruiting Officer.

87587 10728

Bob McBride's Application to Enlist in the Australian Imperial Force

Chapter 4

Basic Training at Dubbo Camp

On Monday, November 1, 1915, Bob presented himself to Dr Herbert Richard Letcher for a preliminary medical examination. Herbert had moved his practice to Cobar from Kadina, South Australia, in February, 1905, and had held the position of Medical Officer for Cobar District Hospital



Cobar Railway Station (opened 1892) 2017 has changed little since 1916. Platform view looking towards Nyngan
Author's photographs

since June of that year. He signed off on Bob's examination, declaring him 'fit for active service'. Bob seems to have lost little time in leaving Cobar, as by Friday, November 5, 1915, he had arrived at the AIF Training Camp at Dubbo Showground. There were only three train services a week on the Cobar branch line to the Main Western Line junction at Nyngan in 1915, leaving on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, although from Nyngan to Dubbo there was at least one service a day. Excluding any connection delay at Nyngan, it was at least a 13-hour train journey from Cobar to Dubbo, so it seems that Bob may have left Cobar without fanfare as early as the day after his medical examination. There are no reports of any organised farewells to recruits that week in Cobar.¹

On arrival at the Dubbo Showground AIF Camp, Bob completed his *Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad*, and had it signed off by Captain William Ley, on Friday, November 5, 1915. He then faced another medical inspection, this time by Dr Edmund Henry Burkitt, the Medical Officer at the Camp and an honorary captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC). Captain Edmund Burkitt concurred with Dr Letcher's assessment and signed off on Bob's Certificate of Medical Examination. Bob was described as 5 feet 3 inches tall (160 cm), weighing 126 pounds (57.2 kg), and having a 35-inch (89 cm) chest girth when fully expanded. It was also noted that Bob had a dark complexion, brown eyes, dark brown hair and had no distinctive marks.²

Captain William Ley had been instructed in early August, 1915, to establish a military camp at Dubbo to enlist and train volunteers from western NSW. The Dubbo Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Association immediately placed the Showground at his disposal, as it 'was close to the town and rifle range, with excellent accommodation'. The main pavilion was converted into a 'dormitory', the luncheon shed into a cookhouse and the agricultural pavilion into a mess room. It was estimated that around 300 recruits could be accommodated. Drainage, bathroom and lavatory accommodation, and Municipal Council concerns about the supply and cost of providing sanitation services and water supply, the latter already being 'scarcely...enough...for domestic purposes', were still ongoing issues when Captain Arthur Lionel Keith Cooper was appointed camp commandant in early October, 1915, and remained so throughout most of Bob's time at the camp.³

When Bob reached Dubbo, there were about 140 men in the camp. He would have been immediately disabused of any fanciful notions he may have had about joining the AIF. There were no uniforms available, and recruits were issued with one set of 'ill-fitting and unsightly dungarees' known as 'blues'. No shirts were supplied and boots were issued without laces. Recruits were not allowed to wear their private clothes when on leave in the town, and after marching about in the

summer weather 'their clothing (became) saturated with perspiration, and from a sanitary point of view these should be washed before being again worn'. Without a second set, this was not possible. While this situation was somewhat improved by December, 1915, with the State Commandant, Brigadier General Gustav Mario Ramaciotti, agreeing to supply a second set of dungarees and permit men to wear their ordinary clothes while on leave, the provision of uniforms at the Dubbo Camp was not resolved until January, 1916. The Military Authorities had by then determined that from January 1, 1916, 'the issue of uniforms to the men in country camps is to be precisely on the same basis as for Sydney...camps', that is, all men to wear dungarees for the first month in camp and then be issued with a uniform. While some uniforms had arrived at Dubbo Camp in early January, it was not until a month later that those men like Bob who had 'been over a month in camp' were finally issued with uniforms. By then Bob had spent at least three months of his time in the camp living and training in 'dungarees'.⁴

Bob and his fellow recruits in the Dubbo Camp had to deal with a range of issues. As numbers fluctuated, the 'barrack room' could become 'crowded', and it seems that 'concrete floors' were not put down until March, 1916. Pay days, 'usually about the 1st and 15th of the month', were sometimes delayed, a problem not really addressed until February, 1916, when a pay sergeant and pay corporal were attached to the camp. The issue of 'unnecessary restrictions' on leave at Dubbo Camp was believed to be one of the reasons prospective recruits made 'straight for Sydney' rather than enlist at Dubbo. Leave was not granted on Friday nights, and weekend leave only from 1.00 pm on Saturdays to 11.00 pm on Sundays, this latter being further restricted in February, 1916, to exclude the Saturday night after 11.00 pm. Some of these 'restrictions' however, may have been self-imposed as it was reported that 'so great an aversion have some of the recruits to the present clothing [dungarees] that they prefer to stay in camp rather than take leave'. Sensitivity around leave was also a factor when Private Thompson, a member of the Dubbo Recruiting Committee, rejected the committee's suggestion that men from the camp be used to parade through the streets to support recruiting meetings. He argued that 'men were drilling and training hard all the week,



Dubbo Show Ground Camp-Soldiers Marching on Race Track 1916 and a similar view 2017. The impressive grandstand in the 1916 view (which was located to the right of the modern grandstand in the 2017 photograph) was allowed to fall into disrepair, was further damaged in a 2001 storm and was finally demolished by the Dubbo City Council in 2010 - Macquarie Regional Library D0001452/Author's photograph

and it was not fair to ask them to work overtime for no extra pay' and furthermore, 'their week-end leave would be seriously broken into', and that all of this was 'against all the rules under which Australian workers labored'. While such parades were eventually agreed to, it was only with the proviso that 'men on leave...be induced, if possible, to march voluntarily'.⁵

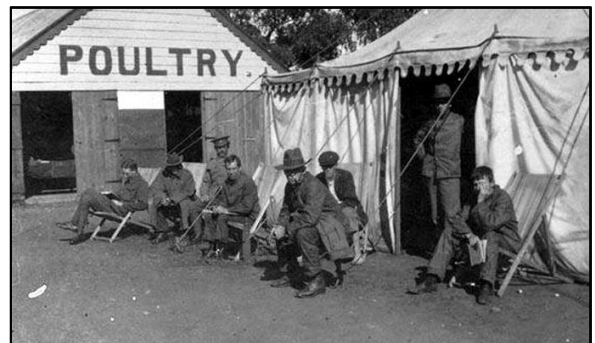
Of much greater import however, was the quality of the training Bob and his fellow recruits were receiving. A fortnight after Bob arrived, members of the Dubbo Recruiting Association were expressing disquiet about the 'scope of the training' at the camp. It was noted that 'the constant marching around the Show Ground and "forming fours", with little variation, is very irritable', and that the 'facilities around Dubbo for extended drill' were not being utilized. Of greater concern was the fact that even though the town rifle range was 'only separated from the Show Ground by a paling fence', no 'musketry' training was provided to recruits. Stories circulated locally that 'men had been sent from Australia who had not fired 30 shots from a rifle before leaving', that 'men had been sent

to the front...who have never handled any weapon other than a pea-rifle', and that 'many had not previously fired a rifle'. The association charged that this was a 'scandal' and a 'gross reflection on the Defence authorities'. In mid-December, 1915, representations were made by the association to the State Commandant, Brigadier General Ramaciotti, 'to provide a sufficient number of rifles and bayonets for the use of the Dubbo Camp, to enable recruits to complete their rifle course and bayonet exercise'. They further suggested that in the meantime sanction be given for the loan of rifles to the camp from local residents and members of the rifle club.⁶

No sanction was forthcoming for public rifle loans, but by late January, 1916, approval for use of the rifle range for a 'full musketry course' was given and about 100 rifles were received. For Bob and other recruits who had been marching around the showground for nearly three months, this was too little too late, particularly as numbers in the camp had by then swelled to 'upwards of 320'. Bob was more fortunate than most, as he had received more rifle training as a cadet in Bourke almost a decade previously than he had received in his first three months of AIF training. It would certainly seem that the historian Jeffrey Grey's contention that the quality of AIF training which had made the initial 1914 contingent 'probably the worst-trained formation ever sent from Australia's shores', had not improved that much a year later when Bob enlisted. Training at Dubbo Camp was supervised by militia officers, and it seems the only veteran appointed was Camp Sergeant Major McIntyre in late 1915. He was a former member of the 'Imperial Army in India', and had seen active service in the Boer War. The Dubbo Recruiting Association in March, 1916, continued to express its concerns about the quality of training, stating they were of the opinion that 'where a vacancy occurred on the officers' staff in the training areas the position should be filled by...a returned soldier'.⁷

Major General McKay, the Inspector General of Camps, issued a new 12-week, 40½ hour per week 'progressive syllabus' of training for recruits to be introduced on February 14, 1916. The syllabus began 'with the usual routine of drill', 'a full musketry course...and route marches' and led up to 'advanced training...in trench digging and bomb throwing'. On the very day it was introduced, the increase of five and a half hours in the time spent drilling sparked a walkout and 'strike' at Casula and Liverpool camps, which by mid-afternoon had turned into a drunken riot by up to 3,000 soldiers in central Sydney, culminating in the 'Battle of Central Station' where an armed guard fired into the mob killing one and injuring six others. Even in the Dubbo Camp, the introduction of an additional two hours of 'physical culture before breakfast' generated 'considerable resentment' with talk spreading of a 'strike'. However, a deputation to the commandant of the camp resulted in a compromise, with the additional drill reduced to one hour.

The military authorities responded to the Sydney riot by closing Casula Camp and reducing numbers in Liverpool Camp through sending men to camps in country districts, including Dubbo. By the end of February, 1916, the horse stalls at the Dubbo Show Ground had been converted to sleeping quarters, with nearly 100 tents erected, additional shower baths and brick ovens installed and the poultry shed converted into a hospital. By the end of the first week in March, 1916, numbers had swollen to 544, and a fortnight later to 1,060. Such rapid expansion, coupled with the changes to camp leadership with the replacement of Captains Cooper and Ley in mid-February, 1916, meant further disruption to the training regime for long-term Dubbo Camp recruits such as Bob.⁸



Poultry shed and tent hospital at Dubbo Camp 1916
Macquarie Regional Library D0001450

The citizens of Dubbo were generous in their support of the Dubbo Camp recruits. Comforts such as 'milk puddings, jelly or custard' were supplied to patients in the 'sick bay' and the Dubbo District Hospital was made readily available to receive those requiring more urgent medical attention. Sports, including cricket matches between local teams and recruits, were organised. In late 1915, funds were raised to provide a reading room and piano, and in February, 1916, a 'Battalion Comforts Fund' was established to provide, among other things, instruments for a battalion band, which played for the first time at the military camp sports on Saturday, February 26, 1916. A 'committee of ladies' organised weekly concerts 'to break the monotony of camp life' and musical entertainment

was also occasionally provided by the Salvation Army and Dubbo Citizens' bands. On Christmas Day, 1915, the 50 or so recruits remaining in camp experienced 'lavish Christmas cheer' provided by 'the ladies of the town'. Bob may not have been one of the recipients of this largesse, as the four days leave granted to the men in the camp for Christmas would have been enough for him to visit his oldest sister Lizzie and her husband Stuart, then Constable-in-Charge of Trangie Police Station, 42 miles (68 km) directly up the Western Line from Dubbo.⁹

Dubbo camp life however had its dark side. Following the rapid increase in camp numbers, incidents of petty theft by soldiers at the camp gained more prominence in the Dubbo Police Court in 1916. The court also occasionally dealt with recruits from the camp charged with 'riotous behaviour' in the township, 'inflicting grievous bodily harm', 'drunkenness', and 'indecent language'. The Government's response to the Sydney riot — ordering the closure of hotels at 6.00 pm — only heightened local concerns of an increase in the incidence of drunkenness as soldiers took 'an excess cargo on board on Saturday afternoon — as their only opportunity for another week'. Three charges of drunkenness were enough to get a recruit 'drummed out' of the camp, with three such incidents reported in January, 1916, alone. It was considered however, that 'the harm that is done recruits owing to an excess of drink is only a mere circumstance to the injury that may be caused by [venereal] disease'. Certainly, several recruits were sent from the camp to isolation camps in Sydney with this disease. The Dubbo Sports Ground opposite the Railway Station and less than three quarters of a mile (1 km) from the Showground Camp was notorious locally as 'a nocturnal meeting place of undesirable characters' and 'that almost any evening several of these women and their male parasites are to be seen'. Indeed, while a 'woman of ill-repute', Jane Healey, was murdered there in June, 1915, the establishment of the Dubbo Camp 'added inducement to these individuals to make Dubbo their headquarters'. The police were urged to apply the Vagrancy Act to eliminate this threat, but other than the reported arrest and conviction of Millie Howard (aka Brown) in late January, 1916, there is no evidence that this hazard to the well-being of the soldiers in the Dubbo Camp was ever effectively removed.¹⁰



Dubbo Railway Station (opened 1881) 2017
Has changed little since 1916
Author's photograph

Bob spent more than four and a half months at Dubbo Camp. This seems to be a lengthy period to be occupied in what was little more than basic training. Batches of recruits were regularly sent from the Dubbo Camp to camps in Sydney, but Bob's experience was not unique. James Rogers from Bourke, of whom we will learn more later, attested at Dubbo on the same day as Bob and was sent to Menangle Park at the same time as Bob. Corporal Burkitt and Privates Donnison, Raphael, Hankin, Dash and Schuhkraft were reported as having been in Dubbo Camp 'since the establishment' when they were entertained at a farewell function on Monday, March 20, 1916. Exactly when Bob left Dubbo Camp

for Sydney is not noted in his service record, but it was reported in the *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* on March 17, 1916, that 'some of the men who have been in training here for some months past will be sent away shortly'. The abovementioned Corporal Burkitt and the five privates were sent to Liverpool by the Tuesday evening train on March 21, 1916. Given that the mail train left Dubbo at 6.30 pm on Tuesdays and arrived in Sydney at 6.25 am the following day, it seems most likely Bob was on it as he had reported for duty at Menangle Park by Thursday, March 23, 1916.¹¹

Chapter 5

Menangle Park Light Horse Training

When Bob arrived at Menangle Park, he was immediately appointed to the 16th Reinforcements 7th Australian Light Horse Regiment by 2nd Lieutenant Vivien Paul Turner. Up to this time, there was no evidence he was destined for, or intended to join, the Light Horse. Furthermore, in early 1916, the previous practice of recruits being able to stipulate a certain service on enlistment was stopped, and all recruits were regarded from then on as being for general service and, 'provided there is room for them, they may be drafted into particular units afterwards'. There is no evidence that Bob underwent the test for acceptance into the Light Horse, either at Dubbo Camp or at Menangle Park Camp.¹ However, if he did, he would have no doubt had an experience similar to that of Dubbo recruit Kenneth James Irvine at Casula Camp in November, 1915:

There were about 150 of us marched across. Twenty or more horses were brought up, and the first lot went off....My turn came in the second batch...We mounted, and had to ride at a trot, and cantered in a circle. Then we had to take off the stirrups, and ride at a gallop over a hurdle....The horse jumped away with another (we were jumping in twos) at a gallop for the hurdle, and when we got up to it the other horse balked. Mine did too. I had to hang on to the pommel to save a fall. We had another go, and I made sure of getting my horse over first. We got over, and I had another struggle to stick to the saddle. I am pleased to say that I passed...²

An agreement to lease land for the Menangle Park camp was being negotiated by the Department of Defence with the Menangle Park Racing Company Limited in early 1916. However, after the Sydney riots, and the closure of the Casula Camp, immediate occupation of the site became urgent. Light Horse recruits were transferred to this new camp in late February, 1916, but the camp was ill-prepared to receive men for training. The legal basis for the occupation was also doubtful, with a formal agreement still unsigned at the time Bob arrived in camp, and financial authority for a lease only granted in mid-April, 1916. Even at the end of April, 1916, the State Commandant of Camps, Colonel Miller, considered that 'arrangements for the occupation of this property were in an unsatisfactory condition'. Clearly so, as the actual lease agreement was only finalised and gazetted in late September, 1917.³

Throughout March, 1916, Light Horse recruits at the Menangle Park Camp laboured like 'bullocks' to clear about 40 acres (16 ha) of timber and build wash houses, shower baths, cook houses and latrines. Most of the men objected strongly to being used in this way, seeing it as a 'wasting their most valuable time, which could be utilised much better in training'. Even by late March when Bob arrived, Trooper Joseph Gluyas considered the work incomplete, but thought 'by the end of April all will be in order'. By early April, a Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) tent had been erected, 'with plenty of writing paper pens ink piano magic lantern, and...[a] moving picture machine'. Recreation facilities, including a billiard room and a 'most commodious canteen' were commenced in April, but were not completed until May, 1916, several weeks after Bob had left the camp. During Bob's short time at the camp, it was clearly still very much a 'makeshift' camp, and he would no doubt have had to do his share of construction work.⁴

Menangle Park Camp was on a hillside at North Menangle, close to the Nepean River and adjacent to the racetrack. It had 'sufficient slope...to give excellent drainage' and water was 'laid on from the Sydney water supply'. The racetrack itself, which had only opened in August, 1914, was included in the lease agreement. It included an 800-seat grandstand and luncheon rooms as well as various other 'superior buildings'. However, the agreement stipulated that on race days, the facilities 'within the fences of the racecourse proper' reverted to exclusive control of the Menangle Park Racing Company. Race meetings continued as usual, mostly on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and in fact during the 1915-1916 season, which spanned the time Bob was there, 18 meetings were staged – the most ever in a season before or since.⁵

Unlike Bob's experience in Dubbo Camp, where there was immediate access to the township when on leave, Menangle Park Camp was quite isolated. The small village of Menangle, with a population of about 250, was three miles (4.8 km) south of the Camp, but held few attractions for men on leave. In particular it had no hotel, the nearest being six miles (9.6 km) north-north-east at Campbelltown

– a fact no doubt not lost on the Military Authorities when establishing the camp after the Sydney riots. Sydney was 42 miles (67.5 km) away by rail, but weekend services on the Great Southern Line did not stop at the siding of North Menangle, close to the camp. Local support for the men in camp, given its isolation from major population centres, was limited. The small Menangle Red Cross Branch considerably diminished their bank account by providing a 14-bed convalescent and hospital tent for the camp, and they, together with their counterparts in Camden, kept the camp hospital supplied 'with eggs, cakes, scones, pyjamas,... pillow slips, sheets, towels, and cakes of soap'. The Sydney Soldiers' Entertainments Committee had by April, 1916, included Menangle Park Camp in its program of 'entertainments' by 'artists', and on Thursday, April 13, 1916, about 300 men from Menangle Park Camp attended 'Wirths' [Circus] New Hippodrome in the Haymarket'. Such organised functions were rare however, and Bob and his fellow Light Horse recruits were largely left to their own devices for recreation outside of training hours. Joseph Gluyas gives a hint of one form this might have taken by noting that in the nearby Nepean River 'there are some lovely swimming holes..., also good fishing' ⁶



Menangle Park Light Horse troops marching along Argyle Street Camden April 12, 1916 - Camden Library Local Studies

Menangle Park Camp at the time Bob was there was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Robert William Lenehan, who had been a Major during the Boer War commanding the Bushveldt Carbineers at the time of the incident which led to the court martial of 'Breaker' Morant and others in 1902. Despite the camp being 'situated in ideal country for Light Horse work', under Colonel Lenehan, training at Menangle Park seemed to involve little more than parades and 'forced marches in the local area'. On Tuesday, April 4, 1916, the men at Menangle Park Camp were paraded before the Governor-General, Sir Ronald

Munro Ferguson, who 'in a short address complimented them on their turnout and smart appearance' before moving on to lunch with the officers of the Camp.⁷ On Wednesday, April 12, 1916, according to the *Camden News*:

One thousand men, under Colonel Lenehan,...participated in a route march to Camden via Campbelltown....The troops headed by the military band marched to the Show Grounds where they were dismissed for an hour, and where they had lunch. It was an imposing spectacle such a large number of troops marching through the town, and among them were about 100 horsemen. The mayor, Ald. G.F. Furner officially welcomed the troops to the town, and the officers were entertained at lunch.⁸

It is disconcerting to note that for a Light Horse training camp, this route march was very much reminiscent of those Bob experienced as a recruit at Dubbo Camp – marching on foot. There were

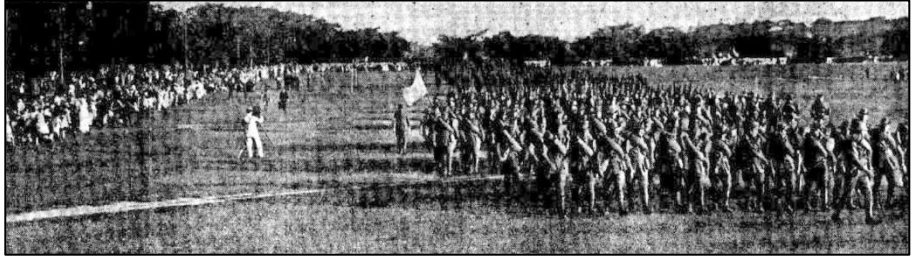


Light Horse training at Menangle Park - a still from the film *Australia Prepared* C Mar-Jun 1916 - AWM F00143

only about 100 men of the 1,000 Light Horsemen on horseback that day. The 1916 propaganda film, [Australia Prepared](#),⁹ does show a short segment of the Light Horse at Menangle Park in training on horseback, but how much this reflects the reality of day-to-day training there during the 22 days of Bob's stay at Menangle Park is questionable, particularly as the camp was still very much in the establishment phase. A further concern is that there does not appear to have been an easily accessible rifle range. Indeed, it was a month after Bob had completed his basic training in Australia before the Military Authorities insisted that 'each man must fire a minimum of eighty rounds', ensuring that 'the Australian soldier of the future will know one end of a rifle from the other'.¹⁰

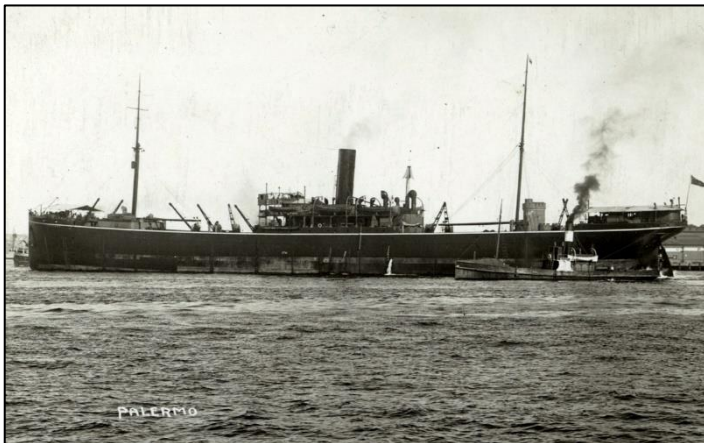
Chapter 6 Embarkation

The day after the route march to Camden, Thursday, April 13, 1916, at 4.00 pm, at Moore Park in Sydney, the State Commandant, Brigadier General Ramaciotti, reviewed upwards of 3,000 reinforcements who were ready for embarkation. As 'all arms of the service' were represented, including the Light Horse reinforcements, it is most likely Bob was amongst them. The troops left Central Railway Station in sections from 3.00 pm, formed up in Eddy Avenue



The Moore Park Review of Reinforcements April 13, 1916
The Daily Telegraph (Sydney) 14/04/1916, p. 9

and then marched to Moore Park by way of Elizabeth, Chalmers, Cleveland and Dowling streets. It was reported that it was the 'biggest inspection held in Sydney since the outbreak of the war', with more than 30,000 spectators present who 'heartily cheered' each unit as they 'swung past in exceptionally good style' with the men looking 'very fine in their workmanlike uniform and equipment'. At the conclusion of the inspection, the reinforcements were quartered in the Royal Agricultural Showground prior to their embarkation.¹



HMAT *Palermo* A56 (undated)
SLNSW PXE 722/3055

Bob boarded His Majesty's Australian Transport (HMAT) *Palermo* A56 at Woolloomooloo Wharf in Sydney on Monday, April 17, 1916, along with the 101 other men and two officers of the 7th Light Horse Regiment 16th Reinforcements. Also boarding was one man from the Mobile Veterinary Section 17th Reinforcements, a Medical Officer, a Veterinary Officer, and 283 horses.² HMAT *Palermo* was a 7,597 gross ton general cargo liner owned by the Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O). The ship was built in Glasgow in 1903 for employment on P&O's Indian and Far Eastern Services. It

had triple expansion steam engines, twin screws, could carry 12 passengers and 14,671 cubic metres of cargo, had been retro-fitted with refrigerated cargo facilities in 1906, and was capable of a speed of 14 knots. In 1914, it had a crew of 117 – 26 Europeans and 91 Asians. In command of the ship was Captain J.B. Fergusson, who had been Master of the *Palermo* since at least March, 1915.³

The *Palermo* sailed the next day with the troops under the command of Lieutenant Edwin Gordon Donkin, a 31-year-old grazier from Sydney with previous service as an officer in the militia from 1907 to 1912. He had only joined the AIF in mid-April, 1916, and received his commission as a Lieutenant on the day before sailing. Second in command was 2nd Lieutenant Vivien Paul Turner, a 26-year-old surveyor from Gunnedah, who had joined the militia in January, 1915, and the AIF in August, 1915. He had received his commission in January, 1916. This was the same 2nd Lieutenant Turner who had processed Bob's appointment when he first arrived at Menangle Park. The medical officer appointed to the ship was a 35-year-old former General Practitioner from Lismore, Captain Theodore William Van Epen, who had no previous military experience and had only received his commission in early March, 1916. Finally, completing the complement of officers, was the ship's Veterinary Officer, Captain Robert Spooner-Hart, a 41-year-old veterinary surgeon

from Calcutta, India, with previous service with the Royal Field Artillery during the Boer War. This was Captain Spooner-Hart's first, and as it turned out, last voyage as a Sea Transport Veterinary Officer. He had only received his commission one week before sailing. These officers were supported by eight temporary non-commissioned officers, aged between 18 and 38, half of whom had had no previous military experience either in the cadets or in the militia.⁴

The 104 men of the 16th Reinforcements were a diverse, young and inexperienced group. They do not fit easily into Official Historian Henry Somer Gullett's glowing vision of the Light Horseman as being 'great hearted countrymen riding in to enlist...all...pioneers, or the children of pioneers...all horsemen...in body and spirit the true product of the wide Australian countryside'.⁵ The median age of the 16th Reinforcements was 23, with the youngest being 18 and the oldest 49. Fifteen of the men were under 20, with only five over 35. Eighty-nine were single men, 14 married and one, the 49-year-old, widowed. Ten of the men had been born in the United Kingdom, 81 in NSW, nine in Victoria, two (including Bob) in Queensland, and one each in South Australia and Tasmania. Thirty-one of the men had started their life in metropolitan Sydney, Melbourne, London or Edinburgh, with the remaining 73 in country towns. However, of the 60 men from NSW and Queensland country towns, only 31 came from west of the Great Dividing Range. Thirty-two men, including Bob, were labourers, with a further 28 (including 13 farmers and graziers) working in specific rural occupations. Twenty men had either a trade or their own business and 11 worked in transport either as carriers or railway workers. Six men had clerical jobs and four worked in mining. This mix of occupations was rounded out with a student, a ships fireman and a hairdresser. Only 12 of the men listed occupations that would have involved riding horses, and of 20 men previously in the militia, only eight had been in the Light Horse. Like Bob, 98 of the men had enlisted between August and December, 1915. Seventy-five had no previous military experience. Five had been in school or senior cadets and, as stated above, 20 in the militia. Only four men had ever experienced any action – two in the Boer War, one in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force to New Guinea in 1914, and one who had been wounded on Gallipoli, evacuated to Australia, and was now returning to active duty.⁶

By Monday, April 24, 1916, the *Palermo* had reached Albany in Western Australia, where it was delayed for four days and five nights while the ship's funnel was repaired. It seems unlikely that the troops would have been allowed to go ashore, as they had constant work to do caring for the ship's equine passengers.⁷ The ship departed Albany on Saturday, April 29, 1916, and the magnificent vista of King George Sound would have been Bob's last view of Australia as the *Palermo* headed out into the Great Australian Bight and on into the Indian Ocean on its third voyage as a troopship. As the ship headed north-west, the weather increasingly became warmer and the horses began to suffer. It seems that nothing had been learned from the tragedy that had engulfed the horses on the *Palermo* during its first voyage almost exactly one year prior to Bob's voyage.



Moonlight over Albany Harbour February 1915
NLA obj 146153161

The *Palermo* had arrived in Sydney from London at the end of March, 1915. By mid-April, the ship had been requisitioned by the Australian Government as a troopship. In what was seen at the time as an impressive 53 hours, the ship was refitted to carry 100 men and 360 horses, before sailing from Sydney to reach Melbourne. There, 102 4th and 8th Light Horse Regiment Reinforcements and 360 horses were embarked and the *Palermo* sailed for Egypt, via Colombo, on Friday, May 7, 1915. As the ship headed north into the monsoon season, horses began to die. By the time they reached Suez and disembarked on Tuesday, June 8, 1915, 172 horses had died, mainly of septic pneumonia. In his Voyage Report, the Commandant, Captain Arthur Heywood A'Beckett, was scathing of the arrangements for horses on the *Palermo*. He stated that the condition of many of the horses loaded in Melbourne was 'very poor' and that they all had their heavy winter coats on for a voyage through the tropics. To make matters worse, 'no material for clipping or grooming horses was put on board'. He considered that 'the fitting up of the ship for remounts was very badly carried out'. Part of No. 1 hold was 'carried away' after two days and had to be fixed by the ship's carpenter.

Drainage of the horse stalls was poor, with no proper outlet for urine or water for washing. Holes in the deck leaked water and urine into the feed and destroyed several bags. Ventilation was very bad and arrangements for exhausting stale air as laid down in Transport Regulations (for horses) Paragraph 21, had not been made. Fodder supplied was plentiful but of poor quality. Of most concern was that there was no room left on deck for exercising the horses.⁸

On the second voyage of the *Palermo* in October-November, 1915, no horses were carried, but a comment in the Voyage Report by the Commandant, Lieutenant Henry James Thornton,



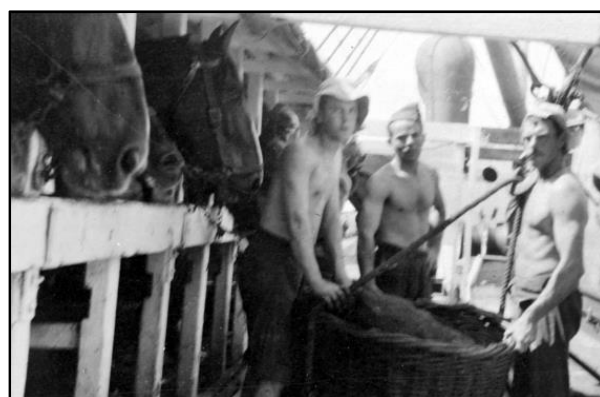
Dead horse being thrown overboard from HMAT *Star of Victoria* A16 C 1914-1916
AWM J02763

corroborates the concerns of Captain A'Beckett about the lack of deck space for exercise. Lieutenant Thornton noted that: 'space rather confined, and drill suffered thereby owing to the Horse Boxes occupying all of the deck space on the Well Decks'. While Bob's voyage had 77 fewer horses on board than had been the case in *Palermo's* disastrous first voyage, they were still being shipped into a northern hemisphere summer season. Furthermore, it seems minimal, if any, improvements had been made to horse accommodation on the ship. In their Voyage Reports, Lieutenant Donkin and Captain Spooner-Hart stated that ventilation was 'unsatisfactory' and it was difficult 'to get rid of the bad air'. The quality of forage was viewed as 'good', but that 25 per cent more lucerne needed to be supplied 'for use through the Tropics & sick horses'. Exercise of horses was 'impossible'. This inability to exercise the horses on the *Palermo* was critical, and exacerbated by the poor ventilation. Shipboard routines considered essential for horse ships included laying down matting on the decks and exercising as many horses as possible for at least 20 minutes daily when the weather allowed. It was also considered vital that there be continual place changes of horses in the hold and those on the upper decks, and that 'in hot weather the salt-water hose plays an important part' in caring for horses. Even this latter facility, which for a ship at sea should be easy,

was clearly a problem on the *Palermo*, with Captain Spooner-Hart suggesting in his Voyage Report that salt water hand pumps should be installed on each deck.⁹

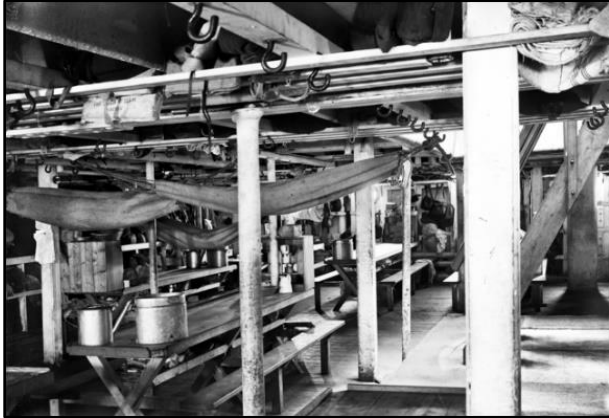
Twenty-three horses died during Bob's voyage, most of 'heat apoplexy' - an eight per cent casualty rate. While this pales into insignificance when compared to the near 50 per cent casualty rate on *Palermo's* first voyage, or the 33 per cent on the mid-1915 voyages of HMAT *Kabinga* A58 and HMAT *Malakuta* A57, it is well above the 3 per cent experienced by the First Convoy in 1914, and most other Australian horse transport ships.¹⁰ Disposal of their corpses overboard would have been an unpleasant task for Bob and his fellow Light Horsemen and one they would have had to do at least once or more per day for the time it took to cross the Indian Ocean from Albany to Suez. Some sensitivity about horse casualties is reflected in the Voyage Report. Lieutenant Donkin clearly states that 283 horses were embarked and 260 disembarked, and in the sub-section titled 'Horse Report', he first writes 'Number horses lost from "Heat Apoplexy"', but then contradicts this at the end of this section by stating 'No disease No casualties reported'. The report from Captain Spooner-Hart, makes no mention of horse casualties at all. Not surprisingly, there is a pencil entry, which does not appear to be in either Lieutenant Donkin's or Captain Spooner-Hart's handwriting, on a copy of the report - '? 23 horses died'.¹¹

Captain Spooner-Hart, in reporting on the management of horses stated that the 'troops did their best'. With a ratio of one man to three horses, it was certainly constant hard work. Most horses had never seen a stable of any kind, being 'station born and bred', and they now found themselves in a 'narrow stall, exactly two feet five inches wide (74 cm)', never being able to 'lie down during the voyage...and...prevented from moving backward...[or] forward'. The daily routine for Bob and



'Dungpunchers' on the HMAT *Clan MacCorquodale* A6
1915 - AWM P11235.010

the other men began at 7.00 am with watering and feeding of oats, bran and chaff, repeated at noon and at 4.00 pm, with an extra watering and feed of lucerne or hay at 9.30 pm. Horses got to know feeding time, 'announcing their readiness for meals by loud stamping, whinnying, and stretching their heads out of their stalls'. Water was supplied individually in buckets to ensure each horse got an adequate amount, the stipulated ration being 10 gallons (45.5 L) daily per horse. Men were detailed in the morning to clean horse stalls, collect manure and dump it overboard and then hose down the decks. After the noon feed, those not on the morning cleaning detail, groomed the horses,



Hammocks in the Mess Room RMS *Mooltan*
C 1915 - a P&O ship similar in size to the *Palermo* -
AWM J01354

paying particular attention to the feet and to cleaning the sheaths of geldings. It was found that the skin of horses at sea became tender, so use of 'a wet cloth in hot weather and a dry one in cold weather...was necessary to keep them clean'. To further add to the workload, pickets were rostered to be on duty on the horse decks at all times.¹²

Conditions for Bob and the other men on board were a little better than for their equine charges, but not much so. Provisions, medical comforts and the distilling and supply of water were considered to be good, at least by Lieutenant Donkin in his Voyage Report. Bread was baked and issued daily. Lieutenant Donkin however did note that the 'present arrangement of forcing water

up to [the] Men's Wash house...is not satisfactory'. As on most transports, the men slept in hammocks and ate in crowded mess rooms. One AIF man who served on a horse transport wrote of the men:

They are trodden on, they are kicked, and they are bitten. They have to work down below decks in the sweltering heat of the tropics. They work seven days in the week besides their night work. Their work is always hard and not always agreeable.... Stables, stables, stables, always bally well stables.¹³

It is doubtful, given the conditions on the *Palermo*, that Bob would have experienced anything much different to this. While Lieutenant Donkin reported that there was 'no sickness prevalent among troops', like some other aspects of his report, this was just not true. During the voyage, five men were isolated with venereal disease, one with orchitis¹⁴ and two with mumps. Seven of these eight were taken directly to the Government Hospital in Port Suez when the *Palermo* docked at one of the piers there on Monday, May 21, 1916.¹⁵

Chapter 7 Training in Egypt

Horse transports were usually afforded priority in docking, so it is unlikely the *Palermo* was kept waiting long at anchor in the harbour. It is just as well, as on arrival, ships were a magnet for entrepreneurial Egyptians in 'bum boats' or 'coolie boats'. Troops were under orders not to buy from them and 'to turn the hose on them if they came near'. Some ships even put out armed lifeboats to keep them at bay. Those troops who did succeed in buying goods found out to their cost that the sellers were 'absolute rogues', with cheap cigarettes often turning out to be 'worthless'. Troops also had to contend with boys who, despite the prevalence of sharks in the bay, would swim out to the ships and beg for money, some keeping 'themselves afloat for about two hours'.¹ The men on the *Palermo* probably avoided prolonged exposure to these 'hawkers'. Once alongside the pier, the final task Bob and his fellow Light Horsemen had to do for the horses in their charge was lead them off the ship and onto a train specially fitted for transporting horses to the remount depot. Judging from the experience of the men on HMAT *Itria* A53 which arrived at Port Suez one week later, this task would have taken about two to three hours. With horses weakened after a long and difficult voyage in poor conditions, this was not an easy task, and at least one man, Private James Thomas Ruming, was injured leading a horse off the *Palermo* when 'it plunged on top of him, hit him in legs & calf and knocked him down'. After the stress of a long sea voyage, horses were usually in no condition for riding for at least three weeks. The *Palermo* horses, given the exceptionally poor conditions on board, would have needed every hour of this time and more to recover.²



Light Horse transferring horses onto a waiting train at Port Suez December 1916
AWM P02658.001

After the men of the 16th Reinforcements finally disembarked on Tuesday, May 22, 1916, there is a gap of 19 days before they are recorded as being at Tel el Kebir. Letters home from men who had also arrived at Port Suez in 1915-1916, often referred to delays in disembarkation, but these were usually never more than the two to three days required to clear the backlog of ships waiting to dock and for train transport to be available. The longest wait reported was seven days over the Christmas-New Year period in 1915. All except one reported that they remained on board the ship during this time. That exception is Hedley West, who disembarked at Port Suez from HMAT *Ceramic* A40 on Sunday, May 20, 1916 – two days prior to Bob. Hedley wrote to a friend in Forbes that 'tomorrow [May 20] we disembark at Port Suez and have a nine mile (14.5 km) walk to our camp. It will be severe on us with our packs up'. Hedley was not taken on strength of his Battalion at Tel el Kebir until six days later. Given Hedley's experience, it is quite possible that Bob and the rest of the men from the



Arbaen (Arbaeen) Camp Suez December 1915 - AWM C00322

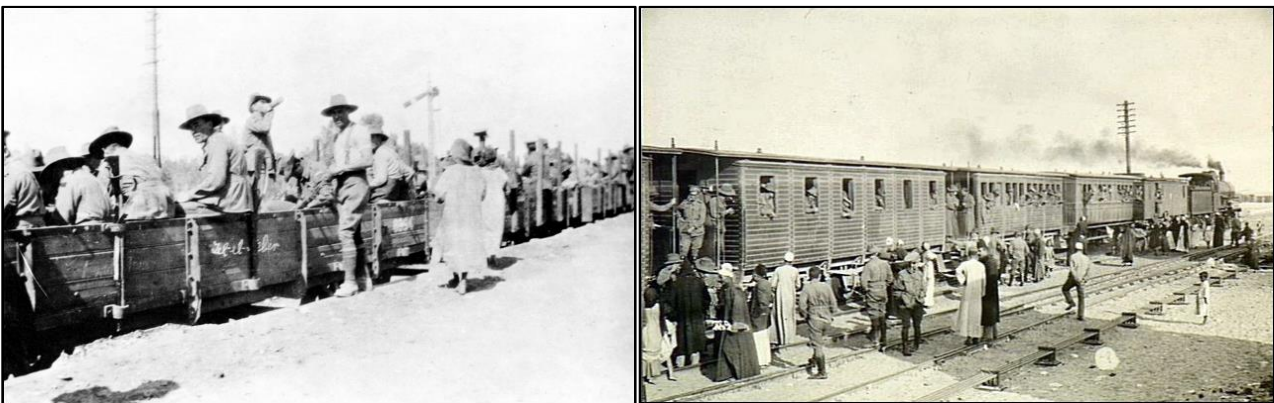
Palermo may well have faced a similar trudge to a camp at Port Suez while waiting for a train to Tel el Kebir. Still, 19 days seems an excessive wait for transport even at a busy port like Port Suez in 1916, and an administrative delay once they reached Tel el Kebir certainly cannot be ruled out. If Bob did spend time at a camp in Port Suez, it was most probably at Arbaen (Arbaeen) Camp, where Australian reinforcements were accommodated and trained.³

A stay in Port Suez, no matter how short, would have given Bob his first experience of Egypt. We do not know what he thought of it all, but some indication may be gleaned from the views expressed by other Australian troops arriving there in 1915-1916:

The port looked lovely at night with its electric lights and the warships search lights (Wilfred Burgess). The port of Suez ... (is) alive with steamers, dredges, fishing boats and ... battle-cruisers (Algie Pederson). At the Port [Suez] my first sight of hundreds of camels ... also numerous donks, mules and Arab horses (Gottlieb Dietrich). We arrived here [Port Suez] ... in the evening and it looked very pretty when all the ships were lit up. In the morning it did not look so pretty (Robert Gill). Suez is a pretty place to look at from the Port with its fine large square buildings. The architecture of some is very beautiful, but the native quarter is very dirty (James Donnison). The township of Suez has very few sights worth viewing. There is ... a pretty fair street, otherwise the only thing of any interest is the cosmopolitan crowds of cadgers, etc. One meets civilians and soldiers from almost every clime (William Taylor). The town does not appear to be very large, and the barrenness of the hills around make the place look very desolate (Albert Singleton). Port Suez from the bay, presents a fine appearance, but on closer inspection ... you find ... it is very dirty and literally stinks (Gus Edwards). It is a very dirty port. What broke me up most was the way the people live. They have very small houses, and on the roofs they keep their poultry etc., and their donkeys camp alongside the hut (William Rickards). Our first impressions of Egypt [at Port Suez] was a place of filth, heat and discomfort (Arthur Love). It was all very novel and interesting – a mixture of every race on earth in the way of population; donkeys, mules, camels – and stinks. Oh, Lord, you should smell the stinks. There is no sewerage system, and the sanitary arrangements are very crude. The streets are littered with filth (Wilfred Merlin). One of the strangest sights was an Arab camp; ... never thought that there was such poverty in existence (Trevor Stokes)⁴

The less than positive reactions to Port Suez by many troops landing there, including Bob no doubt, would have meant they were pleased when the order came to entrain for the journey north.

Ambivalence however, was rarely a feature of the views expressed about the train journey to Tel el Kebir. By 1916, the Egyptian Railway's trunk lines from Cairo to Port Said, Ismalia and Port Suez had been taken over by the military authorities in response to the Turkish threat to the Suez Canal. Men were 'packed on a little ramshackle of a train, like sardines'. If they were lucky, they were in carriages taking 40-48 men; otherwise they were in 'cattle trucks' or 'goods trucks' with about 30 men in each 'with no room to sit down on the floor'. The carriages, when available, were in three classes '1st Class for Officers, 2nd for sergeants, and 3rd for men'. Men in the 3rd class carriages, rough wooden affairs after 'the style of horse boxes', variously remarked that they 'would make good dog boxes', were 'like brake vans on a cattle train', and 'seem full of fleas'. One man remarked that it was like a 'toy train' and another that the 'carriages were small and stuffy with no room to get doing Highland Flings... We just sat down in them and remained seated as the carriages would probably have capsized if too many of us moved about in them at once'. They 'created a frightful noise when the train was in motion', without doubt exacerbated by the narrow gauge and the propensity of the drivers to push along at up to '30 miles (48 km) an hour' and 'blowing their shrill whistle... nearly all the time'. There were no toilets on the train and, when actually provided, men had to make do with 'empty open trucks with about one foot (30 cm) of dry sand in the bottom... in between the carriages'.⁵



Open goods trucks at Tel el Kebir C 1916 and Carriages at a stop Suez to Cairo April 1915
Troop trains in Egypt similar to those used on the Port Suez to Tel-el-Kebir line in 1916
AWM H12866 / NLA obj 146156914

It took about seven to eight hours for the journey between Port Suez and Tel el Kebir,⁶ and it is only to be hoped that Bob was able to experience the marginally more comfortable experience of being in a 3rd Class carriage. The line ran north alongside the Suez Canal, skirted the Great Bitter Lake and entered Ismalia, where it turned west towards Tel el Kebir, following the line of the Sweet Water Canal. For the first two or three hours, all that could be seen was sand, with occasional views of

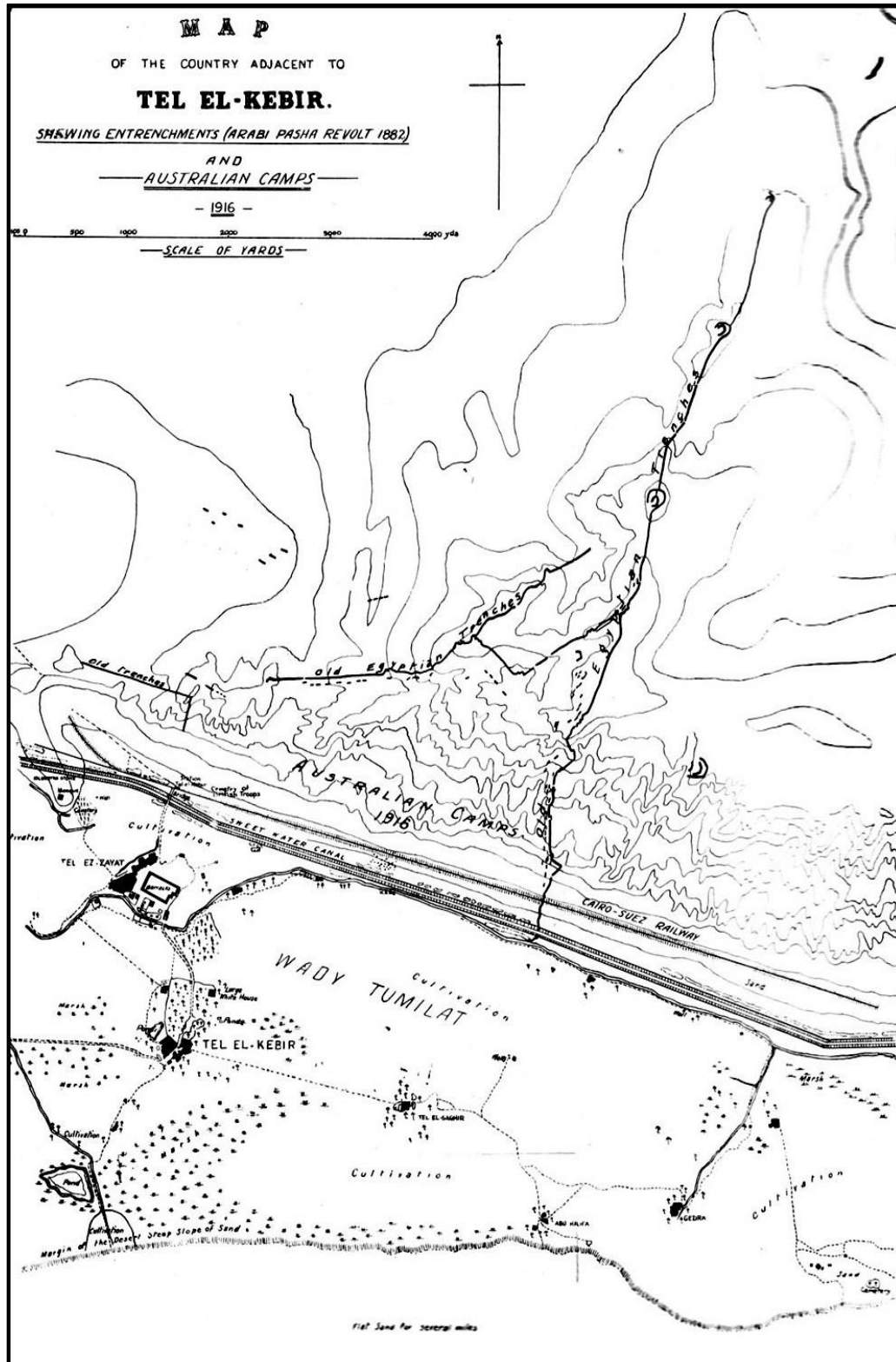
'large ships [in the Suez Canal] seemingly wending their way through the sand'. Once through Ismalia, the train passed through fertile country, irrigated by small canals with water wheels worked by camels or oxen, and dotted with 'native villages' consisting of 'square, ugly, low ...wretched mud hovels ...huddled one against the other in irregular masses'. Indian soldiers were a common sight, guarding the canal, railway stations and bridges – impressing Australians as 'fine big men... and well trained'. Quite a few of the train journeys from Suez were through the night, limiting the views available 'of the country and its people', save for the electric lights of Ismalia. Whenever the train stopped at a station or pulled up for water, the troops were 'besieged by hordes of half-starved...Egyptians, Arabs, and Soudanese, clamoring to sell their wares', including bad cigarettes, Turkish delight, chocolates, lollies, dates, oranges and hard-boiled eggs. Whenever the train slowed, an 'army of beggars' consisting of 'children of both sexes ran alongside as far as they could keep up, waving their hands and yelling "baksheesh" (baksheesh – alms)'. In these confrontations, the men on the train faced 'a Babel of tongues – a horse sale at Maitland was nothing to it'.⁷

Bob had arrived at Tel el Kebir Railway Station by Saturday, June 10, 1916, where he and the other men of the 16th Reinforcements were taken on strength of the 2nd Light Horse Training Regiment. This unit had been formed in March, 1916, to train incoming reinforcements for the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, and to allow the Brigade's wounded and sick to recover prior to returning to active service.⁸ The camp at Tel el Kebir was established following the withdrawal of Australian troops from Gallipoli to provide a strategic location to reorganise and refit, and to protect the Suez Canal. 'As far as the eye could see, was nothing but a wide spanse (*sic*) of desert, and as it was mostly solid ground it was an ideal training ground'. The new camp was also 70 miles (112 km) from Cairo by train, a fact not lost on the military authorities given past issues of indiscipline and disease when Australian troops were camped there in the shadow of the pyramids. By the time Bob arrived, the Australian Infantry Divisions had left for France, leaving Tel el Kebir to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Training Regiments, No. 2 Australian Stationary Hospital and a large prisoner of war camp.⁹

Bob was at Tel el Kebir for a little over a month during the hottest part of the Egyptian summer. For a young man who had spent his whole life in western NSW and Queensland, the Egyptian summer would not have come as much of a shock. Indeed, Trooper Edward Dowling, a shop assistant from Dubbo, who arrived at Tel el Kebir in the same month as Bob, wrote home that 'between the heat and the flies things are not too pleasant; but the heat is not so bad as I expected. It is similar to the Dubbo heat'. Private Francis (Frank) McCrickard from the much cooler climes of Beech Forest in Victoria, also arriving about the same time, complained of temperatures 'from 116 (46°C) to 126 (52°C) in the shade'. On Sunday, June 4, 1916, at Tel el Kebir, Private Henry Langtip wrote in his diary: 'Very hot worst dust storm I ever saw. Couldn't see more than 50 yards (45 m)'. He continues to mention the 'dust & heat' in his diary entries up until the last week in June when he finally wrote on Tuesday, June 27, 1916: 'Still hot but no dust'. Henry also comments that after the heat of the day, the nights were cold. Private Donald Munro wrote that after the 'awful' heat of the day, it was 'nice and cool at night', and that the 'only thing that troubles us is sand, mosquitoes and flies'. Corporal George Jones was less forgiving, describing Tel el Kebir as 'blazing hot from the day and freezing cold at night. It is a miserable sort of place'. Heat, sand, dust, dust storms, cold nights, mosquitoes and flies would have been nothing new to Bob.¹⁰

Tel el Kebir was a tent city. Bell tents, each accommodating eight men, sleeping 'feet to the centre like the spokes of a wheel', ranged in serried ranks for up to seven miles (11 km) beside the railway line. By the time Bob arrived, 'a real little township' had developed, with several canteens, both wet and dry, and numerous 'natives shops' including chemists, barbers, grocers, watchmakers, soft drink, silk and stationery stalls, and laundries. The YMCA had a piano and gramophone, and provided facilities where 'one may read the latest books or magazines, write, or sit and listen, and sometimes take part in the concerts that are often held there'. By May, 1916, there were 'two picture shows and a circus in the camp'. Food, though, was often the subject of complaint. Henry Langtip wrote at the end of June, 1916, that 'men squabble about their mess & there was a fight. There don't seem to be enough rations'. He even notes on a couple of occasions that meals were not 'issued' at all. Breakfast could be tea or coffee, 'burgoo', some 'mystery bags', bacon or sausages, but just as often 'hard biscuit and bully beef'. Frank McCrickard even suggested that next time a public building was to be erected in Colac, he would send 'one of our Army biscuits for a foundation stone'. Dinner could be roast meat or a 'nice stew' and tea 'rice, bread and jam, cheese, and tea

to drink'. Leave to Cairo was available but limited in duration and only for a few men at a time. Its value was further reduced by the six-hour train trip there and back, with picquets supervising each train to keep order. The men themselves knew however that 'if there were not some restrictions, Cairo would be over-run with the boys'.¹¹ There is no indication that Bob was granted any leave to Cairo while he was at Tel el Kebir.



Tel el Kebir 1916 - Collett, Herbert Brayley, p. 148

Two hundred yards (183 m) south of the railway line at Tel el Kebir was the fresh water of the Sweet Water Canal, and a little way beyond that, the village of Tel el Kebir. Although some men in their letters home mentioned that they were 'barred from going over the canal to the native villages',

there are several accounts of visits there, and even photographic evidence. We can be reasonably sure that Bob, like many others, regardless of any restrictions, would have had a good look around. While Private Ernest King may have regarded the village as 'a very dirty little place with a few dirty shops in it', Private George Weymouth was impressed with the 'small iron drawbridge' over the canal, and with the palm trees, orange groves, 'pa-paw trees' and 'beautiful roses' in the village. Donald Munro felt that the 'green vegetation along [the canal's] banks breaks the monotony of stretches of sand'. Letters from men at Tel el Kebir commented positively on the 'fine camel teams here', the boats and barges on the canal, and the 'many interesting methods' of irrigation practised, particularly 'waterwheels... driven by oxen power'.¹²

On the western fringe of the camp, and of more interest perhaps, were the well-preserved Egyptian trenches on the old battlefield of Tel el Kebir where Lieutenant General Sir Garnet Wolseley routed the army of Colonel Ahmed Arabi Bey, in a dawn attack on Wednesday, September 13, 1882. Men at the camp reported finding buttons, bullets, bayonets, Martini-Henry cartridge cases and broken weapons. Human bones, including whole skeletons, had been unearthed over time. Trooper Ion Idriess wrote:

yellowed skulls show up where the Khamseens have blown the sand away. The scurrying winds have uncovered odd bodies in an uncanny state of preservation, surely due to some chemical preservative in the sands. Several boys looked mustily young and sleeping. They gave me an uneasy impression that from some aloof world they were accusing me - and really I never knew they once existed. Our boys buried them deep.

Close to the Railway Station was 'the little cemetery...with its cypress trees, flowering shrubs, and date palms, casting their cool shadows over the silent tombs..., [of] some of those who dropped out of life's path in that campaign....many from Scotch regiments'. One writer also noted the sombre fact that 'this cemetery also contains the graves of some of our boys who died in camp'. No doubt Bob, like many men in the Tel el Kebir camp, was drawn to these sights from a battle fought a mere 34 years prior to their own involvement in the Great War.¹³

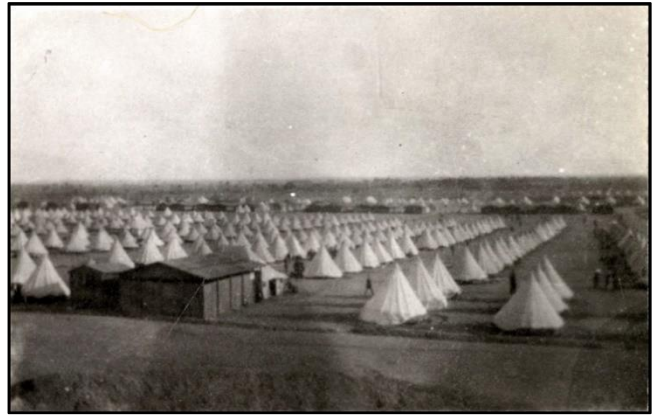
Camps in Egypt in 1916 held 'abundant reinforcements' for the Light Horse, so much so that by the time Bob arrived the Light Horse Regiments were at full strength.¹⁴ The training regime for Light Horse reinforcements at Tel el Kebir during Bob's time therefore appears to have been heavily influenced by the urgent need to provide infantry troops to defend the Suez Canal. By late June, three Light Horse Double Squadrons and the 1st Field Squadron Engineers had been formed from men in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Training Regiments. These Squadrons were dismounted units and were moved to the Canal in early July, 1916. Twenty-one men from the 16th Reinforcements were allotted to the 2nd Light Horse Double Squadron or 1st Field Squadron Engineers, but Bob was not among them. Parades, marching, rifle and bayonet exercises were certainly part of Bob's experience at Tel el Kebir, something not all that much different to his training at Dubbo or Menangle Park. Henry Langtip, despite finally getting horses a fortnight after his arrival, and the fact that there were horseback 'patrols' occurring, was worried that being sent to 'grenadier school' might mean a 'shift to the infantry'. He spent at least five days at this school, including 'throwing live bombs (*sic*)'. At least three men of the 16th Reinforcements also attended this school. Henry was right to be worried as by early July, he had been posted to the 1st Light Horse Double Squadron and sent to defend the Suez Canal. In contrast to his experience in Australia however, Bob certainly had access to a Rifle Range, albeit five miles (8 km) march away from the main camp. Henry Langtip spent two long, tiring and thirsty days on the range during his time at Tel el Kebir, and it is quite likely Bob experienced much the same. Men from the 16th Reinforcements were certainly at the range on Friday, July 7, 1916, when Private Edwin Frost, who was on the *Palermo* with Bob, was injured in the right eye when a faulty rifle bolt disintegrated. Henry Langtip complained that when he was issued with a rifle, 'they are old ones off Galipoli (*sic*), mine has had a bullet hole patched'. Hopefully, Bob had better luck with the rifle issued to him than did Edwin and Henry.¹⁵

Towards the end of June, 1916, it is easy to understand that Bob would have had enough of a training program little better than the basics which he had experienced in Australia, and which seemed to be focused on an infantry rather than a Light Horse future. At this critical time for Bob, a new opportunity presented itself. A decision had been taken in mid-June, 1916, to expand the current 10 Companies of the Imperial Camel Corps (ICC) by recruiting volunteers for an additional five Companies from the Australian and New Zealand Light Horse reinforcements at Tel el Kebir.

Men were to be 'attached' to the ICC, yet to all intents and purposes, were permanently transferred. Recruitment began in late June, and Bob was amongst those who volunteered. The new volunteers may have been 'keen and anxious to learn their new work', but found that at Tel el Kebir, there was only more 'musketry and foot drill' to prepare them for their future duties with the ICC. Fortunately, Bob did not have to endure this for too much longer. By Monday, July 10, 1916, he had been transferred from the 2nd Light Horse Training Regiment to No. 12 Company, ICC, and later that week boarded the train with the other men appointed to this Company for the three-hour journey to Cairo. At Cairo Railway Station, they took a local train to Palais de Koubeh Station, then marched two miles (3.2 km) to the ICC barracks at Abbassia, where on Saturday, July 15, 1916, they were formally taken on strength of No. 12 Company, commanded by Temporary Captain George Achilles Smith.¹⁶



Tel el Kebir Railway Station January 5, 1916
AWM C00093



Australian Army camp at Tel el Kebir C 1916
SLSA PRG 18/4/21/12



Tel el Kebir Camp village July 3, 1916
AWM P02321.046



Sweet Water Canal outside Tel el Kebir village C 1916
AWM H03523



View from the road to Tel el Kebir village C 1915-1916
AWM A02461



Tel el Kebir village market place and café February 1916
AWM C04134



Postcard of human remains near Gun Pits Tel el Kebir
(undated) - TAHO CRO14-1-37



Cemetery at Tel el Kebir (undated)
SLSA PRG 18/4/21/20



Bob McBride's Egypt

Chapter 8

Abbassia and the Camel Corps

What motivated Bob to join the Camel Corps will never be known for certain. One contemporary, somewhat cynical view, was that 'men had volunteered for various reasons – but the most general one was, that, they were tired of the pack and they wanted an animal to carry it'. As a Light Horseman, Bob should have been less inspired by this thought than the ex-Gallipoli infantrymen who volunteered for the initial camel companies in January, 1916. Yet, as we have seen, Bob's time since his enlistment had been spent mostly on foot rather than on horseback, and quite likely he would often have had a 'pack' on his back. Certainly, Bob would have talked with his tent mates and others in camp about this, and he was not alone in making the decision to join the Camel Corps. Seventeen other men from the 16th Reinforcements volunteered at the same time, including Troopers James Rogers, Edward Riley and Arthur MacKie who had all enlisted at Dubbo within days of Bob in early November, 1915, and had been appointed to the 7th Light Horse at Menangle Park with Bob on the same day in March, 1916.¹ What is quite certain however, is that Bob did not volunteer with any thoughts in his mind of camels as something new, foreign or exotic. Camels were part of his experience as a young boy growing up in Hungerford. Only a year after his birth, *The Brisbane Courier* reported that in the last week in August '300 camels with loading passed through the Hungerford district'. Bob's oldest sister, Lizzie, told her daughter Shirley that when the Afghan cameleers brought supplies to town, the women would rush out to get bags of flour and dried apples and other fruit and would go home to cook using these supplies 'still hot from the camel's back'. At Bourke, Bob had even greater opportunity to experience significant numbers of camels up close at the Bourke Carrying Company's base at the railway station. Even further east at Cobar, wool was often transported to the railway station by camel, particularly in times of drought, which was the case when Bob lived there. Of the 16th Reinforcements who joined the Camel Corps, only Bob and James Rodgers had been born in and were living in the far west of NSW at the time of enlistment. Based on their place of birth and occupation and address on enlistment, it is fairly unlikely most, if not all, of the others had even seen a camel prior to landing in Egypt.²

If Bob had delayed his enlistment for a month or so, he would have had the opportunity to train in Australia at Menangle Park Camp as a reinforcement for the Camel Corps. By mid-May, 1916, negotiations for 'a supply of tame camels to practice on' were in progress, and training commenced the following month after Abdul Wade, owner of the Bourke Carrying Company, lent six camels to the camp and paid for their transport by rail from Bourke. When camel training at Menangle Park was terminated in 1918, a grateful Government insisted that Abdul pay for railings his own camels back to Bourke.³

Cyrus, the King of Persia, was using camels in warfare from as early as 557 BCE, as did the Syrians around 190 BCE. The Romans also used camel troops in Egypt as late as 420 CE. In 1799, Napoleon formed a camel regiment during his Egyptian campaign, and the British Army used camel troops in the Afghan Wars (1839 and 1878-1880), in the Crimea (1854), in Abyssinia (1867) and in the Sudan (1884). Poor selection, cruelty and neglect characterised these early British efforts, with 70,000 camels dying in the second Afghan campaign and 500 from exhaustion in one day alone during the campaign in the Sudan. In 1885, 50 men from the NSW Sudan Contingent, anxious to escape the boredom of guard duties on the construction of the Suakin-to-Berber railway, volunteered for the Suakin Unit of the Camel Corps. They thus became the first Australians to serve in a camel unit, 31 years before Bob and other men from the AIF did so. By 1899, the British Army had 10 camel companies and by 1907 these had been organised into the British Camel Corps. Informed work by Captain Richard Dawson and Sergeant Major James Barber of No. 2 Company, taking into account past errors in practice, resulted in the establishment of a Camel Corps training school at Polygon Barracks, Abbassia in 1909, replacing the existing Mounted Infantry School there. Captain Dawson was appointed Commandant and Sergeant Major Barber Chief Instructor. Their efforts culminated in the publication of the *Camel Corps Training Manual* in 1913.⁴

On January 1, 1916, the ICC was established to respond to the threats from the pro-Turkish Senussi tribesmen threatening the Nile Valley from the Libyan Desert. Despite having the appearance of

mounted troops, the men in the Camel Corps were always considered by Army General Headquarters (GHQ) to be infantry, 'armed and trained as such, but possessing greater mobility'. The Camel Corps training school was abolished and the permanent staff there absorbed into the



Headquarters Staff ICC Abbassia 1916 (front row from left 3rd Robin Buxton, 4th Clement Smith, 5th James Barber) – IWM Q108534

new ICC Headquarters set up at Abbassia. Major Clement Leslie Smith was appointed Commandant and (the now) 2nd Lieutenant James Barber as Adjutant. Before the end of March, 1916, the first four Companies drawn from Australian troops returning from Gallipoli were trained and ready for deployment against the Senussi, and a further six Companies drawn from British Yeomanry and Territorial Infantry were in training. The five-month training course considered essential by the

former Camel Corps training school was reduced under the ICC to four weeks. It was noted however, that 'this would possibly have proved sufficient had the men been well trained as infantry soldiers before joining, but owing to lack of discipline and otherwise insufficient training, it was found that a longer period was necessary'.⁵ This then was the training regime that Bob faced once he arrived at Abbassia in mid-July, 1916.

The ICC Abbassia Barracks were old and primitive. Captain George Langley, Bob's future Commanding Officer in the 1st Battalion, ICC, complained that 'there was a variety of pests. Flies by day, mosquitoes by night, bugs at all times, black beetles, cockroaches and some enormous hornets'. Lieutenant Geoffrey Inchbald concurred, adding that 'local experts said a single sting from the hornets was probably fatal, and two certainly'. By the time Bob arrived, it was mid-summer, which Geoffrey Inchbald contended was:

the hottest summer in Egypt for over forty years, and we were to experience temperatures of anything up to 130° (54°C) in the shade, and that without any shade except perhaps when we were resting during the hottest part of the day, under cover of a ground sheet supported by four slender poles which were continually blowing down.

Despite the insects and weather, 2nd Lieutenant Rex Hall, who arrived at Abbassia three weeks after Bob, wrote in his diary that 'Abbassia Camel Corps Camp is splendidly organised - mess huts, shower baths & other conveniences. Leave is liberal'. Officers and Other Ranks alike were housed in barracks, the 'Huts of Abbassia', which, even if considered primitive, would have made a welcome change from the stifling tents at Tel el Kebir. However, unlike the camp at Tel el Kebir, Abbassia was close to Cairo – 'a city full of interest and vice'. The Cairo Tramway Company's workshops and sheds were only about 1,000 yards (1 km) south-west of the ICC Barracks, with a line running directly from there into the centre of Cairo about three miles (4.8 km) further west. Fares were cheap – 1 Piastre, about 2½ pence (\$1). The attractions of the foreign quarter and the Esbekiah Gardens were then less than 1,000 yards (1 km) further south. However, to get there, troops had to traverse the Wagh el Birka and Wasa'a red-light districts, collectively known as the Wazza to Australian troops, an area Bob clearly visited to his later cost.⁶

When Bob arrived at Abbassia, three of the six ICC companies formed from British Yeomanry and Territorial Infantry in April-May, 1916, were still in training, together with the Hong Kong and Singapore (HKS) Battery and No. 11 Company from Tel el Kebir, which had arrived the previous week. As the establishment of an ICC company at this time was 130 all ranks, and that of the HKS Battery 248, the men in training at Abbassia would have totalled about 760 men in mid-July. By August, two of the British Companies had left, but these had been replaced by Nos. 13, 14 and 15 Companies from Tel el Kebir. No. 11 Company was deployed mid-August. Company establishment was increased to 184 all ranks at the end of August, and throughout the month there was a steady stream of reinforcements being trained for the companies in the field. By the end of Bob's time at

Abbassia then, the number of men in training had grown to about 1,100.⁷

The establishment for each Company by the end of August, 1916, was six officers, 32 Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), eight Signallers, six Batmen and 132 Privates. Each company was commanded by a Captain and was organised into four sections plus a Machine Gun section with three Lewis guns. Company Headquarters included a Company Sergeant Major, a Company Quartermaster Sergeant and an attached Veterinary Corps Sergeant. Each section was led by a Lieutenant or 2nd Lieutenant supported by a Section Sergeant and either a second Sergeant or a Corporal, and was divided into eight groups of four men. The Machine Gun Section was led by a Lieutenant, who was also Second in Command, and had 14 other ranks in total including a section Sergeant and Corporal. Camels outnumbered men, with 201 riding camels and 14 baggage camels allotted to each Company. The officers' batmen were responsible when the Company was mobile for leading the baggage camels. The No. 3 man in each group was designated as the camel holder when the group dismounted for action, although in practice it was found that camels showed 'admirable fortitude and patience, even indifference, under fire' and one man could look after a dozen or more camels once they were *barraked* (made to kneel down).⁸



An ICC company at Abbassia (No. 14) 1916 - AWM P02386.001

The Abbassia base in the time Bob was there was still commanded by Clement Leslie Smith, now a Lieutenant-Colonel, from the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and Egyptian Army, supported by his Second in Command Major Robert Vere (Robin) Buxton from the West Kent Yeomanry and his Adjutant, the previous British Camel Corps instructor James Barber, now a Captain, originally from the Warwickshire Regiment. All the base NCOs had had previous experience in the Sudan with the former British Camel Corps. The inevitable clash of cultures between these regular British Army officers and their Australian and New Zealand Camel Corps trainees, while most marked during the training of the first four Companies in early 1916, was still a feature of the experience of the Light Horse Tel el Kebir recruits four months later. Rex Hall describes Captain Barber as a 'typical sergeant-major type, with waxed moustache and a very very red face'. He recalls one incident when he was having trouble keeping his camel the required distance from the one in front that Captain Barber bellowed: 'Hall, I said three camel lengths, not three bloody sea-serpents'. The Australian troops in the first training contingent had rejected the withdrawal of slouch hats and the issue of pith helmets by kicking out the crowns of the new headgear and scattering 'scores of damaged helmets...over the sands of Abbassia', and then parading bareheaded. The slouch hats were returned, but even during Bob's time, Captain Barber had not given up, issuing an order on August 26, 1916, that: 'All ranks are hereby warned that Helmets must be worn on all occasions between Reveille and Retreat. Failure to comply with this order will be severely dealt with'. By October 17, 1916, however, he was reduced to defining 'Drill Order' as including 'helmets or slouched hats'. Saluting however, remained a constant source of friction. Second Lieutenant John (Jock) Davidson, with No. 12 Company at Abbassia at the same time as Bob, recalled that:

Saluting was considered a most important part of the training. Seems the heads had come to the conclusion that what lead and metal couldn't do perhaps saluting could and began a most energetic saluting campaign. Lectures on that subject were frequent and tiresome.

Jock and some other Australian officers did their best to be seen but not actually conduct these lectures. Captain Barber's ongoing exasperation with both officers and men was revealed in his order issued on September 6, 1916: 'The attention of all ranks is again drawn to the existing slackness in Saluting. This slackness must at once cease, and Officers will bring to Notice any Warrant Officer, N.C.O. or man failing to comply with the Regulations'.⁹

The Australian Companies of the Camel Corps had gained a reputation by mid-1916 of being

populated by 'undesirables...no hoppers and troublemakers'; a reputation underscored by reported instances of disorderly conduct at Abbassia and in Cairo. Both George Langley and Private Frank Reid of No. 3 Company however rejected this characterisation of Australians in the Camel Corps, noting that 'this may be true of a small section of the men, but not of the majority'. While admitting that there were some 'reckless characters' and 'hard-doers' among the men, they both based their rejection of this poor reputation primarily on 'what excellent fighters these troops were'. Regardless of this, without doubt, as with any military unit, there were some 'undesirables'. Major Buxton wrote to the Commandant at Tel el Kebir on June 26, 1916, listing 15 men, including 11 Gallipoli veterans, he classed as 'undesirable' and noting the suggestion of the Commanding Officer of West Force that they be 'sent back to Australia'. An insight into their behaviour is revealed in Buxton's contention that 'their object apparently is to misbehave themselves in such a way as to get removed from the Corps and thus be sent to France'. If that was their intention, they were successful. All 15 ended up in France, where three were killed in action, six were wounded and one returned sick to Australia for discharge. Six continued to accumulate regular entries on their crime sheets, but five others had no further crimes recorded, and two had no crimes recorded, including while they were with the ICC. It is noticeable that six of these men had histories of sickness and hospitalization while with the ICC. The ICC definition of 'undesirable' thus seemed to be somewhat elastic. Within Bob's own No. 12 Company, the company Field Returns show that over the eight weeks he was at Abbassia, only 14 men were listed for punishments, nine of which were for being Away Without Leave (AWOL). Ignoring the likelihood that some were repeat offenders, this is a 'crime' rate of less than two a week on average, hardly an indicator of significant numbers of 'troublemakers' in Bob's Company.¹⁰

The training regime at Abbassia was rigorous. The standard ICC four-week training program was scheduled as follows:

Week 1: Riding School. Instruction in Saddlery and Stable Management

Week 2: Section and Company Drill

Week 3: Tactical Exercises and Practice Marches

Week 4 and any further period before taking the field: Tactical Schemes, Marches and Night Camps

No. 11 Company completed this program in six weeks, but Bob's Company, like most others, took much longer, in their case, nine weeks. The daily routine began with reveille at 5.00 am during the week and at 6.30 am on Saturday and Sunday. Parade followed, usually in 'Drill Order' which meant being dressed in khaki coats, shorts, puttees, helmets or slouched hats and, depending on the training planned for the day, bandoliers, belts and side arms and carrying rifles. Feeding and grooming of camels and maintenance of their saddlery then followed for at least an hour. Breakfast for the men was at 8.15 am during the week, and at 7.00 am on Saturday and Sunday. For those not on duty, a parade was held each Sunday at 8.50 am and the men marched to the Remount Depot Park for 'divine service' at 9.00 am. Training ended each day with a further feed for the camels at 5.00 pm. Each day would also almost certainly include at least one form of inspection, be it of camels, rifles, kit and equipment, mess huts or company huts. Even after the men's evening meal, inspections did not end as it was customary to call the roll in each hut at 9.30 pm. Captain Oliver Hogue describes that even after 'lights out', 'the wild wind off the Makattam Hills wafted us the aroma of camel', adding to the men's apprehension of the next day's training.¹¹

While Lieutenant-Colonel Nowell Barnard De Lancey Forth of the Manchester Regiment, future Commanding Officer of Bob's 3rd Battalion ICC in 1917, considered that 'it did not take men from mounted regiments long to acquire the necessary knowledge...to ride a camel', it was still no easy task for the Light Horse recruits to make the transition. Riding instruction was usually given by sections in an enclosed arena. The men first had to learn how to *barrak* their camels – the procedure set out in the Training Manual being: 'On the command "Barrak", take a pace forward and turn right-about facing the camel. Seize the head chain with the left hand close to the camel's jaw and jerk the chain downwards, at the same time making the sound Krr.....r'. Trooper John Robertson, later training with the New Zealand No. 16 Company, suggested that this process was also frequently accompanied with 'other remarks not very complimentary to the animal's parents'. Frank Reid noted that the 'unearthly guttural noises ...on the part of the riders' was equally matched by the camel's 'grunts and deep throated noises' in remonstrance. Once men could successfully *barrak* their camels, they had to learn how to fit the wooden saddle to the camel and attach the apron to the camel's neck to prevent friction by the rider's boots, the sheepskin furwah (robe), water tank

(fantasie), dhurra (camel food) bag, clothing, food and ammunition bags, greatcoat and blankets. As saddle injuries were the most frequent cause of trouble with camels in the field, men were exhorted to make sure the camel's back was free of sand and stones, and that sufficient padding was provided to accommodate the shape of the hump and back, which varied from one camel to another.¹²

Bob and his fellow recruits were then instructed how to tie and untie a *barraked* camel, and how to carry out dismounted drill with or without rifles – ‘Stand to Your Camels, Attention, Stand at Ease, Stand Easy’. This was followed by what George Langley described as the ‘very difficult and intricate task’ of mounting and dismounting a camel with or without rifles and dismounting without *barraking*. On the command ‘Mount’, the rider would take hold of the kneeling camel by the nose and turn its head towards him, place one foot on the camel's neck and lift himself into saddle. The diagrams in the Training Manual made it look straightforward, but as Jock Davidson of No. 12 Company described, it was far more difficult than it looked:

When ordered to mount, even by numbers, men had a holy terror to take a short hold and to be ordered to twist his head round behind the back as the first motion to mount, well, that needed nerve. Then, when mounted...men would forget his mount gets up hindquarters first and would make a header over the camel's head...Yet, within a couple of weeks, men were as much at home on camels as on a horse.



Instructions for mounting a camel
IWM Camel Corps Training Manual p. 20

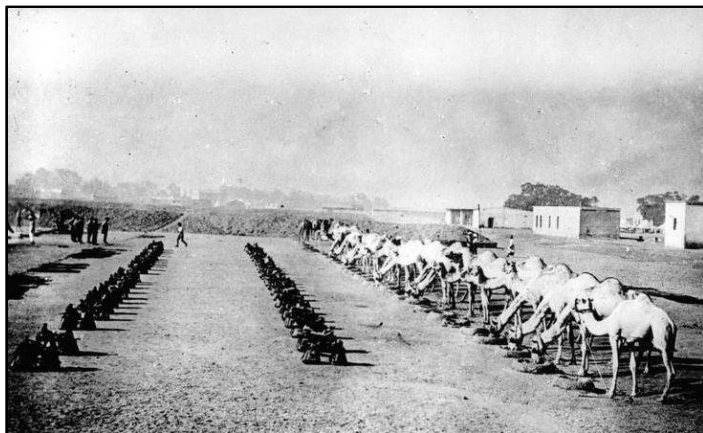
Geoffrey Inchbald noted that ‘on every single occasion every single camel roared in protest while this [mounting] was going on’. Camels would also sometimes buck, but George Langley observed that the rider would win if he kept his nerve and his seat. Once men had mastered the skills of mounting a camel, they were instructed in how to sit on the camel to avoid back pain for the rider, and how to guide the camel using the rider's feet and camel's head rope – moving forward, trot from the walk, turn left or right and stop. Men were warned against any inclination they may have to use the whip on a sluggish camel, as ‘frequent severe flogging often causes a camel to become sulky and to refuse to do anything’. Of course, at Abbassia, these riding lessons were incomplete without taking Bob and the others through the half-page in the Training Manual devoted to saluting, both when dismounted and mounted, with rifles and without.¹³

Camels for the ICC were purchased mainly from the Sudan and Upper Egypt as these were considered capable of great endurance despite their light build. Male camels were preferred, as it was felt they were stronger and better able to carry the weight of an ICC trooper in full marching order. They were also cheaper. Camels had to be at least six years old to ensure their incisor teeth were fully developed and capable of grazing on thorny scrub when on active service. New recruits to the ICC were quickly divested of any myths they may have had about camels, such as that they ‘are specially provided by nature with an interior storage for water’ (they are not), that they can go ‘an indefinite time without water’ (they can go for five days, but only when trained to do so), and that they can carry ‘unlimited weight’. The standard ICC marching order load for a camel was 382 pounds (174 kg) including the rider and five days rations, but if the camel considered itself too heavily laden, it would refuse to get up. Most importantly for these Light Horsemen, they learned that, unlike a horse, a camel does not outwardly show that it is suffering, be it from hunger, thirst, disease or ‘being pushed beyond its powers of endurance’, and that the first indication the rider may have of this is that the



ICC Troopers about to mount 1918 - AWM B00195

camel 'drops dead in his tracks'. All recruits including Bob were instructed on the correct feeding and watering of camels, treatment of minor ailments, camp and stable management and grooming. The necessity for keeping picketing lines clean by removing dung and frequent changes of location was stressed, as was the importance of ensuring the health of the camel by keeping its skin clean. Each morning at Abbassia, camels were tethered in a hollow square facing inwards. Men were



Line of newly washed camels Abbassia 1918 – IWM Q105543

instructed in the use of body brushes to remove dirt and sweat from under the hair, sponges to clean nostrils, eyes, lips and to remove dirt and urine from the rear legs, and fibrous rope wisps for massaging the back and polishing the coat. This was followed by the laborious process of removing ticks, which were bigger than sheep ticks, and usually attached themselves under the camel's tail, where, once gorged, they would look like a bunch of grapes. Once extracted, the ticks were dropped into small straw fires made around the square, whereupon 'they used to explode like popcorn'.¹⁴

Camels had a reputation as wild and savage by nature but Geoffrey Ingham contended that they could be the 'most gentle and amenable of creatures'. He admitted though, that beneath the surface they maintained a degree of obstinacy and bad temper. Male camels were at their most dangerous during the winter months of their rutting or 'syning' season. George Langley, Oliver Hogue, Frank Reid and Jock Davidson all had their stories of 'mangoon' (berserk) camels injuring or killing men. George wrote that at such times, the camel would foam at the mouth, stretch his neck and bare his teeth. When attacking a man, he used his teeth first then attempted to crush his victim by kneeling on him and pounding with its knees. However, the most common type of injury was being bitten or kicked. George observed that when a camel bit a man, 'once they get a grip they hold on like a bulldog and their teeth are very nasty'. Even though bites could be, as he says, 'nasty', he only quotes one case where a man was so badly bitten that he had to be sent back to Australia. In most cases, no permanent injury was inflicted unless a tendon was severed. Bites were rare after the first month as men learned to trust their mounts. Geoffrey Ingham noted that unlike horses or mules, the camel kicked sideways, which could come as a surprise to the uninitiated. Oliver Hogue wryly noted, most probably from experience, that the camel's padded foot was much harder than it looked. There is no evidence Bob was ever bitten or kicked, but some of his fellow troopers in the 16th Reinforcements were not so lucky. Henry Graham was bitten on the leg on Friday, August 18, 1916, necessitating a 12-day stay in hospital. Joseph Howe sustained an injury to his chest the previous day, putting him in hospital for 10 days, although whether this was directly caused by a camel is not clear. Albert Allan, was kicked in the shin on Friday, September 8, 1916, and was not able to rejoin No. 12 Company from hospital for two months.¹⁵

Specialist training was provided to two teams from each company as Lewis Gunners and Signallers, but Bob was not selected for these courses. He did however have access to a well-established rifle range, immediately to the south-east of the Polygon Barracks for 'musketry practice'. A full day was spent there by No. 12 Company on Friday, August 25, 1916, prior to commencing 'Scheme and Practice Marches' and 'Attack Practices' in earnest. 'Scheme and Practice Marches' were usually held on the sandy stretch of country south of the Barracks leading up to the Mokattam Hills. Initial efforts at marching order tended to result in 'stragglers dotting the sand as far as the eye could see' as men stopped to adjust their camel's load. By the time these stragglers had caught up, the section or company was moving on again after a halt. Men soon learned to spend the extra time necessary when saddling up and arranging the camel's load before moving off. Once effective marching order had been achieved, training entered a more critical phase as it focused on sections and companies manoeuvring without verbal commands 'with rapidity and smoothness [and] complete absence of noise and confusion'. A heavy emphasis was placed on learning how to keep regulation distances between units and between individual troopers during specific manoeuvres. Distances were

specified in 'camel lengths' – 10 feet (3 m). Skills that Bob had to learn as a trooper in both section and company formations were:

Words of command and the 16 equivalent hand signals

In Sections

Forming a line, column of groups, column of files and column of single files

Forming up and telling off, dressing, wheeling, inclining

Increasing and diminishing the front

Forming a section to a flank and to the rear

Extending and closing by files or groups

In Companies

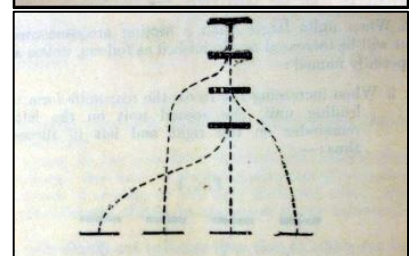
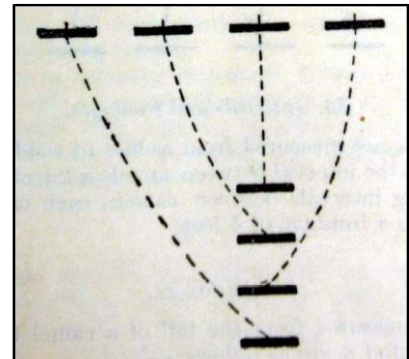
Forming a line, Company column, Company close column, column of groups, files, and single files

Changing Company direction and formation

Extending and closing the Company

Coming into Action

Forming a Square



Instructions for increasing and diminishing the front - IWM Camel Corps Training Manual pp. 31-32

On Monday, August 28, 1916, No. 12 Company left Abbassia at 4.45 pm in full marching order and carrying rations for an extended 'Scheme and Practice' march, not returning until Wednesday morning after spending two nights in the field. Immediately upon returning from this exercise, the company was sent out again for 'Attack Practice'. Perhaps Bob experienced something similar to Oliver Hogue's 'realistic sham-fights on the Virgins' Breasts', a set low hills in the desert beyond Abbassia. The following Monday, September 4, 1916, the Company again left Abbassia for an overnight 'Scheme and Practice' march.¹⁶ Clearly, the period of intensive training for Bob and the men of No. 12 Company was reaching its peak.

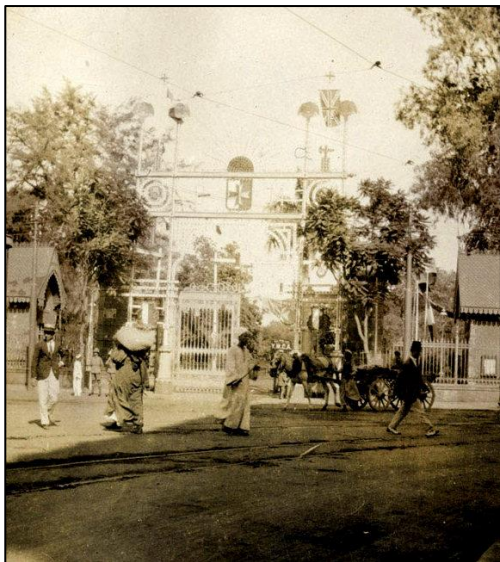


The Virgins' Breasts Abbassia - Luscombe, Stephen, '7th Hussars', *The British Empire* [URL]

Despite the intensive training regime, there was time for relaxation. In Cairo, there was plenty to see, both in terms of 'antiquities' and 'iniquities'. Even within a few miles north and south of the ICC Barracks were such sights as the ruins of Heliopolis, the Koubeh Palace, the Citadel, and the tombs of the Caliphs and of the Mamelukes. In the adjacent suburban area of Abbassia were markets and eating places, but of greater interest further west in central Cairo were many Christian and Coptic Churches and Moslem Mosques, the Opera House, the Egyptian Museum, and the imposing structures of the Grand Continental, Shepheard's and Ghezireh Palace Hotels. Across the Nile River, the Cairo Zoo, and even further afield, the Pyramids and the Sphinx, were all easily accessible from Abbassia by tram or train.¹⁷

It is not known how many of these sights Bob saw, but like most Australian troops on leave in Cairo, he would almost certainly have ended up at some point in the Esbekiah Gardens, where, 'since the early days of the war, night after night, thousands of khaki-clad warriors...congregated'. With its 'lovely lawns and trees' it would have been a welcome escape from the sands of Abbassia. Here, the YMCA ran a 'Soldiers' Recreation Club', with the motto 'Something doing every night'. The regular weekly program of events included concerts, plays, lectures, cinema, roller skating, foot races, boxing, wrestling and fencing matches, hockey tournaments, and of course on Sundays, church services, bible classes and choir singing. There were a swimming pool, billiards room, hot and cold shower baths and writing and reading facilities. The canteen was staffed by English and

New Zealand women volunteers, lending a 'home touch' to the Gardens. Perhaps the best feature of this canteen was that it provided inexpensive meals 'pleasantly different from those the Army provided'. This would have been particularly important to men like Bob, who, as 'Other Ranks' were barred from almost all the best restaurants and hotels in Cairo, with the exception of St. James's Grill Room — known to the men as 'Jimmy's' — just to the south-west of the Esbekiah Gardens in el Maghrabi Street. Like many of his compatriots, Bob would have also explored the poorer quarters of Cairo, and in particular, the infamous 'Wazza'. Corporal Frank Hanley described these areas as 'well nigh impregnable owing to the stench' with narrow alleyways 'about 8 to 9 feet (about 2.5 metres) wide'. Corporal William Patterson added that in these 'filthy streets...the whole life of the people...is spent in practicing deceit and robbery'. In 1916, these 'narrow, ill-lighted lanes' had



Esbekiah Gardens 1916
NAMUK 2002-05-1-78



YMCA Canteen at Esbekiah Gardens C 1915-1917
ANZ AD1 969 49/200

Y. M. C. A.
Programme of week's Events
at the
Soldiers' Recreation Club
Esbekia Gardens

MONDAY Cinema and skating for beginners
TUESDAY Grand skating concert. Music kindly supplied by 2/8 Middlesex Band under Bandmaster Kenyon.
WEDNESDAY Boxing and wrestling. Teams from Royal Bucks Hussars and 2/7 Middlesex will be present.
THURSDAY Grand concert to be preceded by skating events. Obstacle Race. Musical Chairs. Entrance fee 1 p.t. Trophies to be given. Entries to be handed to the Secretary not later than 6 p.m. Thursday.
FRIDAY Five-a-side hockey tournament. All entries to be in by 6 p.m. Friday. Play commences 7 p.m.
SATURDAY Members of the Egyptian Fencing Club have kindly promised to give an exhibition on this night at 6.45. This will be a unique opportunity for soldiers to see some really first class fencing. At 7.45 the usual Saturday night concert will be held.
GENERAL SPENS HAS KINDLY CONSENTED TO BE PRESENT
SUNDAY A Bible Class will be commenced at 3.30 if sufficient inducement offers. At 7.30 an attractive service will be held. Biblical and scenic pictures. Choir and solo singing and short address by Mr. W. Bradley, a resident of Egypt for 17 years.

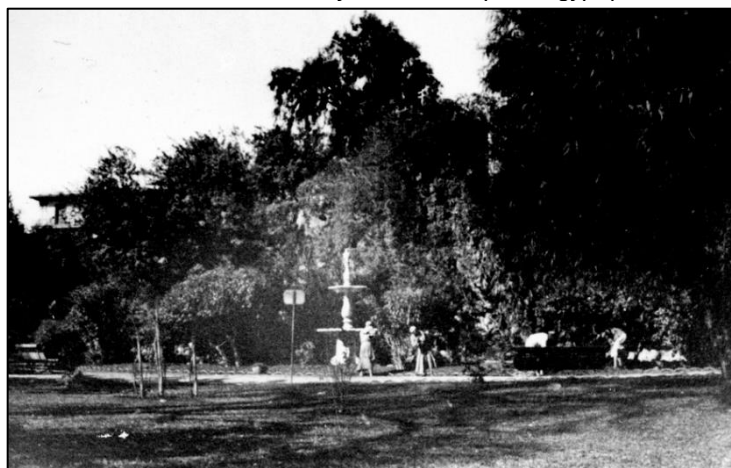
Free To All Soldiers

IMPORTANT
Watch for particulars of a Junior Marathon race to be run on Saturday Oct. 9. Get into training now.
Valuable Prizes to be Given

YMCA Leaflet - YMCA Soldier's Recreation Club, Esbekiah Gardens – AM 1995x2.262



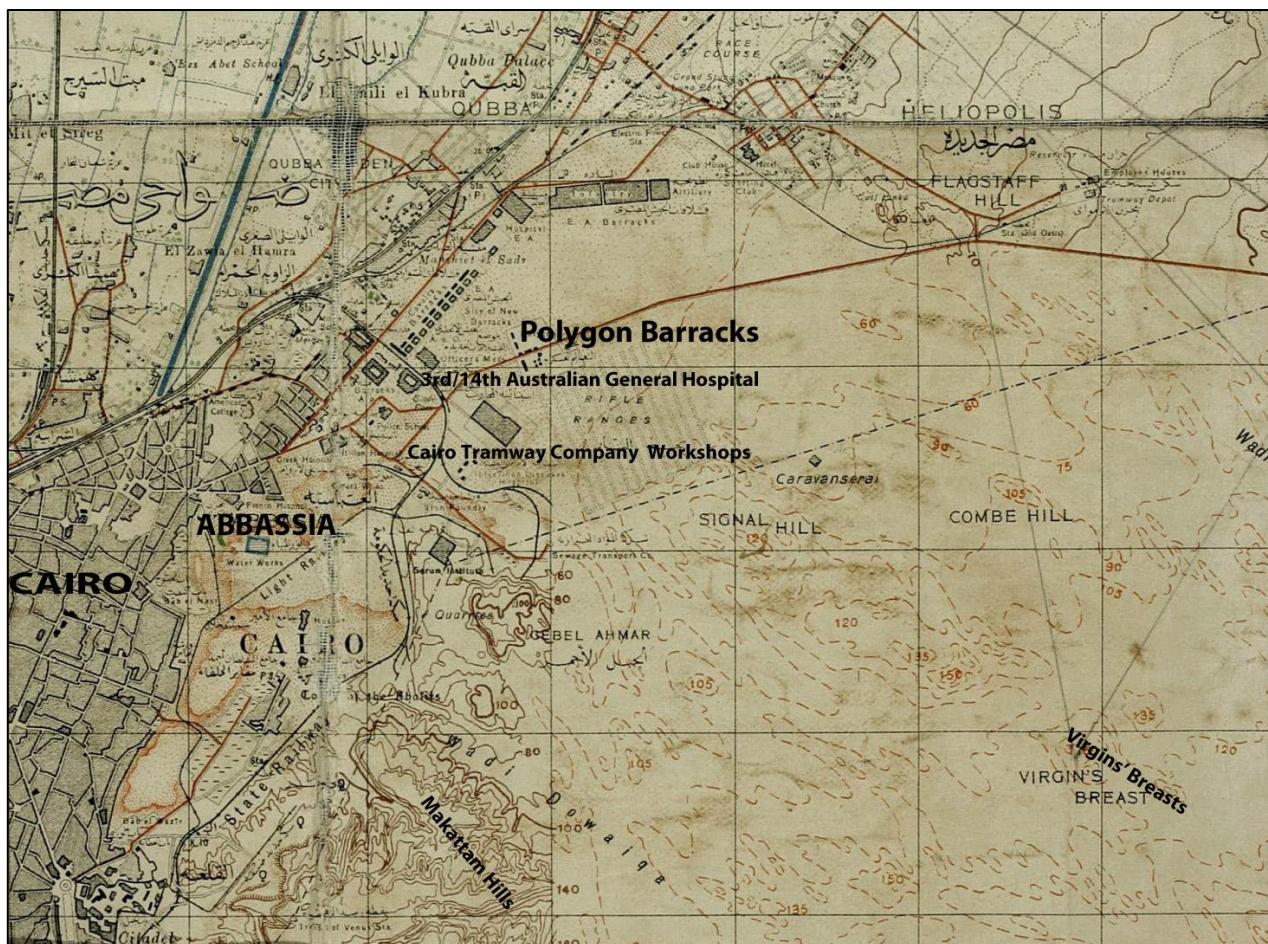
Soldiers' Club Esbekiah Gardens - Barrett, James W. & Deane, P.E., *The Australian Army Medical Corps in Egypt* p. 133



Esbekiah Gardens 1915 - SLSA B 54907/130

many cafes and bars selling poor quality alcohol at inflated prices, as well as 'innumerable' unlicensed, but officially tolerated, brothels, alongside the 'one-room shacks' where many non-European prostitutes plied their trade.¹⁸

On Saturday, September 9, 1916, nine days before No. 12 Company completed their training and were sent to the Suez Canal to join the 1st Battalion, ICC, Bob reported sick. The ICC Medical Officer Captain Henry Speldewinde de Boer's diagnosis was venereal disease, and Bob was admitted to the Dermatological Section of the 3rd Australian General Hospital at Abbassia. He was not alone. Since arriving in mid-July, 1916, five men from No. 12 Company had been hospitalised with venereal disease, including, just 11 days previously, Edward Riley, who had been with Bob at Dubbo, Menangle Park and with the 16th Reinforcements on the *Palermo*.¹⁹



Imperial Camel Corps Headquarters at Abbassia 1916
Auckland Libraries Sir George Grey Special Collections NZ Map 8064
Additional annotations by Author



Central Cairo and 'The Wazza' 1916

LC, Geography and Map Division, Egypt - Maşlahat Al-Misāḥah, *General Map of Cairo*. [1920], G8304.C2 1920.E4
 Insert: Middle East Institute, 'Historical Discursus for April 2, 2011 'The First Battle of the Wasa'a', *Editor's Blog* [URL]

Additional annotations by Author

Chapter 9 Thirty-Nine Lost Days

When Bob entered the Dermatological Section, he joined about 65 other venereal disease cases there, all from the Australian Mounted Division and the ICC. In early September, 1916, the Dermatological Section was a self-contained unit administered by, but located separately from, the 3rd Australian General Hospital. Its exact location is not clear. The 14th Australian General Hospital War Diary later locates it 'on the Heliopolis Road', and Captain Reginald Bowman, in charge of the Section from mid-September, 1916, wrote that it was located at 'Preston Barracks, Heliopolis'.



Heliopolis and Abbassia Barracks 1916
Auckland Libraries Sir George Grey Special
Collections NZ Map 8064

Preston Barracks is not marked on any contemporary map, and most other sources locate the Section in 'Abbassia'. The closest barracks to Heliopolis marked on contemporary maps is the Artillery Barracks at Abbassia, less than 1,000 yards (1 km) to the south-west on the Heliopolis Road, and the most northerly of the barracks in the Abbassia complex. The Artillery Barracks had been an annex for 'the treatment of different classes of cases' at the 1st Australian General Hospital, based in the Palace Hotel at Heliopolis until March, 1916. Preston Barracks was a long-established base in Brighton, England, for artillery and cavalry units, so it is possible the name was used unofficially for the artillery barracks in Abbassia by British artillery units based there over the years. In the absence of any other explanation, it is reasonable to assume Bob ended up being treated in the Artillery Barracks, about a mile and a quarter (2 km) north-east of the Camel Corp's Polygon Barracks.¹

Before entering hospital, Bob was required to hand in to the ICC store all equipment that was issued to him for active service in the field, including rifle and bayonet, bandolier, waist belt, mess tin, water bottle, blankets and groundsheet. In addition, the 'mountains of equipment' issued to him for use with camels was retained by his company. He was allowed to take only 'clothing actually in wear (including great coat), all necessaries (including drinking mug and enamelled plate)', and his 'haversack and ration bag'. An inventory of all articles he held was completed and all except personal items for use in the ward, such as boots, hat (or helmet), brushes, comb and razor, were stored by the hospital until his discharge. A khaki drill suit was issued as the 'hospital uniform'. The Australian Red Cross Society provided additional clothing to Bob, including 'pyjamas, shirts, drawers, socks and towels'.²

Prostitution had been legal in Egypt since 1882. In 1905, Egyptian authorities enacted regulations setting out minimum standards for brothels, a minimum age for prostitutes (18 years) and requiring prostitutes to have weekly health checks. It was easy to flout these regulations and there was a thriving trade in black market health certificates. Furthermore, the Egyptian authorities had no control over European women, although by the end on 1915, they too were subject to similar regulations. Reverend Guy Thornton, a chaplain with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, visited the slums north of the Esbekiah Gardens in 1915, and described seeing hordes of men in 'sodden stupefied condition' in the drink shops, 'ready victims of touts' for the 'innumerable low brothels of the most filthy and repulsive character situated in narrow, ill-lighted lanes running off the main street'. Many Egyptian, Nubian and Sudanese women worked as prostitutes in the area in the most abject conditions, together with almost as many Europeans in 'unlicensed but officially tolerated brothels,



Clot Bey Street Cairo C 1914-1916
Museums Victoria HT 32631

The tolerated European brothels centred around this street merged through narrow alleyways running off it into the unregulated Wasa'a native prostitution area. The whole area was known to Australians as the Wazza.

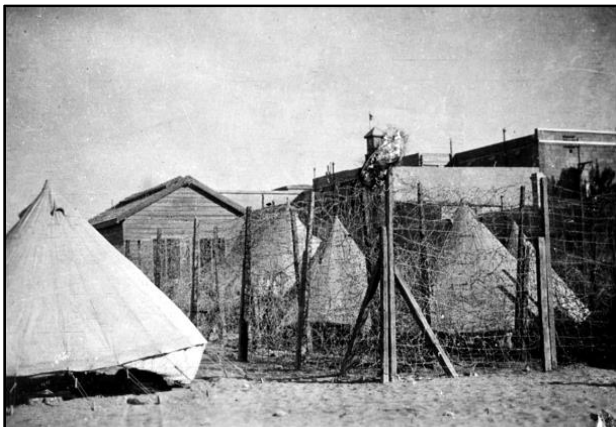
cafes or bars all of which sold alcohol'. Sapper Harry Bonser of the Royal Engineers described some of these places 'where girls sat on chairs outside a door, waiting for hire. One of their tricks was to snatch a soldier's hat and run into their room with it, in the hope that he would follow'.³ What was much more common, however, was less playful — the link with alcohol and the loss of inhibitions that often accompany it. Lance Corporal Eric Ray Pullen of the 20th Battalion gave a vivid account of this when he wrote home in early 1916:

In regard to the venereal disease...it is not altogether their fault in a way, for they are not in their right senses when they are ruined for life. Drink is the start of it all. The chaps go to a bar, call for a drink [and] in a few minutes they are like lunatics. Then a nigger, who lives on the game, will get them to follow him to a place called a 'wassie' and, before the poor devils know where they are, their money is gone and they are ruined for life. It's a crying shame to see all the fine-looking fellows who have been caught this way, so if you know anybody coming tell them not to touch drink and to shun all the Egyptian 'bludgers'.⁴

While this description of the almost immediate effect of alcohol might seem an exaggeration, AIF troops in Egypt were officially warned that 'native alcoholic...beverages are nearly always adulterated...often composed of pure alcohol and other ingredients, including urine...a very small amount is sufficient to make a man absolutely irresponsible for his actions'.⁵

Bob's service record does not contain any detailed medical records relating to his hospitalisation for venereal disease. Given the length of his treatment, and the notation 'VD' on his record, he most likely contracted gonorrhoea, which has an incubation period that can stretch from one to 10 days, or even up to 30 days, depending on the individual. Edward Riley's service record states that he contracted venereal disease '10 days ago' from the date of his admission, at 'Cairo', from a 'Europ' (European). This puts the time of his infection as mid-August, 1916. If Bob was infected at around the same time, his incubation period would have been about 21 days, which is not inconceivable. Whether or not Bob and Edward were mates 'playing up' while on leave together is not known. What is known for certain is that Bob was in the company of a number of men experienced in using prostitutes right from his earliest days at Dubbo Camp through to his time with the No. 12 Company at Abbassia. Given the lack of knowledge of who Bob's friends were, what his personal proclivities were, and even if he drank, the precise circumstances in Cairo that led to his infection will forever remain a mystery.⁶

While he certainly would not have felt so at the time, Bob was fortunate that he contracted venereal disease in the latter half of 1916 and not in the previous year. From the arrival of the AIF in Egypt in December, 1914, the problem of venereal disease presented itself, with '800 to 1000 men...suffering from venereal disease at any one time'. The AIF's first response was to criminalise men with venereal disease, even though the only crime under Section II of the *Army Act* involved concealment of the disease. By February, 1915, the Australian Government had included a special military order in the *Australian Finance and Allowance Regulations* stating that 'no pay will be issued



'Cage' at Heliopolis C 1916 – AWM P02148.012

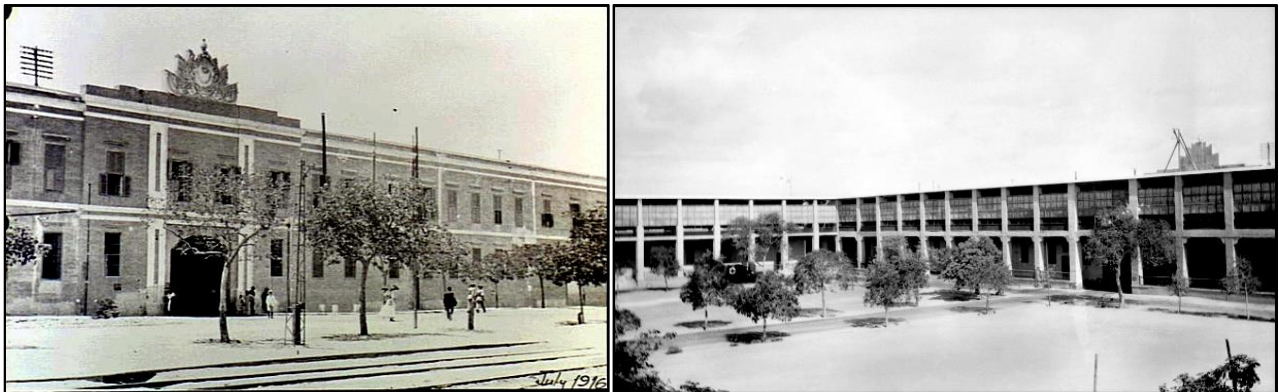
There is no clear evidence this particular 'cage' was used to house venereal disease patients, but it is typical of the conditions in which they were held in 1915

while abroad for any period of absence from duty on account of venereal disease'. In April, 1915, 'the dregs from the venereal outbreak' were relocated to tents at the Detention Barrack Isolation Hospital at Abbassia, where they were under guard, and had minimal hospital staff, with 'most duties and treatment carried out by the patients themselves'. The next move was to begin sending men with venereal disease back to Australia. While this decision was no doubt influenced by 'moral' considerations, it was primarily based on the need to clear hospitals in Egypt to make way for Gallipoli casualties. By 1916, 1,344 men had been returned to Australia, and a further 450 sent to Malta, effectively the loss of two battalions with little gain, as most of the men returned to Australia were cured by the time they

got there. Lieutenant Colonel James Barrett estimated that this decision cost the Australian Government more than £500,000 (\$52.4 million). After the evacuation of Gallipoli, the first five months of 1916 saw a spike in infection rates in the AIF in Egypt, with 'no fewer than 10,000 cases'

occurring in this period. Sending men home 'in disgrace' was no longer an option, either militarily or financially. The AIF prevention strategy until this time had almost exclusively been the same as that of the Australasian White Cross League — counselling self-control, chastity and abstinence from alcohol. To this the AIF added support for the provision of ethical 'clean and wholesome activities', such as the Soldiers' Club in Esbekiah Gardens. What ensured that this medical debacle continued for the rest of the war was an accompanying policy of refusing to issue prophylactics, through fear of being seen by the Australian public to 'tacitly give their approval of illicit intercourse by providing the means to carry it out with a guarantee of immunity from physical consequences'. This strategy was clearly not working. Lieutenant Colonel Barrett contends that most AIF medical officers in Egypt by early 1916 had reached the conclusion that 'nothing but education and educated prophylaxis will ever enable us to get rid of this source of destruction'. As medical men, they increasingly saw themselves not as 'professors of morality', but as in the business of preventing and curing disease and they objected to 'being hampered by those who appear to think that venereal diseases were created to enforce chastity.'⁷

A fortnight after Bob was admitted to hospital, the 3rd Australian General Hospital left for England, and was replaced by the 14th Australian General Hospital which had been raised in Melbourne in July, 1916, and had only disembarked at Port Suez on Tuesday morning, September 19, 1916. The new hospital was short on staff, and 10 officers from the 3rd Australian General Hospital remained



3rd/14th Australian General Hospital - Abbassia Military Barracks 1916
AWM P02321.047 - Front view/AWM J00413 - Interior view

behind to assist until mid-October, 1916, including Captain Alfred McClure 'to instruct an officer of the new Unit in V.D.'. That officer, Captain Reginald Bowman, described the facilities at 'Preston Barracks' as 'very large' with the Dermatological Section occupying only one side of the building. There were four wards, one for patients confined to bed and three for those able to move about. There were special rooms set aside for irrigation and treatment, a well-equipped operating theatre, dispensary, drug store, pack store, Red Cross store, quartermaster's store and an office. 'An Egyptian' conducted a canteen, paying rent for 'his rights' which went to 'Regimental Funds'. At the time of the changeover, 9.00 am on Saturday, September 23, 1916, there were 100 patients in the Section. During Bob's remaining time there and until the end of October, 1916, 141 further patients were admitted and 101 (including Bob) were discharged. To manage this number of patients, Captain Bowman had only a small staff of three NCOs and nine privates, with only six of these available for general ward duties. It is no wonder he enlisted the assistance of 'patients whose treatments were almost completed...to maintain the general cleanliness of the Hospital'.⁸

While the cause of gonorrhoea, the bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, was identified in 1879, no reliable way of killing bacteria existed before the discovery of penicillin in 1928. Treatments during the war were 'lengthy, brutal and uncertain'. The standard treatment for gonorrhoea was internal irrigation of the urethra and bladder via a catheter with a solution of silver nitrate suspended in glycerine, and external irrigation with a solution of permanganate of potash. Captain Reginald Bowman wrote that in the Dermatological Section, 'various irrigations' were used. Most of these treatments would have contained at least one of the heavy metal compounds used at the time as anti-bacterial drugs, silver, gold, mercury, arsenic, antimony or bismuth, or would have included hydroxynaphthalene, a compound similar to carbolic acid. Whatever the irrigation used, once injected, it had to be retained there for several hours. Mercury and sandalwood oil could also be given orally. It is possible these treatments killed the bacteria, but only after multiple doses over a



Metal syringe with metal urethral catheter (undated) for irrigation of the urethra in the treatment of gonorrhoea
Wellcome Collection Digital Image (CC BY 4.0)

long period. Surgery, usually circumcision, was also used in particular cases, as Edward Riley found out. The toxicity of these treatments resulted in unpleasant side effects, and there is no doubt Bob would have often felt that the cure was worse than the disease. After the usual symptoms of 'burning with urination and penile discharge' had disappeared, testing to see if a patient had been cured was done by taking swabs and urine samples and checking microscopically for pus threads. More effective testing, such as Pappenheim's staining method, required a laboratory. Both the 3rd and 14th Australian General Hospitals had 'an excellently fitted and stocked' pathological department. Captain Bowman notes, however, that 'great difficulty was encountered in

so much as all pathological examinations had to be made at the main hospital', something that would have delayed the progress of the Dermatological Section's treatment of patients like Bob.⁹

While patients in the Dermatological Section in the second half of 1916 were still held in isolation, confined to the hospital and remained subject to the financial penalty of withdrawal of pay, there were improvements compared with earlier experiences of AIF venereal disease patients. There was a canteen, although the lack of pay probably restricted Bob's purchases. Meals were supplied by the George Nungovitch Hotel Company at a contract rate of 2/6 (\$12) per day for other ranks and eaten in a mess hut provided by the Australian Red Cross. Supplies of meat and butter were locally obtained, but the hospital administration considered that in this regard, they would have been better off on army rations, particularly as 'the food was cooked and served in a style foreign to the Australian and not to his taste'. One of the main issues faced by venereal disease patients held in isolation was boredom. Captain Bowman wrote that 'every endeavor was made to occupy the minds of the patients'. The Australian Red Cross had built a large hut which was used as a library and recreation room. Games, magazines and books were provided, and the hut 'contained lounge chairs, writing tables, also a piano'. Before being discharged, 'good conduct patients' were granted half-a-day's leave in Cairo, something unheard of for venereal patients in Egypt up to this time.¹⁰

On the day before Bob was discharged from hospital, patients voted in the first Conscription Referendum, with medical officers acting as 'Authorised Witnesses' in their own wards. This was a full 12 days before the Australian public voted at home. Prime Minister William Morris (Billy) Hughes had arranged this as he was so certain the AIF would vote 'Yes' that he wanted time to release the results from the troops to 'set an example for Australians at home'. As it turned out, the AIF vote was too close to be of much use as propaganda, and the numbers were not released until five months after the referendum. The question put on the on the Referendum Paper was somewhat vague:

Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it has now with regard to military service within the Commonwealth?

How Bob reacted to this is not known. However, the 14th Australian General Hospital War Diary entry in relation to this event noted that 'voting was completed quickly. It cannot be said that the patients took a very great interest in the question set before them and many men refrained from voting'.¹¹

On Tuesday, October 17, 1916, Bob was discharged from the Dermatological Section. It was recorded that he had been treated for venereal disease for 39 days, including the day he was discharged. Accordingly, he forfeited all his pay for this period, a total of £11 14 shillings (\$1,110), which was, when coupled with the pain and discomfort of the disease and its treatment, a costly result of the likely one-shilling (\$4.70) investment that led to his infection.¹²

Chapter 10 To the Sinai and Back

After collecting his belongings from the Section pack store, Bob made his way back to the ICC Depot at Abbassia. The intense training period that began with the expansion of the ICC in June was now winding down. Only two full companies remained in training, Nos. 14 and 15, together with three sections from other companies. The focus of the ICC Depot had now switched to training reinforcements for the companies in the field, locating, training and dispatching camel remounts, renewal of equipment and ensuring that men convalescing from wounds or sickness were made ready to rejoin their units. Bob was therefore posted to the Australian Reserve Company. The same training regime as Bob had experienced before his admission to hospital was still in place, with the Reserve companies undergoing company drill daily under the watchful eye of Captain James Barber. Drill order dress, 'khaki coats, shorts, puttees, helmets or slouched hats' was strictly enforced, as was, no doubt, saluting. Fortunately for Bob, he only had to endure this for three days, as on Friday, October 20, 1916, he was marched out to rejoin No. 12 Company.¹

It was during this brief period that Bob again met 2nd Lieutenant James Kinkead. James and Bob knew each other from Cobar where James had been the clerk of petty sessions, before enlisting in the AIF two and a half months prior to Bob. James had been promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in September, 1916, while with the 6th Australian Light Horse Regiment, then seconded to the ICC and taken on strength of the Australian Reserve Company at Abbassia, six days before Bob was discharged from hospital. They were both marched out to join No. 12 Company on the same day. Bob must have been anxious to get away from Abbassia and what must have seemed to him as endless training since his enlistment 11 months previously. After Bob's death, James wrote to Bob's mother, Kate, that 'I met your boy at the base in Cairo and he asked me to take him with me to the desert to do some fighting. So I took him'.²

After No. 12 Company left Abbassia on Monday, September 18, 1916, they marched via Tel el Kebir to Ferry Post, east-south-east of Ismalia on the Suez Canal. At the Sweet Water Canal, boats were waiting to ferry them across. At this point they learned just how stubborn camels could be. Jock Davidson told the story:

...not a camel would get on board. So we had to unload and ferry over baggage and saddles, then long ropes were secured to camels and men hauled them and pushed them into the water. It took many hours of hard work to get all across and camels became upset and angry at this usage.

Bob had missed out on witnessing the complexities of canal camel crossings. The company then marched towards Bir el Abd, 47 miles (76 km) east of the Suez Canal, then south to Bir el Bayud



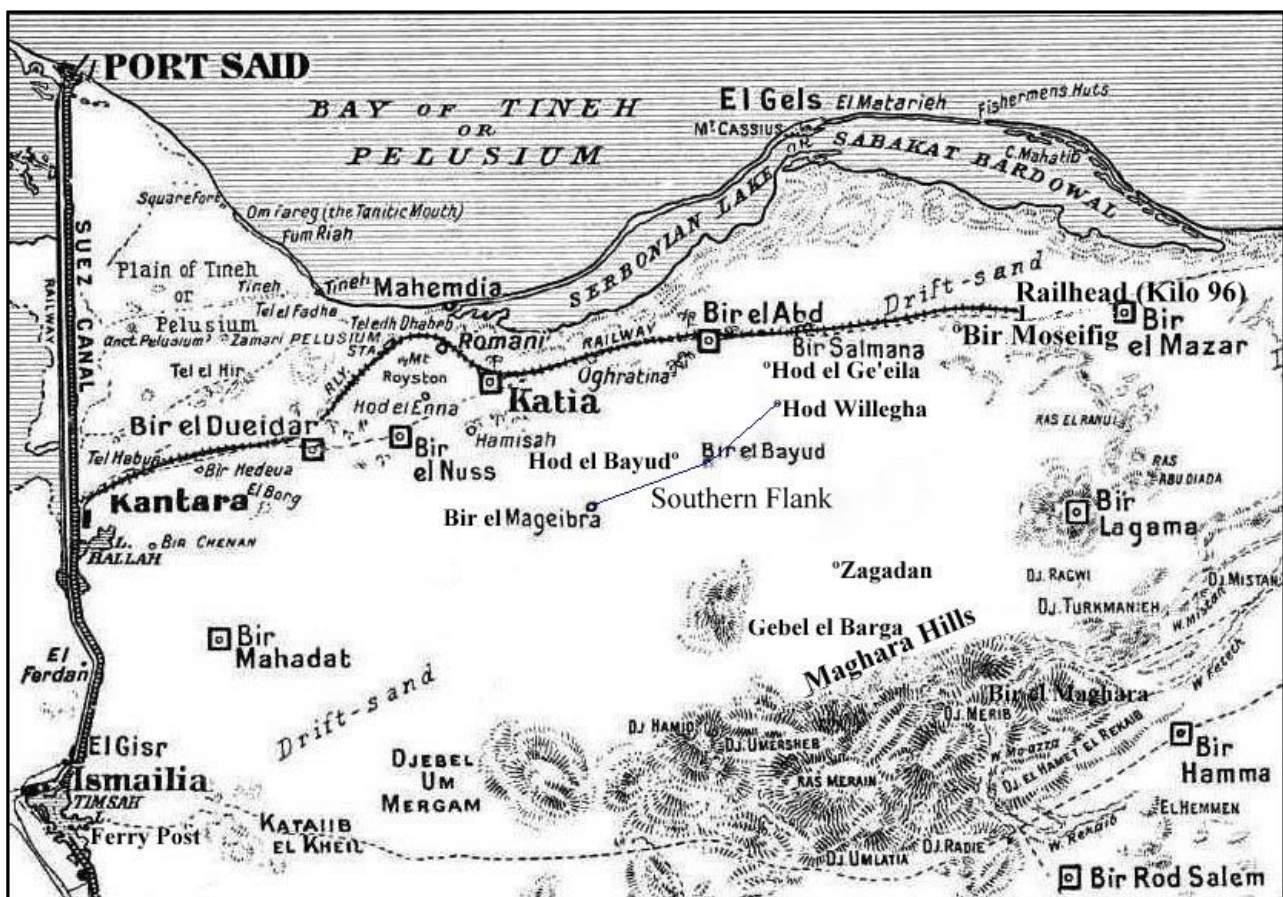
Hod el Bayud from the air C 1918
AWM A00627

where they joined up with the 1st Battalion, ICC, established from the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Companies on Sunday, September 10, 1916, under Temporary Major George Langley. There they performed outpost and day and night patrol duties, covering the area south of the line from Bir el Bayud, Hod el Bayud and Bir el Mageibra. On Friday, October 13, 1916, No. 12 Company was ordered by Major Langley to move to Zagadan. He specifically cautioned that when bivouacking there that night, 'Greatest precaution will be taken not to allow any parties to show themselves on the skyline and any natives encountered will be captured or shot'. He also directed that any noisy equipment was to be rectified before moving out of Zagadan. All this was in preparation for acting as flank protection for the (ultimately unsuccessful) Light Horse raid on the Turkish stronghold at Bir el Maghara. On Sunday, October 15, 1916, No. 12 Company was ordered to make a detour to Gebel el Barga, where an enemy outpost was supposedly located. No Turks were found and the position was occupied by the company until the next day. No. 12 Company had returned to Bir el Bayud by Wednesday, October 18, 1916.³

According to their service records, both Bob and James were taken on strength of No. 12 Company at Bir el Bayud on the same day as they left Abbassia, Friday, October 20, 1916. This looks more like an entry based on administrative convenience, or error, than actuality. A train journey from

Abbassia to Kantara on the Suez Canal would have taken at least eight hours. At Kantara, Bob and James would have had to travel on the British Military Railway, which by mid-October, 1916, had reached Bir el Abd. From there, the only way to reach Bir el Bayud, about eight miles (13 km) south of Bir el Abd, was by camel following an old Turkish telegraph line. It was not possible in 1916 to complete a journey from Abbassia to Bir el Bayud in the same day. No. 12 Company marched to Bir el Mageibra on Thursday, October 19, 1916, where incidentally they received their Conscriptioin Referendum papers. At the same time, 1st Battalion ICC headquarters and Nos. 4 and 6 Companies moved north-east to Hod el Ge'eila.⁴

While the exact date Bob and James joined No. 12 Company is not clear, it seems reasonable to assume they did so around October 20, 1916. Company headquarters was at Bir el Bayud, and, operating under orders from the 5th Mounted Brigade, the company carried out day and night patrols of the southern flank between Bir el Mageibra and Bir el Bayud and up to Hod Willegha, as well as conducting long-distance patrols across the waterless area south-east towards the Maghara hills. This latter area was described by the Official Historian, Henry Gullett, as 'one of the most desolate and difficult expanses of sand-dune country in all northern Sinai'. So it was here, at Bir el Bayud, almost a year after his enlistment, that Bob had his first experience of front line action, but he was not there for long. The Anzac Mounted Division (AMD) was instructed to take over the protection of Egyptian railway workers from Wednesday, October 25, 1916, and accordingly, as part of the moves to achieve this, 1st Battalion ICC headquarters moved to Bir Moseifig on Friday, October 27, 1916, and No. 12 Company was withdrawn from Bir el Bayud on Saturday, November 4, 1916, leaving there at 8.30 am and arriving at Bir Moseifig at 4.30 pm on the same day.⁵



North-west Sinai October-November 1916 - Modified by the author from the Map of the Northern and Central Sinai area in World War I, *The Times History of the War*, Volume X, page 368, in Wikipedia Contributors, 'Sinai and Palestine Campaign', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [URL]

By November, the railhead was at 'kilo 96'⁶, about two and a half miles (4 km) north-north-east of Bir Moseifig. No. 12 Company had the task of protecting both the Egyptian Labour Corps laying the military railway, water pipeline and wire netting road, all of which were advancing rapidly into the Sinai desert, and the survey parties working in advance of this construction effort. The work involved 'continuous outposts, dawn patrols and scouting miles in advance'. While this work did

occasionally involve skirmishes with Turkish camel and cavalry patrols attempting to disrupt the construction work, Official Historian Henry Gullett wrote that following the Bir el Maghara Raid, from 'October until late December there was no further fighting'. Bob's desire for action was to be foiled when two days after taking up these new duties, on Monday, November 6, 1916, he reported sick to the medical unit at the 'railhead'. He had been with his company in the Sinai for fewer than 17 days.⁷



Egyptian Labour Corps workers building the railway and wire netting road in the Sinai 1914-18
AWM J02669/AWM P02668.006

Following the debacle of the evacuation of Australian Light Horse wounded from the railhead after the Battle of Romani in early August, 1916⁸, a 'surgical centre' had been established at the railhead which moved forward as the line progressed. The Medical Officer at the railhead immediately sent Bob south-west to the mobile section of the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance which had a dressing station at Bir Moseifig. Here he was assessed as having 'VD'. Bob now commenced a strange odyssey whereby he was quickly passed from one medical unit to another, seemingly without any further diagnosis or treatment until, five days later, he was readmitted to the Dermatological Section at the 14th Australian General Hospital at Abbassia.⁹

As soon as they had made a diagnosis, the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance transferred Bob to the 1/1 Lowland Field Ambulance close to the railway line at Bir Salmana, a further seven and a half miles (12 km) to the west of Bir Moseifig. On Monday, November 6, 1916, the day Bob was admitted to the Lowland Field Ambulance, that unit's War Diary was dominated by references to an incident in which a converted 13 pounder anti-aircraft gun opened fire on an enemy aeroplane returning from a bombing raid on Bir el Abd. Whether or not Bob arrived in time to witness this episode is not known, but it's likely he heard all about it. This unit also



Bir el Abd Railway Station C 1916
AWM H02863

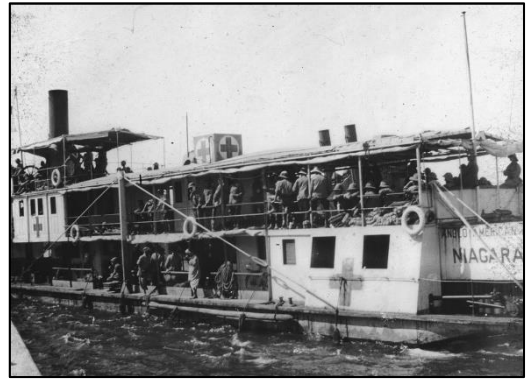


31st General Hospital Port Said C 1916
AWM P08401.014/NAMNZ 1992.1156.2

wasted no time with Bob, but sent him on to the 24th Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) at Bir el Abd, about four miles (6.5 km) further west along the railway line. This was a busy unit with 60 patients at the start of the day that Bob was admitted, and admitting another 52, including Bob, over the two days he spent there. On Wednesday, November 8, 1916, Bob was transferred with 10 other patients by train 47 miles (76 km) west to the 26th CCS at Kantara.¹⁰

Bob was admitted to the 26th CCS on the same day as he was transferred from Bir el Abd, along with the 60 other patients admitted that day. During the two days he spent in this unit, the number of patients increased from 118 to 191. On Friday, November 10, 1916, Bob, along with 130 other patients, was transferred out of the CCS to various hospitals, in Bob's case,

to the 31st General Hospital at Port Said, 31 miles (50 km) north along the Suez Canal. The War Diaries for the hospital trains on this date do not record any journey from Kantara to Port Said, so Bob travelled either by a normal train or by one of the hospital boats that transported wounded from Kantara to Port Said along the canal. The British 31st General Hospital had been set up in a huge warehouse beside the Suez Canal in December, 1915. On the day Bob arrived he was one of 149 admissions, bringing the total number of patients in the hospital to 767. The next day Bob, with 169 other patients, undertook a six-hour journey to Cairo by hospital train. Later that day, he finally arrived at the Dermatological Section of the 14th Australian General Hospital at Abbassia, 25 days after he had been discharged from that unit.¹¹



Hospital boat Kantara to Port Said 1914-1918
SLSA PRG 1480/2/83

At the Dermatological Section, Bob was diagnosed with 'VDSC', chancroid or 'soft chancre', painful genital ulcers caused by the bacterium *Haemophilus ducreyi*. The Official Historian for the Australian Army Medical Services in the Great War, Arthur Butler, estimated that 16.38 per cent of AIF men admitted to hospital for treatment of venereal disease suffered a relapse, and 22.93 per cent were readmitted for further treatment. The high number of readmissions is not surprising, given the unreliability of the treatments at the time. Bob was clearly not alone in this experience. In fact, Edward Riley also suffered a relapse, was admitted to the 1/1 Lowland Field Ambulance on Monday, November 20, 1916, then, like Bob, transferred to the 26th CCS and the 31st General Hospital before being admitted to the Dermatological Section at Abbassia three days later. Unlike Bob, he was discharged from the Section after only four days treatment. The standard treatment for chancroids during the war was the application of mercury in various types of lotions. Captain Bowman was still in charge of the Section when Bob arrived, and wrote that the Section treated chancroids with 'Black Wash, Calomel, Iodoform, 50 per cent Zinc Chloride, as the condition appeared to demand always accompanied by daily exposure to the sun's rays until the part blushed'. Calomel was mercurous chloride, known as 'Black Wash' when mixed with limewater. Iodoform, or triiodomethane, was an antiseptic compound based on iodine in use since 1880. While less invasive than the treatment for gonorrhoea, all these treatments were nonetheless still uncomfortable, toxic and uncertain in their outcomes.¹²

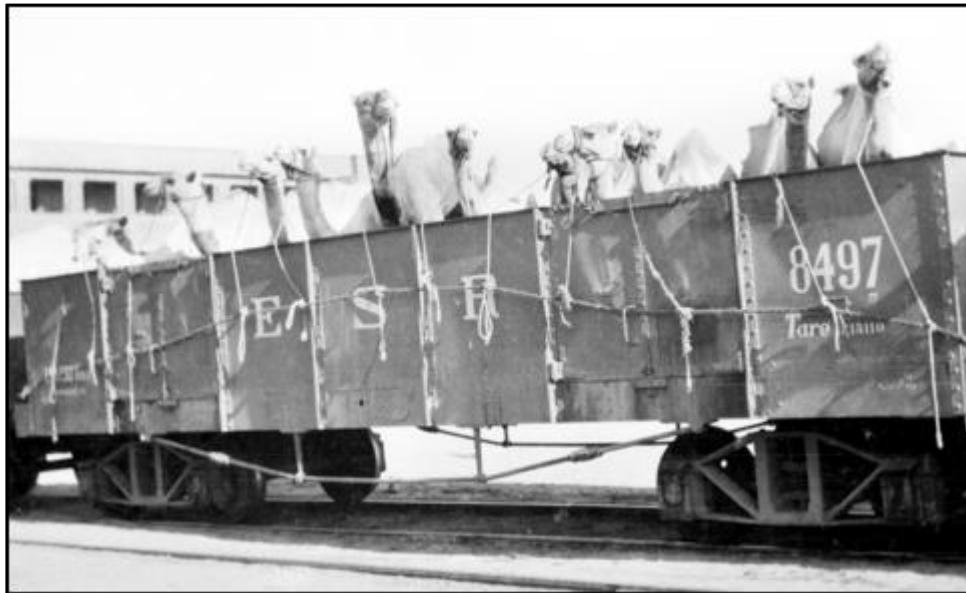
Since Bob was last in the Dermatological Section, Captain Bowman had added to the care of his patients by ensuring that they were not only mentally occupied, but physically occupied as well. At



Patients in blue hospital uniforms 14th
Australian General Hospital C 1916 AWM
H02446

the end of October, 1916, he had made arrangements with the Officer in Charge of the gardens at the Delta Barrage on the Nile River, 16 miles (26 km) north-west of Heliopolis, to obtain a supply of young trees and plants. Patients who were well enough planted out several large beds, and by the time Bob arrived, there were about 40 trees established. Patients during November continued to maintain these gardens, with some becoming 'enthusiastic amateur gardeners'. Bob was one of 51 chancroid patients admitted during November. The total of 173 men being treated in the Section was only about 30 more than when Bob was last there. One change he would have noticed was the issue of a different hospital uniform. Complaints from the Military Police 'as to their difficulty in distinguishing patients on leave in Cairo' in their khaki drill suits, together with the onset of colder weather, resulted in the introduction of the 'blue uniform suits used in Imperial Hospitals'. These were single-breasted suit and trousers made of oxford blue flannel material, with a white lining. Sizing was 'hit and miss', the flannel, but not the white lining, would shrink with washing and there were no pockets, something that particularly annoyed patients. For Bob, it must have brought back bad memories of the 'blue dungarees' at Dubbo Camp.¹³

After 12 days' treatment, Bob was discharged on Thursday, November 23, 1916, and made his way south to the ICC Barracks at Abbassia. As this was not an initial infection with venereal disease, he did not forfeit any pay for this period. Once again, he was posted to the Australian Reserve Company, and entered into a daily round of training, this time with an almost unbroken focus on riding drill. Unless he had been assigned to duty that day, Bob would have marched to the Remount Depot for a Church of England 'divine service' at 9.00 am on Sunday, November 26, 1916. Only No. 16 Company and the 4th Camel Regiment now remained at Abbassia undergoing basic training, together with about 80 reinforcements. The 4th Camel Regiment had been created from the disbanded 1st and 2nd Light Horse Double Squadrons, and was to be eventually broken up to form Nos. 17 and 18 Companies, ICC. In November, 1916, 280 camels arrived as remounts, adding to the 1,232 that had arrived the previous month. It is quite likely that camels outnumbered troopers at Abbassia during the fortnight Bob was with the Australian Reserve Company. On Friday, December 8, 1916, Bob was marched out to rejoin No. 12 Company.¹⁴



Entraining camels at Abbassia 1914-1918
ESR on the wagons stands for Egyptian State Railways
AWM J00419

Chapter 11

The Advance to El Arish

While Bob was in hospital at Abbassia, No. 12 Company continued to provide protection for the Egyptian Labour Corps laying the military railway, until it reached Bir el Mazar, which had been abandoned by the Turkish forces two days after the unsuccessful raid by the AMD on Sunday, September 17, 1916. By November, Divisional planning for an advance to the next Turkish garrison at El Arish was well under way. As part of this, on Friday, November 17, 1916, No. 12 Company undertook a major reconnaissance mission with the 1st Battalion Adjutant, Captain Paul Goldenstedt, towards Abu Fileifil and El Bittia, to the west of El Arish. The Company reported that they had found 'plentiful water if slightly brackish' at both places, and that the Turks were entrenched in positions at El Sebil and Abu Feteih. On their return to base, five or six bombs were dropped within 50 yards (46 m) of the Company by a 'friendly' aeroplane. Jock Davidson said 'we got suspicious they were to bomb us [and] spread out rapidly. As luck would have it, or was it rather bad bombing...they didn't get a single hit'. The 1st Battalion ICC headquarters had moved from Bir Mosefig to Bir el Mazar and then on to El Mustagidda by Tuesday, November 21, 1916. By Friday, November 24, 1916, No. 12 Company was based at Katib el Barda, at the far northern end of the AMD's line, making daily patrols of the Bardawil Peninsula and eastwards. They were ordered to arrange for a strong patrol to occupy Point 133 at El Maadan daily and withdraw after dark, and while there, to closely watch the Turkish troops in the El Sebil position.¹

The 1st Battalion ICC, including No. 12 Company, was relieved by the 2nd Battalion ICC on Sunday, December 3, 1916, and ordered to march back to Bir el Abd for a rest, arriving there the next day. No. 12 Company had been on front-line duty since mid-September, and many of the troopers were suffering from camel itch.² Once at Bir el Abd, 'efforts were made to rid both men and camels from it', with all the men being 'disinfected by the Sanitary Section' based there. It was here at Bir el Abd that Bob was recorded as being taken on strength of the company again on Saturday, December 9, 1916. While it may have been possible to make the train journey from Abbassia to Bir el Abd in two days, it seems that once again the exact date on which Bob rejoined the company is questionable, particularly given that this entry was not made on his service record until a week later.³



Troops at Bir el Abd C 1916
AWM J03191/SLSA PRG 18/4/21/44

Bob and the other troopers in No. 12 Company would have found that Bir el Abd was not an ideal place for a rest camp. It had been the headquarters for three divisions until late November, 1916, remained a major railway supply depot and staging area for troops moving up the line, and, as Bob had previously experienced, had a busy CCS – the 24th, with capacity to handle 400 cases. There were no barracks for troops 'resting' here, indeed conditions were little better than the company had experienced in more remote posts out in the Sinai desert. There was however, a YMCA tent where troops could 'purchase a few things & write their letters'. Water was scarce. Even though the pipeline bringing water from Kantara had reached Bir el Abd three days before Bob arrived, water supplies were still limited, and only available from the storage tanks beside the railway line or from local wells. Most of the pipeline supply was railed onwards to forward units. The standard Egyptian

Expeditionary Force (EEF) ration of eight pints (4.5 L) of water per day per man was seldom fully met, and after allowance for cooking and drinking, only one pint (0.5 L) was available for 'hygiene'. The men in the Scottish 5th Battalion, Highland Light Infantry (HLI), who were also in Bir el Abd in late November, 1916, described how 'the men were extremely badly off for washing water, and dirty bodies and dirty clothes were neither pleasant nor healthy'. All this must have brought back for Bob childhood memories of the constant struggle for water in Hungerford. The HLI men also found that 'the nights were now extremely chilly, but the flies had not yet succumbed', and that for protection from the elements they only had 'the blanket bivouac'. The complete lack of any form of amusement at Bir el Abd is well illustrated in this HLI story:

Bir el Abd was much the same as any other bit of desert, save that the higher sand hills were lacking, the country consisting of rolling slopes of no great elevation well spotted with scrub. It boasted a fine breed of chameleon, and we also found a number of little tortoises, which were pressed into the service to give a bit of sport! Tortoise racing was a slow business, but eminently sporting, because the tortoise is so splendidly unreliable. On one occasion one of the competitors in a big sweepstake was discovered to consist of a shell only—the tortoise who had once dwelt therein having died and turned to dust. In consideration of this it was given a start of six inches (15 cm), but long odds were offered against it. However, at the end of the time limit—eight minutes—no competitor had moved at all, so that the tortoiseless one was adjudged the winner amid great applause.

There is little doubt that Australian troopers like Bob would have had to indulge in similar pursuits to the Scots at Bir el Abd to occupy their 'rest' time.⁴

When first occupied by the AMD in mid-August, 1916, Bir el Abd was a known cholera area, scattered with 'notice boards placed in infected areas by Turkish medical officers.' Even though all AIF troops were inoculated against this disease, the Deputy Director of Medical Services was still concerned in early December, 1916, about its possible impact, and bemoaned the lack of 'cholera outfits' in Field Ambulance units. No cholera cases were reported at Bir el Abd during the time Bob was there, and indeed, he had little time to settle in at Bir el Abd, and the rest of the company had hardly commenced to recuperate, before the 1st Battalion ICC was ordered forward 24 miles (39 km) to Bir el Mazar to join the 1st Camel Brigade. This Brigade had been created on Wednesday, December 13, 1916, under Lieutenant-Colonel Clement Leslie Smith from Abbassia, now promoted to Brigadier General. It initially consisted of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions ICC and the HKS Battery. The 1st Brigade headquarters and the 1st Battalion ICC, including Bob and the rest of No. 12 Company, had reached Bir el Mazar by Tuesday, December 19, 1916. On this same day, aircraft from the *Flieger Abteilung 300* (FA 300) flying out of El Arish, dropped 12 bombs on Mustagidda and Bir el Mazar, wounding one man at Mustagidda and killing one 'native' and four camels at Bir el Mazar. There is no evidence that it was ICC camels that were killed, but the incident certainly marked Bob's entry to an active war zone.⁵



View over Bir el Mazar to the Mazar Hills January 1917
AWM J00907

After withdrawing from Bir el Mazar, the Turkish army retired to El Arish, and prepared to defend this area in order to deny the more 'favourable country of southern Palestine to the British'. Since July, 1916, British policy had been that the occupation of El Arish would directly threaten Turkish communications in the Sinai and be the most effective location from which to defend Egypt. For both sides then, occupation of El Arish was critical. By mid-December, the railway had progressed east of Bir el Mazar to kilo 128 south of El Madaan, allowing sufficient water to be stored there to make an advance across the waterless area to El Arish possible. The Turkish garrison at El Arish and Masaid was variously estimated to be between 1,600 and 5,000, with between four and 14 guns, and well entrenched. They were supported by further garrisons south-east along the Wadi el Arish at El Magdhaba and Abu Aweigila. At the end of November, British forces east of the Suez Canal were reorganised, with Lieutenant General Philip Chetwode being appointed to command all troops in advanced positions in the Sinai, a command that became known as the Desert Column. He arrived at Bir el Abd to take up his appointment only a few days before Bob arrived there. On December 17, 1916, he formulated a plan of attack on the El Arish position which involved three

mounted brigades, the Camel Brigade and two infantry divisions, and three days later moved his headquarters to kilo 128. The AMD and the 1st Brigade ICC, including No. 12 Company, had left Bir el Mazar on Wednesday, December 20, 1916, and that afternoon had also arrived at kilo 128, nine and a half miles (15 km) further east.⁶

It was here at kilo 128 in the evening of the day that they arrived that a reorganisation of the battalions in the 1st Brigade ICC began. The Australian and New Zealand Governments in mid-October, 1916, had approved that Australian and New Zealand personnel in the ICC be formed into two distinct Anzac battalions. This was done not for any reasons of national pride, but for the simple administrative purpose of 'regulating the promotion of Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers'. To date, 1st Battalion ICC had consisted of two Australian (Nos. 4 and 12) and three British companies (Nos. 5, 6 and 7), 2nd Battalion of one Australian (No. 3) and two New Zealand Companies (Nos. 14 and 15) and the newly formed 3rd Battalion of two Australian companies (Nos. 1 and 11). At kilo 128, both to balance the battalions and to commence the process desired by the Australian and New Zealand Governments, No. 15 (New Zealand) Company was transferred to 3rd Battalion, and No. 5 (British) Company to 2nd Battalion.⁷



Kilo 128 railhead December 17, 1916 – AWM A01969B

One further much needed change that occurred at the time the ICC Brigade reached kilo 128 was the attachment of a Field Ambulance to the brigade. The brigade had been established without any medical unit, and until this time had had to rely on adjoining Light Horse or infantry medical units for the evacuation of sick and wounded troopers. This explains why Bob ended up in New Zealand and Lowland Field Ambulance units in early November, 1916. On December 16, 1916, the Deputy Director of Medical Services (DDMS) of the Desert Column, Colonel Charles Joseph Macdonald, received instructions to 'make improvised medical units for [the ICC] brigade...and that the 1/1st Welsh F.A. of 53rd Div. would...be placed at [his] disposal for the purpose'. He developed a scheme to 'make a mounted mobile section from the ordinary mobile section of the unit, using the camels in excess for the conveyance of the personnel'. The next day, after discussions with Brigadier General Smith, given that each ICC company already had a 'medical orderly and cacolets', he decided that only one ambulance convoy was needed. On December 18, 1916, the Welsh Field Ambulance mobile section and No. 1 ambulance convoy arrived at Bir el Mazar and Colonel Macdonald and the Commanding Officer of the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Donovan, met with Brigadier General Smith and finalised arrangements. Even though the improvised mobile section and convoy were short on 'medical comforts panniers' and mules and mattresses for their nine sand carts (two-wheeled ambulance wagons), at 1.00 pm on December 20, 1916, they left Bir el Mazar to join the ICC Brigade at kilo 128. The Welsh Field Ambulance mobile section had bearer and tent sub divisions, usually staffed by four medical officers, so their arrival enabled each ICC battalion to now have its own medical officer and several supporting orderlies. Once these changes had been put into effect, Bob and the rest of No. 12 Company, still with the 1st Battalion, were ready for the advance to El Arish.⁸

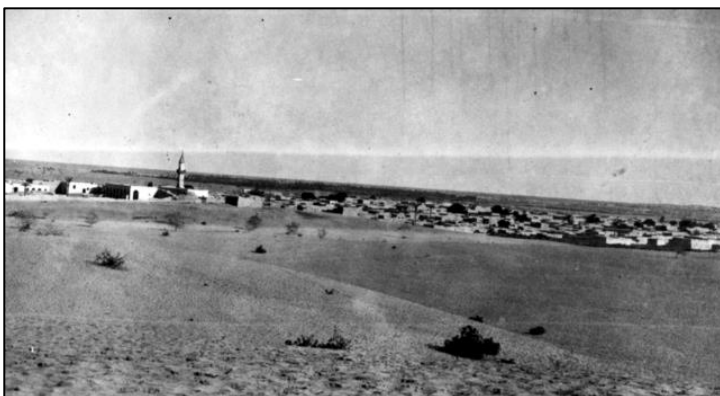
At the very time that Lieutenant General Chetwode was planning a set-piece battle to take El Arish, reconnaissance reports forwarded from the 14th Squadron, Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and 1st Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC) operating out of El Mustabig, noted that there were signs of Turkish troops withdrawing from El Arish. The Desert Column's intelligence staff however, were firmly of the opinion that the Turks would defend the position, and ignored these reports. All this changed in an instant however, when Lieutenant Eric Roberts, 1st Squadron AFC, flew the senior artillery officer of the 42nd Division over El Arish, descended to about 100 feet (30 m), and they confirmed that it was abandoned. The German commander of the Turkish Expeditionary Corps, Friedrich Siegmund Georg Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, later wrote that 'As our troops were not strong enough to defend the town of El Arish, which was unhappily situated and exposed to the fire of British warships, we were obliged...to evacuate'. As Lieutenant Ross Smith, 1st Squadron AFC,

wrote to his mother Jessie two days later: 'They had all vanished in a night, just 12 months after we had played them a similar trick at Anzac'. Lieutenant General Chetwode immediately directed the AMD, including the 1st Brigade ICC, to march without the infantry during the night of Wednesday, December 20, 1916, and envelop and then occupy El Arish at dawn the next day. Bob marched out of kilo 128 with the rest of the 1st Brigade ICC at 8.00 pm that night, loaded down with five days water and forage rations and 500 rounds of ammunition.⁹

Both the British and Australian Official Historians waxed lyrical about this night march to El Arish:

The night march of the mounted troops to El Arish...marked the escape from the desert. As they rode through the darkness the men, to their delight, felt their horses pass from the sand which they had known so long to firm soil. And with the morning light...their eyes were gladdened by green patches of cultivation. Now in the magical, idyllic atmosphere of a Sinai night in December, with the heavens thickly sprinkled with stars particularly brilliant and seemingly very near, the riders rejoiced as their horses stepped suddenly off the deep sand of the dunes on to the wide firm flat [of] the great Wady el Arish. The men laughed with delight. Sinai was behind them.

The reality for the troopers in the Light Horse and Camel Brigades actually undertaking this 16-mile (26 km) march was somewhat less poetic. The AMD anticipated that 'the going by night, with no moon, was likely to be difficult'. The 1st Light Horse Brigade diary noted that the march 'was made over difficult desert country', and that of the 1st Machine Gun Squadron described the march as 'pretty rough in places'. The Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment found 'the going became very rough, and as the troops advanced in the darkness the horses [were] at times buried almost belly-deep in the shifting sand'. The Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment, operating as advanced guard to the New Zealand Mounted Rifles (NZMR) Brigade, moved off into the night 'across trackless desert covered with sand hills, which all looked alike' and had to cover the entire distance 'solely by compass bearing'. The 1st Battalion ICC operated as the advance guard for the Camel Brigade, and Jock Davidson with Bob in No. 12 Company ICC, wrote that they were well out on the right flank amongst the sand dunes 'where no beaten track existed to guide us [and as] it was a particularly dark night...it was with great difficulty touch was kept with the advance screen [and] the flank guards'. For the ICC, the 'particularly brilliant' stars were clearly not of much use. Trooper Robert Valentine Fell with No. 1 Company later wrote in his diary 'Awful journey (rough) fell down sandhill with camel'. Silence was rigidly enforced, but as Jock noted 'camels brayed if they wanted to', bringing down the wrath of an officer or NCO on the hapless rider. As the march went on, the men 'began to feel drowsy', not surprising since the last sleep they had had was at Bir el Mazar, 24 hours ago. Despite the march order prohibiting lighting matches and smoking, many men lit up cigarettes to keep themselves awake, bringing further disapprobation from officers and NCOs down on their heads. Even those marching in the slightly better country closer to the coast were hardly consumed with 'delight'. Captain Wilfred Evans of the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance wrote to his mother a week later that 'the night march was a wretched one as we halted for a couple of hours at midnight & nearly froze for these winter Egyptian nights are very chilly', and clearly, at least to Wilfred, far from 'idyllic'. This halt was ordered by the



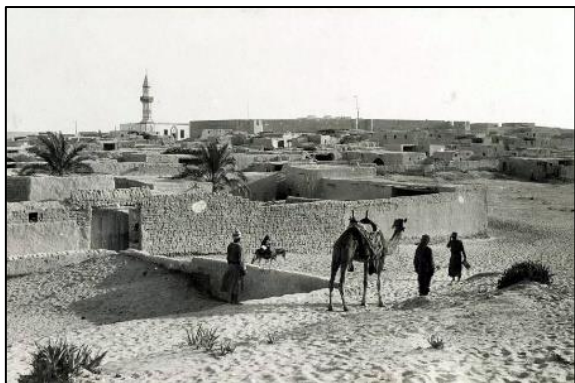
El Arish half an hour after the capture of the town December 21, 1916 – AWM H02828

Commanding Officer of the AMD, Major General Harry Chauvel, at Um Zughla at 2.00 am to ensure the column did not reach El Arish before 5.30 am. The march continued at 3.30 am, and even as Wilfred's unit later marched along the sea shore, he complained that even through 'it was glorious to be so close to it [the sea] again... we were rather too tired to enjoy it'.¹⁰

The 1st Brigade ICC and the rest of the AMD reached El Arish at 5.30 am in the pre-dawn light on Thursday, December 21, 1916. The Camel Brigade reached its allotted position on the right flank,

about two miles (3.2 km) south of El Arish on the west bank of the Wadi el Arish, and immediately sent out patrols into the steep sand hills across the wadi to the east and down the wadi to the south-south-east towards Bir Lahfan. By dawn, just after 6.30 am, a complete cordon around El Arish had been established and the town was fully secured by 7.45 am. Once contact had been made on the

left with the 1st Light Horse Brigade, and it was confirmed that the Turks really had evacuated El Arish, Jock Davidson wrote that 'we rushed for what scrub was available to make fires and within a few minutes fires were dotted all over the wadi. Camels were fed and men began to open up the bully tins.' There was little time for a leisurely breakfast however, as at 9.15 am Major General Chauvel ordered the Camel Brigade to push two sections out to posts on sand hills on the east bank of the wadi, including Goz el Dhabaa, about four miles (6.5 km) south-east of El Arish. Those remaining with the ICC Brigade could not help but hear the massive explosion at 1.30 pm, when two curious Light Horsemen from the 1st Light Horse Brigade 'were blown up by a stranded mine on the beach', thus becoming the only casualties of the occupation of El Arish. By 4.00 pm, a further ICC outpost was established to cover the area directly to the south. Patrols were continually conducted between these outposts, as the exact whereabouts of the Turkish forces from El Arish was not known until late the next day.¹¹



El Arish 1916 – LC 2007675298



El Arish Mosque and Ruined Fort C 1916
IWM Q57750

A grove of 'tall and feathery palms' marked the mouth of the Wadi el Arish, and about two miles (3.2 km) inland on the west bank of the wadi in a hollow surrounded on three sides by sandhills, was the town of El Arish itself. To the east and south of the township on the alluvial flats of the wadi were groves of figs and dates. A trooper with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Yeomanry at El Arish at the same time as Bob, described the town as presenting 'quite a scriptural picture' with the minaret of the Mosque standing 'as a shaft of whiteness' above the flat-roofed yellow plastered mud houses, 'with robed figures in many hues moving about among them'. He described the town's cemetery, just north-west of the Camel Brigade's bivouac, as containing 'white tombstones or mere cactus bushes as grave marks according to the importance of the individual'. There were few other substantial buildings, save for the white domed tomb of the Nebi Yesir on a sandhill near the mouth of the wadi and the fort beside the mosque with its stone walls destroyed by 'the guns of the British Navy'. El Arish had been occupied by the Turks for more than two years, and the inhabitants greeted the arrival of the AMD and the Camel Brigade with enthusiasm 'as deliverers', handing over one Turkish soldier and two spies as a mark of good faith. As Frank Reid of No. 3 Company ICC cynically noted however, 'they would have greeted the Turks in the same way if they had returned the following morning'. Captain Frank Valentine Weir of the 1st Light Horse Regiment was equally cynical noting that they 'pretend they are glad to see us but they sent up 2 pigeons as soon as we entered.'¹²



'Feathery Palms' at the Mouth of the Wadi el Arish C 1917
AWM J06215

Far less idyllic than the Gloucestershire Yeomanry trooper's impression of El Arish was that of the Assistant Director of Medical Services (ADMS) of the AMD, Colonel Rupert Downes, who found El Arish to be 'very squalid', with the sole exception of 'a mosque and a few fine buildings'. Wilfred Evans concurred, describing it to his mother as 'a collection of mud huts...200-300 in all...on the whole...a very wretched place...[with] a few wretched fig trees scattered about it but the rest is the same old

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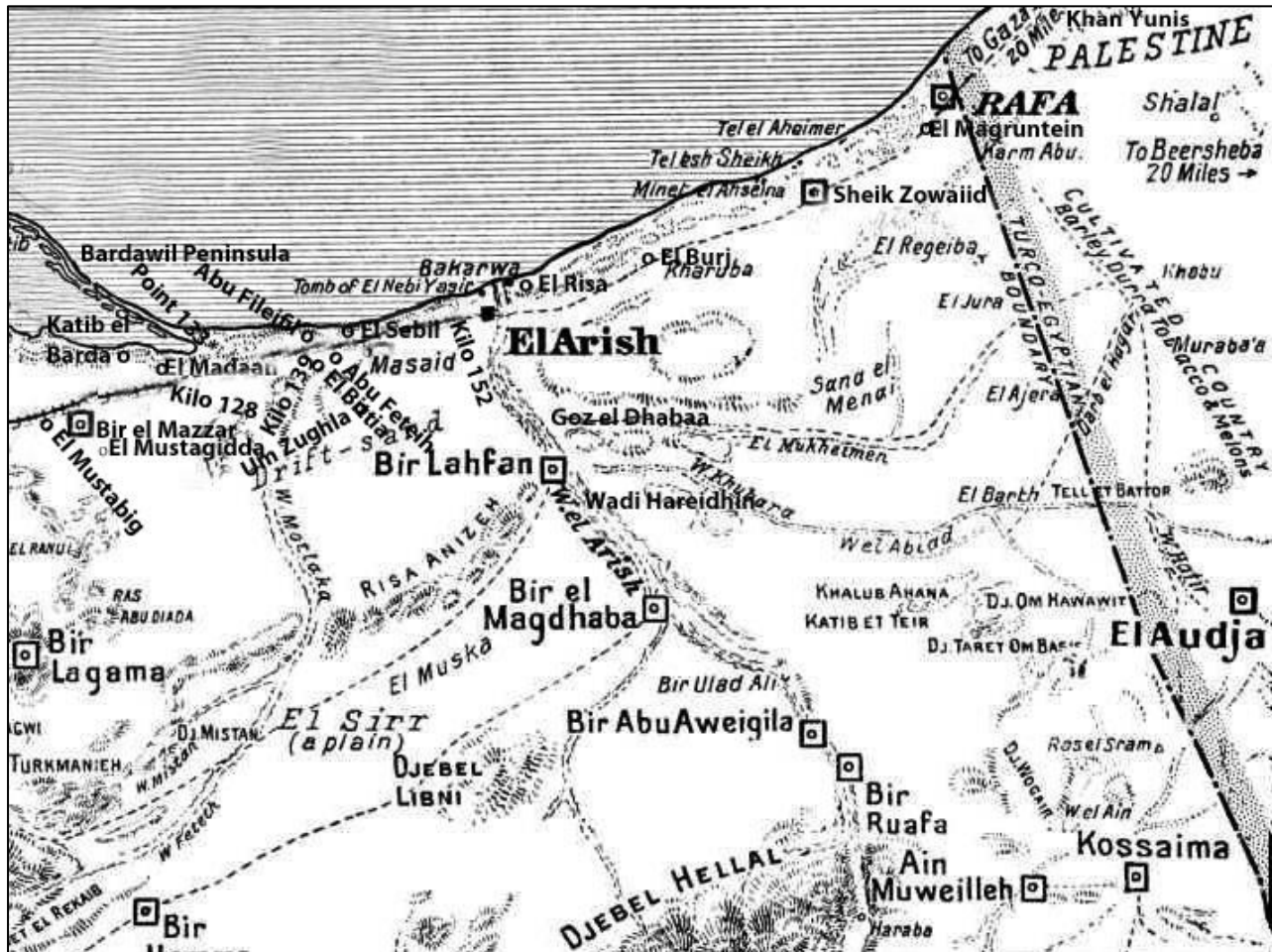
sand of which we have become so tired'. The town was immediately declared out of bounds to all troops, and men were cautioned against using well water until it was declared safe. It is very unlikely Bob visited the town, or indeed saw much of the surrounding countryside, other than from a distance, at this time. No. 12 Company was busy from the time they reached the wadi. If Bob and the others in the company were not on outpost, patrol or guard duty, there was the constant work of grooming, feeding and watering of camels, and the monotonous but essential sanitary duties associated with camel lines – collection of dung and raking over the ground 'so that the sun and air may cleanse it'.¹³

Conditions for Bob in the company's bivouac in the wadi were little changed from past experiences in the Sinai. Jock Davidson commented on the preponderance of flies, despite the predations of a large population of chameleons, and wondered 'what did they live on when the Camel Corps were not about?'. The ICC bivouacs at the wadi were not protected from the 'full blast from the sun' during the day, and at night temperatures could drop below 0° C. The first night at El Arish was described by the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, as 'bitterly cold [and] one blanket was hardly sufficient to entice sleep'. No tents were available, so 'blanket bivouacs' offered the only shelter from the dew, which Wilfred Evans characterised as 'very heavy' and enough to 'wet through blankets'. Frank Reid recalled that on occasions when camels were barracked, troopers would stretch a blanket from the top of one to the other, crawl underneath and sleep. This might seem to be a risky way to get some protection from the elements, but Frank 'never knew the animals to move when men were sleeping like this between them'. Jock Davidson recalled that exhausted men would often just lie down alongside their camels, 'some using the camel's front leg as a pillow'. Both Rex Hall and Frank Reid observed that in such circumstances, the camel may perhaps have moved its other legs from time to time, but never the one being used by the sleeping rider. Bob's first night at El Arish then was no doubt spent in this way, huddled between camels and struggling to ward off the bitter cold of the night.¹⁴

Before Bob and the rest of the camel troopers could even start to settle into a routine at El Arish, on Friday, December 22, 1916, Lieutenant General Chetwode arrived by sea and landed on the beach at 10.00 am. He had been apprised of an intercepted Turkish order to its forward forces to retreat immediately and reform in El Auja, the main Turkish railhead in Palestine. Fearing that the Turkish forces remaining in the Sinai would escape, he immediately ordered a pursuit of these forces east to Rafa and south to Magdhaba. To support this operation, he had arranged for a special convoy with rations and horse feed to arrive at El Arish from the railhead at 4.30 pm. Once these rations had been drawn, three companies of the ICC were to move along the coast to Rafa via Sheikh Zowaid to capture any Turkish forces there, and the remaining ICC companies, less one to remain at El Arish for 'protection and escort duty', were to accompany three brigades of the AMD and march on Abu Aweigila and Ruafa via Magdhaba with the same object. At the very time Bob and the rest of the ICC were preparing for this operation, unbeknown to them, General von Kressenstein was visiting the Turkish garrison at Magdhaba, following up on the order he had received 'to pull out our troops from El Arish and take them back to Palestine through Magdhaba'. He later wrote of Magdhaba that

There were five substantial redoubts constructed with minor communication trenches which surrounded the garrison. Like everywhere, unfortunately it was missing war material necessary to create obstacles. There were men from the 80th Infantry Regiment...a Camel Corps Squadron and a mountain battery with outdated cannons, all told the staff and seven raw companies. I was satisfied with the spirit and health of these troops and the arrangements made.

General von Kressenstein made no immediate decision to evacuate this force, and indeed, only learned of the occupation of El Arish by the Desert Column late that evening after he returned to El Auja. In the meantime, at 4.30 pm Lieutenant General Chetwode received a report from 2nd Lieutenant John McGowan Glen, a Royal Scots officer on secondment to the 1st Squadron AFC, indicating that the Turkish forces at Magdhaba were in considerable strength, with machine guns and artillery. He immediately abandoned the Rafa enterprise, and concentrated all his available forces, including all of the ICC Brigade's battalions, on Magdhaba.¹⁵



North-east Sinai December 1916 – January 1917 - Modified by the author from the Map of the Northern and Central Sinai area in World War I, *The Times History of the War*, Volume X, page 368, in Wikipedia Contributors, 'Sinai and Palestine Campaign', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [URL]

Chapter 12

The Magdhaba Affair

The concentration point for the troops taking part in the advance to Magdhaba¹ was fixed as 'the 28th telegraph pole on the El Arish-Magdhaba telegraph wire', a point in the Wadi el Arish some four miles (6.5 km) south-south-east of the town. By nightfall, the Light Horse Regiments had passed through the 1st Brigade ICC lines on their way to this concentration point, and, as Jock Davidson puts it, the Brigade 'gradually ambled into what was termed Column of Route, known to the ranks as Column of Lumps, and ...followed'. By 8.00 pm the full force was assembled. The special camel convoy from the railhead organised by Lieutenant General Chetwode was to meet the troops there by this time to distribute rations and fodder, but its progress was severely disrupted when the 156th Infantry Brigade marching up to El Arish crossed its path, effectively 'cutting [the convey] in two'. As a result, the 'force was unable to leave the point of concentration until after midnight'. The Diary of the 2nd Battalion ICC noted that 'the long wait in the cold was trying for both men and animals'. Major Lewis Timperley, 10th Light Horse Regiment, wrote, 'a frightfully cold wind blew through us [and] some of us lay down on the sand in pairs, back to back, as the best method of keeping warm'.²

There is nothing in Bob's service record to indicate that he was anywhere else that night other than suffering the bitterly cold night in the Wadi el Arish along with the rest of the troopers in the ICC. In Bob's 1st Battalion, No. 4 Company had been left behind at Bir-el-Abd as it was 'in such poor shape', and in the 2nd Battalion, No. 3 Company had been left at El Arish, as 'rations could not be procured for them in time'. Second Lieutenant Rex Hall, at this time in the 14th Company, but later the Orderly Officer for the 1st Brigade ICC, states that eight companies of the ICC were sent to Magdhaba.³ After allowing for the above two companies, the remaining companies at El Arish on December 22, 1916, were Nos. 6, 7 and 12 (1st Battalion), Nos. 5 and 14 (2nd Battalion) and Nos. 1, 11 and 15 (3rd Battalion). No. 12 Company was then certainly one of the eight companies involved in the action at Magdhaba. During the march to Magdhaba, a section of the ICC was left with engineers at Bir Lahfan, but this was unlikely to have come from No. 12 Company as it was designated to serve as a reserve company during the action. Possibly it was from No. 5 Company which was designated to act as an escort company, primarily to the HKS Battery. In the absence of any other information, it is safe to assume that since joining the AIF 420 days earlier, Bob was now faced with his first opportunity to fulfil his desire 'to do some fighting'.⁴

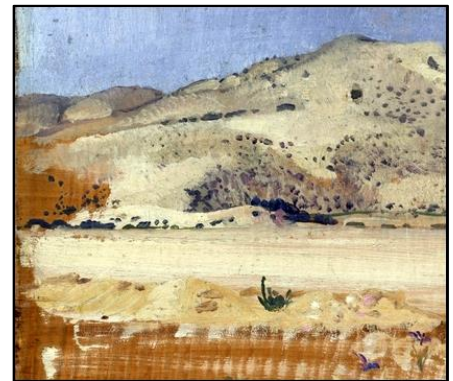
Major Horace Robertson, second in command of the 10th Light Horse Regiment (3rd Light Horse Brigade), later recalled of the march to Magdhaba that night:

I never had such an unpleasant march. The pace varied from that of a snail to a hard gallop and was punctuated by sudden checks...The main trouble was caused by dust...[which] rose in clouds and obscured the units in front....No one had slept on the night of the 20th, some had slept on the night of the 21st, but this was the third sleepless night for most...

The dry bed of the Wadi el Arish varied in width from about one to three miles (2-5 km). The stony bed was reserved for the artillery batteries, so the ICC and Light Horse brigades followed the main track to Magdhaba on the eastern side of the watercourse. The ICC, bringing up the rear of the column, would have suffered more than most from the fine white chalky dust. The night was clear but moonless. Speech and smoking were forbidden, but as Jock Davidson commented, there was no need to order this:

Every man [was] dead tired and sleepy. Soon many were dozing in the saddle. Camels hated the rough, loose stones...and betrayed us to the enemy every time they encountered the stony wadi bed. Officers gave up the threats about keeping camels quiet, their own were amongst the worst offenders and even officers felt the want of sleep.

Perhaps during the silence, Bob experienced something similar to Sergeant William Peterson, also riding to Magdhaba that night in the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade):

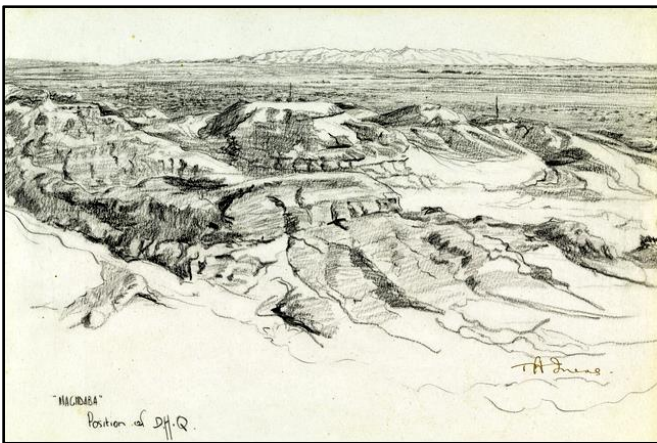


Wadi bed between El Arish and Magdhaba - George Lambert 1918
AWM ART02679

one thinks of home and friends when no conversation is permissible and the brain must remain active...At such times the brain opens one of those little almost-forgotten cells and reveals for inspection as it were or review some little incident which has lain hidden away perhaps for years.

Major George Langley, Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion ICC, commented that this was the first occasion when the two types of mounted infantry, camels and horses, covered the same distance under the same conditions. The camels were able to keep to the hourly march schedule, 40 minutes riding, 10 minutes leading and 10 minutes halt, and Bob and his fellow troopers were thus able to keep a steady pace 'without pushing the beasts'.⁵

At Bir Lahfan, about nine miles (15 km) south of El Arish, the retreating Turkish forces had destroyed the water wells. Australian Engineers, A Troop of the 1st Field Squadron, with an ICC section as escort, were left there to examine the wells and source water for the return journey. The rest of the column then negotiated the difficult country where the Wadi Hareidhin crossed the road, and by 3.50 am the Turkish campfires at Magdhaba were visible. One hour later Major General Chauvel halted the column on a level plain about four miles (6.5 km) from Magdhaba, ordered all Brigades to dismount, and men and animals fed. Bob no doubt joined the others in No. 12 Company who took the opportunity to 'light up and boil the billy'. He and many others no doubt would have concurred with the observation of Corporal Jim McMillan of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment: 'it was quite evident that the enemy were not expecting visitors, at least not for breakfast anyway'.⁶



Position of DHQ Magdhaba – Sketch by Thomas Henry Ivers
1919 - AWM ART02632



Magdhaba Hills (DHQ position) 1919 - AWM B00853

As dawn was breaking around 6.30 am, the fires at Magdhaba disappeared and the town and wadi were covered with a 'heavy layer of smoke'. The whole column was 'brought up into line of masses out of view of the enemy and about three miles (4.8 km) [north-west] from his position'. The ICC barracked their camels on the right of the Inverness Battery, where, according to Frank Reid, they had a 'splendid view'. Major General Chauvel had set up his Divisional Head Quarters (DHQ) immediately to the right of the ICC position adjacent to the telegraph line to El Arish. As he was in a designated reserve company, Bob was now in a position to observe the events of the day as they unfolded. As the sun rose and the smoke dissipated, the day turned clear and bright.⁷



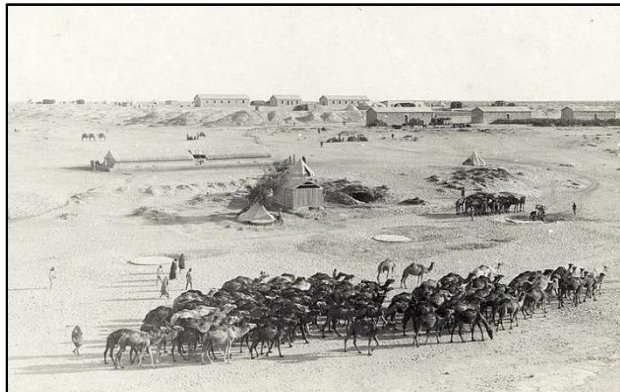
Camel Corps Dismounting to Advance on Foot at
Magdhaba - Harold Septimus Power 1925
AWM ART09230

Shortly after 6.30 am, the first BE2cs from the 1st Squadron, AFC arrived from Mustabig, and flying low, began to bomb the Turkish positions. Until this time, Major General Chauvel and his staff had only been able to make out the major buildings at Magdhaba through the smoke which, together with a buildup of sand from a recent khamsin (dry sandstorm), effectively hid the exact location of the five defensive redoubts. They already knew that the redoubts existed as they had to hand a map drawn from aerial photographs taken previously by 1st Squadron. Turkish rifle and shrapnel fire at the aircraft soon revealed their positions. At 7.50 am the

first message was dropped from an aircraft to the waiting Divisional staff below. Its coloured streamer would have been clearly visible to Bob and the other ICC troopers nearby. Another message streamer followed 10 minutes later. Major General Chauvel was now in a position to plan the attack and at 8.22 am issued his orders, with the attack to commence as soon as the artillery opened fire. As the ICC Brigade was a larger unit than any of the Light Horse brigades, it was selected to make the frontal assault. By 8.45 am the 3rd Battalion ICC (Nos. 1, 11 and 15 Companies) were forming up in open order north of the El Arish Road, with their centre on the telegraph line, and their objective being No. 2 redoubt⁸ on their right front. The NZMR Brigade and the 3rd Light Horse Brigade were on the left of the ICC, charged with attacking the Turkish right and rear and thus cutting off any line of retreat.⁹



AFC Message Streamer
AWM REL28974



Maghaba Village C 1915-1916
LC CN 2007675298



The Ground at Maghaba crossed by the ICC and Light Horse 1919 - AWM B00856

General von Kressenstein had good reason to feel confident in the Maghaba position. Most of the garrison consisted of Syrian conscripts, often viewed as of 'lower quality and dubious loyalty' by their Ottoman officers, but who on the day proved stubbornly effective. While they were supported by only one machine gun and four outdated 1873 model Krupps 7.5cm 'Gebirgskanone' guns, the well-designed system of redoubts 'each capable of covering the next' were sited on ground most advantageous to these defenders. The Wadi el Arish at Maghaba was 'a complicated gorge some twenty or thirty feet deep (6-9 m) in the clay, and was freely broken on either side by short rough bays affording the best of cover to troops'. Sand dunes came right down to the wadi on the west, and to the east and north, from which any attack must come, stretched a plain of flat, hard sand dotted with scrubby bushes and 'gay with...[winter] desert flowers'. If the Maghaba garrison could hold out for one day, lack of water would ensure Bob would be returning defeated to El Arish with the rest of Major General Chauvel's force by the evening.¹⁰

Unlike Light Horse troopers, ICC troopers, given the size of their mounts, had to advance from the start on foot. Initially, the 3rd Battalion was not fired on by the Turkish defenders, but this soon changed after the Inverness Battery commenced firing at 9.50 am. After a pilot landed near DHQ and delivered a message that there were signs of a Turkish retreat south, Major General Chauvel, at 10.00 am, sent two regiments of the 1st Light Horse Brigade trotting past the right of the ICC. This provoked a strong reaction from the Turkish defenders. Now exposed to heavy rifle and shrapnel fire, the ICC advance slowed. The only cover was 'tufts of grass just high enough to conceal a man lying down'. No. 6 Company from Bob's 1st Battalion was sent forward at this time to extend the left of the ICC 'and gain contact with the [NZMR] Brigade'. By 12.30 pm, No. 14 Company from the 2nd Battalion had also been ordered into the attack in the centre of the ICC line, following the telegraph line on their left. By use of disciplined covering fire by sections and fine work by Lewis machine gunners, ICC casualties were kept low. The accuracy of the Inverness and Somerset Batteries was



Lewis Gunner in Action at Maghaba
December 23, 1916 - AWM P00812.011

limited by the poor visibility due to the heat mirages, dust and smoke, and the sand nullified the effectiveness of their 13 pounder (6 kg) shells on the redoubts. The ICC HKS Battery was more effective in support, particularly after 11.15 am when they took their guns across the wadi to within 1,950 yards (1,783 m) of No. 2 redoubt. By 1.30 pm, the ICC had 'reached a broad shallow wadi 1,000 yards (915 m) from the enemy's position but appeared to be unable to make further progress.'¹¹

Bob meanwhile was still waiting with the rest of No. 12 Company in reserve. He could not have missed seeing the significant air support provided from early morning until mid-afternoon. The 1st Squadron AFC flew 12 sorties and the 14th Squadron RFC a further three. They dropped 1,300 pounds (590 kg) of bombs on Magdhaba, machine gunned the Turkish positions, and dropped, or landed and delivered, messages to DHQ about Turkish troop locations and the progress of the attack. Major General Chauvel wrote later that there were sometimes four aircraft on the ground behind his DHQ at a time. At 2.00 pm, Bob would have observed the Somerset Battery limbering up and moving to the right of the Inverness Battery and closer to the ICC position, where they could provide better support. Bob was in little danger where he was though, as Turkish fire was focused on the advancing troops.¹²

Just after 1.00 pm, Major General Chauvel received advice from the engineers at Bir Lahfan that they were unable to get water. Given that no progress was being made and that the horses had been without water for nearly 24 hours, at 1.50 pm he telegraphed Lieutenant General Chetwode that he intended to withdraw. Then, without waiting for approval, he sent out the order to his brigades to withdraw at 3.00 pm. Even as he did so, the situation was improving. Under well organised covering fire, Nos. 1 and 11 Companies ICC, with the 3rd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade) on their right, had moved forward to within 100 yards (92 m) of No. 2 redoubt. With a final bayonet charge, the Turkish defenders surrendered. By the time Lieutenant General Chetwode replied at 2.20 pm strongly urging the fight not be abandoned 'even at the cost of some horses', Major General Chauvel could inform him that 'there was no further doubt as to the result'. By 3.40 pm, the 3rd Light Horse and NZMR Brigades were closing in from the north and east, Nos. 6, 14 and 15 Companies ICC were advancing on the centre of the village, and the 1st Light Horse Brigade was attacking No. 1 redoubt, with covering fire from Nos. 1 and 11 Companies ICC now established in No. 2 Redoubt. Bob's Company, No. 12, was now finally ordered to advance in support.¹³



Hospital and Stores Buildings Magdhaba
December 23-24, 1916 - AWM H13646



Turkish Soldiers KIA at Magdhaba
December 23-24, 1916 - AWM P01034.011

Each four-man group of No. 12 Company handed over their camels to their No. 3 man, the designated camel holder, before going into action. It is not known whether or not Bob remained in charge of his group's camels or went forward with the rest of the company. Regardless, he was not to see action at Magdhaba. Even at a quickened pace, the advance of No. 12 Company over the three miles (4.8 km) to the centre of the village would have taken the best part of an hour. With fighting now at close quarters, Major General Chauvel had ordered the Inverness and Somerset Batteries to cease fire twenty minutes before No. 12 Company began their advance, although the HKS Battery, who were much closer to the action, continued to provide 'effective support'. At 4.00 pm, No. 1 redoubt was taken by the 1st Light Horse Brigade, and the Turkish Commanding Officer, Kadri Bey, taken prisoner, which hastened the collapse of any coordinated resistance. Within twenty minutes the village buildings and remaining redoubts had also been overrun. By 4.30 pm,

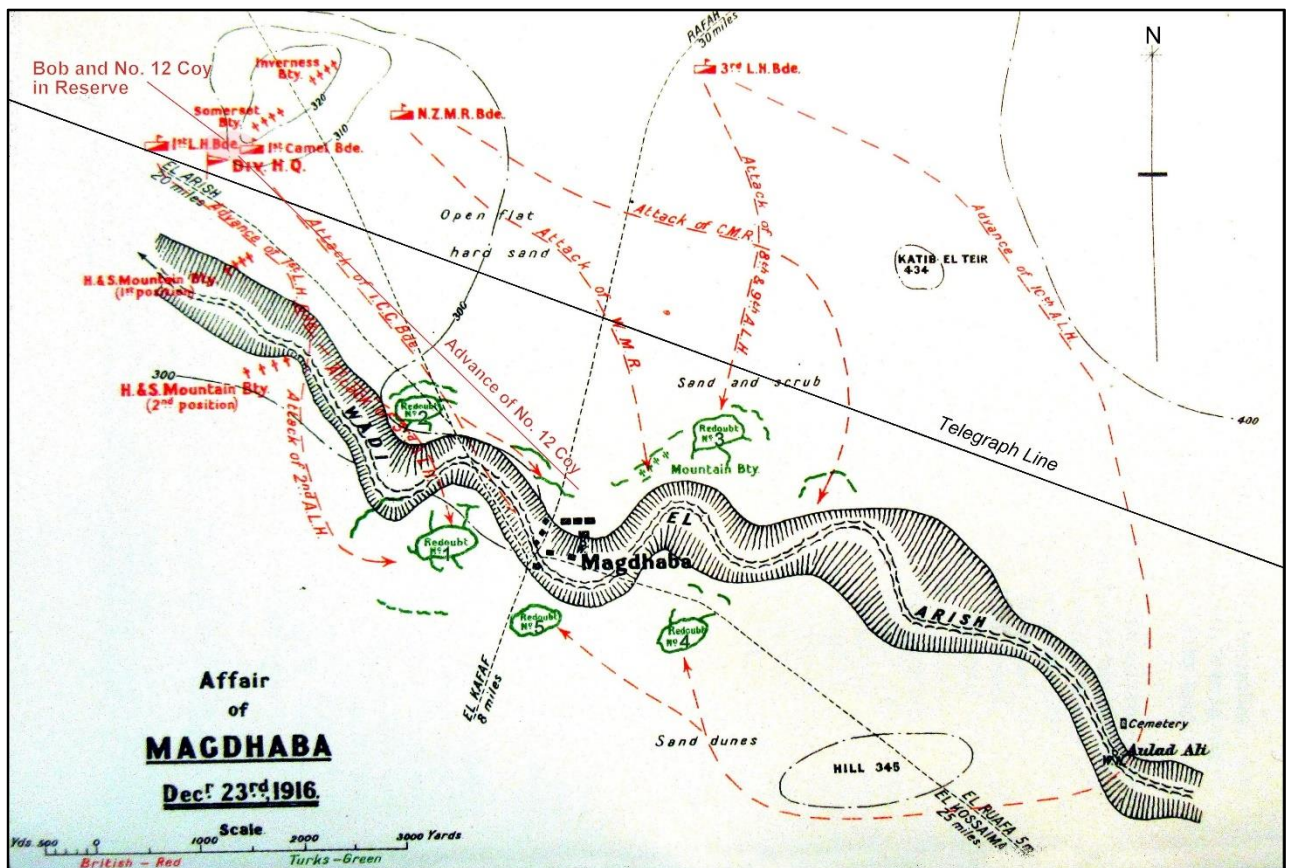


Trenches at Magdhaba December 23-24, 1916
AWM P00228.029

'as the short winter day was closing,...the whole position had been taken, though firing continued from isolated parties, chiefly from the sand dunes south of Magdhaba until after dark'. No. 12 Company would have arrived at about this time, entering a scene of 'great animation and confusion' as darkness fell.¹⁴

The ICC companies, now including No. 12, rallied quickly in the darkness, showing no interest in collecting prisoners, and returned to their camels. The full water bottles¹⁵ of the troopers of No. 12 Company would have been welcomed by those ICC and Light Horse troopers who had struggled forward in what turned out to be, as Trooper Joseph Michael Bolger in No. 1 Company later

wrote, a 'very hot' day. On the way back, the ICC companies would have passed the bodies of the two ICC Brigade troopers killed during the advance, and would have seen the little fires that had been lit to mark the position of wounded men, some of whom would have been the 27 wounded from the ICC Brigade. No. 12 Company had incurred no casualties. Once reformed, the ICC Brigade started back towards El Arish, and by midnight were bivouacked about three to four miles (4.8-6.5 km) up the Wadi. Bob and the other troopers were astir again by 2.30 am, and well on the way to El Arish by 4.00 am. It was their third night in the saddle in the last four days, and Jock Davidson described how 'men went to sleep in the saddle...some men even fell off and slept by the way'. The night was extremely cold, with the same stifling dust that had enveloped them on the previous night. Many were so tired they suffered hallucinations. One trooper in No. 12 Company swore he saw 'a large town with lighted streets'. By 9.30 am on Christmas Eve, the ICC companies straggled into camp, 'dismounted and [feeling] fed up'. They watered their camels, barracked them and fitted the nose bags to feed them, then 'lay down alongside their mounts...and were soon snoring'.¹⁶



The Magdhaba Affair December 23, 1916
MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, *History of the Great War: Military Operations Egypt & Palestine*, p. 252.
Redoubts renumbered and additional annotations by author

Chapter 13

An El Arish Christmas

Christmas Day dawned bitterly cold, with a north westerly wind blowing hard, by 4.00 pm bringing showers, and by evening, heavy rain. There had been no Christmas carols on Christmas Eve, nor cheery voices 'wishing the compliments of the season', as most troops at El Arish had taken the opportunity to sleep 'the sleep of the weary'. Some Christmas mail and foodstuffs had arrived by sea, but generally the troops at El Arish had little more than their rations to provide 'Christmas cheer'. Trooper Michael Minahan at the Australian Mounted Division Headquarters complained that daily rations were 'very seldom not enough to fatten a rat'. William Peterson in the 2nd Light Horse Regiment had a Christmas dinner of 'Fray Bentos [Bully Beef] and Army Biscuits No. 5...armour plated', Trooper Walter Stewart in the 10th Light Horse Regiment had 'two tins of dog, pudding and fruit jam, cheese and bread', Lance Corporal George Auchterlonie in the 8th Light Horse Regiment only had 'a slice of bread & jam and a piece of plum pudding' and Wilfred Evans 'bully and biscuits'. A few men did a little better. Private Cady Hoyte and his fellow dispatch riders at Desert Column Headquarters bought a couple of fowls from a local and raided a garden for carrots, then boiled the lot up. He commented however that 'the so-called chickens...had seen more than one Christmas Day'. By evening the men of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment had to consume their Christmas dinner standing up holding the food and mugs at arm's length to avoid the torrents of water pouring off their hats.¹

Bob and the other troopers in No. 12 Company appear to have fared a little better than most. As camels could carry a much greater load than horses, ICC troopers usually had in addition to preserved meat and biscuits, items such as flour, rice and potatoes. According to Jock Davidson however, 'regulation ration was neglected' as the Australian Comfort Fund's Christmas Billies had arrived. The contents of each billy varied as they were contributed by individual members of the Australian public. Bob's billy may have been similar to that described by an AIF soldier receiving his in Cairo in December, 1916:

One plum pudding, 1 tin toffee, 6 packets of chewing gum, 6 wattle buttons, 1 tin Capstan tobacco, 1 cake soap, 2 khaki hankies, 1 tin Milkmaid coffee and milk, 3 tins ham and tongue paste, 1 tin smoked sardines, 2 tins Vice-Regal tobacco, 2 packets Capstan cigarettes, 1 tooth brush, envelopes and paper...[and] a nice little letter from Winnie Murphy, of Lucknow – New South Wales

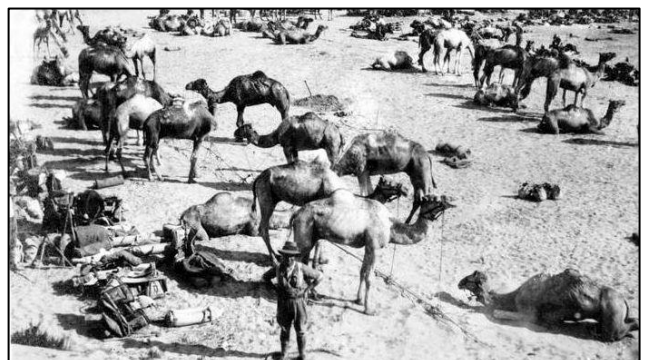
Other billies contained 'tins of fruit, sweets and other eatables'. The ICC were more fortunate than some of the Light Horse Regiments who had received their Christmas Billies just prior to setting out for Magdhaba, and attached them to their saddles. When advancing at the gallop, 'the billies worked loose, and Christmas puddings, tins of milk, packets of chocolates...were strewn thickly over the approach to the battleground'. The Quartermaster for No. 12 Company had also been able to obtain a rum issue which 'brighten[ed] up the sleepy camp'. Bob may well have reflected on the contrast with his last Christmas in Australia, likely the last time he had seen any member of his family, and



ICC Troopers with Christmas Billies at El Ferdan 1916 (Those issued to ICC troopers at El Arish would have been the same) – AWM J06053



No. 3 Company Camp El Arish March 1917 (A few tents had obviously arrived by this time) – AWM J05844



ICC Camel Lines El Arish February 1917 – IWM Q104003

perhaps felt, as did Private Maurice Cann Evans of the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance when reflecting on his last Christmas — ‘This year I am at El Arish of all god-forgotten places!!’ ‘Between want of sleep and a big issue of rum’ however, Christmas night for Bob and the rest of No. 12 Company was soon spent sleeping as comfortably as possible in the pouring rain.²

No tents had arrived before the winter storms commenced on Christmas Day, and shelter had to be improvised, resulting in a proliferation of ‘unauthorized “bivvies”...pieces of sacking, pieces of canvas, Bedouin cloth’, and of course the ubiquitous ‘blanket bivouacs’. ‘Palm branch gunyahs’, often used in the desert for more lengthy stops, would have been of little use to ward off the cold and rain, and certainly made more difficult to construct given the order issued that ‘no palm leaves [are] to be cut’. The building of shelters was made even more difficult by a strict order that ‘no trees of any description are to be cut down’. The ICC troopers were not as well off as some of the Light Horse troopers who had delayed their exit from Magdhaba and scavenged some ‘fine shelters’ of waterproof ‘Turkish oil sheets...superior to our own’ which could be erected using an accompanying kit of jointed sticks and metal pegs. Regardless of the shelter, the ground and the men’s clothing were constantly wet and, as one ICC trooper, Jack Martin, lamented of their shelters, ‘the sand seems to get in no matter how you build them’. Digging down in the sand to build a ‘bivy’ was not a sensible option. In the 52nd (Lowland) Division, one man was smothered and another hospitalised when their dugout in the sand fell in. Better accommodation in the form of bell tents did not begin to arrive at El Arish from the railhead until January 7, 1917.³

Fires may have helped to ward off the cold, but firewood was hard to come by at El Arish. William Peterson complained that it ‘took 20 minutes to collect enough sticks to boil the billy’. While a ‘light scrub’ grew in many parts of the Sinai desert, and ‘was good enough to boil the billy under a hot sun... [it was] never good enough as firewood to make a successful fire’. Firewood sourced from Cyprus was brought to the railhead and was supposed to be issued on the basis of ‘two lbs. (just under 1 kg) ... per man’, but seldom was. The distance to the railhead from El Arish ‘brought the firewood question to a climax’. Men in the camel companies had long ‘saved the wooden portions of matches...[which] with dried camel-manure often gave...a chance to boil a dixie of water’, but this was hardly sufficient to generate any warmth. Routine orders in December, 1916, warned against cutting down trees or telegraph poles and threatened that ‘offenders will be severely dealt with’. Despite this, ‘five whole miles (8 km) of telegraph line’ had disappeared by Christmas Day, which the camel companies blamed on the Light Horse and the Light Horse blamed on the camel companies. Bob’s Commanding Officer, George Langley, in later telling the story against himself, wrote that he

gave a dissertation [to the Battalion] on the enormity of the offence and threatened punishment to anyone found in possession of wood, even resembling telegraph poles. The speech was more than impressive as it was delivered from a high mound which acted as a dais. I was later told the unkind truth that the mound I was haranguing from was composed of a store of cut up telegraph poles buried by my battalion cook

There is no doubt that it was the camel companies who had obtained ‘a little store of wood put away for the cold nights’.⁴



ICC Patrol South of El Arish
Inchbald, Geoffrey, *The Imperial Camel Corps*, p. 62



El Arish Beach and Pier C 1917
AWM B02893

Despite the wind and rain soon developing into a ‘bitter gale’ with ‘torrential rain’ and ‘even hail’, there was no let-up in the work of the ICC. Immediately on their return to their bivouac about 1.5



Camels being loaded at El Arish Railhead C 1916
AWM A02066

miles (2.4 km) south of El Arish on Christmas Eve, the ICC companies were required to establish a line of observation posts on hills east and south of the town. All roads leading into El Arish were to be patrolled for three miles (4.8 km) beyond the observation posts at 'uncertain hours', and by night standing patrols were also to be kept on these roads. On Christmas Day, Major General Chauvel ordered the ICC Brigade to send a company to Bir Lahfan by midday the next day. Two days later a further ICC company was dispatched as a screen for armoured cars proceeding to Maghaba, and on January 2, 1917, a further patrol was sent in support of an armoured car sent to Maghaba to

assist 'a fallen aeroplane'. After clearance of mines by the Royal Navy and the construction of a pier by the Australian Naval Bridging Train, stores were being landed by sea by the morning of Christmas Eve. This success was short lived, as the storms brought strong currents, shifting sandbars and heavy surf, wrecking the pier and one supply ship. Continued reliance on camel convoys from the railhead brought further work for the ICC and by the end of the month one company per Battalion was engaged on bringing in supplies from the new railhead at kilo 139. In addition, when the NZMR Brigade was moved to the railhead 'to facilitate supply arrangements', the ICC Brigade had to take over the NZMR Brigade's support line.⁵

All of these operations were on top of daily routines. In a standing camp such as that at El Arish, camel lines required men to be on stable duty during the day and required stable guards at night. Picketing lines in wet weather had to be moved frequently as there was little sun to dry out the dung. Aerial observation posts also had to be kept manned. Eight men were required for water duty from 8.30 am until dusk at the two wells north of the bivouac allocated to the Brigade for drinking and cooking water, and many others for supervising the watering of camels at the designated wells in the wadi north-east of the town. Rex Hall noted that watering 200 camels from a single well could involve 10 men and take the best part of a day. Each unit was also responsible for drawing its own rations and forage from the dumps that accumulated the supplies brought in from the railhead. Bob was not sent to Bir Lahfan (it was Rex Hall with No. 14 Company), but would certainly have been involved in many of the other duties. Perhaps the only time when he might have been able to even partially relax was if he was allocated the duty of taking a group of camels out to graze between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm. This required the two or three men allocated this duty to patrol the outskirts of the group ensuring that the camels remained in the designated area, usually an undemanding task. Frank Reid even contended that once the group was grazing contentedly, he could dismount and sit under a bush and do some writing.⁶



Camels at a Watering Point El Arish C 1916
AWM H00906

If the cold, rain, wind, sand, 'mobile rations'⁷ and constant work were not enough, there was the problem of water. There was no running water in the wadi in December, and the ICC had only two wells to meet the needs of some 1,500 troopers. These had been chlorinated on December 21, 1916, but regardless, troops were 'warned against using well water until it is reported safe'. Indeed, it was not until Christmas Eve that a Specialist Water Officer, Captain Pierce, accompanied by a trained chemist arrived in El Arish to test wells for salinity and poisons. In the meantime, troopers carried tablets of sodium bisulphate to 'render the local brackish water palatable [and] safe as regards cholera', but

despite the risk, men strongly resisted using them given their caustic effects. It was only after December 29, 1916, that the 'local brackish water' was considered suitable for drinking. The water from the Nile River, delivered to the railhead by a pipeline, despite being strained, filtered through sand and chlorinated, was as Colonel Downes described, little better than 'liquid sewerage, the number of micro-organisms per cubic centimetre [being] uncountable and their variety perhaps

unequaled'. Peroxide of iron suspension in the water from the iron pipeline gave the water 'an unpleasant taste and ...[made] tea unpalatable'. One Light Horse trooper declared that by the time they came to drink it this treated water tasted 'as if there were a very dead camel lying a hundred yards further up the stream whence it was drawn'. Bob may well have felt that even the water at Hungerford during his childhood was preferable, and, like Staff Sergeant Stanley Parkes of the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, 'would [have given] anything for [a] drop of fresh water'.⁸

Surprisingly, given the conditions at El Arish, there was little sickness. On arrival, Colonel Downes was seriously concerned that no Sanitary Section had been sent forward, and that no supplies of disinfectant or water treatment chemicals were available. Even when a truckload of supplies of Chloride of Lime, Quicklime and other disinfectants finally arrived at kilo 139, he had to transport them to El Arish himself on December 31, 1916, by sending the camels from the Welsh Ambulance Convey to get them. A 'Fumigating Train' to treat the men's clothing for vermin however, took another month to arrive at El Arish. When smallpox was identified amongst the inhabitants of El Arish township, strict orders were issued that no member of the ICC or Mounted Division was to enter the town. Warnings were also issued against eating seeds or nuts found locally, as a number had poisonous properties and had caused some cases of illness. The lack of water had always presented problems in relation to personal hygiene in the Sinai, and was no less of a problem at El Arish. With the rain able to fill containers, perhaps Bob took the opportunity to fill a bucket as did Wilfred Evans and 'spread out [a] sack on the ground & with the aid of a sponge & soap manage to sluice...all over....It is chilly in the open & the wind whistles round'. Bob may even have had the opportunity to get to the beach as did Robert Fell, to collect stores and take time for a swim, although Robert described it as 'the coldest swim I ever had'. While many men had 'septic sores like Barcoo Rot', which Frank Weir blamed on a lack of vegetables, in the last fortnight of December, 1916, the only serious illness amongst the troops at El Arish comprised one fatal case of typhus and four cases of diphtheria. The percentage of daily admissions sick was only 0.17 per cent of total troop numbers. The ICC had had only 30 troopers admitted to hospital with illness in this period. There is no evidence in Bob's service record that he was among them.⁹

Men in the Light Horse Brigades had had previous experience of what they saw as 'British military incompetence' in making arrangements for the evacuation of wounded after a battle. At Romani, in August, 1916, the evacuation 'was carried out in a manner which caused much suffering and shock to the wounded', exacerbated by the fact that British authorities gave precedence to the transport of Turkish prisoners of war over that of Australian and New Zealand wounded. The men of the ICC at El Arish, having just participated in their first pitched battle, would now witness a similar debacle in relation to the wounded from Magdhaba, 27 of whom were fellow troopers. The 'extreme suffering...[during]...the hideous night' of transport to El Arish, was compounded by the fact that the 'receiving station...on the beach at El Arish' was only manned by the mobile section of the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance. Tents, stretchers, blankets, medical orderlies and supplies had to be scrounged from the 52nd (Lowland) Division, AMD Headquarters and a naval beach party before the wounded arrived at 4.00 am on Christmas Day. Patients were being admitted while the tents were still being erected. Eventually, 'some major surgery was carried out, though with very inadequate appliances'. The next day, as a convoy of sand carts was being organised to evacuate the wounded to the railhead, orders were received from the Desert Column that 'all evacuation must be by sea'. This was despite the fact that a request for a hospital ship had already been rejected and the sea was too rough for embarkation. The wounded languished two days on the exposed beach at El Arish before this order was rescinded and the wounded, both allied and Turkish, transported to a hospital train at the railhead on December 28-29, 1916. From the day of the battle, it took some seven to nine days for the Magdhaba wounded to reach a hospital. This experience would have done nothing to alleviate the fear of being wounded which was shared by all troops in the Sinai, and no doubt now by Bob too. They knew that 'transport was always agonizing and often fatal', and that if they survived the initial move to a receiving centre, evacuation to a hospital could be what one historian has described as 'Crimean in its neglect'.¹⁰

The only likelihood of Bob or anyone else being killed or wounded at El Arish was to come from the air. Turkish troops did not attempt to probe the outpost lines, and the only reported contact during this period was a Turkish camel patrol of about six men encountered by the 1st Light Horse Regiment during a reconnaissance to Sheikh Zowaiid. The Turks quickly retreated to avoid conflict. Frank

Reid thought the main danger was from ‘packs of famished dogs...abandoned by Bedouins’ which followed patrols and men out grazing camels, and who had to be shot if they came too close. However, FA 300, the German squadron now based at Beersheba, was active whenever the weather permitted. Two planes ‘dropped 12 bombs’ on the NZMR Brigade just as they arrived back at their bivouac in the early morning of Christmas Eve, but caused no casualties. Jock Davidson tells the story that when the ICC Brigade was on parade to be congratulated by Lieutenant General Chetwode and Major General Chauvel for their efforts at Magdhaba, a ‘taube¹¹...laid his eggs’ and the parade and Generals scattered. This parade occurred on December 28, 1916, when the weather was still raining and blowing a gale, and there is no mention of this incident in any Unit War Diaries, so bombing by FA 300 on this day seems most unlikely. It was New Year’s Day before FA 300 returned, with three planes flying over El Arish on their way to bomb the dumps and railhead at kilo 139. Here they were more successful, with one man from the 8th Light Horse Regiment being killed and six men wounded, two of whom subsequently died. Three horses were also killed. ‘Hostile aircraft’ were again reported overhead in the early afternoon of January 6, 1917, but there was no reported bombing, possibly as ‘two of our planes were well after him’.¹²

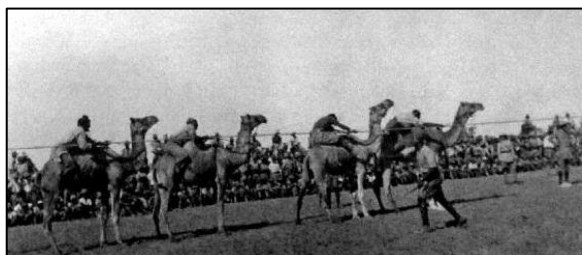


‘Dud’ bomb dropped at El Arish by FA 300 1916
AWM H03784

The next day brought the most intensive of the FA 300 air raids on El Arish, one of which brought the action close to Bob in the ICC Brigade camp. By this time the railhead was almost at the town at kilo 152. Three planes attacked the new supply depot and railhead and the 1st Light Horse Brigade camp just after 11.00 am. Twenty-eight men in the Egyptian Labour Corps were killed and 25 wounded. The 1st Light Horse Brigade suffered only the loss of one horse killed and two wounded, and one trooper slightly wounded. Captain Oscar Teichman, a Medical Officer with the Worcestershire Yeomanry Regiment, explained that ‘our own men...spread themselves out and [lay] down when being bombed’, but the Egyptian Labour Corps...when thoroughly frightened always collected into large groups [making] a very easy target for Fritz’. That night the weather was clear and ‘the moon was shining beautiful and bright’. At about 9.00 pm, FA 300 returned, this time with four planes. The railhead and 1st Light Horse Brigade were again attacked, with the only casualty this time being an Egyptian Coastguard attached to the Desert Column Signals Unit. He was buried in his dugout and suffocated. The ICC Brigade bivouac was also bombed and machine gunned, fortunately without casualties. Frank Reid tells the story that Egyptians attached to his company to look after sick camels had built a sturdy bomb-proof shelter with sandbag walls and roof, but when the bombs fell they ‘fled towards the open desert, while several Cameliers dashed inside the sandbag shelter’. Such shelters though would have been few and far between, and the lack of casualties in the ICC Brigade would have been more likely the result of the difficulty FA 300 had in bombing accurately at night, together with the scattered nature of the camel lines and, as George Langley said, ‘the bombs sank into the sand localising the explosion’.¹³

Next day, January 8, 1917, was a ‘real Riverina winter’s day’ according to Frank Weir of the 1st Light Horse Regiment, and in these ideal conditions the ICC Brigade held its first combined company sports meeting. Sports in the Camel Corps included events such as trotting and galloping races, stunt riding, as well as wrestling, musical chairs, tug of wars and egg and spoon races, all on camel back. At midday, according to Frank Reid,

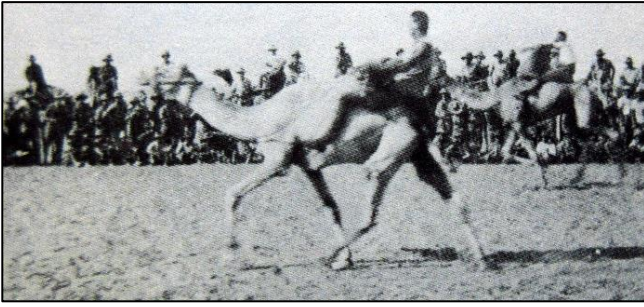
a German pilot in a taube passing overhead noticed the gathering...[and] took a keen interest in us....Just as “Stinker” and “Eau-de-Cologne” were running a dead heat in the Camel Handicap the airman swooped lower...we scattered in all directions. That was the end of our sports meeting.



Camel Tug of War at ICC Sports - Gregory, Alan, p. 4



Camel Stunt Riding at ICC Sports – IWM Q103972



Camel Race at ICC Sports
Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 97



Camel Wrestling at ICC Sports
NAMNZ 1993.1220

The taube was apparently driven off by anti-aircraft fire, but dropped bombs elsewhere at El Arish, wounding five men. Unable to get more than a third of their squadron in the air at any one time, FA 300 often had only one or two 'taubes' in action per day. Had the weather been favourable, and had FA 300 not been short of fuel and spare parts as a result of the tenuous supply lines from Germany, Bob and the rest of the ICC may not have been so fortunate in avoiding casualties. In general, however, the troops at El Arish treated the bombing raids by FA 300 with disdain, often just turning around and 'call[ing] the bomb a bastard' and going on with their work. Frank Weir even complained that 'a Bedouin dog stole our bacon, that is worse or as bad as a Taube'.¹⁴

Despite the risk of disease and the threat of spying, the native inhabitants of El Arish were initially allowed to move about as they wished and would often come into the ICC lines seeking 'baksheesh', although they were forbidden to move past the outpost lines without a special permit. This was probably the only time when Bob would have had the opportunity to interact closely with any of the local residents. Most accounts indicate that troopers at El Arish generally had a positive attitude to the local inhabitants, perhaps because 'there appeared to be a mixture of races...many had blue eyes and fairish skin ...[and] indeed were a cosmopolitan, cheerful and vivacious people'. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Guy Powles of the NZMR Brigade suggested some were descendants of Napoleon's *Armée d'Orient* which had captured and occupied El Arish from the Ottomans in 1799 – something certainly not inconceivable. To men on mobile rations, locals who came down to the watering points selling local produce, such as 'half ripe tomatoes', fresh carrots and parsnips, would certainly have been welcome. Opportunities to obtain local produce however were limited, with an order issued that

Sinai is a province of Egypt and not enemy territory, therefore the property must be protected and any willful destruction of fruit trees will be treated as a serious offence...Livestock, poultry etc is not to be interfered with...and cultivations...not trespassed upon.

By the end of December, the movement of locals was severely restricted following the smallpox outbreak.¹⁵



El Arish Inhabitants C 1916
AWM J01001



Women Drawing Water from an El Arish Well February 1917
IWM Q57825

The attitude of the troopers to the desert Bedouins however, was the complete reverse. Bob would have had little contact with Bedouins up until this time, but others in No. 12 Company would no doubt have passed on their longstanding views that the Bedouin were 'without either moral or

religious principles', spied for the Turks, and were untrustworthy scavengers who 'prowled round the edges of the battlegrounds ready to tear uniform and boots from the fallen, and even to dig up and strip the dead'. The British official policy of tolerance towards the Bedouin was particularly infuriating to those in direct contact with them. By early January, 1917, letters were sent to Sheiks



Bedouins Surrendering at El Arish December 1916
AWM H02831

of tribes living east and south of El Arish 'desiring them to come in...to surrender...[under] a white flag'. Troops were ordered that 'Natives endeavouring to enter the outpost line without waving white cloths should be treated as suspects and shot if they endeavour to break through'. For Bob and others on outpost duty, this was a clear indication of a hardening of the official attitude to Bedouins, and was certainly not unwelcome. Frank Reid claimed that ICC patrols 'kept a watchful eye on prowling Bedouins, who were suspected of spying', and that 'there were men in those patrols who would not have hesitated to put a bullet through one of them'.¹⁶

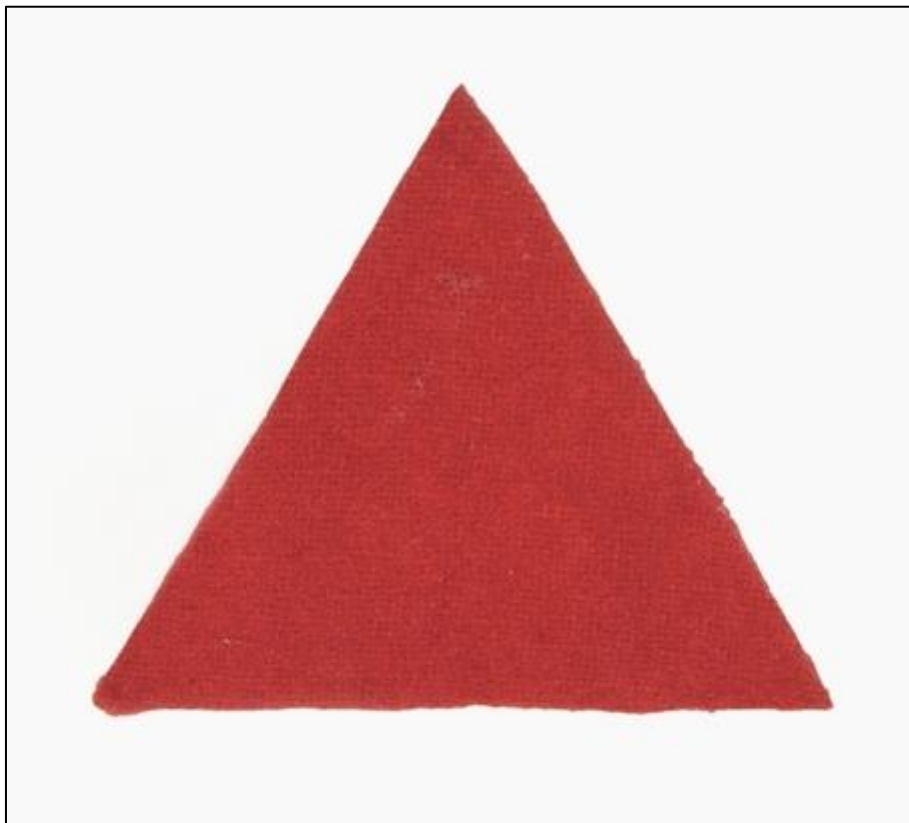
The cold, wet and threatening weather came to a head on New Year's Day not long after the bombing raid by FA 300. By 9.30 am, a violent dust storm had commenced which lasted for most of the day and into the next, by sundown bringing rain. The 'fierce wind', continuous rain and freezing conditions continued unabated for the next three days. William Peterson complained that the 'fine drift sand...simply smothers everything...we look like dustmen'. Trooper Gordon Cooper of the 1st Light Horse Brigade Machine Gun Squadron described the second day as a 'wretched day sand & rained all day, one of the most cruel nights I remember...rained incessantly all night, wet through by 8 o'clock'. Frank Reid in the ICC Brigade bivouac recounted that

The swirling and gritty sand struck the exposed parts of our bodies like the lash of a whip; soon little streams of blood were trickling down our faces and arms...[we] endeavoured to protect our faces with our arms. The camels also had a bad time. On such occasions they turn their backs to the khamsin and close their nostrils, thus preventing themselves from breathing properly. When the storm had passed two of the camels in my company were dead.

On January 3, 1917, the Wadi el Arish began to flood, with Rex Hall upstream at Bir Lahfan noting that the water was 'strong enough to wash a native off his feet [and] amongst other things two dead horses floated by'. By the evening of January 5, 1917, the sun had come out, and the next morning ushered in conditions that were 'lovely and warm all day'. This coincided with the first issue of fresh meat and vegetables, after what was for Bob and the rest of the ICC and Light Horse troopers over a fortnight existing on little else other than mobile rations.¹⁷

In the middle of this atrocious weather, two events of significance occurred. On January 4, 1917, the first construction train arrived at El Arish and work began on building the railhead station, sidings and dumps, although the accompanying pipeline would take another month to arrive. This had the immediate effect of reducing for the ICC the distance and time taken on camel convoy work. Of even greater significance for Bob however, was the implementation of the next phase of the re-organisation of the ICC Battalions. From 9.00 am on Wednesday, January 3, 1917, No. 12 Company, 1st Battalion and No. 14 Company, 2nd Battalion were transferred to the 3rd Battalion, No. 3 Company, 2nd Battalion was transferred to the 1st Battalion and Nos. 6 and 7 Companies from the 1st Battalion were transferred to the 2nd Battalion. In line with the Australian and New Zealand Governments October 1916 requirement that distinct ANZAC Battalions in the ICC Brigade be formed, this stage of the re-organisation meant that the 1st and 3rd Battalions were now composed entirely of Australian and New Zealand troopers. The following day, Major Hubert Gervoise Huddleston, Bob's new Commanding Officer, arrived in El Arish and took over command of the 3rd Battalion. Thirty-six-year-old Hubert Huddleston was a former Coldstream Guards and Dorsetshire Regiment officer who had seen action in the Boer War. Another person who would shortly become significant in Bob's life, 28-year-old Church of England Chaplain, Captain Charles Scott Little, reported to the ICC Brigade on January 5, 1917, and was posted to the 3rd Battalion. As an adherent to the Church of England, it is more than likely Bob attended Charles' first Holy Communion and Service for the ICC Brigade held on Sunday morning, January 7, 1917, on the flat ground between the 1st and 2nd Battalion camps.¹⁸

General Archibald Murray, Commanding Officer of the EEF, visited El Arish on December 27, 1916, and pressed Lieutenant General Chetwode to 'advance as rapidly as possible along the coast...to compel the Turks to retire from the Sinai'. On December 29, 1916, 1st Squadron AFC and 14th Squadron RFC had reported an 'enemy position at Rafa...a series of trenches and redoubts in a semi-circular formation protecting the approaches by road to Rafa', and that the 'camps at Rafa were bombed'. This was confirmed on the ground in the last two days of December by a reconnaissance in force to Sheik Zowaiid by the 1st Light Horse Brigade. Although observation was made difficult by the misty rain, an advanced party located about 20 enemy posts on El Magruntein. Aerial photography of the Rafa defences was completed on New Year's Day. An intelligence summary for the period January 2-8, 1917, confirmed that 'one or two taburs (battalions) of Turks and Syrians [were]...holding a line of entrenchments at Magruntein'. Major General Chauvel was warned by Lieutenant General Chetwode on January 2, 1917, that 'operations lasting two days may be expected to commence about 5th instant'. On January 6, 1917, special instructions were issued to each Brigade setting out logistical arrangements for an operation against the Rafa position, and at 9.00 am on January 8, 1917, an order was issued detailing each Brigade's role in the march and attack, stating that 'the enemy will be attacked...as soon after dawn on the 9th January as possible'. Following the interrupted ICC sports meeting on January 8, 1917, the ICC Brigade paraded at 2.00 pm, and Bob, together with troopers in all ICC companies except those in No. 14, who remained on guard at Bir Lahfan, proceeded to the rendezvous point on the El Arish-Sheik Zowaiid road near the 1st Light Horse Brigade headquarters at El Risa. After crossing the flooded Wadi el Arish in about 'four feet (1.2 m) of water', they were assembled with the rest of the attacking force by 3.30 pm 'in column of Brigade Masses facing East'.¹⁹



1st Battalion ICC Colour Patch - AWM RELAWM07941.039
Bob was with the 1st Battalion for 75 days followed by the 3rd Battalion for 10 days.
The 3rd Battalion colour patch was green but it is unlikely Bob had the opportunity
before moving out to El Magruntein to change over

Chapter 14

El Magruntein

As Bob waited with his battalion at El Risa, he could not have helped but notice the constant air patrols by 1st Squadron AFC and 14th Squadron RFC over the assembling troops. After the bombing raid by FA 300 that morning, Lieutenant General Chetwode was anxious to ensure that the 'Brigade Masses' were not observed. The air patrols continued until dusk, and from the surviving records of FA 300 it appears that this action was successful in preventing FA 300 from detecting the concentration. At 4.00 pm, not long before sundown, the column moved off for Sheik Zowaiid, via El Burj. Each man carried 'one day's rations, one iron ration, and [the] unconsumed [ration] portion of the day of departure'. The men on horses had only their water bottle and an additional half-gallon of water (2.3 L) carried on baggage camels. Bob, like all cameliers, was much better off, as in addition to his water bottle, each rider's mount carried a five-gallon (23 L) fantasie (water tank).¹

Bob's 3rd Battalion commenced the march to Rafa² with 316 men and 368 camels. The first part of the journey was difficult, traversing 'very heavy sand-dunes' about two to three miles (3.2-4.8 km) inland from the coast before the column reached the old Caravan Route – 'a great shallow trough worked down by the feet of countless generations', now flanked by a modern telegraph wire. The ICC Brigade followed behind the horsemen. The British 5th Mounted Brigade, including the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) B Battery, led and operated as the advanced guard. They were followed by the 1st Light Horse Brigade, the NZMR Brigade, the AMD Artillery (Inverness-shire, Leicestershire and Somerset Territorial Royal Horse Artillery Batteries), and the 3rd Light Horse Brigade. One Troop on each flank from the 1st Light Horse Brigade secured the column's flanks. Behind the ICC Brigade came the 1st Line Transport and Divisional Ammunition Column, the 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance, the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance, the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, the ICC Brigade's 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance Mobile Section, and the Welsh Ambulance No. 1 and No. 2 Convoys. Once the Caravan Route was reached, the artillery and other wheeled transport were given priority on the road, with the mounted troops riding on each side.³



Column advance to Rafa January 8, 1917
AWM J06556



Artillery at El Risa on the way to Rafa January 8, 1917
AWM A02424

The ICC Brigade rode in sections, four abreast. Frank Reid described the start of the ICC Brigade's trek to Sheik Zowaiid:

The sun disappeared behind the horizon, spreading a rose colour over the western sky – a striking contrast to the dull grey sand over which our camels slowly padded their way. As the twilight deepened, the pulsating heat of the day gave way to a refreshing coolness brought by a fanning breeze which swept towards us from the coast. The stillness of the night grew even more intense....Just before nine o'clock a rising moon flooded the desert with its pale, searching light.

The night of January 8, 1917, was 'clear and the air sharp', with a full moon and a total lunar eclipse, which certainly accounts for Frank's description of a 'pale light'. Although Bob was almost certainly oblivious to it, the Blood Moon was perhaps an omen for what was to come. The 'refreshing coolness' soon turned into what the historian for the 9th Light Horse Regiment noted was 'the coldest

[night] that had been experienced in the desert'. The 3rd Battalion War Diary noted that the march was 'very trying to both men and animals on account of the cold and intense dew that was falling'. Cady Hoyte, at the front of the column with the Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment, noted that 'the drop in temperature [and] cold damp atmosphere, [necessitated] a halt to put on our greatcoats'. Wilfred Evans, following along behind Bob in the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, 'suffered considerably from the cold as it was an exceptionally chilly night...[became] terribly sleepy ...and [rode] along in a kind of dream sometimes dozing off on the saddle'. Stanley Parkes, also in the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, noted that it was 'very cold, had to walk at times to get warm and to keep awake'. Jock Davidson recalled that it was 'a beastly cold night, and at times we were forced to dismount and lead camels to keep ourselves warm, [but] this caused the line to straggle out too far, and so had to be discontinued'. It was difficult during night marches for units to maintain the required intervals, usually set at 25 yards (23 m). Unit Seconds in Command had been ordered to always ride in the rear of their unit, and unit Commanding Officers 'from time to time [to] ride back along their unit to [enforce] march discipline'.⁴



ICC Brigade on the march (Unknown Date)
The advance to Rafa would have looked similar to this.
Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 47

Three halts for rest were scheduled, the first for 10 minutes at 4.50 pm. At 6.25 pm, the column passed El Burj, and 20 minutes later again halted for a 15-minute rest break. The final halt for a 15-minute rest was at 8.45 pm. Ten minutes later, the 5th Mounted Brigade reached the crossroads one mile (1.6 km) west of Sheik Zowaiid and halted, concentrating north of the road. The vanguard unit, D Squadron from the Worcestershire Yeomanry Regiment, under orders to ensure that 'no communication is to be allowed to pass between the village and the surrounding country', moved up the Rafa Road for about two miles (3.2 km) and established a line of outposts facing east and south-east. A Squadron of the Worcestershire Yeomanry established a cordon around the village. The ICC Brigade began to arrive at the crossroads at 9.30 pm and concentrated with the rest of the AMD south of the road. By 10.00 pm the tail of the column had closed up. Bob had completed a march of 15½ miles (25 km) in six hours.⁵

Frank Reid described Sheik Zowaiid as 'a delightful spot of greenness that showed up in the moonlight'. Oscar Teichman, a Medical Officer with the Worcestershire Yeomanry, was effusive about what he saw, describing it as:

most picturesque in the brilliant moonlight – in the foreground was a silver lake, here and there dotted with little islands of white salt, resembling snow, and surrounded by patches of green cultivation and giant dark palm-trees, which stood out boldly against the sky. At one end of the glistening water nestled the sleepy little village...not a sound was heard; the silence was uncanny



Sheik Zowaiid Village January 9, 1917 - AWM J00987

Less impressed about the place was Maurice Evans with the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance who had previously visited Sheik Zowaiid while on reconnaissance in late December, 1916, seeing it then as 'a big palm grove rather scattered with a mud village in the middle & a big sized swamp – now a lake – alongside'. Most of the men, including Bob, if they thought about it at all, would have agreed with Maurice. They had halted on cultivated land with a crop about six inches high but with no overhead cover. Although instructed to get as much rest as possible, after barracking the camels, most troopers in the ICC Brigade, and indeed in the rest of the column, found sleep impossible owing to the intense cold. In fact, they could not even lie down for any length of time but 'had to tramp up and down to keep up their circulation'. As fires were prohibited, they could not even brew up a billy

of tea to warm themselves. They remained at this bone-chilling halt at Sheik Zowaiid for three hours.⁶

Three units at Sheik Zowaiid had immediate roles to undertake and thus perhaps were able to keep a little warmer. The Tent Subdivision of the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance commenced the work of establishing a Dressing Station for those wounded and unable to return with their units to El Arish. The 1st Field Squadron Australian Engineers and the 2/1 Cheshire Field Company Royal Engineers (attached to the ICC Brigade) were charged with the task of developing drinking water facilities for the men and their mounts upon their return from Rafa. It had been previously planned that the Welsh Ambulance No. 1 and No. 2 Convoys were to remain at Sheik Zowaiid, but on arrival, Lieutenant General Chetwode issued an order that all wheeled transport, except artillery and mobile section ambulances, was to remain also. This led to protests from the Brigade commanders as this meant that all reserve artillery and small arms ammunition (SAA) would not move up with the troops. Their protests were in vain, and this decision was not without its consequences during the action the next day. The ICC Brigade, and its attached HKS Battery were not affected as they did not rely on wheeled transport for their ammunition reserves.⁷

At 1.00 am, Tuesday, January 9, 1917, Bob and the ICC Brigade left Sheik Zowaiid 'in straggling lines' with the rest of the column, following the 'Old Road' direct to Rafa. The harsh desert sand of the Sinai gradually gave way to a light coating of grass and patches of cultivation. Once again, as he did in relation to the ride to El Arish the previous month, the Australian Official Historian waxed lyrical about this night march:

the troopers looked round on a rolling expanse of tender pasture splashed with patches of young barley, and sprinkled brilliantly with poppies, anemones, iris and a wealth of other wild flowers. Jaded as they were after the night in the saddle, all ranks were intoxicated with delight.

There is little evidence that the troopers were 'intoxicated with delight' after leaving Sheik Zowaiid. With respect to the early stages of the march after El Risa, both Frank Reid and Jock Davidson told stories of cheerful banter between troopers in the ICC Brigade, including one involving a 'Padre', probably Charles Scott Little. After they left Sheik Zowaiid, smoking and talking were strictly forbidden. Already having endured a 'body-wearying ride', the men were by now tired out and suffering severely from the cold, and although they no doubt noticed the change in the countryside, it was likely they were more like the men described by 'Aram' in the 1919 publication *Australia in Palestine*: 'Cheerful and good-tempered soldiers are few at 03.00' am.⁸



Barley crops near Rafa January 1917 - SLSA PRG 1480/2/46

The 1st Light Horse Brigade took over the role of advanced guard after leaving Sheik Zowaiid, with the 5th Mounted Brigade, less two troops of Worcestershire Yeomanry left to guard Sheik Zowaiid, now moving parallel to and north of the ICC Brigade at the end of the column. Each Brigade, including the ICC Brigade, put out flank guards and the 3rd Light Horse Brigade a rear guard. Half a mile (800 m) east of Sheik Zowaiid, a Bedouin camel patrol was encountered. The patrol fled, but was pursued and the entire patrol captured. At point 210, the 5th Mounted Brigade and Lieutenant General Chetwode and the Desert

Column Headquarters (HQDC) left the column, moved north-east about two miles (3.2 km) and halted. As a result of an error in the march orders, the bearer sub division of the 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance were marching ahead of the 5th Mounted Brigade's leading squadron, and it would seem were the first unit from the column to be fired on, just as dawn was breaking. At this stage, it was planned that the 5th Mounted Brigade be held in reserve. Flank guards were sent out and an observation post established to the north to report any attempt by the enemy to move into the sandhills near the coast.⁹

Bob with the ICC Brigade and the rest of the AMD continued east to point 250, reaching that position at 3.30 am, and halted there for one hour before moving on towards point 296. At 5.15 am, the

NZMR Brigade were detached and sent forward to round up the Bedouins at Karm Ibn Musleh and Shokh es Sufi. Just before 6.00 am, a troop from A Squadron, 9th Light Horse Regiment, acting as left flank guard to the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, were fired on from a Turkish outpost about two miles (3.2 km) south-east of El Magruntein. The outpost fired two green flares before the four men in it were captured. As the flares were not answered, it seems that they were not observed from the main Turkish position. Arriving at Karm Ibn Musleh at 5.45 am, the New Zealanders found only 'old men, women and children; no arms except swords and a few revolvers'. By 6.15 am, the Brigade had crossed the border into Palestine and surrounded the village at Shokh es Sufi. Here the situation was different. An Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment trooper was killed and another wounded, the first casualties at El Magruntein. Two Bedouins escaped, and together with smoke signals and the 'shrill high-pitched tremolo' cries of the women, the Turkish defenders at El Magruntein were now left in no doubt about the arrival of the column.¹⁰



A Bedouin home near Rafa January 9, 1917
AWM J02252

At about 5.30 am, in the pre-dawn light, the silence was broken by a single rooster crowing. This elicited some cheering and laughter from the men in the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, riding just ahead of Bob and the ICC Brigade, who were probably similarly amused. Major General Chauvel moved the AMD forward to the south of Karm Ibn Musleh where he initially established his headquarters (DHQ). By 6.45 am, as the sun was rising, Bob with the ICC Brigade was positioned 'under cover of some rising ground' three quarters of a mile (1.2 km) west of the village and about three miles (4.8 km) south-east of the Turkish positions. It was still very cold, and, like Joseph Bolger, now in No. 4 Company, Bob and most other troopers would also have taken the opportunity to eat some bully beef and bread for breakfast.¹¹

As daylight revealed El Magruntein, Colonel Downes considered that

Few scenes could have appeared more unwarlike....The matting tents of the Bedouins, with their camels, sheep and donkeys grazing peacefully, and the smoke of their fires mingling with the wreaths of mist rising from the wet green slopes, made a picture which brought to mind the stories of the Old Testament.

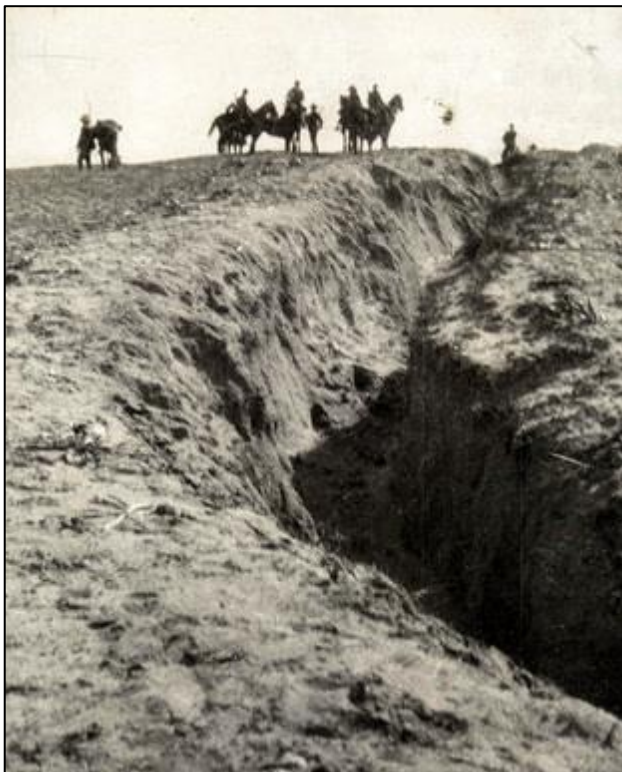
Rafa...lies...in gently undulating country which, though sandy, ...at this time of year was covered by green grass, wild-flowers and young barley, which made a pleasant sight.

However, for Bob and everyone else, El Magruntein presented a formidable sight. The Turkish position 'consisted of a series of strong redoubts, connected by a maze of saps on the top of a huge mound or hump, the approaches to which, on all sides, were smooth grassy slopes of a mile or more'. In the centre, at a height of 200 feet (61 m) above the surrounding country, on a smooth grassy knoll, incorporating point 265, was a 'formidable keep, known as "the Redit"....South of this, in a rough semi-circle, was a series of three works, known as "A", "B", and "C"...forming a first line of defence against advance from the south'. With the exception of 'a few gentle folds in the ground', the approaches were all open and exposed, with 'not a scrap of shelter for man or beast for miles around', save for 'patches of early barley about nine inches (23 cm) high'. The works (redoubts) were well designed to provide overlapping fields of fire, the trenches were difficult to see in the grass, and the 'immediate neighbourhood of the works was almost a glacis'. Lieutenant General Chetwode was dismayed that the 'ground appeared considerably more open than could be judged from the map', and confessed that he 'thought the task was almost beyond the capacity of dismounted cavalry to carry through'. His concerns were reflected by the rank-and-file troopers. In the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment, 'everyone expected that it would cost many lives'. Frank Reid neatly summed up the views of the ICC Brigade troopers as they were 'surveying the landscape in front of them':

The odds were overwhelmingly against us; everything pointed to the fact that the machine-gunners would mow us down in hundreds....We didn't like our chance of success and told each other so.¹²

There is not much doubt that the arrival of the column caught the Turks by surprise. Frank Reid saw 'many Turks ...rushing into the trenches, having been disturbed [according to Frank] just as

they were about to have breakfast'. The Royal Gloucestershire Hussars Yeomanry Regiment saw the enemy striking tents and removing stores on camels, and many observers below certainly saw what appeared to be displays of confusion and disorder from some of the Turkish troops in their hurried rush into their defensive positions. Between 7.00 am and 8.30 am, Major General Chauvel and his staff reconnoitred the Turkish position, established helio and telephone communication with HQDC at point 210, ensured the telegraph wires from El Magruntein to Khan Yunis and Shellal were cut, moved DHQ to higher ground at point 350 near Shokh es Sufi and received aeroplane reports that the roads to the east and south-east of Rafa were clear, and that of the nine gun positions at El Magruntein, only four were occupied with artillery. At 8.32 am, Major General Chauvel issued orders for the attack. The Somerset, Leicester and HKS Batteries began immediately to register their ranges on the Turkish positions, which by 8.40 am had brought retaliatory fire of high explosive (HE) and shrapnel from the Turkish Krupp Mountain guns, which continued for the next two to three hours.¹³



Turkish trenches at El Magruntein C 1917
AM PH-ALB-214-p41-1



El Magruntein C 1917
NAMNZ 1994.2560.2



The Redit El Magruntein January 1917 - Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 65

The ICC Brigade Commanding Officer, Brigadier General Smith, on receipt of his orders for the attack, moved the brigade at 9.15 am up to a position west of the Somerset Battery, which was positioned 1,000 yards (915 m) north of Karm Ibn Musleh. By 9.25 am, as the Brigade arrived, they dismounted and one company was deployed behind a sand ridge in line with the artillery. As the 3rd Battalion moved up along the Rafa Road, they came under shrapnel fire while on the march, as did the rest of the Brigade as they arrived at the new position. Despite the Turkish gunners having the range, there were no casualties. As men on camels posed a much larger target than horsemen, Brigadier General Smith moved the ICC Brigade back half a mile (800 m) to the south-east behind the cactus garden at Karm Ibn Musleh. Bob and the rest of the troopers dismounted and handed their camels over to the camel holders, usually four camels to one (although Jock Davidson's later recollection was it was eight to one). Frank Reid tells the story that during the shelling 'several shells burst over where [three small] Bedouin children were standing... [on] a cultivated stretch of land ... a woman rushed out from a mud hut [and] with shrapnel tearing up the ground around her' took the children back into the hut. The story is not unlikely, as the Bedouin showed a marked indifference to the conflict, 'would seldom trouble to cease their labours...and during the engagement...some of the men continued to follow their crude ploughs on land between Chauvel's batteries and the Turkish trenches', and others continued to graze their flocks 'along the line of the advance'. For Bob, this was the first time he had come under artillery fire since he joined the AIF.¹⁴

Clearly dismayed by the strength of the enemy position, at 7.50 am Lieutenant General Chetwode sent a message to Major General Chauvel 'pointing out the necessity for deliberate artillery preparations and selection of targets', but other than this advice, left the planning of the attack entirely to Chauvel. Major General Chauvel's orders were for the NZMR Brigade to attack C4 and C5 and ensure the safety of the right flank and rear, for the 1st Light Horse Brigade to attack C3, C2 and C1, and the ICC Brigade to attack the B group of trenches, commencing with B4. The 3rd Light



Barraked camels and troopers just before the ICC attack at El Magruntein (No. 15 Company)
NAMNZ 1993.1220

Horse Brigade was to be held in reserve. Artillery was to open fire at 9.30 am for half an hour, concentrating initially on the C group of trenches, then on the Redit, with cross fire arranged with the HAC B Battery, then situated about a mile (1.6 km) east of point 210. The Somerset and Leicestershire Batteries were both in a position north of Karm Ibn Musleh and the Inverness Battery further east near point 350. The Brigade attacks were to commence at 10.00 am. After the order was issued, aeroplane messages were received that the B trenches and C1, C4 and C5 were more strongly held than any of the other positions, and that loaded camels were going east towards Rafa. To forestall any retirement, the Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment

was dispatched to cut off the retiring Turks and occupy Rafa, an action successfully completed by 10.40 am. Rafa, it should be noted, was entirely on the Egyptian side of the frontier and consisted of nothing more than 'a few huts, the Police Barracks and the Police Post on the main road'.¹⁵

As at Magdhaba, Bob's No. 12 Company, now as part of the 3rd Battalion, was initially held in Brigade reserve and waited in extended order 50 yards (46 m) west of the trees at Karm Ibn Musleh, about 4,000 yards (3,660 m) south-east of B works. At 9.45 am, Brigadier General Smith deployed the 1st Battalion against B4 under Bob's former Commanding Officer Major George Langley, with 2nd Battalion in support. Unlike the Light Horsemen, who in most cases at El Magruntein rode to within 1,500 to 2,000 yards (1,370-1,830 m) before dismounting and advancing on foot, to protect their camels, the ICC Brigade had to cover twice that distance on foot. No. 15 Company led the 1st Battalion attack, supported by No. 3 Company with No. 1 Company in reserve. The HKS Battery advanced to a position 4,500 yards (4,115 m) from the B works to support the attack. The ICC companies advanced at first in artillery formation, then in extended line, until finally at about 2,000 yards (1,830 m) machine gun and rifle fire allowed further advance only by 'crawling or by making short rushes' by sections. Frank Reid, with No. 3 Company, said that 'we had only moved forward a few yards when the first Camelier fell [and] when we were half a mile (800 m) from their trenches the Turks...greeted us with a deadly shell and machine gun fire. Many more men fell'. Enfilading machine gun and rifle fire was now coming from C works and B2, and despite the support and reserve companies being brought into the firing line, by 11.30 am the 1st Battalion could not advance further and took what shelter they could behind a small sandy ridge 800 yards (730 m) from B4.¹⁶



HKS Battery in action at El Magruntein January 9, 1917 - NAMNZ 1993.1220

In the meantime, at 10.30 am, Brigadier General Smith had realised that the HKS Battery range of 4,500 yards (4,115 m) was not effective, and requested further artillery support on B works. The Somerset Battery was subsequently moved up an hour later to a range of 2,500 yards (2,280 m) south of the southern Turkish positions. Also, at 10.30 am, Brigadier General Edgar Wiggin of the

5th Mounted Brigade received an order from Lieutenant General Chetwode 'to worry the enemy along the whole front'. The Gloucestershire Yeomanry was subsequently ordered to attack A1 (Green Knoll)¹⁷ and the Warwickshire Yeomanry to engage B1 and B2. The Warwickshire Yeomanry dismounted under fire at 2,200 yards (2,000 m). By noon, they had advanced 'by short rushes of ten or twelve yards (9-11 m) at a time' to a slight ridge 800 yards (730 m) from B1 and B2. Two machine guns were sent up to support them at this position. At 11.30 am, the Worcestershire Yeomanry, less one squadron, commenced 'a holding attack on the Turks from the sand dunes'. Also, at 11.30 am, the 2nd Battalion ICC Brigade was ordered forward, No. 5 Company leading, with Nos. 6 and 7 Companies in support. No. 5 Company eventually became held up and 'absorbed in the firing line of the 1st Battalion' in front of B4. At the same time, Bob with the rest of the 3rd Battalion in reserve, was brought forward to the 'line occupied by [ICC] Brigade Head Quarters' – a 'wooded hill' south of the artillery position and just north of Karm Ibn Musleh.¹⁸



Initial advance of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment at El Magruntein January 9, 1917
The ICC troopers had to walk – AWM A02386



Light Horse troopers lying on the edge of a sunken road at El Magruntein January 9, 1917 - AWM P11277.002

In order to keep in touch with the NZMR Brigade, the 1st Light Horse Regiment, leading the 1st Light Horse Brigade attack, had veered to the right and had become exclusively focused on C4. They reached a sunken road, about 800 yards (730 m) east of the C4 position, but, like the ICC 1st Battalion, could advance no further. At 11.00 am they were reinforced by the 2nd and 3rd Light Horse Regiments from the 1st Light Horse Brigade. At 10.40 am, Major General Chauvel had issued an order for the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, less the 8th Light Horse Regiment to be kept in reserve, to attack C4 and C3 on the left of the 1st Light Horse Brigade, to commence at 11.30 am. Advancing in short rushes by squadron, with covering fire from Lewis guns and the remaining troops, the 9th Light Horse Regiment managed to link up with the ICC 1st Battalion, but, as with the 10th Light Horse Regiment on their right, were held up about 900 yards (820 m) from the C3 and C4 positions. The NZMR Brigade by this time had cleared Rafa and the sandhills to the north and the Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment had advanced to within 600 yards (550 m) of point 255, with the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment on their left and the Inverness Battery shelling C5 and point 255 in support. By midday, Brigadier General Smith had found that the B2 position 'was strongly held, and was in reality, a formidable réduit'. He ordered No. 4 Company forward to reinforce the firing line of the 1st Battalion on the left centre, and also sent the supporting companies of the 2nd Battalion forward - No. 6 and No. 7 Companies, to extend the line to the left and engage B works from the south-west. However, 'cover was very scanty' and machine gun fire from B2 held up these new companies on the left flank of the ICC Brigade about 700 yards (640 m) from the enemy positions.¹⁹

By 1.00 pm, the ICC Brigade Head Quarters had been moved 500 yards (457 m) closer to the firing line, but Bob continued to wait in reserve just north of Karm Ibn Musleh. The ICC Brigade companies on the firing line were held up 700-800 yards (640-730 m) from B works. Heavy fire from B2 and B4 made further progress difficult, as, to quote the 3rd Light Horse Regiment War Diary, the ground between the firing line and the enemy was 'level as a tennis court'. On the left of the ICC Brigade, there was still a gap to the Warwickshire Yeomanry who were similarly held up. Further to the north, the Gloucestershire Yeomanry had been ordered 'to press the attack on A1' and attempt to get in touch with the NZMR Brigade. There had been some progress on the right of the ICC position, where the 3rd Light Horse Regiment with the support of the 10th Light Horse Regiment, had gained 'superiority of fire', and on being re-supplied with ammunition 'by pack horses

under heavy shell fire', commenced an advance which would eventually bring them to within 400 yards (365 m) of the Turkish trenches before coming under heavy enfilade fire. The 1st and 2nd Light Horse Regiments had rushed an outlying trench system near the 'Big Tree' and captured 44 Turks, but any further advance on C5 was prevented by 'bombardment by our own artillery'. By this time, the first calls for more ammunition had begun, with the situation of the NZMR Brigade serious, with at least four machine guns out of action and the Inverness Battery with rapidly dwindling supplies. The Leicestershire Battery was waiting for ammunition before it could move up alongside the Somerset Battery closer to the Turkish positions. Lieutenant General Chetwode's decision to leave wheeled transport at Sheik Zowaid was now beginning to affect the ability of the brigades to bring the battle to a successful conclusion.²⁰



Artillery in action at El Magruntein January 9, 1917
This was near Bob's position north of Karm Ibn Musleh
AWM P00228.028

With two of the three Battalions of the ICC Brigade now committed to the firing line but 'held up by the enemy', the 3rd Battalion was now ordered to advance to 'a position on the extreme left and in front of the enemy's redoubt [B2]'. The HKS Battery dragged their guns forward to within 1,000 yards (915 m) of the B works in support. Bob with No. 12 Company began to move towards the Turkish positions at 1.00 pm. He had to advance on foot some 3,500 yards (3,200 m) over ground which was 'only slightly undulating and well swept with rifle and machine gun fire'. Jock Davidson describes how they 'moved off in 3 lines of open order' to the left of the leading Company (No. 11). Major Huddleston knew that like Bob, most of the men in No. 12 Company now faced their first experience under fire. To 'steady and inspire the most nervous...he marched fearlessly and unarmed' at their head; this 'reckless bravery' later leading Frank Reid to describe him as a 'decent sorter bloke'. Observing the advance of the 3rd Battalion, at 1.40 pm Brigadier General Wiggin ordered three troops of the Worcestershire Yeomanry, up until this time operating as escort to the HAC B Battery, to take up a position on the right of the Warwickshire Yeomanry in an attempt to join up with the ICC Brigade. As the 3rd Battalion got closer to the firing line, they ran into heavy fire from B1 and B2 and tended to shear off to the right, where B3 was found to be unoccupied.²¹ By 2.00 pm, No. 11 Company had been committed to extend the left of the line from No. 7 Company, the machine gun sections of both companies led by Lieutenants Davidson and Bell had been brought into action in support and the Somerset and Leicestershire Batteries had turned their fire on the B works. As a juncture with the Warwickshire Yeomanry had still not yet occurred, No. 12 Company was brought forward to the left of No. 11 Company shortly after 2.00 pm. Bob now found himself about 600-900 yards (550-820 m) in front of B2, which, with two machine guns, was one of the most strongly held positions in the Turkish defences.²²



The firing line at El Magruntein January 9, 1917
Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 73/NAMNZ 1994.2560.3

Like all of the troopers in the firing line, Bob had no cover whatsoever. There were no entrenching tools, and like everyone else Bob had to scratch a 'shallow hole' with whatever he had to hand, his jack knife, his bayonet or indeed, his bare hands. There is even one story of a New Zealand Padre

using a spoon. Unlike the sands of the Sinai, the earth at El Magruntein was hard and often covered with turf which had to be cut through before any digging was possible. If the exposed position and enemy ground fire was not enough, unlike at Maghaba, at El Magruntein FA 300 was 'active all day dropping bombs on every available target', including DHQ. While the primary task of FA 300 was to disrupt 1st Squadron AFC and 14th Squadron RFC from directing artillery fire (wireless was being used for the first time in the Sinai), they also took every opportunity to direct bombs and machine gun fire on the attacking troops. The 3rd Battalion War Diary notes that 'hostile aircraft attempted to harass the men with bombs and machine gun fire', and that bombs were also dropped on the 'led camels' at Karm Ibn Musleh. The diaries of Robert Fell (No. 1 Company) and Joseph Bolger (No. 4 Company) attest to the fact that this harassment extended to other elements of the ICC Brigade, and Robert noted that on their return to collect their mounts they found 'several camels killed'.²³

When Brigadier General Wiggin observed that the 3rd Battalion was in position, he sent a message to Brigadier General Smith asking if the left of the ICC Brigade and the Warwickshire Yeomanry could co-operate in an attack on B1 and B2. However, before this plan could get off the ground, at 2.30 pm Lieutenant General Chetwode sent out an order that all forces were to concentrate on an attack on the Redit at 3.30 pm, with an intense artillery bombardment up until this time to be made by the artillery batteries on C4, C5 and the Redit. The 5th Mounted Brigade was ordered to co-operate with 5½ squadrons against the rear of the Redit. Accordingly, the three troops of the Worcestershire Yeomanry and C Squadron of the Warwickshire Yeomanry were now withdrawn under fire from the right of the Warwickshire Yeomanry position and sent to support the Gloucestershire Yeomanry in the north, suffering many casualties in the process. To Bob and everyone else in the ICC Brigade up to Brigadier General Smith, it appeared to be that the '5th [Mounted] Brigade...was withdrawn'. The Warwickshire Yeomanry however, still had two machine guns and two squadrons in the firing line and, while being ordered to abandon the attack on B1 and B2, had been instructed to 'keep up a steady fire...in order to divert attention from the ICC to [the] east of it'. The Warwickshire Yeomanry however, acknowledged that on the re-deployment of almost half their numbers, the enemy 'now showed considerable re-activity with rifle and machine gun fire'.²⁴

With the halving of supporting fire from the Warwickshire Yeomanry position on their left, and the re-focusing of the heavier artillery batteries on the Redit, despite maintaining a 'heavy fire' on the Turkish works, with the HKS Battery in close support, the position of Bob and the other troopers in No. 12 Company on the exposed slopes of El Magruntein now became more perilous. George Langley noted that even with the Turkish position surrounded after 2.00 pm, the attacking force struggled to keep the defending Turks quiet, and whenever the pressure was taken off, the Turks 'stood boldly up above their parapets and re-asserted their mastery'. They could be clearly seen taking deliberate aim and it seems that higher casualties were avoided only because their 'shooting was poor'. The general attack at 3.30 pm met with little success. By this time, the Inverness Battery had run out of ammunition and had been withdrawn. On cessation of firing from the remaining batteries, the 9th and 10th Light Horse Regiments had not yet received the order to advance and the 3rd and 10th Light Horse Regiments, who had during the previous two hours managed to advance into a sharp salient 300 yards (275 m) from the Turkish trenches, came under heavy shrapnel and HE fire and had by 3.45 pm retired 100 yards (92 m) further back. The 5th Mounted Brigade attack on the rear of the Redit was late, 'owing to the distance to be traversed by the...squadrons transferred from right to left'. The NZMR Brigade attack on the Redit was also late and was checked when the Somerset and Leicester Batteries re-opened fire at 3.45 pm. By 4.00 pm, 'enemy fire against the New Zealanders was very heavy'. Bob's Battalion was held up by rifle and machine gun fire from B1 and B2, and the rest of the ICC Brigade and the 9th Light Horse Regiment to their right by fire from the C works.²⁵

At 3.00 pm, information from a German prisoner revealed that the 160th Regiment had left Shellal headed to relieve Rafa when the attack at El Magruntein commenced. By 3.50 pm, the presence of two battalions advancing west from Shellal and an estimated 2,000 from Khan Yunis was confirmed by the 8th Light Horse Regiment, the Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment and the 1st Squadron AFC returning from bombing the FA 300 airfield at Beersheba. The advancing Turkish forces were estimated to be four miles (6.5 km) from Rafa at this time. Lieutenant General

Chetwode and Major General Chauvel discussed the situation by telephone. Almost all of their available forces were committed, yet the attack on all of the Turkish positions had stalled. With Turkish relief forces moving on Rafa, there seemed to be little opportunity to bring the battle to a successful conclusion, and they agreed on a withdrawal. At 4.20 pm, Lieutenant General Chetwode issued an order to the Australian Mounted Division that the attack was to be 'abandoned at 1700 (5.00 pm) owing to strong enemy reinforcements arriving' and all forces were to return to Sheik Zowaid. In the half hour before this decision was taken however, their Brigade, Regimental and Battalion commanders had made critical decisions of their own.²⁶

About 4.00 pm, Brigadier General Wiggin, 5th Mounted Brigade, 'switched the guns on to Green Knoll (A1) and trenches adjoining', and pressed the attack on A1 in the rear of the Redit by the Gloucestershire and Worcestershire Yeomanry, now reinforced by the three troops of the Worcestershire Yeomanry and C Squadron of the Warwickshire Yeomanry transferred from the right. Two machine guns from the 7th Light Car Patrol moved forward with the Gloucestershire Yeomanry and provided effective covering fire. At the same time, on the opposite side of the Redit, Brigadier General Chaytor of the NZMR Brigade issued an order for a frontal attack on the Redit at 4.30 pm. A counter attack by the Turkish defenders in the Redit at 4.15 pm had been repulsed by 4.25 pm, and the supply of ammunition for the machine guns had been replenished by the 'foresight and dash' of the Quartermaster of the Wellington Mounted Rifles, Major Alexander Wilkie. Considered positioning of machine guns on the right flank ensured the assault troops would have "overhead" covering fire until...within a few yards of the [Turkish] trenches'. Other machine guns were to advance 'in the firing line, crossing their fire to get better targets, co-operating with one another and with the machine guns of the 1st Light Horse Brigade' on the left. Before the attack began, the 'hail of fire' on the Redit 'made [it] appear like a smoking furnace'.²⁷

At the same time, off to the south-west, Brigadier General Smith had become concerned at the lack of progress against B works. He consulted by telephone²⁸ with his Battalion commanders, Majors Langley, Bassett and Huddleston, and issued an order for an attack on B2²⁹ to occur at 4.20 pm., led by Major Huddleston, with the assaulting companies being Bob's No. 12 (3rd Battalion) on the far left, No. 7 (2nd Battalion) and No.11 (3rd Battalion). Major Langley was charged with guiding the companies into position. The remainder of the 2nd Battalion and the 1st Battalion as well as the HKS Battery were to concentrate their fire on B4 and C1 to reduce the cross fire on the assaulting companies, and the 12th and 11th Company machine gun sections led by Lieutenants Davidson and Bell, reinforced by the machine gun section from No. 4 Company, were to provide covering fire from the flank. Just before the attack was to commence, Brigadier General Smith sent a situation report to Major General Chauvel:

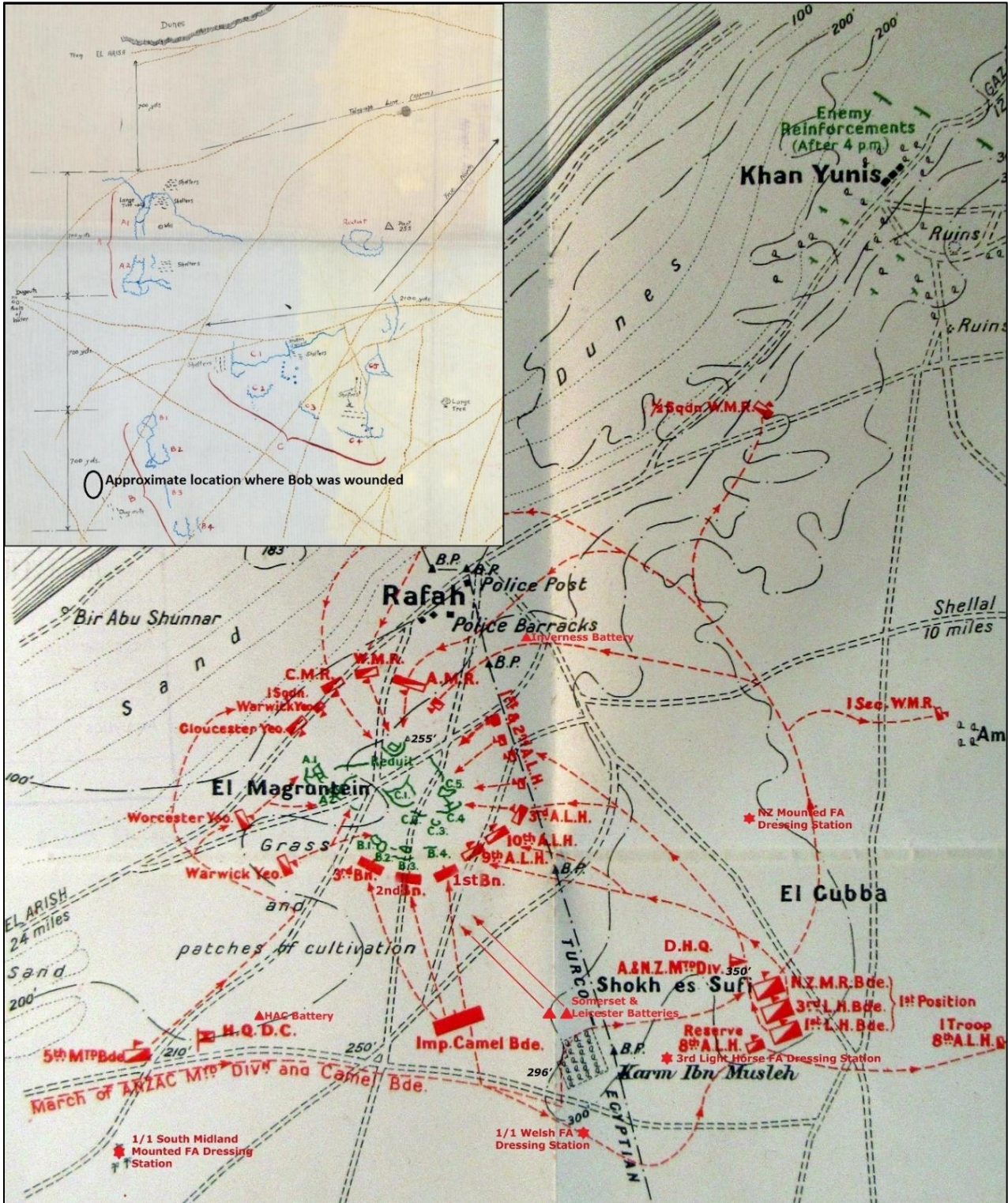


Lewis Machine Gun Section in action El
Magruntein January 9, 1917
AWM A00192

Position in centre, held up extreme right of Bde [3rd Brigade] on right apparently still retiring. Have only one half Company [two sections of No. 1 Company guarding the HKS Battery and the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance] available to throw into that part of line without withdrawing Company from attack on MG position in B works. Attack on position is supported by Worcesters (*sic*), and would take time to withdraw from, doubt if this can be carried on in daylight.

There is no record of contact between the ICC Brigade and the remaining Warwickshire Yeomanry on their left at this time, although contact had previously been established at 2.00 pm 'when 1st Battn got Worcester (*sic*) Yeo by flag'. Brigadier General Smith noted in the ICC War Diary that at 2.30 pm the 5th Mounted Brigade 'was withdrawn', but his later messages at 3.30 pm and 4.20 pm to Major General Chauvel indicate that he was aware that 5th Mounted Brigade troops were still in support on the left of the ICC, although he incorrectly identified them in the latter message as Worcestershire rather than Warwickshire Yeomanry. Once the attack was observed to commence, the Warwickshire Yeomanry machine guns and the rifles of B Squadron provided covering fire from the left.³⁰

Bob with the rest of the troopers in the attacking companies, guided by Major Langley, were in position about 600 yards (550 m) from B2 by the appointed time, 4.20 pm. The exact position of the B2 redoubt could not be clearly seen from the firing line, and to get within assaulting distance the troopers had to crawl forward on their hands and knees, most likely each section in turn, under the covering fire of the other sections and of the ICC machine guns on the flank. There was no artillery support to suppress fire from B1 and B2. It was while slowly crawling forward that Bob was shot through the lower part of his abdomen and groin. He was 400 yards (365 m) from the Turks in B2.³¹



Action of Rafa January 9, 1917

Map 11 in Map Case attached to MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, 'Military Operations Egypt & Palestine From the Outbreak of War with Germany to June 1917', *Official History of the Great War*

Map Insert: Diagram showing Turkish positions at Rafa compiled from aeroplane photographs dated 1st January 1917 in Appendix 29 General Staff Headquarters Anzac Mounted Division War Diary January, 1917 AWM 1/60/11 Part 1.

Correction to ICC Brigade Battalion positions and additional annotations by author

Chapter 15

Death at El Arish

As Bob lay on the ground severely wounded, the remaining troopers of No. 12 Company continued to crawl forward. At 200 yards (183 m) from B2, they could see the Turkish defenders fixing their bayonets, then advanced in rushes, making a final charge from 40 yards (37 m). Three of Bob's fellow troopers and his Officer Commanding, Captain George Smith, were killed in this final advance. By 4.50 pm, the Turkish defenders of B2 had surrendered. In the meantime, the NZMR Brigade had covered the 600-800 yards (550-730 m) to the Redit in two rushes, and at 4.30 pm could be clearly seen topping the 'Green Hill' at point 255. Once the Redit was taken, the NZMR machine guns were pushed forward and were able to dominate and enfilade all other Turkish positions. At 4.40 pm, the Somerset and Leicestershire Batteries had ceased fire and were withdrawn. The NZMR and 1st and 3rd Light Horse Brigades now advanced on the C works from both sides, the Turkish defenders surrendering before the redoubts were reached. To the west, at 4.45 pm Brigadier General Wiggan had received Lieutenant General Chetwode's order to withdraw at 5.00 pm at the same time as he observed the NZMR on point 255. He ordered the Warwickshire Yeomanry to 'cooperate vigorously in the enveloping attack on B1 and 2'. B and D Squadrons¹ led by Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Annesley Gray-Cheape of the Warwickshire Yeomanry immediately advanced and took B1, and then continued the advance alongside the ICC towards the C works. To the north-west, the Gloucestershire and Worcestershire Yeomanry had advanced in places to within 150 yards (137 m) of A works, and 'creeping forward in the darkness' found the A1 and A2 positions abandoned. Other than scattered rifle fire, by about 5.15 pm, all organised Turkish resistance at El Magruntein had ceased.²



El Magruntein immediately after the battle - Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 80

Bob was most likely wounded between 4.20 pm and 4.30 pm. It is difficult to determine how long it took after this before he received medical attention. Chaplain Charles Scott Little stated that 'I saw him myself shortly after he had been shot, he was lying not far from their trenches, (i.e. the Turkish) & the Dr gave him something to ease the pain'. Charles was clearly taking no notice of the view often expressed by Senior Chaplains that to preserve manpower, chaplains should not go further forward than field ambulances. To reach Bob 'shortly after', as he described, Charles must have already crossed the exposed slopes of El Magruntein under fire, but until the fire from B2 and B1 was

finally suppressed after 4.50 pm, he, the Medical Officer and stretcher bearers would only have been able to reach Bob with difficulty and extreme risk to themselves. Both Unit War Diaries and personal accounts contain references to the fact that stretcher bearers and Medical Officers came right up to the firing line throughout the day. Wilfred Evans, Medical Officer with the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, wrote to his mother three days later that even at the collecting post about a mile (1.6 km) from the firing line, 'bullets were dropping into the ground about us', and he confessed that when he went right up to the firing line, which he did on at least one occasion, his 'resolution' was sorely tested and he 'was beastly frightened'. Trooper Cleve Cone, a stretcher bearer with the 1st Light Horse Regiment, described how he worked all day 'without a break under fire all the time [and] had a few narrow escapes, getting bullets through the sleeve of his coat and the heel of his boot'. Lieutenant Colonel Donovan of the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance related the story of one stretcher bearer who 'was shot twice while carrying a wounded trooper on a stretcher. He was shot in the buttocks but "stuck it" with blood streaming down his legs'. The special correspondent to *The Egyptian Mail* summed it up: 'Special mention deserves to be made of the gallantry of the stretcher bearers...on ground that would not have sheltered a rabbit...[who] took no notice of the heaviest fire'.³

The open and exposed nature of the El Magruntein position meant that horse transport to evacuate wounded could not be brought anywhere near the firing line. Before 10.00 am, four Dressing Stations had been established from the Tent Subdivisions of the Mobile Sections of the New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance and the 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance, each one about three to four miles (4.8-6.5 km) from the Turkish positions on El Magruntein. The 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance, whose Tent Subdivision formed the Receiving Station at Sheik Zowaiid, was to send their casualties to the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station. Each ambulance then established an advanced Collecting Post to which casualties would be carried by stretcher bearers, receive preliminary treatment and then be transported to the Dressing Stations by either horse-drawn sand cart or sledge. Camels, given their size, were not used this far forward. The position of the Collecting Posts varied with the terrain but was usually between one and two miles (1.6-3.2 km) from the Turkish positions. Given the absence of cover, 'it was necessary for the ambulance bearers to carry the wounded a considerable distance to the transport'. For Bob, this would have meant a carry of about 1,800 to 2,000 yards (1,650-1,830 m) to get to a Collecting Post.⁴

About 4.30 pm, Colonel Downes received an order from Desert Column Headquarters to close the Dressing Stations and ensure that any sand carts and sledges that arrived from the Collecting Posts did not return to the field. He was further advised that 'wounded who could not be collected at once were to be left behind'. These orders were passed to the Dressing Stations and to the bearers in the field through their Brigade Headquarters. About the time that Bob was wounded, 'fighting increased & wounded began to collect quickly', placing the bearers under increasing pressure. Bob was in the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance mobile section area of responsibility. As an infantry unit, their stretcher bearers were equipped with regulation infantry field stretchers weighing 30 lb (14 kg), which at Romani in August, 1916, had been found too 'clumsy' and difficult to transport for mounted field ambulances. It would have taken the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance bearers at least 30 to 40 minutes to carry Bob to their Collecting Post, so the earliest possible time he could have arrived there was between 5.00 pm and 5.15 pm. By this time, the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance Dressing Station, a further one hour's journey to the south-east, in response to the order to 'clear out', had hastily departed for Sheik Zowaiid, leaving their tents behind. The Commanding Officer of the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance, Lieutenant Colonel Donovan, later considered that 'this was very unfortunate as had the real state of affairs been known the wounded would have been better attended to'.⁵ Even in the unlikely scenario that Bob was picked up by ICC troopers returning to their barracked camels following Major General Chauvel's order to his Brigades at 4.45 pm to 'collect their prisoners' and withdraw, the returning men had neither stretchers nor blankets to improvise a stretcher, and did not reach Karm Ibn Musleh until 6.30 pm, well after the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance Dressing Station had left. When the ICC Brigade reached their camels, they were only accompanied by about 200 Turkish prisoners and those lightly wounded men who could walk and then ride. It seems fairly certain that Bob was not evacuated to the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance Dressing Station.⁶

The New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance Dressing Station and part of the transport and equipment of the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station also left for Sheik Zowaiid between 5.30 pm and 6.00 pm. Only two Dressing Stations now remained, the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance and further to the west the 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance. According to Major Langley, there was an 'unwritten law' in Desert Column units that no soldier was to be abandoned to die or suffer at the hands of the Bedouins. This 'law' was certainly put into effect at El Magruntein by the Ambulance Units. By 5.30 pm, Colonel Downes had communicated to Desert Column Headquarters that there was insufficient transport to evacuate the wounded already in the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station and that there were a 'large number of wounded still out in the field'. He was successful in getting the order to abandon the wounded changed. The Bearer Sub Divisions of the NZMR, 1st Light Horse, 3rd Light Horse and 1/1 South Midland Field Ambulances now commenced a systematic search for wounded, both their own and Turkish, in the dark. It should have been close to a full moon, but the moon was obscured by 'rainclouds' and the night was 'pitch dark', so much so that 'a compass became a vital necessity to find one's way about the battle-field'. The 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance Dressing Station lit a beacon fire to show its location, but the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station had only two hurricane lamps, 'one to dress wounded with & the second placed on a rise as

a guide to the carts'. By 7.00 pm, the 5th Mounted, NZMR, ICC and 1st Light Horse Brigades and the Desert Column and AMD Headquarters had left for Sheik Zowaiid, and at 10.30 pm the 3rd Brigade, acting as Divisional rear guard, followed them. The Dressing Stations and bearers in the field were now only protected by the 8th Light Horse Regiment and D Squadron of the Warwickshire Yeomanry.⁷

For Bob and everyone else left at El Magruntein, it was a 'precarious and nervous night'. The progress of the Turkish troops advancing from Shellal and Khan Yunis was not known and the local Bedouins were active. Medical Officers in the 5th Mounted Brigade area were each given 'an escort of six men' to protect them and the wounded from mutilation or plunder from 'prowling Arabs'. The 8th Light Horse Regiment provided similar support to Medical Officers and bearers further east. At 8.00 pm, the 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance had finished collecting their wounded and left for Sheik Zowaiid. By 9.00 pm, the telephone line to Sheik Zowaiid had been cut in several places, it was assumed, by Bedouins, and the Welsh Ambulance Convoy sent from Sheik Zowaiid at 4.30 pm had not arrived. Sand carts continued to shuttle wounded from the Collecting Posts to the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station, and despite staff officers' assurances by 10.00 pm that all wounded had been collected, the bearers persisted. The last NZMR and 3rd Light Horse Ambulance sand carts left their Collecting Posts, the latter with wounded Turks, at 1.30 am, and the last sand carts from the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance with wounded of both sides arrived at the Dressing Station at 1.45 am.⁸



First Field Dressing and Iodine Ampoule
AWM REL33764, REL05919

It is not known what time Bob was picked up. From November, 1916, Light Horse Field Ambulance bearers used improvised portable stretchers. These had bamboo poles and weighed only five lbs (2.3 kg), but as they lacked traverses, they were only able 'to carry a patient comfortably for [a] short distance'. When the bearers reached Bob, if it had not already been done, they would have applied bandages from his First Field Dressing pack, and iodine.⁹ They would have at least been able to load him on to the stretcher without too much difficulty as he had already been administered morphia by a Medical Officer soon after being wounded. Without it, the bearers would quite likely have faced the same problem as experienced by Private Roger Morgan, a bearer at Gueudecourt in France the previous month, who was ordered up the line to where a man had been 'sniped in the abdomen'. Roger related that 'I was to take morphia and Hyperdermic (*sic*) up to where he lay, and give him an injection as they could not keep him on the stretcher, poor beggar, in his agony.'¹⁰

Once at a Collecting Post, Bob's wound and First Field Dressing would have received an assessment from a Medical Officer and he would have been made ready to transport to the Dressing Station either in a sand cart or on a sledge. A sand cart was a 'two-wheeled spring cart with a canvas hood, fitted with a spring bottom...[and] wheels fitted with metal tyres nine to twelve inches (23-30 cm) in breadth to increase their surface [on] sand'. Two mattresses were placed over the spring bottom to accommodate two or three lying-down cases. Most were drawn by six horses, with a minimum of four on occasions. Ion Idriess, wounded by shell splinters and placed in a sand cart in late 1917 wrote: 'soon I lost some illusions, having all my time taken up in desperate snatches at the cart to ease the bumps when going over the slightest uneven ground'. Sledges were at first improvised from wood and sheet iron, but later versions had runners. They were drawn by one or at most two horses, but 'were easily overturned on uneven ground' and 'their close contact with the ground surface indelibly impressed upon the occupant of the sledge the rough nature of the country'. Whichever method of transport was used, the journey for Bob would have been long and uncomfortable as it would have taken at least an hour to reach the Dressing Station over the broken ground on the slopes of El Magruntein. At the 3rd Light Horse Ambulance Dressing Station, he

would have joined about 100 to 150 other wounded men. The night was bitterly cold, and there were few blankets, no food and with the exception of the two hurricane lamps, no lights, as these items had been mistakenly sent back to Sheik Zowaiid earlier in the night. At the Dressing Station, Bob's wound dressing would have been assessed and if considered appropriate, more morphia and also 'anti-tetanic serum' (anti-tetanus) injected. All he could do then was wait for sufficient transport to be available to evacuate him to Sheik Zowaiid. As Maurice Evans felt as he looked after the wounded at the Dressing Station - 'it is very unpleasant when you can do nothing but wait while any minute 2000 turks may turn up'.¹¹

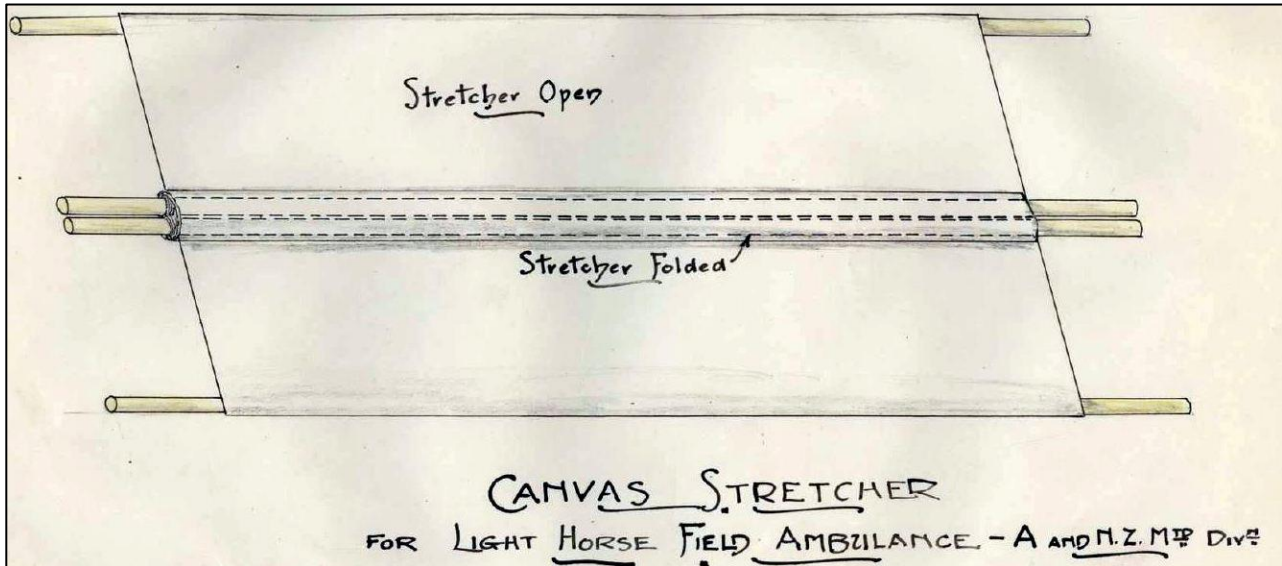


Diagram of a Portable Stretcher made by 1st Field Squadron Engineers January 1917 - AWM4, 14/36/8

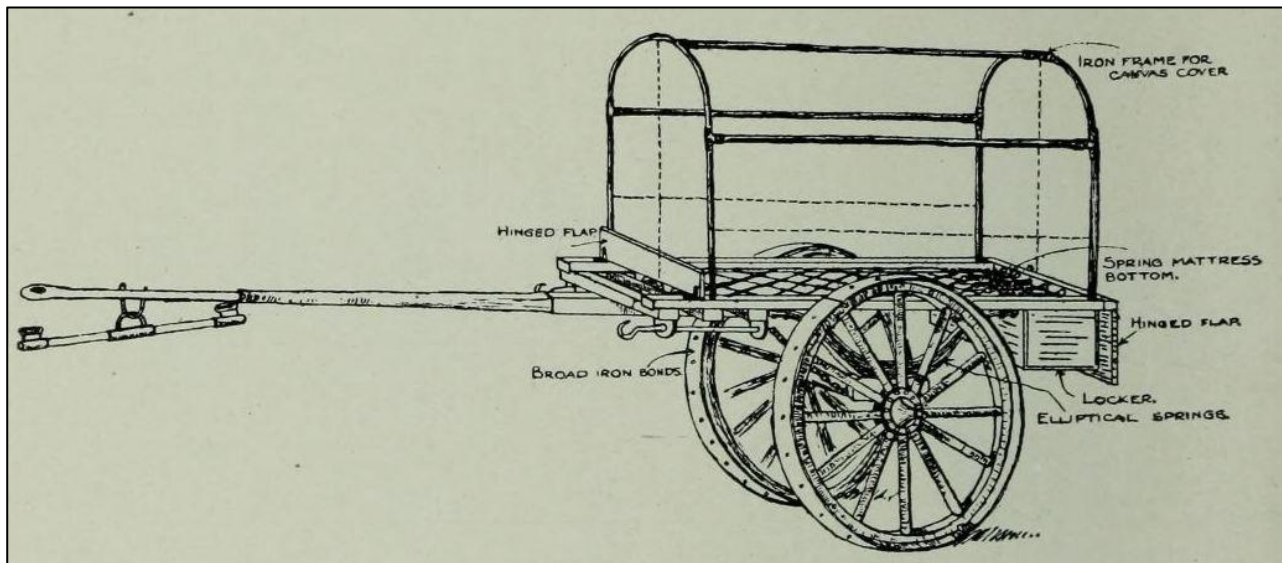


Diagram of a Sand Cart - Macpherson, W.G., *History of the Great War: Medical Services General History*, Vol IV, p. 616

The Welsh Ambulance Convoy expected from Sheik Zowaiid at the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station never arrived. By the time it had reached point 210, it had received 'such alarming reports from retiring parties', that, under orders from a staff officer from Desert Column Headquarters, by 10.30 pm it had returned to Sheik Zowaiid' with the sand carts 'loaded with wounded'.¹² The journey from El Magruntein to Sheik Zowaiid took about four to five hours by sand cart. At the 3rd Light Horse Ambulance Dressing Station at El Magruntein, evacuations to Sheik Zowaiid did not commence until early the next morning, January 10, 1917. The first convoy left about 2.00 am, a second about 4.00 am, and once a Welsh Ambulance Convoy arrived, at 10.00 am, when the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station at El Magruntein was finally closed. These evacuations were made even more uncomfortable for the wounded, as it was only achieved by 'packing 4 & 6 into one cart'. If Bob was evacuated on one of these convoys, he would have reached the 1st Light Horse Mounted Ambulance Dressing Station at Sheik Zowaiid between 7.00

am and 3.00 pm. According to Staff Sergeant Stanley Parkes, the final convoy consisted of Turks, so it seems likely Bob was on one of the two that left before daylight.¹³

The Tent Subdivision of the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance at Sheik Zowaiid acted as a Receiving Station and Dressing Station for evacuations by the Dressing Stations at El Magruntein. By 8.45 am on January 9, 1917, it was fully set up after having received four additional EP tents¹⁴ and a mobile operating tent from the 1/2 and 1/3 Lowland Field Ambulances at El Arish brought out by the No. 1 Welsh Ambulance Convoy and the 7th Light Car Patrol. Six additional medical orderlies from the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance also arrived with the 7th Light Car Patrol. By 3.00 pm, only six slightly wounded cases had arrived and were evacuated to El Arish on horseback. After 6.00 pm, 'casualties began to arrive & continued all night and the following day completely overtaxing [the] tent accommodation'. It was found that most of the wounded still only had First Field Dressings on, thus making the work 'extremely difficult & slow', as 'practically every case had to be redressed'. Tent accommodation was inadequate for the numbers of wounded arriving and supplies of dressings and 'medical comforts' ran low as did rations and fodder for the horses. When Lieutenant General Chetwode visited at 7.00 am on January 10, 1917, he ordered urgent medical supplies to be delivered by aeroplane and sand cart. These supplies arrived at 2.15 pm with the Lowland Field Ambulance sand carts from El Arish, and 45 minutes later a small supply was delivered by aeroplane. By 6.00 pm 400 rations had been obtained, but no fodder. Further rations and fodder didn't arrive by camel convoy from El Arish until the next day at 6.30 am. After midday, Medical Officers and Nursing Orderlies from the Lowland Field Ambulances assisted in dressing the wounded, and at 6.00 pm took over dressing the Turkish wounded. Even with this additional assistance it was 11.00 pm before the Receiving Station finished dressing all patients. Maurice



The 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance Receiving Station at Sheik Zowaiid January 9-10, 1917 - AWM H14084

Evans commented that 'the wretched turks were crowded 40 in a big marquee & the scent of suffering humanity was awful inside'. Given the problems with accommodation, it is doubtful if Bob experienced anything much better, and it is also doubtful if the overtaxed Medical Officers were able to do much more than ensure that he was rested and his wounds were properly dressed.¹⁵

In El Arish, the DDMS of the Desert Column, Colonel Macdonald, received advice at 5.20 pm on January 9, 1917, that the column was returning to Sheik Zowaiid and to send all available sand carts 'tomorrow'. He subsequently made arrangements for them to concentrate at El Burj at midday. However, at 1.20 am, still ignorant of the number of casualties, he received a further message that the dispatch of sand carts was urgent. Over the next hour, all available sand carts from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Lowland Field Ambulances of the 52nd (Lowland) Division reported to Captain Greer at El

Burj and the combined convoy left for Sheik Zowaiid at 4.15 am and began to arrive there by 11.30 am. The first convoy to evacuate the wounded to El Arish left at 5.00 am on January 10, 1917. Further convoys followed at 9.30 am, 1.00 pm, 2.00 pm, 2.30 pm, 3.30 pm, 4.20 pm, 5.30 pm, 6.00 pm, and the next day a final convoy left at 11.30 am, with 132 serious cases, escorted by the Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment who had been detailed to remain behind to protect the ambulance units at Sheik Zowaiid. At the closing of the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance Receiving Station, FA 300 appeared and dropped four bombs just as the last convoy was moving out, fortunately causing no damage.¹⁶

Bob was admitted to the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Receiving Station at El Arish on January 10, 1917, and Bob's section Officer Commanding in No. 12 Company, 2nd Lieutenant James Kinkead, saw him there 'on the morning of the 11th'. He was therefore certainly on one of the convoys that left on January 10, 1917. The journey took about eight hours, made even slower in some cases by the fact that the Lowland Field Ambulance orderlies, not being mounted, had to walk. The first four convoys were camel convoys, with the 5.00 am convoy being 'sitting cases' only. Given the severe nature of his wound, it is virtually certain Bob was not on any of these convoys. By 1917, ambulance camels were equipped with either sitting or lying cacolets made of wood or metal and canvas, copied from a Turkish pattern. George Langley contended that 'it would be impossible to devise a more acute form of torture for a [wounded] man...than this hideous form of transport'. Colonel Downes described the lying cacolets as

resembling coffins [and] the most uncomfortable form of wounded transport ever devised. The patient lay flat, with his head towards that of the camel, and was put into the [cacolet] when the camel was squatting on the ground....The camel always rises hind legs first, with the result that the patient's first impression that he is falling out on to his head is quickly corrected when the forward end of the [cacolet] is jerked up as the camel rises on to his forelegs. When the beast moves off, the patient is thrown and bumped about to a degree sufficient, in many cases, to produce nausea and vomiting. To a man with a painful wound...the torture of a long trip in one of these contrivances was extreme....A camel takes long, slow strides, with an irregular, swaying movement....To the pain and shock of their wounds were usually added the discomforts of heat, flies and the smell and grunts of the camel.



Evacuating wounded from El Magruntein by camel cacolet January 9-10, 1917 - AWM J01090, J101093



Evacuating wounded from El Magruntein by sand cart and sledge January 9-10, 1917 - AWM H02796, H02797

Medical Officers knew by 1917 that in serious cases of abdominal wounds, movement dramatically increased the mortality rate. Wilfred Evans and other Medical Officers ensured that 'the more serious [cases] went on sandcarts & sledges & the slighter cases on the sitting or lying down cacolets on camels'. They would also have remembered the 'considerable suffering' of the wounded travelling in cacolets from Maghaba. The cacolets repeatedly broke down and several had to be abandoned. Three patients died on the way and when the sand carts from the 52nd (Lowland) Division met the convoy three miles (4.8 km) from El Arish at 2.00 am, all cacolet patients were immediately transferred to the sand carts. To arrive at El Arish on January 10, 1917, Bob must have left on a convoy before 3.00 pm. As all of the sand cart convoys after this time were Lowland Field Ambulance convoys, which all took their patients to the 2nd Lowland Field Ambulance Receiving Station, the only convoy Bob could have been evacuated on was the combined 3rd Light Horse and Lowland Field Ambulance convoy at 2.30 pm, which would have arrived at El Arish before midnight.¹⁷



Sand cart convoy to El Arish from El Magruntein January 10, 1917 - NAMNZ 1994.2560.1

The nearest fully equipped Casualty Clearing Stations with surgical specialists to El Magruntein were the 54th CCS at kilo 128 and the 26th CCS at El Mazar, 20 to 30 miles (32-48 km) west of El Arish. The nearest Hospitals were No. 2 Australian Stationary Hospital at Mahemdia, north of Romani, and No. 24 Stationary Hospital at Kantara on the Suez Canal. Two Receiving Stations were set up at El Arish from the immobile sections of the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance and the 2nd Lowland Field Ambulance to act as Casualty Clearing Stations. The 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Receiving Station had been originally set up by the mobile section as a CCS 'right on the beach' between El Arish and Masaid on December 22, 1916, for the Maghaba casualties, and was taken over by the immobile section four days later. It was short of blankets, pillows, bedsteads and tents. By the time the casualties from El Magruntein began to arrive, the tents, stretchers and blankets borrowed the previous month from the Royal Naval Beach Party, the Australian Mounted Division Headquarters and the 52nd (Lowland) Division were still in use and only a few bedsteads had been received. The 2nd Lowland Field Ambulance Receiving Station was in little better shape, having arrived on December 25, 1916, and on January 3, 1917, had to move their site to make way for the railway. On January 6, 1917, they reported having insufficient supplies and equipment even for the 73 patients in hospital on that day. Their remaining equipment arrived two days later but by 9.00 am on January 10, 1917, they had to borrow 10 tents from Desert Column Headquarters in

order to be able to cater for up to 350 patients, and it was the next day before a shipment of 500 blankets arrived. In the afternoon of January 10, 1917, Colonel Macdonald had received advice from Colonel Downes at Sheik Zowaid that approximately 450 wounded could be expected. To relieve the pressure on these Receiving Stations, he had previously ordered that all Turkish and German wounded were to be treated at the El Arish Egyptian Hospital. He visited both the Receiving Stations and optimistically declared that they 'were quite prepared in every way'.¹⁸

When Bob arrived at the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Receiving Station at El Arish, it was staffed by two Medical Officers, Major Mylles Wyamarus Cave and Captain Max Yuille, and about 40 orderlies. It had been at least 30 hours since he had been wounded, and in that time, he had spent more than 13 hours being transported in a sand cart or sledge. While the immobile sections of Light Horse Field Ambulances had operating facilities, these were poorly equipped in comparison to those at a CCS. Major Cave was an experienced medical practitioner who enlisted in 1914 and had served at Gallipoli. He was considered by his superiors to 'have shown marked ability and professional knowledge...[and his] power of leadership [was] good'. Captain Yuille on the other hand had enlisted in 1915 as soon as he finished his medical degree and before having any hospital experience in Australia. No special arrangements were made for additional surgical assistance in forward areas until after mid-1917, when 'Divisional Receiving Stations' received greatly enhanced facilities and a mobile 'Operating Unit' was established to reduce the time it took for surgical intervention for abdominal and other critical wounds.¹⁹

Chaplain Scott Little on seeing Bob at El Magruntein felt that 'from the beginning his case was a serious one'. Haemorrhage and peritoneal infection were the primary causes of death for patients with abdominal wounds, and by the end of 1915 Medical Officers knew that 'the only hope for their salvation' was rapid evacuation to a CCS where operative treatment was available. The orthodox treatment of abdominal wounds was based on the 'expectant' approach, that is 'avoiding the disturbance of movement', putting the patient in the Fowler position²⁰, general rest and warmth, withholding food and water for three days and administering morphia. Thirst was 'a distressing symptom' of abdominal wounds and was to be ameliorated by 'rectal salines and mouth washes'. Even when surgery was attempted in Field Ambulance Stations, the late arrival of cases meant that 'the results were undeniably bad' and few Medical Officers in the field made such attempts. While Bob was admitted with 'GSW (Gun Shot Wound) Abdomen', descriptions of the wound by Chaplain Scott Little and 2nd Lieutenant Kinkead indicate that the 'bullet [passed] through the lower part of his abdomen and his groin'. This does suggest that his wound may well have been 'complicated by wounds to other hollow viscera' – the small and large intestine. The British *Great War: Medical Services General History* estimated that 'the increased gravity of multiple wounds' in abdominal cases 'shows a mortality of 100 per cent'.²¹

Second Lieutenant Kinkead later wrote to Bob's mother Kate that when he visited him on the morning of January 11, 1917, Bob was 'very cheerful', and said 'I feel grand. I'll get well, don't worry about me'. While this might be taken as an attempt to put the best light on a dreadful situation for his mother, it may well have been true. Bob was clearly being treated in accordance with the 'expectant' approach, which could produce depression in the patient, knowing that 'nothing could be done for him by operation, and the only thing was to wait events'. However, 'many patients, at first gravely ill, went through a period of improvement which often was very striking'. This may well have been the case with Bob once he reached the Receiving Station at El Arish. Major Cave and Captain Yuille though clearly considered that Bob was in a grave condition, as they made no attempt to have him evacuated on the No. 6 Hospital Train which arrived at kilo 152 at El Arish at 6.30 am on January 11, 1917. They would certainly have known that the Medical Officer in charge of the train had the authority to refuse to load any patient whose condition was so critical that he considered him to be unfit for the journey.²²

An analysis of 17 men identified as having been wounded at El Magruntein with 'GSW Abdomen', including Bob, reveals that five whose wound was described as 'slight' were evacuated by train to various hospitals, and all recovered and were discharged either to their own or another unit. Of the remaining 12 with more serious wounds, four were sent to a train for evacuation, one died in the sand cart on the way to the El Arish railhead and of the three who were actually evacuated to hospital two died and one survived. The survivor's injuries were to his back, ribs and spine, with

the upper abdomen seemingly of secondary concern. He was repatriated in March, 1917, to Australia, discharged in October, 1917, and died in 1944. One of the two who died lived for 11 days and the other, Trooper Herbert Gyler from Bob's No. 12 Company, managed to live for 33 days before succumbing to his injuries. Three of the remaining serious cases died at a Dressing Station and never reached El Arish. Bob was one of five serious cases who did reach one of the El Arish Receiving Stations. None survived longer than three days.²³

Bob died early in the morning on Friday, January 12, 1917. It was a windy day, blowing hard from the south-east and bringing dust from the Sinai desert. He was buried in the afternoon in grave no. 9 in the El Arish Military Cemetery, only established earlier that month by the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance 800 yards (730m) north-north-east of the township on the western bank of the Wadi el Arish. Chaplain Scott Little officiated and 2nd Lieutenant Kinkead and his 'mates' from No. 12 Company were present. Two 'taubes' from FA 300 marked the occasion by dropping two bombs on El Arish in mid-afternoon, just as the ICC Brigade was formed up in a hollow square to hear a speech from Major General Chauvel. The troopers scattered and the speech was cut short. There were no casualties. Before No. 12 Company left El Arish on March 17, 1917, 'his comrades...[had] erected a neat cross at the head of his grave'.²⁴



El Arish Military Cemetery 1917 (X marks Bob's grave)
AWM P05566.021



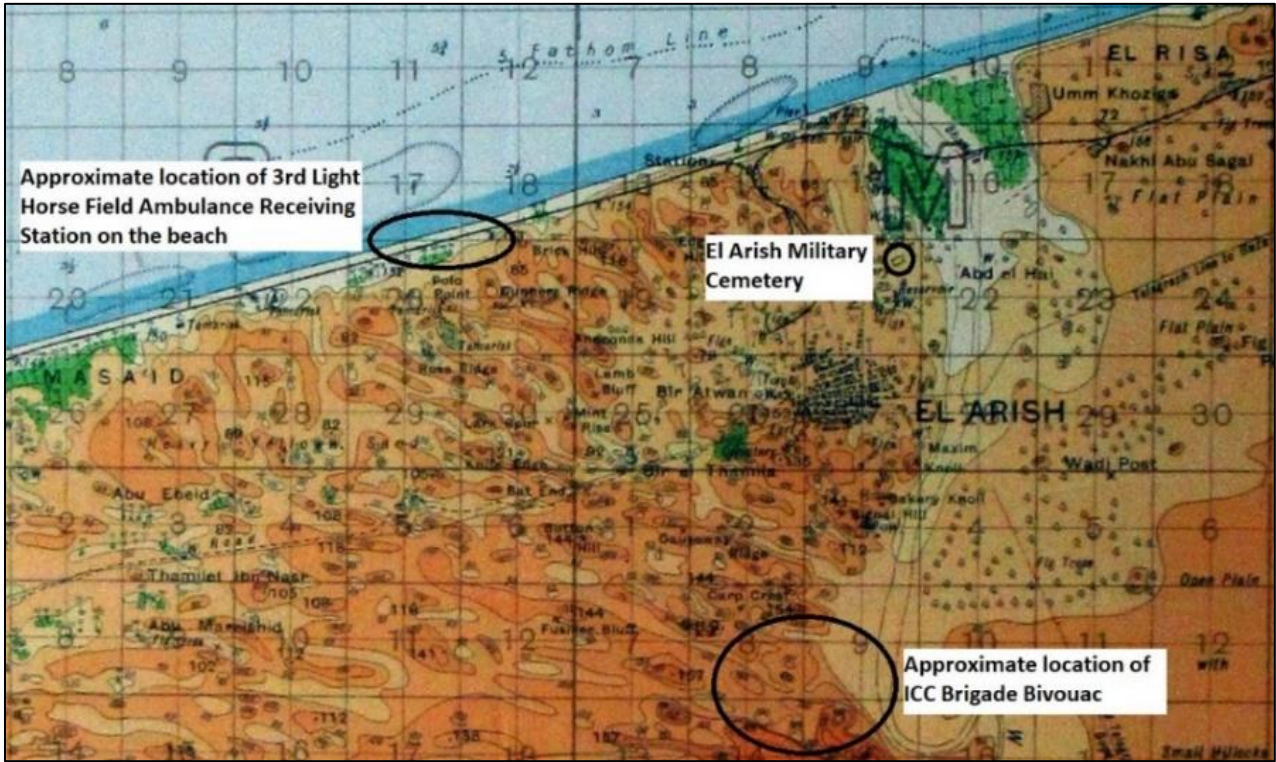
El Arish Military Cemetery Australian Graves
ARAC Garland Collection WWI Photographs



El Arish Military Cemetery C 1916-1919
AWM P09718.013



El Arish Military Cemetery 1918
AWM H10610, IWM Q13141



El Arish 1917 - Sheet 040, 1:40,000, 27/4/1917 TNA, WO 303/175

Chapter 16

Loss Grief and Memory

News of the battle and of the involvement of the ICC in it first appeared in the Australian press, coincidentally, on January 12, 1917. The reported 496 casualties incurred were described as 'light considering the severity of the fighting' - not a number likely to assuage the fears of the families of men in the ICC or Light Horse units involved. In the last week of January, 1917, Brother Ken of the Bush Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd, Reverend Kenneth Leslie McKeown, incumbent minister at St. Stephens Church of England in Bourke since April, 1916, received a telegram from Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Luscombe, Assistant Adjutant General of the 2nd Military District, Victoria Barracks, Sydney. It read:

Base Records 33118 has officially reported that No. 2367, Private N. H. McBride of the Camel Corps, late 7th Light Horse Remounts, died of wounds on January 10. Please inform Mr. A. McBride and convey the deep regret and sympathy of their Majesties the King and Queen, and Commonwealth Government in the loss that he and the Army have sustained through the death of the soldier.

Like so many other ministers of religion at the time, Brother Ken had to convey the distressing news to Alfred and Kate of the death of their son. It was only a short distance from the Church to where they were living in Mertin Street. Kate most likely had to bear the initial shock alone as Alfred was often absent on contracting or carrying work.¹

The advice that Bob 'died of wounds on January 10' was incorrect. On January 14, 1917, Lieutenant John Davidson, acting as Captain of No. 12 Company after the death of George Smith, submitted a Field Return to the ICC Brigade Headquarters via the 3rd Battalion that Bob had died of wounds and was 'struck off strength' of the Company on January 10, 1917. Four days later, the ICC Brigade passed this information on to the Australian Records Section (ARS), 3rd Echelon, EEF in Alexandria. Cables to this effect were then dispatched to London and Melbourne on January 20, 1917, and three days later Lieutenant Colonel Luscombe in Sydney received the advice that he used to prepare the telegram to Reverend McKeown. The 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance meanwhile had submitted Hospital Report C.7911 to the ARS on January 13, 1917, correctly noting that Bob had died of wounds on January 12, 1917. However, no action was taken to correct the error until a Field Return with a corrigendum amending Bob's date of death was received from the 3rd Battalion Headquarters on March 4, 1917. Cables were sent to London and Melbourne on March 21, 1917, cancelling the original advice and substituting the correct date of Bob's death as January 12, 1917. Lieutenant Colonel Luscombe in Sydney received this amended advice the next day, but there is no evidence any action was taken at this time to inform Bob's parents.²

The cryptic telegram from Lieutenant Colonel Luscombe conveyed no details of the circumstances of Bob's death. By January 29, 1917, Alfred and Kate had informed their eldest daughter Lizzie and her husband Stuart of Bob's death. Stuart, now promoted to Sergeant, was still in charge of Trangie Police Station, 185 miles (298 km) south-east of Bourke. He immediately wrote to 2nd Lieutenant Kinkead asking for information about what had happened to Bob. Within the next three weeks, either Lizzie and Stuart or Alfred and Kate sent an enquiry to the NSW Branch of the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in Sydney, which had been operating since July, 1915, to provide further information to 'relieve as quickly as possible the anxiety of the relatives in Australia' following their receipt of the official advice that their family member had been killed, wounded or was missing. The NSW Branch cabled the request to their London office on February 21, 1917, who commenced enquiries with the ARS in Alexandria.³

It took about six to seven weeks for a letter from Australia to reach troops in the Sinai, and Stuart's request crossed with a letter that 2nd Lieutenant Kinkead had written to Bob's mother the day after he had died, which she received in early March, 1917. James Kinkead wrote:

My Dear Mrs. McBride. — It is very painful to me to have to write to you and inform you of your son's death. I was his officer in our last attack on the Turks on January 9. I, myself, was born in Cobar and lived there for years. In fact my people are still there. I met your boy at the base in Cairo, and he asked me to take him with me to the desert to do some fighting. So I took him. He was a well-conducted lad, and his bearing soon won for him the affection of his mates. The Turks were defending their position savagely, and we went out to take it at the point the bayonet. We had to advance over 1^{1/2} mile of fire-swept country,

the final 800 yards being up a slope of ploughed ground. Your boy got to within about 400 yards of the enemy, when he was hit, the bullet passing through the lower part of his abdomen and his groin. He was very badly hit, but was very cheerful. He was quickly attended to and taken to the Field Hospital at El Arish. I visited him on the morning of the 11th, and in reply to my questions he said: 'I feel grand, I'll get well, don't worry about me.' The grit of these lads is marvellous; and Australia will never be dishonored while she has such lads as your son fighting for her. Let the fact that he died a soldier's death in the service of his country, comfort you in your sorrow. A nobler death no man could wish for. He died from his wounds yesterday, January 12, and his mates and I buried him in a soldiers' cemetery at El Arish. His grave will be cared for by me. We avenged his death with the bayonet.⁴

At about the same time that James Kinkead was composing his letter, Chaplain Scott Little also wrote to Kate. There is no extant copy of that letter, but it is most likely that it contained similar information to that which he provided to the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in London on March 12, 1917, details of which would have been passed on to Alfred and Kate at a later date. Charles Scott Little wrote to the Bureau:

He was shot on Jan 9th at Rafa when about four hundred yards from the trenches, the bullet entered the groin & perforated his stomach, & from the beginning his case was a serious one. I saw him myself shortly after he had been shot, he was lying not far from their trenches (i.e. the Turkish) & the Dr gave him something to ease the pain. He was brought in by the field ambulance & eventually taken to the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance where he died early on Friday morning Jan 12th. I buried him that same afternoon, Jan 12th, in the Military Cemetery at El Arish & his comrades have erected a neat cross at the head of his grave, (Grave No. 9).⁵

Stuart received a reply from James Kinkead by early May, 1917, advising him of the letter that James had written to Bob's mother 'a few days after returning from the stunt'. He further wrote:

Any other information you would like I would be only too happy to give you. As I am a member of the Civil Service – being a C.P.S [Clerk of Petty Sessions] – it may be that I will have a chance of personally giving you particulars when we all return. The grave has been nicely done up and has a substantial white enamelled wooden cross, to mark it and to testify that another of Australia's Sons had nobly done his duty. My kindest regards to his mother, sister & to yourself.

James had returned to Cobar by November, 1919. Stuart by this time had been posted to Maclean in Northern NSW. James lived in Sydney in the 1930s and 1940s, when Stuart was retired at Stockton, and often visited Sydney. It is not known if they ever met.⁶

By May, 1917, Alfred and Kate were living in Byrock, 67 miles (108 km) south-east of Bourke, where Alfred had contract work and Kate had been appointed Post Mistress on 17 March, 1917. Despite the information that they had received from James Kinkead and Charles Scott Little, on May 17, 1917, Kate wrote to Base Records, Victoria Barracks, Melbourne:

I have the honor to request that you will furnish me with the following information namely:- My son is reported as being killed in action, so would be very thankful if you could furnish me with authentic information in respect to same. His name was H. N. (sic) McBride, Trooper 12 Company Imperial Camel Corps, late 1st Rifle Remount.

Despite Kate's errors in Bob's initials and first unit, the officer in charge of Base Records, Major James Malcolm Lean, responded on May 25, 1917, correcting these errors and stating that:

the only available information regarding this soldier is that contained in the brief cable message "Died of wounds received in action on 12/1/1917". Later official advice coming to hand by Mail will give further particulars and these on receipt will be promptly transmitted to next of kin, shown as father.

This is probably the first time Alfred and Kate were officially informed of the actual date of Bob's death. Army Field Service Form B 2090A, 'Report on Death of a Soldier', was not signed off by the ARS in Alexandria until July 13, 1917, and it would be January 15, 1918, before Alfred received what turned out to be the final official advice from Major Lean at Base Records in Melbourne:

With reference to the report of the regrettable loss of your son, the late No. 2367, Private N.H. McBride, 7th Light Horse, attached to Camel Corps, I am now in receipt of advice which shows that he died at 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance, El Arish, Egypt, on 12th January 1917, of wounds received in action, and was buried in Military Cemetery El Arish, Grave No. 9, the same day, Chaplain Scott Little officiating. These additional details are furnished by direction, it being the policy of the Department, to forward all information received in connection with the death of members of the Australian Imperial Force.⁷

No further 'authentic' information was to come from any source. It does not seem that Bob's family gave up however, as by September, 1917, the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in London had received a further inquiry about Bob by cable from their Sydney Bureau. On

September 5, 1917, the Secretary wrote to the OC of No. 12 Company, ICC:

We would be greatly obliged if you could give us any details of the wounds, death and burial of 2367 Trooper Neil Hamilton McBride, of your unit who died of wounds on 10.1.17.

Two of the officers that Bob served with, including James Kinkead, were still with the company at this time, but there is no evidence that the Bureau ever received a reply. The Bureau's last record on Bob was dated December 29, 1919, a confirmation from Melbourne about Bob's burial location at El Arish, which added nothing that was not already known.⁸

Bob's name first appears in the 270th 'list of casualties sustained by...Australian troops' as having 'Died of Wounds' in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and 12 other New South Wales newspapers on Saturday, February 3, 1917. He was one of 713 men listed as being 'out of action' and one of a total of 110 listed as having died. On the same day, the Bourke *Western Herald* published the contents of the telegram received by Brother Ken, under the heading 'Death of Private N.H. McBride', and added the comment:

Death has claimed another of our brave lads who have gone to fight the foe who has devastated Europe in his mad desire to be the Emperor of the old world....The young soldier was 24 years of age, and exceedingly well known in Bourke where his parents and relatives have lived for many years. 'Bob,' as he was familiarly known, was a fine stamp of a man, and his death has been great blow to the family, all of whom, however, are somewhat consoled by the fact that their son and brother died the death of a hero, who gave his life for them and his country. There can be no nobler death.

A month later, on March 7, 1917, the *Western Herald* published the letter James Kinkead had sent to Bob's mother under the heading 'Private Robert McBride – How He Died'. Two days later, the article was repeated in the Dubbo *Western Age* under the heading 'The Late Private Bob McBride', with the added comment that 'prior to enlisting Bob was in the employ of Mr. F.G. Kynaston of Cobar'. On March 31, 1917, Bob was again included in an official casualty list, the 284th, under the heading 'Died of Wounds', with the somewhat confusing explanation '(prev. rep. died of wnds)'. This second listing was no doubt prompted by the official confirmation of his actual date of death received in Melbourne on March 21, 1917, but there was nothing in the published information to indicate why his listing as having 'Died of Wounds' was now repeated.⁹

Stuart carefully cut out and pasted into his *Diary* the two articles on Bob from the *Western Herald*. He also added the only published photograph of Bob, inserted in the *Sydney Mail* on April 4, 1917, with the caption 'Tpr N.H. McBride Died of Wounds'. The only other substantial mention of Bob's death in a newspaper came four months later on August 22, 1917, and that was by inference. 'One of the Has Beens' wrote to the Editor of the *Western Herald* to point out the record of Hungerford's recruits. He pointed out that

There are seven families in the township. Of these, eight boys have volunteered and six have been accepted and are in the firing line. Besides this, of two families (the Maslens and McBrides) all of whose boys were born in Hungerford, five have volunteered and four are fighting. And to conclude, one has earned his commission on the field, three have been wounded, and one boy killed on active service....At present the township consists of kiddies, women and "has beens".

It is not definite that the reference to the 'one boy killed' is Bob, but readers of the *Western Herald* in Hungerford would certainly have known of his death by this time.¹⁰



Tpr N.H. McBride
Died of Wounds
Sydney Mail April 4,
1917 p. 13

On March 4, 1916, the *Western Herald* published a list of four names of local AIF volunteers who had died, under the heading 'Death Has Claimed'. The list was repeated every one to two weeks, and new names added as information came to hand. 'Private N.H. McBride, who died of wounds, Jan. 10, 1917' was added to the list on February 3, 1917, bringing the total to 11 names. After the end of March, 1918, there was a three-month hiatus until July 20, 1918, when the last list was published, now grown to 31 names, including Bob, with the incorrect date of his death unchanged. Also commencing publication on March 4, 1916, was 'Our Roll of Honor', listing the names of 'the brave boys who have enlisted from Bourke and district and who had registered at the Bourke Police Station', but a week later requesting 'will relatives and friends kindly send the names of any lads, who have gone from the district to the war, but who are not mentioned in the above list'. This list was also repeated every one to two weeks, but Bob's name only appeared for the first time as an addendum on February 3, 1917. On March 24, 1917, his name was incorporated into the list proper.

This list too, with Bob still included, ended on July 20, 1918, after a three-month break. This may have been a reflection of the war weariness of the home front by July, 1918, with the two lists together now taking up two columns in each new edition of the paper, and with no end to the war in sight. Another possible explanation is that the need for a printed list had been slowly supplanted in the public mind by the suggestion, first raised on June 2, 1917, of a 'permanent Roll of Honor...worthy of the fine men who have fallen [to be] erected in the Park'. Within a fortnight, at a public meeting a committee had been formed and a 'Monument Fund' commenced, which by mid-1918, had been 'liberally subscribed to'.¹¹

The *Western Age* in Dubbo also began publishing in January, 1916, a 'Roll of Honor' each week of those who had volunteered from the Cobar District. Bob is listed for the first time as 'Neil Hamilton (Bob) McBride' on December 8, 1916. His name continued to be listed until the final publication of the roll on April 20, 1917. Unlike others in the list who are marked as 'killed' or 'wounded', Bob's entry after January never indicated that he had died. The list was taking up about one and a half columns by April, but no reason is given why publication suddenly ceased. One possibility is that both the Cobar Municipal Council and the Cobar Public School had by April, 1917, commenced preparations for installing more permanent Rolls of Honour.¹²

On March 7, 1917, a paper package of Bob's effects was dispatched from the Australian Depot Stores at Ghezireh in Cairo, Egypt, on the New Zealand transport ship *Willochra*, and by early April, 1917, a Registered Packet had been forwarded by Major Lean at Base Records in Melbourne to Alfred at Byrock with the contents listed as a 'Matchbox, Pencil, Badges & bullet in tin box, watch in Leather case, Letters, Knife, Key, toothbrush, 1 Handk'f [handkerchief]'. An indication of the heartfelt significance of these few small and seemingly insignificant items to Bob's parents, is reflected in the letter Alfred wrote to Major Lean on May 12, 1917:

Dear Sir, I received, matchbox, badges & bullet in tin box, watch in leather case, letters, knife, key, toothbrush, but did not receive any pencil. Thanking you for the package. Could you tell me what the little key belongs to.

There was really no way that Major Lean could help Alfred and the reply sent 10 days later merely stated

that the package in question was forwarded to you in exactly the same condition it was received from Abroad – it will be noted the seals were unbroken. Consequently, I regret my inability to give any information as to its contents.

A second paper package was dispatched by the Australian Depot Stores at Ghezireh on May 3, 1917, on HMAT A45 *Bulla* and passed on to Alfred by Major Lean on July 17, 1917. It contained 'Photos, letters, badges, numerals, silk handk'f [handkerchief], neckties, pocketknife'. Finally, on July 10, 1917, an envelope containing '1 Identity Disc' was dispatched on HMAT A15 *Port Sydney* and forwarded to Alfred by Major Lean on September 5, 1917. This was the last material item once possessed by their son that Alfred and Kate were to receive. It is difficult to understand why Bob's effects were sent in three separate lots over a period of four months, given that under the Field Service Regulations

The pay book and identity disc of a deceased soldier, and any personal effects which may have sentimental value, will be sent with the least possible delay, by the officer under whose immediate command he was when he became noneffective, to the A.G.'s [Adjutant General] office at the base... effects will be forwarded to the officer in charge of records concerned.

The drawn-out succession of packages would not have helped Alfred and Kate come to terms with Bob's death. Alfred's plaintive letter about a 'pencil' and 'little key' reveal just how much these personal effects were treasured as memories of their dead son; they were after all 'the only things that came back from overseas'.¹³

A two-year silence from the Government and media about Bob's death now descended on the McBride family. During this period, in May, 1919, Alfred and Kate received the first public recognition of Bob's death in the form of a Memorial Certificate from the Bourke Returned Soldiers Welcome League. The League was formed in December, 1917, under the chairmanship of the Mayor of Bourke, Horace Kennedy Bloxham, to ensure all returning soldiers received a public welcome. By January, 1919, the committee had decided to fund a framed 'illuminated certificate' to be presented to 'the relatives of deceased soldiers' at an estimated cost of £1 each (\$80). The



Example of an Identity Disc similar to the one issued to Bob McBride
AWM REL31248

committee adopted the design used by the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League. Bob's certificate was ready to be presented at a meeting of the Bourke Returned Soldiers Welcome League at the Council Chambers on a rainy evening on Monday, May 12, 1919. It is not known if any member of the McBride family was present on that occasion, but it was noted that for those not present, the certificates 'are to be forwarded to them'.¹⁴



Nearest Female Relative
Badge - AWM REL11143

In April, 1917, the Minister for Defence George Pearce announced that the nearest female relative of soldiers in the AIF would receive a badge 'of special design, suggesting how women have helped the Empire by enabling their men to fight the enemy'. It would bear the inscription 'Issued by Dept. of Defence to Women of Australia For Duty Done'. Application forms for the badge were available at all Post Offices, and Kate joined many thousands of other women who applied. A contract for manufacture was let by July, 1917, but a shortage of enamel in Australia produced such lengthy delays, that by the second half of 1918, newspaper reports stressed that "'the nearest female relative" is growing somewhat tired of the pleasure of anticipation' and that the Department of Defence 'was growing ashamed of its repeated failures to redeem its promise...[and] at length confessed itself to be in the stupid position of having ordered a badge that could not be manufactured'. By December, 1918, George Pearce promised they 'will be distributed right away', but a year later supply of badges was still inadequate to meet the demand. Badges were issued in order of receipt of applications, so if Kate had applied in 1917, she would have received her badge by June, 1919. Otherwise, it may have been as late as 1920 before her application was processed. Kate clearly valued this badge, as after their home in Byrock was destroyed in the massive bushfires 'in the triangle formed by the towns of Byrock, Brewarrina and Bourke' in November, 1921, she wrote to Base Records in Melbourne in August, 1923: 'Would you kindly send me another blue enamel badge brooch with "Duty Done". Mine has been destroyed by fire.' In reply, she was informed 'with regret that the issue of badges ceased on 31/3/22 and no stock is available for distribution at this late juncture'.¹⁵

In January, 1919, the Defence Department announced that a badge of honour would be issued to mothers or widows of members of the AIF who had been killed in action or died of wounds or other causes directly attributable to their service. It was described at the time as consisting

of a band of black silk three inches (7.6 cm) long and two and a quarter inches (5.7 cm) broad...suspended from a bar of silver half an Inch (1.2 cm) wide, with a brooch pin attached. There is a similar silver bar at the bottom. Artistically woven into the silk band...are two scrolls in gold of wattle flowers, then the rising sun badge of the C.M. Force, in gold, purple, and silver, and underneath this in gold letters the simple words 'For Australia.' Affixed to the bottom of the silver bar is a gilt seven-pointed star or stars representing the number of those in the family who have made the supreme sacrifice.

Again, applications for this had to be made, this time on a form available from military area officers in each town or directly to the Military Depot, Hyde Park, Sydney. Unlike the debacle of the nearest female relative badge, these were manufactured and were being distributed within six months of the announcement. There was of course no 'military area officer' in Byrock, and there is no evidence that Kate applied for this 'badge of honor'.¹⁶



Mothers and Widows
Badge - AWM REL05876

In January, 1920, Alfred and Kate received a letter jointly signed by the Minister for Defence, George Pearce, and the Minister for Home and Territories, Patrick Glynn, requesting 'certain particulars' about Bob for three purposes:

Firstly, so that the Historians who are writing the National and Regimental Histories of the A.I.F. may have the...particulars of every Australian soldier who died; Secondly, so that the name and record of every Australian soldier who fell may be inscribed in the great Honor Roll of the Australian people in the Memorial Museum; and Thirdly, so that the gravestones of Australian soldiers may be inscribed with the proper information.

A form containing pre-printed questions was enclosed together with a copy of the Imperial War Graves Commission booklet *The Graves of the Fallen*, written by Rudyard Kipling, and inscribed on

the front cover with the message 'With the Compliments & Deepest Sympathy of the Australian Government'. Alfred returned the form partially completed, but the information he included on it did almost nothing to add to knowledge already obtainable in Bob's military record, and in fact, was more often a source of confusion. Alfred wrote Bob's birth name as 'Neal', which was correct according to his birth registration, but only indicated his birthplace as 'queensland'. In answer to the question 'With what Town or District...was he chiefly connected', he wrote 'Cobar', which again, at least for his adult life, was correct, but in answer to 'What was his school' he unhelpfully wrote 'State'. For 'Date of Death' Alfred actually entered Bob's date of birth – '12 october'. Perhaps the most abstruse information provided for the 'Nation's Histories' was in answer to the question 'Was he connected with any other Member of the A.I.F. who died or who distinguished himself'. Alfred wrote 'Mager (*sic*) Lloyd Uncle by marriage (*sic*)'. There were three 'Major' Lloyds in the AIF, but none were related to Bob. Alfred was actually referring to Richard Lloyd, who went by the alias Herbert Brisbane Lloyd, a Boer War veteran who had married Kate's sister Alice Maude Mary McNab, nee Fisk, in Bathurst NSW in 1904. He put down his age and enlisted in January, 1915, and served with the 7th Light Horse Regiment at Gallipoli and in Egypt. He was promoted to Staff Sergeant Major about September, 1916, but was returned to Australia at the end of that month with debility. He was in the 3rd Australian General Hospital at Abbassia from August 28, 1916, while Bob was training with the ICC nearby, but it is not known if they met up at this time.¹⁷



Bob McBride's Grave in El Arish Military Cemetery 1917
Family Collection

In March, 1920, Alfred and Kate received three photographs of Bob's grave in the El Arish Military Cemetery. These were provided free of charge by the Minister for Defence George Pearce in a cardboard folder inscribed inside with 'a description of the locality of the place of burial' – 'Buried: El Arish Military Cemetery Grave 9 Egypt'. This information in its brevity added nothing that they had not already learned from Chaplain Scott Little three years previously. Also communicated at the time was the advice that additional copies were available for threepence (\$1) each, to be remitted in stamps 'for amounts less than one shilling (\$4)'. Only one of the copies is known to have

survived, that forwarded to Lizzie and Stuart, by then living in Maclean. What is interesting about this original photograph is that Bob's service number on the cross is incorrect, 2368 instead of 2367, no doubt a product of the fact the cross was erected by his 'comrades' rather than through any official action.¹⁸

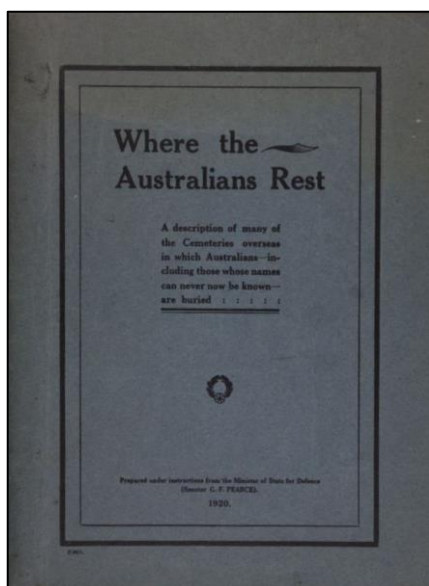
Once again, almost two years were to pass before Alfred and Kate received any further Government communications about Bob. In January, 1922, the first of Bob's two service medals, the British War Medal, No. 38986, was dispatched from Sydney to Alfred at Byrock. The following month, a 72-page booklet *Where Australians Rest* was sent 'With the Compliments and Deepest Sympathy of the Minister of State for Defence Senator G.F. Pearce'. It was 'designed to bring comfort to relatives and friends of fallen soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force', and to be 'a touching record which will be greatly prized by those whose sad privilege it will be to receive it'. Whether or not it had this desired effect on Alfred and Kate will never be known. They would have learned from it however, that 'plain headstones of a uniform type, measuring 2 ft. 6 in. (76 cm) by 1 ft. 3 in. (38 cm), will ultimately take the place of the frail wooden war crosses', but perhaps were nonplussed by the description that Egypt 'will always be a place of pilgrimage for Australians', and 'these cemeteries will be visited constantly by those [Australians] who pass through Egypt on their way to Europe'. A single paragraph on page 69 informed them that:

El Arish Cemetery, near the beach, and about 1½ miles (2.4 km) from the railway station, is surrounded by tall date palms. A barbed-wire fence runs around it. Here are the graves of 88 Australian soldiers.

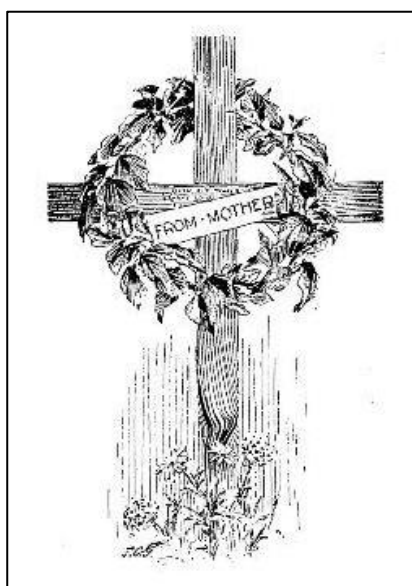


British War Medal - DOD
Defence Honours & Awards

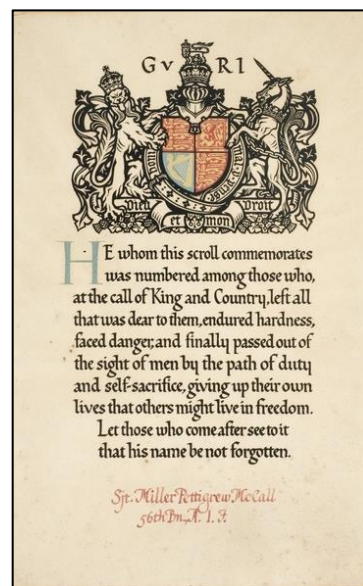
The illustration on page 2 by John Goodchild of a wooden cross with a wreath draped over it with a ribbon 'From Mother' attached would have struck an incongruous note with many recipients however, as bereaved parents had been left in no doubt by the AIF Base Records Office that 'it is not possible to arrange for the distribution of flowers, plants or wreaths for individual graves'.¹⁹



Where Australians Rest
SLV MCP355.69W57G



Where Australians Rest - John
Goodchild's Illustration
SLV MCP355.69W57G



Example of a Memorial Scroll
AWM REL41097.004

Dispatched to Alfred and Kate at the same time as *Where Australians Rest* was a Memorial Scroll and accompanying letter from Buckingham Palace under King George V's signature. The British Government had decided in October, 1916, to issue a memorial bronze plaque to the next of kin of all British and Dominion soldiers who died, and set up a committee to oversee this headed by the Secretary of the War Office. The committee decided in November, 1917, to issue a Memorial Scroll on high quality 11-inch (28 cm) by 7-inch (18 cm) paper to next of kin in addition to the plaque. A Memorial Plaque competition was conducted, attracting more than 800 entries by the closing date of December 31, 1917. The winning design by Edward Carter Preston, Sandon Studies Society, Liverpool, was made public on March 23, 1918. Each circular plaque was over four and a half inches (115 mm) in diameter and was inscribed with the full name of the dead soldier and bore the message 'He died for freedom and honour'. The similarity of the plaques to a penny attracted from the public the cynical appellation of 'Dead Man's Penny'. As the committee could not agree on the wording to be included on the scroll, Dr Montague Rhodes James, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, was asked to assist and with a few modifications his suggested wording was adopted. It appeared in calligraphic script under the Royal Coat of Arms:

He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

Underneath this text, in red calligraphic script, was written Bob's rank, name and unit. Production of the scrolls by the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts had commenced by 1919, and also by then the plaques were being cast by a special Government Memorial Plaque factory in London. Manufacturing at this factory proved unsatisfactory and from December, 1920, the Woolwich Arsenal munitions factory took over production. This factory change, and shortages of paper and metal, meant the scrolls and plaques were not manufactured in any great numbers until well into 1920 and it was found impossible in Australia to distribute both together. Alfred and Kate's 'Dead Man's Penny' was not received until January 29, 1923. Hopefully, Bob's name was correctly inscribed on it as a handwritten note in his military file dated August 10, 1922, noted 'Incorrect spelling of 1st Christian Name – Plaque roll read Neill, Records Neil'. The accompanying message from the King



Example of a Memorial Plaque
AWM 2019.791.1

to Alfred and Kate in relation to these memorial items was brief: 'I join with my grateful people in sending you this memorial of a brave life given for others in the Great War'.²⁰

Any consolation that Alfred and Kate may have gathered from seeing photographs of Bob's grave, or from the words about 'sacrifice' for others in the graves booklets, Memorial Scroll and King's message would have been disrupted by advice sent on May 9, 1922, from Base Records in Melbourne that

the late No. 2367, Private N.H. McBride, Camel Corps, your son, his remains have been exhumed from the former grave site and re-interred in the Kantara Military Cemetery, Egypt (plot E, grave 188). This work is carried out with every measure of care and reverence in the presence of a Chaplain.



Bob McBride's Grave in Kantara War Memorial Cemetery 1922 - Family Collection

The 'sentiment' of the Imperial War Graves Commission to concentrate burials was set out in *The Graves of the Fallen*, the rationale being that some graves were in places such that they 'cannot be reached or tended' and moreover 'scattered graves look lonely...and should be gathered in to rest with the nearest main body of their companions'. El Arish Military Cemetery was initially one such concentration cemetery, with those who had been killed in action and buried at El Magruntein being exhumed and re-buried there by 1920. Kantara Military Cemetery was also designated as a concentration cemetery, additional land being obtained by April, 1919, and a revised layout was well underway by July, 1919. The El Arish Military Cemetery, situated as it was in an isolated and sparsely populated area 'at the foot of a steep bank in the Wadi el Arish, where [it] stood in danger of damage by water which flows down the valley in the winter rainy season, sometimes in great volume', would have been difficult and expensive to maintain. After 1920, the decision was taken to exhume the 552 bodies there and consolidate them at Kantara Military Cemetery (renamed later in 1922 the Kantara War Memorial Cemetery). On October 18, 1922, Alfred and Kate were sent a new photograph of Bob's grave at Kantara. This was a less elaborate wooden cross than had been erected by his fellow troopers at El Arish, but at least recorded his service number correctly. Leaning against the cross is a wreath, remarkably similar to John Goodchild's illustration in *Where*

Australians Rest, but without the 'From Mother' ribbon. It is clearly a prop used by the photographer, as all other crosses behind Bob are devoid of any such symbolic gesture, and any living member of the AIF who knew Bob had long been repatriated to Australia.²¹

In March, 1923, the last of Bob's two service medals, the Victory Medal, No. 38668, was dispatched from Melbourne to Alfred and Kate. Work by the Imperial War Graves Commission on permanent headstones at Kantara War Memorial Cemetery was under way, but Alfred had not returned that part of the form sent in January, 1920, that allowed him to place a personal inscription on the headstone, albeit at his own expense. The limit for the inscription was 66 letters, although in practice allowance had to be made for spaces between words. A 12-word inscription would have cost Alfred 3½ pence (\$1) per letter - about 16 shillings (\$58). Whether or not Alfred and Kate just neglected to return the form, did not want Bob's headstone to have a personal inscription or just could not afford it is not known, but on November 13, 1922, Base Records in Melbourne informed London that no inscription had been requested.²²



Victory Medal - DOD Defence Honours & Awards

By February, 1925, work at the Kantara War Memorial Cemetery was completed, with permanent headstones erected and a detailed register finalised. On August 1, 1925, an Imperial War Graves

Commission letter from the Vice-Chairman Major General Fabian Ware advising the availability of the Cemetery Register for Kantara was forwarded to Alfred and Kate. It contained a 'proof slip' of the entry for Bob on an Order Form which could be used to obtain a full copy of the Register, at a cost of three shillings (\$12). This would be the last official communication they received about Bob's death and burial. Early in 1925, Base Records in Melbourne informed anyone who requested photographs of a completed headstone that

it is not the intention of the Government to supply next of kin with photographs of the completed war graves....in Egypt...it is understood that photographs of the permanent headstones can be obtained through the agency of the General Secretary, Y.M.C.A., St. David's Buildings, Cairo, who will be pleased to furnish estimates on application.

By mid-1925, this advice had been revised to reinforce the Government's decision not to supply photographs but that photographs for graves in the Kantara War Memorial Cemetery were available

on application to The Secretary, St. Barnabas Hostels, 7 Hobart Place, London, S.W.1., who will furnish two postcard size prints with negative for the sum of twelve shillings and sixpence (\$50) ...including postage

There is no evidence that Alfred and Kate ordered either the Register or any photographs of the completed headstone. If they had looked up Kantara Cemetery in their copy of *Where Australians Rest*, they would have found Bob's last burial place described as

situated on the east side of the Suez Canal, near Kantara East railway station [containing] the graves of 138 Australian soldiers....the cemetery is in a desert-like locality, but is well kept. It is surrounded by a low, barbed-wire fence.

The 'desert-like locality' of Kantara Cemetery was bluntly described in 1925 as 'an expanse of sand entirely unrelieved by any form of plant life'.²³



Bob McBride's Headstone in Kantara War Memorial Cemetery
The War Graves Photographic Project



Kantara War Memorial Cemetery
Left, Right and Top – Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira - New Zealand War Graves Project
Bottom – Commonwealth War Graves Commission



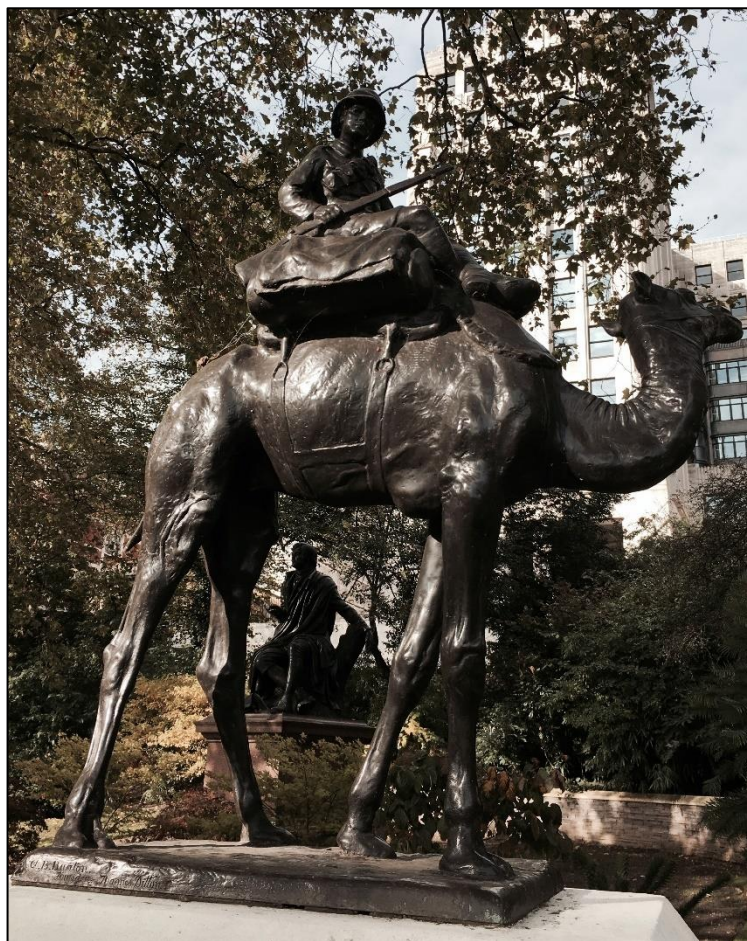
Kantara War Memorial Cemetery 2021 - Google Map Data from *Virtual Globetrotting* [URL] Insert: *Michelin Maps* [URL]
 Additional annotations by Author based on CWGC Kantara War Memorial Cemetery Plan

The first listing of Bob on a memorial occurred on Anzac Day, 1917, at Cobar Public School, when a Roll of Honour was unveiled with 'B. McBride' included amongst 76 ex pupils listed. This Roll of Honour cannot be located today, and Bob's name does not appear on any extant memorial in the town where he enlisted – Cobar Municipal Council Roll of Honour (twin copper Roll of Honour boards first approved in May, 1916), St. Paul's Church of England Honour Roll (1921), or the Cobar Cenotaph in Drummond Park (1986), in fact the latter has no names inscribed on it at all. The next listing of Bob on a memorial occurred on February 8, 1918, with the unveiling of a Roll of Honour of ex pupils at the Bourke Superior Public School, on which 'McBride, N.H +' was included amongst more than 100 names. The honour board was constructed of Queensland maple, with the names in gold lettering and crosses indicating those 'who have fallen or have been wounded'. While the '+' correctly indicated that Bob had died, it seems the problems with his name, this time his surname, continued to plague him, despite the fact that the spelling was correct in the list of those to be inscribed on the board published in the *Western Herald* on December 5, 1917. The cost of £12 10 shillings (\$1,075) had been almost entirely met from public subscriptions. The last mention in the *Western Herald* of the Bourke Public School Honour Board was in relation to the school Anzac ceremony in 1942. In the 1970s, when the Public School moved to new buildings on a site near the High School, the Honour Board was not transferred. Clearly, the original intention of the Bourke Superior Public School Parents' and Citizens' Association that the Honour Board would be 'a perpetual mark of respect to those brave lads, and...a constant lesson on Patriotism to the generations of school children who may attend the school' has not been realised. Fortunately, the President of the Bourke sub-Branch of the Returned and Services League (RSL), Victor Bartley,

retrieved the Honour Board and today it is displayed in the former RSL Club and Memorial Hall, now a restaurant, *Diggers on Darling*.²⁴



Bourke Superior Public School Honour Board 1918 - Courtesy of Victor Bartley



Imperial Camel Corps Monument Victoria Embankment Gardens London - Author's photograph



Imperial Camel Corps Monument Unveiling Ceremony July 22, 1921 – Left: (Billy Hughes) *The Herald (Melbourne)*, September 3, 1922 p.1. Right: 'WW1 Imperial Camel Corps — List of New Zealand Names', *Remuera Heritage* [URL]

The next memorial to include Bob's name was unveiled on July 22, 1921, over 10,000 miles (16,000 km) away from Bourke in Victoria Embankment Gardens in London. On the plinth below a bronze sculpture of a yeoman trooper on a camel was inscribed

To the glorious and immortal memory of the officers NCO's and men of the Imperial Camel Corps – British Australian New Zealand Indian who fell in action or died of wounds and disease in Egypt Sinai and Palestine 1916-1917-1918.

Australian born Lieutenant Colonel Nowell Barnard de Lancey Forth, who took over from Lieutenant Colonel Huddleston as Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion in April, 1917, in conjunction with Lieutenant Colonel Robin Buxton, had developed proposals for the monument by early 1919. The £700 (\$58,400) cost was raised from subscriptions, £130 (\$10,840) of which came from Australia. The memorial was sculptured by a Scottish painter and sculptor, Major Cecil Brown, who had served in Egypt from March, 1915. The bronze element was cast by Arthur Bryan Burton at his Thames Ditton Foundry. Lieutenant General Chetwode unveiled the memorial and the Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, delivered the dedication in the presence of the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, Brigadier General Smith, Lieutenant Colonel Forth, General Sir Edward Chapman, ceremonial commander of the Royal Artillery and former Commanding Officer for Scotland, and a number for former cameliers. The Prime Minister of Australia, William (Billy) Hughes, 'bowing deeply', placed a wreath on the memorial saying 'In the name of Australia I do honor and homage to the memory of our glorious dead'. He then delivered a short speech to those assembled:

It was through these men and their comrades, who did their duty nobly, that they were enable (*sic*) to gather together in great London, to do honour to them, enjoying the liberty and privileges which their sacrifices had won.



Bob McBride ICC Monument
London - Author's photograph

Six pipers 'in full tartans then paced slowly around the memorial playing "The Flowers of the Forest" and the "Last Post" was sounded by the buglers of the Coldstreams'. Bob's name is recorded on the east plaque amongst the 191 Australians in the Camel Corps who died. He is incorrectly listed under the 1st Battalion, as are all of the other members of No. 12 Company who were killed in action or died of wounds at El Magruntein. Bob's name stands out as his is the only listing, Australian, New Zealand, British or Indian without any indication of his forenames – just the entry 'McBride'. The confusion during his lifetime about his first name seems to have followed him into posterity on this memorial. Rear Admiral William Creswell from the Royal Australian Navy who had lost a son, Captain Randolph Creswell, killed in action in November, 1917, serving with the 3rd Battalion ICC, had approached the Commandant of the 3rd Military District (Victoria) with a suggestion that funds be raised 'to set up a replica of the London monument on some central site here', but this proposal in the end came to nothing.²⁵

In Bourke, the initial enthusiasm for a 'Monument Fund' to build a permanent memorial was quickly quashed by the Government. By July, 1917, the NSW State War Council, using the provisions in the *War Precautions Act 1914*, was refusing permission for the erection of monuments which 'involved the expenditure of a large sum of money...[which] during the war, could be applied to more urgent purposes'. In October, a regulation was introduced that for any memorial fund aiming to raise more than £25 (\$2,300), subscriptions could not be solicited without the approval of the State War Council. In November, 1917, the Bourke Monument Committee applied for permission to continue to collect subscriptions but this was refused, although they were allowed to hold the money already collected, about £150 (\$13,800). This amount included the contributions made by Bob's family by September, 1917 — a guinea²⁶ (\$97) by his mother Kate McBride, and 10 shillings (\$46) each by his siblings Irene (May) and Lenard. By May, 1918, however, it was clear that while 'active operations' canvassing for subscriptions had ceased, contributions continued to be made, including a guinea (\$97) in February, 1918, from Bob's sister Lillian (Lil), now married to Rex Maule and living on Gumbardo Station near Adavale in Queensland, 250 miles (400 km) north of Hungerford. Despite the embargo on soliciting subscriptions, the *Western Herald* continued to publish and update the list of contributors in almost every edition until early September, 1918. In April, 1918, the NSW State Board of the Department of Repatriation took over the duties of the State War Council, and by July, 1918, had issued a statement endorsing and reinforcing the 1917 regulation on 'costly permanent memorials'. This evoked a stinging response from the Editor of the *Western Herald*

All we have to say about it, is that it is another glaring evidence of "centralization"...we cannot possibly see why any country town, village or the smallest hamlet should not be allowed to honor their own Brave Boys, who went to the war, in their own way....the Repatriation Department forbids any sum larger than £25 (\$2,300) to be spent in that direction..."being of the opinion that instead of money being devoted to such a purpose, it should be used for perpetuating the memory of those who have enlisted in the A.I.F. in

a more useful manner". Rot! Why not name the "more useful manner"?...we object to people who live in the back country being blocked from using their money to perpetuate the memory of the Boys of their own town...The local Committee...must...take a strong stand against the action which debars country people from honoring their dead and living soldiers.²⁷

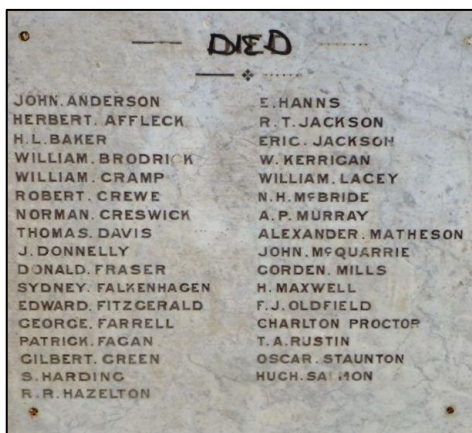
The regulation 'governing the collection and disbursement of funds for war memorials' was cancelled early in 1919, but it was another year before a public meeting on January 13, 1920, attempted to restart the Bourke Monument Fund. Nothing subsequently happened until the Mayor, Horace Bloxham, called a public meeting at the Council Chambers on December 10, 1920. A new committee was formed and it was noted that with the substantial amount received from the Returned Soldiers Welcome League after it was disbanded supplementing the previous subscriptions, together with pledges to hand, a total of £455 (\$32,540) was available. Lengthy discussion ensued on whether the memorial should take the form of a monument as originally envisaged, or a memorial ward at the hospital or the building of a 'Soldiers Memorial Hall'. In the end, it was decided to put the three proposals to a ballot of subscribers, to be returned by January 31, 1921. Forty formal votes were received of which 20 favoured a monument, 16 a hospital ward and only four a memorial hall. A plan for the memorial submitted by Christopher Joseph Shakespeare, 'Monumental Sculptor of Wellington' was finally approved at a committee meeting on June 14, 1923, at an estimated cost of £485 (\$38,000).²⁸



Bourke War Memorial Unveiling Ceremony May 25, 1924
NSW Government *Register of War Memorials in NSW* [URL]



Bourke War Memorial - NSW Government
Register of War Memorials in NSW [URL]



Bob McBride Bourke War Memorial
NSW Government *Register of War Memorials in NSW* [URL]

The completed memorial was unveiled on Sunday afternoon, May 25, 1924, at Bourke Park in front of 'one of the largest gatherings of town and country people' in Bourke, perhaps ensured by the committee scheduling the ceremony 'the day after Empire Day and the day before the race meeting'. Brigadier General Charles Frederick Cox, who had commanded the 1st Light Horse Brigade at El Magruntein, performed the unveiling and delivered a stirring speech emphasising the 'splendid record' of the Australians in the 'Great Fight', and urging Australians to 'stick to the Empire...the most glorious union the world had ever seen'. Hymns were sung, with the Bourke Band providing the music, and Ministers spoke of the 'sacrifice of the Anzacs', 'brave men and consequently heroes' who 'fought for all that was noble and grand, and to make the world safer for democracy'. Only the Mayor of Bourke, Daniel Patrick Clifford, a 'prominent member of the Labor Party', when it was his turn to speak, 'extended his deepest sympathy...to the sorrowing relatives'. At the end of all these fine words, Bob's memory was now finally set in stone in his own country for the first time, seven years after his death.²⁹

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In Hungerford, Bob's birthplace, where his service in the AIF was certainly recognised by local families in 1917, funds were being raised for the 'Hungerford and District Soldiers Memorial Fund' at a 'grand ball' in 1922 and at a race meeting in 1923. However, it seems no memorial was organised until after World War II, when a copper Honour Roll was unveiled at a Ball on September 3, 1949. Bob is not listed on it. A grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to the Bulloo Shire Council in May, 2015, to erect a sandstone memorial in the park next to the Hungerford Community Hall resulted in the dedication of a new memorial on November 14, 2015. For the Great War, the names recorded on it just replicated those on the 1949 Honour Roll. Bob has no memorial in the town of his birth.³⁰

The last physical memorial to Bob to be unveiled was the National Roll of Honour in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, housed in the cloisters on the second level overlooking the courtyard. Plans for the Australian War Memorial were developed in the 1920s, driven by Charles Bean and John Treloar. An architectural competition in 1927 did not result in an accepted design, but two Sydney architects, Emil Sodersteen and John Crust were asked to submit a joint design. John Crust was responsible for the design of the cloisters to house the Roll of Honour. The financial exigencies of the Depression delayed construction, but on Remembrance Day, November 11, 1941, the completed building was officially opened by the Governor-General, Alexander Gore Arkwright Hore-Ruthven, 1st Earl of Gowrie. The cloisters however were empty. No firm decisions on the form of the Roll had been made by 1950. It was thought 'they will probably be engraved in bronze...in alphabetical order under the towns or districts from which the men and women enlisted'; the latter concept being a continuation of the intent first raised in the letter sent to the families of those who had died in January, 1920, by the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Home and Territories. When the completed Hall of Memory at the end of the cloisters was opened on May 17, 1959, by the Governor-General, Sir William Slim, the walls of the cloisters were still empty of any Roll of Honour. By the time the bronze panels to the dead of the Great War were finally installed without any fanfare in 1961-1963, the probably sensible decision to list those who had died in alphabetical order in their units had clearly prevailed. Bob is listed in one group covering '1 to 4' Battalions under the Camel Corps at Panel 10, a decision that probably avoided the possibility of Bob being allocated to the incorrect Battalion as had occurred in London.³¹



Bob McBride National Roll of Honour Australian War Memorial Canberra - Author's photograph

In the meantime, Bob's sister Lizzie and her husband Stuart were ensuring that Bob was remembered within their family with a different and more personal physical memorial. In writing her *McIntosh Family History*, Bob's grandniece, Patsy Doak-Bartrop, recounted the story that

I once asked my little 5-foot-tall (152 cm) Nana McIntosh (Lizzie) why she didn't have more pictures of her relatives on the wall, to which she replied, "I don't want pictures of dead people on my walls". This was not quite true though, as she had had for many years, a very nice big picture of her favourite brother Bob...in uniform hanging in her home at 29 Dunbar Street, Stockton.

Lizzie and Stuart's youngest daughter, Shirley, remembers that picture from their time in Stockton after 1936. Stuart had commissioned it for Lizzie. It was an oil painting, in colour, of the full body image of Bob based on the photograph taken of him before he left Australia in 1916. It was about three feet six inches (106 cm) by two feet six inches (76 cm) in an ornate frame of polished wood about four to six inches (10-15 cm) wide, hanging in pride of place on the left-hand side of the window seat in the lounge room. Stuart died in January, 1949, and after Lizzie died in March, 1954, during the disposal of their possessions, the painting disappeared.³²

After the age of the internet dawned, on-line memorials to Bob's death in the Great War proliferated. He can be found in the [Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour](#), [Imperial Camel Corps Roll of Honour](#), [7th Australian Light Horse Regiment Roll of Honour](#), [The Action at Rafa Roll of Honour](#), [The AIF Project](#), [Discovering Anzacs](#), [Every One Remembered](#), [The Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#), [The War Graves Photographic Project](#), and [Find a Grave](#). None of these though, add much more to an understanding of his life and what happened to him than what is contained in his

service file. [Lives of the First World War](#) however, does provide a greater depth of information and stories about Bob, and [A Street Near You](#) piggybacks on this Lives data and includes some links to other on-line sources. The [Virtual War Memorial Australia](#) also provides some additional data and document links, with potential for further input. In the end though, these incorporeal memorials suffer the from the same issue as their more tangible equivalents in the real world — they can become degraded or indeed disappear at any time.

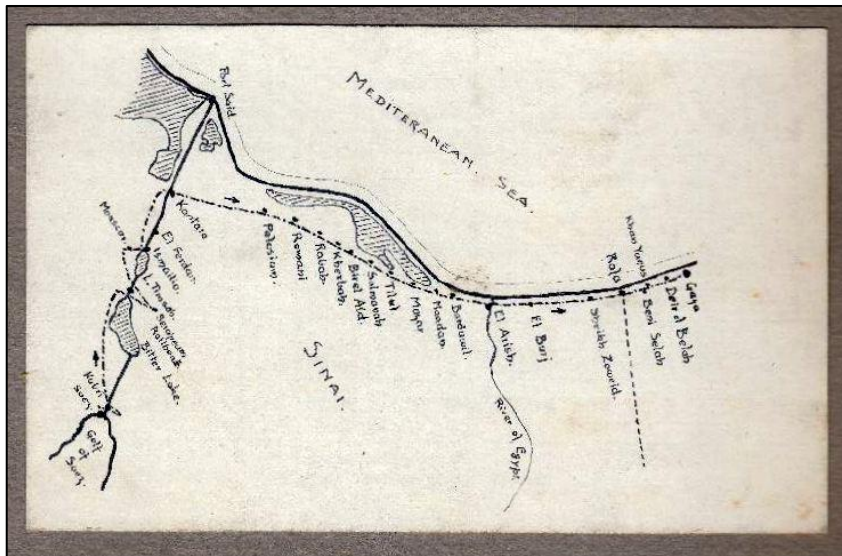
Artifacts owned by a person who has died and physical memorials to them underpin memory of their life. Only a tiny window exists into understanding the value of such things to Alfred and Kate and their family — Alfred's concern about a missing pencil and the mystery of a small key, Kate's desire for a replacement nearest female relative badge, their distribution of copies of Bob's grave photographs to Lizzie, and Alfred's purchase of four copies of *The Graves of the Fallen* in 1923. It is likely any artifacts received before November, 1921, were destroyed in the Byrock fires. The only items known to have survived in their original form to this day are three photographs sent to Lizzie — of Bob in 1916 before he embarked and of Bob's graves at El Arish and Kantara. His name is only recorded on four extant memorials, in London, Bourke and Canberra, and on his headstone in Kantara War Memorial Cemetery. Most of Bob's immediate family were living in Wellington, 260 miles (420 km) away when the Bourke memorial was unveiled in 1924, and Alfred, Kate and six of Bob's nine siblings who were alive when his death occurred, were dead before the Roll of Honour in Canberra was finally installed. Only one of his relatives is known to have visited the London memorial, and it is not known if any have ventured out to the Suez Canal to see his lonely grave in Kantara. More than 100 years after his death, it is hoped this story will provide one more artifact so that the memory of Bob McBride, so assiduously maintained by members of his family up to this time, will endure into the future.³³



Imperial War Graves Commission - Rudyard Kipling *The Graves of the Fallen* - NLA obj-52811997

Epilogue

Bob was not amongst the first soldiers to be wounded or killed at Rafa. In 720 BCE, the Assyrian King Sargon II defeated the Egyptians at Rph, its Egyptian name since at least 1303 BCE. In 217 BCE, Pharaoh Ptolemy IV of Egypt, defeated King Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire in a chaotic one-day fight at Rhapsia, then known by its Greek name. Situated on the old Caravan route from Syria to Egypt, Rafa has seen a constant stream of armies over the centuries — the Hasmoneans from Judah about 100 BCE (Rafiah), the Rashidun Moslem army in 635 CE (Rafh), Napoleon in 1799, Egypt in 1832, the British and Anzacs in 1917, Egypt and Israel in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973.¹



Hand drawn map of old caravan route across the Sinai by Driver Herbert Standen – Nicholson, Paul T. and Mills, Steve, 'Soldier tourism in First World War Egypt and Palestine: the evidence of photography', *Journal of Tourism History* Vol. 9, Issue 2-3, 2017 – Figure 1

Rafa is a border town and at various times has been either in Palestine or Egypt. It became an Egyptian town following the Turko-Egyptian boundary agreement signed in Rafa on October 1, 1906. The treaty was driven primarily by a British motivation to keep Turkish military forces as far away from the Suez Canal as possible. After 1918, the 'few huts' with a population of about 600 developed into a small boundary town of about 2,500, and became an important British base during the Second World War. Egypt's occupation of the Gaza Strip after the 1948 war, allowed the town to expand eastwards 'without any

consideration being taken of the old 1906 boundary'. El Magruntein in this period of population growth became part of the urban sprawl. Israel occupied Rafa, the Gaza Strip and the whole of the Sinai after the 1967 war, but the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel recreated the old 1906 border. By 1982, Rafa, now a town of about 11,000, had been divided in two, with a barbed wire fence separating families, and property on both sides destroyed to create a 'no go' zone. This zone was maintained by Egypt after Israel withdrew from the Gaza strip in 2005.²

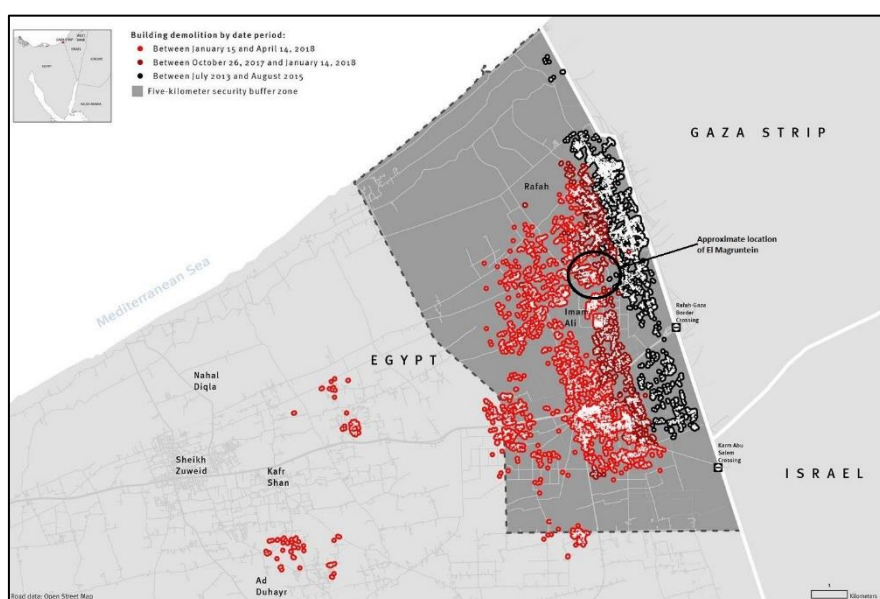
The action at Rafa was as much, if not more, the result of political posturing as it was of military strategy. While Turkish garrisons like that on El Magruntein remained in the Sinai, the Ottoman government could continue to perpetuate the claim that their forces were still in Egypt. The British government on the other hand could achieve a major propaganda coup by expelling the last of the Turkish forces from Egypt. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, was 'very anxious...for some success to enliven the winter gloom which has settled upon England' following the disastrous slaughter of the Somme. General Frederick Barton Maurice, Director of Military Operations of the Imperial British General Staff, advanced the notion that Lloyd George had thoughts of 'a campaign in Palestine, and...the hope of a triumphant entry into Jerusalem'. Newspaper reports following the action contained such statements as 'the enemy have been driven...entirely out of Egyptian territory', 'Sinai is now clear of the enemy', 'Another quick march will bring the Australian Mounted Division to Gaza' and 'British enter Holy Land', but perhaps the thinking of the British government was best revealed in a blatantly geographically obscure announcement from the Secretary of the War Office:

On the 9th of January our troops captured a strong position...30 miles (48 km) north-east of El Arish and within the borders of the Holy Land...The fighting occurred at a spot 80 miles (128 km) south-west of Jerusalem, and inside the borders of the old Jewish province of Judah.³

Such thinking played well with a public imbued with a romantic view of the Holy Land and the need to reclaim Jerusalem. Crusading rhetoric had begun to emerge by 1917 and was perpetuated in many publications in the immediate post war period. Private Bernard Blaser with the 2/14th London Scottish Regiment recalled that ‘as we passed along one of the oldest routes in history...we began to feel that we...were Crusaders engaged upon a task similar to that held so sacred by our gallant predecessors of the Middle Ages’. Bob had also passed along this ancient Caravan route, and had crossed the Old Testament ‘River of Egypt’ – popularly identified at the time as the Wadi el Arish. Bob was wounded in Egypt, and would only have crossed the border into the Holy Land after he was stretchered off El Magruntein, and only if he ended up in the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance Dressing Station. It is unlikely he would have had any thoughts of being a ‘Crusader’ at this time, or have even known that he had reached the Holy Land.⁴

Rumours are part and parcel of any military garrison, and El Arish was no different. Bob may well have heard those recorded by Maurice Evans in the weeks after Magdhaba — ‘It is said Rafa is also evacuated by the Turks’, ‘there is nothing to stop us seriously between here & Jerusalem’, ‘it is rumoured we are going to do a stunt shortly to Rafa’, ‘we shall probably have a cruiser – Rafa is on the coast’. Like most rumours, there was some substance to them. The Turkish forces in Sinai and Southern Palestine, heavily outnumbered by the British forces, had adopted a defensive strategy and were prepared to concede territory to avoid major confrontation. They were also well aware that the British Navy was a major threat to coastal defences such as at El Magruntein – the latter well within the range of any ‘cruiser’. By early January, 1917, the Turks had resolved to establish a final defence line at Khan Yunis. Lieutenant Şerif Güralp, adjutant to Colonel Refet Bey, 3rd Turkish Division, noted in his diary that on the evening of January 8, 1917, he was instructed to take an order to Lieutenant Colonel Ismail Hakki Bey, commander of the forces at El Magruntein, to withdraw to Khan Yunis. He reached Rafa at 11.00 pm and delivered the order. Ismail Hakki Bey responded that he could not retreat in the middle of the night, but would issue the necessary orders and wait for morning. By then, it was too late for both Bob and the Turkish defenders.⁵

In October, 2014, following a rise in terrorist attacks in the Sinai, the Egyptian government declared a state of emergency in North Sinai. One part of the response was to expand the ‘no-go’ zone bordering the Gaza strip into a five kilometre-wide ‘security buffer zone’. From 2013 to 2018 the Egyptian army forcibly evicted most of the residents in this area and demolished their homes and businesses, essentially ‘eradicating the town’ of Rafa on the Egyptian side of the border. Today, El Magruntein is absorbed into this security zone and is an area of complete devastation, just as it was over 100 years ago when Neil Hamilton (Bob) McBride was mortally wounded there in the late afternoon of January 9, 1917.⁶



Satellite Analysis of Building Demolition in Northern Sinai 2018
 Human Rights Watch, ‘Egypt: Army Intensifies Sinai Home Demolitions’, News,
 May 22, 2018 [URL] Additional notation by author

Postscript

What happened to some of the key people in Bob's life?

Bob's Family⁷

Alfred and Kate McBride were still living in Wellington by 1930, at Percy Street, with their son Jack. Also living in Wellington at this time were Eileen and her husband Billy, Irene and her husband Owen and Lenard and his wife Cecilia. Alfred is listed in the Electoral Rolls as a drover. By 1934, Alfred, Kate and Jack had moved to Anson Street, Orange, and by 1937 to Hamer Street in the same town. Irene and Owen also moved to Orange about the same time, followed by Lenard and Cecilia in 1936. Alfred died in Orange, aged 87 years in 1940, and Kate in 1948.



Alfred and Kate
McBride and grandson
Bobbie C 1936 - Family
Collection

Elizabeth (Lizzie) McBride married Stuart Leslie McIntosh, a mounted police constable at Yantabulla, in December, 1903. She then went with him on postings throughout NSW — Cumborah (1905), Wollongong (1908), Berrima (1911), Trangie (1915), Maclean (1919), South Grafton (1928), Casino (1929), Bega (1931) and Wagga Wagga (1933). They had five daughters, the first of whom died as an infant in Bourke. Stuart moved up through the ranks and retired from Wagga Wagga as an Inspector in 1936. They moved to Stockton to be near their oldest living daughter, Phyllis. Stuart died there in 1949 and Lizzie in 1954.



Elizabeth McBride and
Stuart McIntosh and
daughters Phyllis and
Jean 1912 - Family
Collection

Alice Maud McBride married Eric Woodforde in 1904. Eric worked as a teacher and public servant in Queensland – Hungerford, Goondiwindi, Townsville, Longreach, Herberton, Cairns and Innisfail. They had eight children. Like Alice, Eric also had, in his case, two brothers who enlisted — Hector Sydney who enlisted in January, 1916, served with the 12th Battalion and was killed in action on February 25, 1917, and Arthur Jerome who enlisted in June, 1918, but was discharged in Australia after the Armistice. Alice and Eric's youngest daughter died in Brisbane in 1935 aged only 16 and it seems Alice was with her and remained there while Eric worked as a farmer and mill hand at Giru, and later served at Townsville as a corporal during World War II. Alice died in Brisbane in 1944, and Eric in Toowoomba in 1960.



Alice McBride
(Woodforde) -
Family Collection

Alfred James McBride is difficult to track. He had an older cousin, also named Alfred James McBride, born in 1880, son of his father's older brother John. They are often confused in family stories. Alfred is mentioned in Hungerford school reports in the *Western Herald (Bourke)* in 1896 and 1900, but after this, when he would have been 16 years old, he disappears off the radar.

John (Jack) McBride is also difficult to track after he left Hungerford. In 1913 he lived with his parents in Bourke but until 1930 when he was again living with his parents in Wellington, his whereabouts is unknown. He moved to Orange with Alfred and Kate in 1934. He was listed as a shearer in 1913, and in later Electoral Rolls as a labourer. Jack never married. On August 31, 1964, he suffered a subdural haemorrhage following an accident at his camp at Larras Lee, north of Molong. He died in Molong District Hospital on September 2, 1964, aged 78. He was noted as a drover on his death registration.



Lillian McBride and
Edward Maule C 1914
Family Collection

Lillian (Lil) McBride married Edward Reginald (Rex) Maule in Bourke in 1914. Rex was a Station Manager in Queensland at Gumbardo Station, Adavale (1919-1932) and Warnambool Downs Station, Winton (1936-1949). They had two sons and a daughter. Like Lil, Rex also had a brother who enlisted – John

Roland Maule, who enlisted in Townsville on November 8, 1915 – just three days after Bob McBride had signed up in Cobar. He was posted to the 41st Battalion, was gassed in June 1917, sick in early 1918, back in the field in June, 1918, and returned to Australia in 1919. Lil and Rex retired to Bundaberg in Queensland where Rex died in 1966, and Lil the following year.

Catherine Maria McBride married Roger Maitland at Bourke in 1910. They were living in Coonamble, NSW by 1913, then moved to Cobar by the following year. Roger worked as a shearer and labourer. They had one son and three daughters, one of whom died as an infant. Catherine died from 'difficulty labor' in Cobar in 1922. Roger moved to Sydney and re-married – a widow with seven children. He died in 1961.

Eileen McBride married Leslie William (Billy) Beck in Bourke in 1913. They lived in Wellington during the 1930s at the same time as other members of the family. Billy worked there as a carrier and labourer. They had two daughters and had moved to Sydney by 1943. Billy died there in 1947, and Eileen in 1960.

Irene May McBride married Owen Tudor Meredith in Wellington in 1921. They lived in Wellington in the 1920s and early 1930s then moved to Orange at the same time as other members of the family, before moving to Sydney around 1943. Owen worked as a labourer. They had at least one child, a daughter, who died in Wellington in 1930 as an infant. Irene died in Sydney in 1964 and Owen in 1969.

Lenard (Lennie) McBride married Cecilia Fenton in Bourke in 1922. They lived in Wellington in the 1920s and early 1930s at the same time as other members of the family. In 1936, like other members of the family before them, they moved to Orange. Lennie worked as a labourer and later as a second-hand dealer in Orange. Between 1929 and 1944 he had a few brushes with the law, being fined for stealing two bags of wool, being on licensed premises after hours and for drink driving. Lennie and Cecilia had four daughters, with one dying as an infant in 1930. They also had one son, Robert McBride, who was known as 'Bob' or 'Bobbie' — unlike Neil Hamilton this hypocorism at least had some foundation. By 1949, Lennie was living with Irene and Owen in Sydney. Cecilia's whereabouts after 1943 is uncertain, but by 1954 she was living in Sydney with their son Robert. Lennie died in Sydney in 1956 and Cecilia in 1986.

Bob's Employers

Annie Amelia Rodda continued to run her IXL Emporium in Bourke for the next two decades after Bob left her employ. For more than 30 years she supported the Bourke and District Benevolent Society, many of those years as President. She also had terms as President and Vice-President of the local Branch of the Country Womens' Association. She supported her Methodist Church 'when there was a resident Minister' in town. During the war years, she was a 'keen supporter' of the Red Cross. In her Obituary, the *Western Herald* ventured that 'her life was bound up in the above associations', and praised her 'splendid business capabilities' and the fact that 'her charity knew no bounds'.⁸

In October, 1916, after having been previously rejected due to insufficient 'chest measurement', her only son, 28-year-old Arthur Leslie Rodda, was finally accepted into the AIF. Arthur's service was plagued with illness, first with influenza after reaching England in March, 1917, then myalgia less than two months after joining the 35th Battalion in France at the beginning of September. After being transferred from the 35th Battalion to the 1st Australian CCS in April, 1918, he again suffered bouts of illness – pyrexia and then influenza again, finally returning via America to Australia in April, 1919, at his own expense, for discharge as medically unfit. Arthur, a bookkeeper, was about four years older than Bob, but they would have certainly known each other during Bob's time working for Arthur's mother.⁹

After his return to Bourke, Arthur continued to work as a bookkeeper, most likely in his mother's store, and lived with her at Mertin Street. 'The fire fiend again inflicted a blow' on Annie on March 4, 1929, when her store and five adjoining shops were 'gutted'. In true style, she soon reopened in premises previously occupied by Devitt and Co. in Oxley Street next to the Wonderland Theatre.

Despite beginning to suffer health problems, Annie remained active in the business, travelling to Melbourne in late 1930 to personally select a range of 'Xmas Millinery'. After 'ailing for a week' and undergoing an operation, Annie's condition gradually deteriorated and she died on Wednesday, May 13, 1931, at the age of 69. Her body was taken to Sydney for interment in the Methodist Cemetery, Rookwood, where her husband had been buried more than 36 years previously.¹⁰

Arthur and his sister Muriel continued to operate the IXL Emporium until their partnership was dissolved in February, 1934. Arthur, now aged about 45, had married in 1933, and he and his new wife Frances disposed of the business and left Bourke in 1936 for Beecroft, Sydney, where he died in 1972. Enterprise Stores Ltd, under the management of Sid Watkins, took over the Oxley Street premises on Saturday, August 15, 1936, effectively ending some 45 years of Annie's IXL Emporium services to Bourke residents.¹¹

Francis George Kynaston was born in Shropshire, England in 1858. He emigrated to Australia and married Edith Collins in the Glen Innis district in 1894. By 1896, they had settled in Cobar, where they had two children, Walter Clive (1896) and Bessie Proctor (1898). By 1904, Francis was established in business as a Produce Merchant in Linsley Street, Cobar. His son, known as Clive, enlisted in the 12th Light Horse Regiment in February, 1915, aged only 18. He served on Gallipoli with the 6th Light Horse Regiment but was evacuated after a month with dysentery, influenza and enteric fever. By January, 1916, he had rejoined the 12th Light Horse Regiment, but was soon transferred to the 4th Field Troop Engineers. He served in Palestine in 1918 and 1919 where he had recurrent bouts of malaria. Promoted to Corporal, he returned to Australia and was discharged in Sydney in October, 1919.

Francis closed his Cobar Produce Business in May, 1920, and two years later he and Edith moved to Sydney. Edith became seriously ill and was in Bathurst District Hospital by 1936, close to her married daughter Bessie. Francis died suddenly in August, 1936, while visiting his daughter and wife in Bathurst, and Edith succumbed seven weeks later. Clive married in Sydney in 1927 and moved to Cairns. He died in 1990.¹²

Bob's Enlistment

Michael Joseph Duffy was born in Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, and emigrated to Australia as a 13-year-old. He studied law in Sydney and became a solicitor in 1894, establishing a practice in Cobar. He was an alderman on the Cobar Municipal Council by 1899, and was first elected Mayor in 1910. He had married Mary Teresa Rankin in 1897, and they had two daughters and five sons. A member of the Labor Party, he was Secretary of the local branch in his early years. Michael was very active in the public life of Cobar including the District Hospital Board, the School of Arts and the Catholic Church, and 'his ability and energy' contributed much to the negotiations to reopen the Great Cobar Mine in 1915. He was an enthusiastic and patriotic supporter of the war effort, Chairman of the Cobar Recruiting Association and a tireless worker for the Cobar Soldiers' Red Cross Association supporting soldiers and their dependents.

In 1920, Michael was made Knight Commander of St. Gregory by Pope Benedict XV in recognition of his services to the Catholic Church and the local community. In 1924, after 13 years serving as Mayor of Cobar, Michael moved his legal business to Dubbo. By October, 1925, he had been elected as an alderman to the Dubbo Municipal Council and became Mayor in 1934 after his name was drawn out of a hat following a tied vote. He still held this position when he died in October, 1935.¹³

Charles Stuart Fern was born in Glebe in 1884, the son of Scottish immigrants. At 18 years of age, he mined for silver at Yerranderie, south-west of Sydney where he contracted phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis). An active unionist, organiser with the Amalgamated Miners' Association and member of the Labor Party, he was elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly in 1911 as the Member for Cobar. In 1904, he married Ruby May Sorman and they had four daughters. He was instrumental in gaining relief for the workers in Cobar out of work following the closure of the Great Cobar Mine in 1914. An enthusiastic campaigner for recruitment, he demonstrated his commitment by enlisting in August, 1915. He was granted leave of absence to continue his recruiting activities

in western NSW and finally embarked as a Private with the 9th Reinforcements 17th Battalion in January, 1916. In a letter written on the troopship, he expressed his views that

I am in the rank and file as an ordinary soldier, sharing the trials of the campaign with my fellow workers, as I promised to do when addressing recruiting meetings....I am satisfied that our cause is worth fighting for, and if needs be, worth dying for.

In February, 1916, having failed to reembark in Freemantle, Western Australia, Charles embarked with the 14th Reinforcements 16th Battalion. His service record is confusing, but as he was sick in hospital in Etaples, France, on May 14, 1916, he must have rejoined the 17th Battalion in Egypt. The 16th Battalion did not arrive in France until June 7, 1916. Charles was sent to England for treatment and admitted to the Northern General Hospital in Leicester with tuberculosis on May 20, 1916. A month later he was invalided to Australia, where he was discharged as medically unfit in Sydney in November, 1916. He died at Lidcombe, Sydney, on April 18, 1918. According to a message from the Agent General in London,

at the time that Sergeant Fern was invalided from the front, he was taking part in a gallant charge when he received the effects of an enemy shell, and was subsequently picked up on the field suffering from shock and exposure.

Shellshock is more than likely, as the 17th Battalion was in trenches near Bois Grenier from mid-April to the end of May, 1916, and Brigade and Battalion Diaries record that the 17th Battalion was shelled while in billets on April 11, while in the support line on May 11, and while in the front line on April 13, 19, 21, 27 and 30 and on May 12. A 'gallant charge' though is unlikely, as the Diaries, while recording constant night time patrolling of No Man's Land, do not record any 'charge' or attack of any kind in this period. Charles did spend a brief time on board his first troopship as an acting Sergeant, but was discharged with the rank of Acting Corporal.¹⁴



Charles Stuart Fern
Parliament of New
South Wales, Former
Members Legislative
Assembly [URL]

Dr Herbert Richard Letcher, born in Ballarat, Victoria, in May, 1871, was the Health Officer at Kadina in South Australia before moving to Cobar with his wife Annie (nee Sands) in February, 1905. He left Cobar to take up a practice in Adelaide, South Australia, in September, 1916. Annie died in 1925, and Herbert married Gwendoline Sauerbier in 1932. He retired before 1939, but recommenced practice during the Second World War to relieve the shortage of doctors. He died, aged 76, in February, 1948.¹⁵

Bob's training in Australia



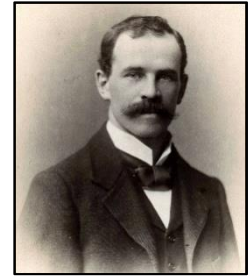
Arthur Lionel
Keith Cooper
AWM
P00391.001

Arthur Lionel Keith Cooper, the Dubbo Camp Commandant, was a 25-year-old single Sydney-born engineer who had enlisted in the 1914 Australian Naval and Military Expedition to German New Guinea as a Private, but by January, 1915, had been promoted to Lieutenant. He was appointed Commandant at Dubbo with the temporary rank of Captain in mid-1915. In May, 1918, he enlisted in the AIF with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant and embarked for England in July. While at the 5th Training Battalion at Fovant, he became ill with influenza, and died of pneumonia at Tidworth Military Hospital on November 14, 1918.¹⁶

William Ley, the Dubbo area Recruiting Officer, was a 41-year-old single Dubbo born Militia officer, a General Stationer by trade. He enlisted in the AIF as a Private in March, 1918, embarked in July and joined the 3rd Battalion after arriving in France in January, 1919, after the Armistice. He returned to Dubbo and was discharged in September, 1919. He died on July 24, 1948, at Lady Davidson's Hospital, Turrumurra, and his body was returned to Dubbo for burial.¹⁷

Edmund Henry Burkitt, the Medical Officer at Dubbo Camp, was a 48-year-old married English born General Practitioner in Dubbo with extensive experience as a surgeon at Dubbo District Hospital. He had received his Bachelor of Medicine (MB) at Sydney University in 1896. He enlisted in the AIF in March, 1916, was appointed as a Captain, embarked in April, and arrived at Tel el Kebir about a month earlier than Bob. He served with the 14th Field Ambulance during the defence of the Suez Canal, then embarked with that unit for France at the end of June, 1916. His first front line experience was at the debacle at Fromelles in July, 1916. In August, 1916, he was transferred

to the 2nd Australian CCS, where his surgical experience was put to good use. He was promoted to Temporary Major in February, 1917, and Major in September of that year. He arrived back in Australia in November, 1917, and his appointment was terminated at his own request in December, 1917. He died at Coogee NSW on November 14, 1925.¹⁸



Edmund Henry Burkitt 1896
University of Sydney
'Beyond 1914' [URL]

Robert William Lenehan, the Camp Commandant at Menangle, was a 50-year-old married Sydney-born lawyer and a Major in the NSW Military forces who volunteered for service in the Boer War. He commanded the Bushveldt



Robert William Lenehan 1916
Aust Light Horse
Studies Centre

Carbineers in 1902 and was court martialled along with Harry Morant, Peter Handcock and George Witton over the shooting of Boer prisoners. Robert was reprimanded, his military service was terminated and he was sent back to Australia. The Commonwealth Government restored him to the active military list and by July, 1903, he was in command of an artillery battery. By 1913 he had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 4th Field Artillery Brigade. He was appointed Camp Commandant at Menangle on its formation but removed in 1917 by the Minister for Defence following a Sydney divorce scandal in which Robert was cited as co-respondent. He appeared as a bankrupt in the Sydney Bankruptcy Court in May, 1918, and died in Sydney on May 20, 1922, of cirrhosis of the liver.¹⁹

Bob's embarkation

Edwin Gordon Donkin, the Commandant on the *Palermo*, was a single 31-year-old grazier and former militia officer who enlisted on April 15, 1916, in the 7th Light Horse Regiment with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. In May, 1916, he was transferred to the Australian Mounted Division 1st Signalling



Edwin Gordon Donkin 1916 -
Aust Light Horse
Studies Centre

Squadron, promoted to Lieutenant two months later, then back to the 7th Light Horse Regiment as Regimental Signalling Officer on January 20, 1917. In November, 1917, he was wounded but remained on duty. Edwin was in hospital in Jerusalem with pyrexia and debility in August and September, 1918. In December 1918, and January 1919, he was on Gallipoli with the 7th Light Horse Regiment occupation contingent tasked with identifying graves and recovering objects for the future Australian War Memorial. He returned to Australia in April, 1919, and was discharged two months later. The impression that Edwin's leadership on the *Palermo* was not all it should have been, is perhaps reinforced

by the opinion of him expressed in January, 1919, by the Commanding Officer of the 7th Light Horse Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel John Dalyell Richardson — 'This officer has never commanded even a troop in action...He has ability for topographical and intelligence work, but a very bad manner with men'. Edwin died in Bowral in 1970.²⁰

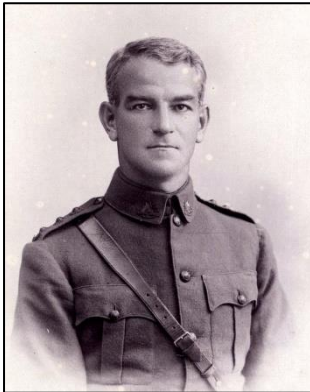


Vivien Paul Turner
Australian Surveyor,
Vol. 19, Issue 2, June,
1962 p. 137

Vivien Paul Turner, the 2nd in Command on the *Palermo*, was a married 25-year-old surveyor and militia officer from Sydney who enlisted in March, 1916, in the 7th Light Horse Regiment with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. At Tel el Kebir, he was posted to the 2nd Double Squadron, then in September, 1916, was attached to the AFC for instruction in aerial observation. He was promoted to Lieutenant in October, 1916, then after qualifying he joined the 1st Squadron at Mustabig as a Flying Officer-Observer on December 22, 1916. It is quite possible he was in the air above Bob at El Magruntein on January 9, 1917. In April 1917, he was admitted to the 54th CCS with burns to his chest, arms and legs and was transferred to the 14th Australian General Hospital at Abbassia. He contracted scarlet fever and finally rejoined his squadron at the end of June, 1917. Vivien was Mentioned in Dispatches in mid-1917. In August, 1917, he was back in the 14th Australian General Hospital with debility and again rejoined his squadron in October, 1917. In July, 1918, he was seconded for duty as an Instructor in Navigation at Heliopolis and in November that year was once again in hospital, this time with influenza. He returned to duty in December, embarked for Australia in March, 1919, and was discharged in June, 1919. Vivien and his wife

Evelyn had four children. He returned to his work as a surveyor in Sydney and died in Springwood in April, 1962.²¹

Theodore William Van Epen, the Medical Officer on the *Palermo*, was a 35-year-old married General Practitioner from Lismore. He was a teacher in a Provisional School in 1902, but entered Sydney University in 1908 from which he received his MB in 1913 and a Master of Chirurgiae (Surgery) (ChM) in 1914. He first applied for a commission in the AIF Medical Corps in November, 1915, but even though he had been born at Copmanhurst, Clarence River, NSW, his Germanic sounding name caused problems. A police report from Lismore was obtained to verify that his father was 'a native of Holland' and that Theodore was 'a most loyal subject'. His appointment as a Captain was finally confirmed in March, 1916. On arrival at Tel el Kebir, he was temporarily appointed for duty to the 2nd Division base depot before being attached to the 2nd Australian Stationary Hospital at Port Said in August, 1916. In July, 1917, he was transferred to the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance, then at El Arish. In February, 1918, he was seconded to the 1st Signal Squadron at Wadi Hanein in Palestine, then in April, 1918, he was attached to the 14th Australian General Hospital annex at Port Said. The next month, he was hospitalised there with *colitis*. On being discharged, he was attached for duty to the AIF Headquarters in Cairo. He applied for leave as his General Practitioner business in Lismore was in financial difficulties. He was granted four weeks' leave of absence in Australia and left Egypt on May 19, 1918. His appointment was terminated in October, 1918. He worked as a General Practitioner in Casino and Bankstown, and died at Narooma, NSW on January 25, 1940.²²



Theodore William Van Epen
University of Sydney
'Beyond 1914' [URL]

General Practitioner business in Lismore was in financial difficulties. He was granted four weeks' leave of absence in Australia and left Egypt on May 19, 1918. His appointment was terminated in October, 1918. He worked as a General Practitioner in Casino and Bankstown, and died at Narooma, NSW on January 25, 1940.²²

Robert Spooner-Hart, the Veterinary Officer on the *Palermo*, was a 41-year-old Calcutta born but London-trained veterinary surgeon, with previous service with the 116th and 117th Royal Field Artillery. He enlisted in the AIF on April 11, 1916, and joined the A56 *Palermo* on April 18, 1916. He returned to Australia on duty as Transport Officer on the A46 *Clan Macgillvray*, leaving Suez on July 10, 1916, and arriving in Sydney August 14, 1916. His appointment was terminated on August 17, 1916, with later comment that he had 'had satisfactory overseas service'. A letter in his file to the Army Base Records from the Goulburn and Mulwaree Shire Repatriation Committee in Victoria dated August 4, 1950, stated that 'Recently Robert Spooner-Hart died in destitute circumstances'.²³

The 'Other Ranks' in the 16th Reinforcements

The 101 'Other Ranks' besides Bob in the 16th Reinforcements were dispersed from Tel el Kebir to various units, with only 32 being allocated as reinforcements to the 7th Light Horse Regiment. Twenty in addition to Bob joined the ICC, 17 of these at the same time as he did in early July, 1916. Thirteen were posted to the 2nd Double Squadron, 12 to the 2nd Light Horse Brigade Machine Gun Squadron, eight to the 1st Field Squadron Engineers, one to the 2nd Signal Squadron AMD, one to the Anzac Provost Corps, and one to the 3rd Division Engineers in France. Thirteen were hospitalised from Tel el Kebir, of whom nine were returned to Australia as unfit. Of the remaining four, two were sent to hospital in England and subsequently were posted to the 56th Battalion, one eventually joined the 7th Light Horse Regiment and one the Pay Corps.

In addition to Bob, seven of the 16th Reinforcements 'Other Ranks' were killed in action or died of wounds, and a further three died of disease – an overall casualty rate of just over 10 per cent. Excluding the nine returned in 1916 as unfit, 81 of the 'Other Ranks' on the *Palermo* with Bob returned to Australia and one was discharged in South Africa. Of those who joined the ICC, only two besides Bob died, both from No. 12 Company in subsequent engagements in 1917. There were 13 of the 16th Reinforcements men on the ground at El Magruntein on January 9, 1917. None was killed in action there, and only one besides Bob wounded, Alexander Ferris in No. 1 Company. He also suffered a 'GSW abdomen' but as it was diagnosed as 'slight' he survived and rejoined his unit. Other than Bob, 15 men in the 16th Reinforcements contracted venereal disease at some stage during the war. This represents a rate of about 15 per cent, on a par with the estimated rate for all AIF troops who embarked from Australia during the Great War.²⁴

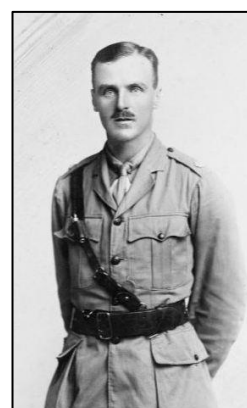
Bob's Training and Hospitalisation at Abbassia

Clement Leslie Smith, Commandant at the ICC Base at Abbassia and later Commanding Officer of the ICC Brigade, was born in Romsey, Hampshire, England in 1878. He served with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in the Boer War, then in Somaliland in 1904, where as a Lieutenant he was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was appointed to the Egyptian Army the next year, was promoted to Captain, then Major in 1916, and was awarded the Military Cross for actions in the Sudan. He was transferred to the position of Commandant of the ICC Base at Abbassia with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and became a Brigadier General when appointed to command the ICC Brigade in December, 1916. When the ICC Brigade was disbanded in June, 1918, he was transferred to command the 24th Infantry Brigade, 10th Division. After the war he left the army and retired to Italy where he died suddenly at Alassio, Liguria, in 1927.²⁵



Clement Leslie Smith
AWM B00191

Robert Vere (Robin) Buxton, second in command at the ICC Base at Abbassia, was born in Belgravia, London in 1883. He served in the Sudan Civil Service from 1907 to 1911, then became a Director of Martins Bank in London. He was commissioned in the West Kent Yeomanry Territorial Force in 1911 and served with them as a Captain at Gallipoli and then in Egypt as part of the Suez Canal defence. In 1916, he was seconded to the ICC Base at Abbassia with the rank of Major. In July 1918, he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion ICC. In August, 1918, he commanded a flying column consisting of Nos. 5 and 7 Companies, ICC which supported Thomas Edward Lawrence in a long-distance raid on the Hejaz railway, for which Robin received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). The column marched 700 miles (1,130 km) in 44 days. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1919. He returned to Martins Bank after the war and continued his association with Lawrence, being invited to edit chapters of Lawrence's book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. After 1945, he became Deputy Chairman of Martins Bank and Chairman of its London Board. In 1916, he had married Margureite Pix, but they had no children. Robin died in Itchen Abbas, Hampshire, in 1953.²⁶



Robert Vere (Robin)
Buxton - IWM
Q103052



James Barber
IWM Q108534

James Barber, the Adjutant at the ICC Base at Abbassia, was a Sergeant Major (Warrant Officer Class 2) with the 1st Garrison Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Before 1909, he was serving with the Egyptian Army Camel Corps No. 2 Company, an Arab Company raised after 1902 commanded by Captain Richard Dawson. When a Camel Corps training school was established at Polygon Barracks, Abbassia in 1909, James was appointed as the Chief Instructor. He and Captain Dawson were instrumental in the publication of the *Camel Corps Training Manual* in 1913. In March, 1915, he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and then to Temporary Captain when he was appointed Adjutant at the newly formed ICC Base in January, 1916. He remained at Abbassia until August 1, 1918, when he left for Matruh, about 450 kilometres west-north-west of Cairo. By 1922, he was the Officer

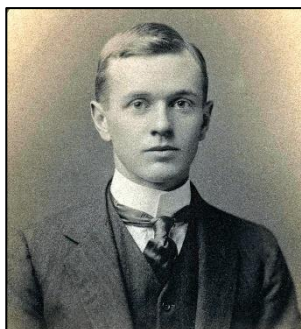
Commanding the Camel Corps Depot, Egyptian Frontiers Administration, at Khanka, north of Cairo.²⁷

Henry Speldewinde de Boer, the Medical Officer at the ICC Base at Abbassia and later Regimental Medical Officer for the 1st Battalion, ICC, was born in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1869. He gained his medical qualifications at London Hospital in 1913. He enlisted as a Temporary Lieutenant with the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers in January, 1915, and landed on V Beach Cape Helles, Gallipoli with them on April 25, 1915. He was wounded and evacuated. Promoted to Captain, Henry was appointed the Medical Officer at the ICC Base at Abbassia after its establishment in January, 1916, and in December of the same year took up duty as the Regimental Medical Officer with the 1st Battalion, ICC. He was Mentioned in Dispatches and awarded the Military Cross in 1918. In 1920, Henry relinquished his commission and married Frances Ethel



Henry Speldewinde
De Boer
IWM Q108534

Bartholomeusz in London. They had two sons. He joined the Colonial Medical Service and held senior posts in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia, Uganda and Nyasaland. He retired in 1947, returned to England and became a temporary Medical Officer at the Ministry of Health. He died in Liverpool in 1957.²⁸



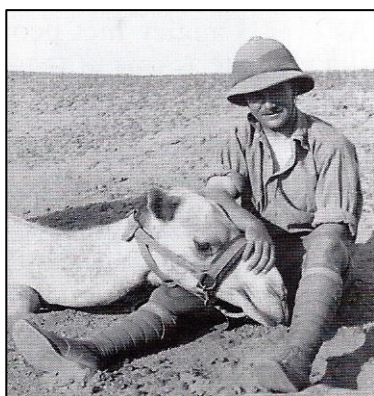
Reginald McDougall Bowman - University of Sydney 'Beyond 1914' [URL]

Reginald McDougall Bowman, the Medical Officer at the Dermatological Section, entered Sydney University in 1906, and was awarded an MB and ChM in 1911. He was a 27-year-old single medical practitioner in Parramatta when he enlisted in the AIF Medical Corps in May, 1915. He served as a Medical Officer with the 3rd and 9th Battalions on Gallipoli, before being hospitalised with enteric fever in August, 1915. He was returned to Australia in October, 1915, for six months change, and was married in December of that year. He returned to Egypt with the 14th Australian General Hospital in September, 1916, and was appointed to the Dermatological Section, where he remained until January, 1917. He was transferred to the 2nd Light Horse Field Ambulance in June, 1917, promoted to Major that month and served with this unit in Palestine. He was appointed a Temporary Lieutenant Colonel in January, 1919, and repatriated to Australia in May of that year. His appointment was

terminated in October, 1919. In the 1930s he was a medical practitioner in Paddington. Reginald died in Paddington on February 9, 1975.²⁹

Bob's Commanding Officers in the 1st and 3rd Battalions

George Furner Langley, Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, ICC, was born at Port Melbourne in 1891 and graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Diploma of Education in 1914. He was teaching at Mansfield Agricultural High School before he enlisted as a Private in December of that year. He was a Captain in the 21st Battalion by September when their transport to Gallipoli, the *Southland*, was torpedoed. He served on Gallipoli from September until the evacuation. Seconded to the ICC in January, 1916, he led No. 1 Company against the Senussi in the Western Desert. After his promotion to Major in September, 1916, he was made Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, ICC. Promoted Lieutenant Colonel at the end of January, 1917, he continued to lead the Battalion. George was wounded by shellfire in March, 1918, and rejoined the Battalion in May, 1918. When the ICC was disbanded in July, 1918, he was transferred to the 14th Light Horse Regiment as Commanding Officer. In November, 1918, he was admitted to hospital with malaria and on discharge in January, 1919, assumed command of the 5th Light Horse Brigade charged with suppressing the Egyptian rebellion. George was Mentioned in



George Furner Langley and Horace – Gregory, Alan, p. 50

Dispatches three times and awarded the Distinguished Service Order. He returned to Australia in July, 1919, and his services were terminated in November that year, although he remained on the reserve of officers. He had married Edmee Mary Plunkett in Cairo in December, 1918, and they had two daughters. In 1920 he became Headmaster of the school that he had left in 1914. In September, 1940, he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 38th Battalion, promoted temporary Brigadier in 1942 with the 2nd Infantry Brigade, but his war wounds precluded service overseas. He retired in 1944, joined the Australian Red Cross as a field commissioner and served in England and the Middle East until 1946. Upon his return, he served as Headmaster at three Victorian high schools before he retired in 1957. In 1970 he and Edmee moved to Sydney where he died the following year.³⁰

Hubert Jervoise Huddleston, Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion, ICC, was born in England in 1880 and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards in 1898. He served in the Boer War, was Mentioned in Dispatches, transferred to the Dorsetshire Regiment and was promoted Lieutenant in 1901. He served in Northern Nigeria from 1903 to 1908, becoming a Captain by 1904. By 1911 he was attached to the Egyptian Army and in 1912, he was Officer Commanding a company in the Egyptian Army Camel Corps. From 1914 to 1916 he was a Major

in command of the Corps, leading them from March to November, 1916, in the Anglo-Egyptian Darfur Expedition to protect the Sudan. Appointed to the 3rd Battalion on January 4, 1917, he left 16 days later for duty at GHQ in Cairo. By 1924 he was a Major General commanding in the Sudan, then CO of the 14th Infantry Brigade in 1930. He served in India from 1934 to 1938 and Northern Ireland in 1940, before being appointed Governor-General of the Sudan later in that year. He retired in 1947 and died in London in 1950.³¹



Hubert Gervoise Huddleston
November 1916 - Daly, M. W.
and Hogan, Jane R., *Images of
Empire*, p. 174

Bob's Officers and companions in No. 12 Company

George Achilles Smith, the Officer Commanding No. 12 Company, was a 34-year-old married bank accountant from Burringbar in northern New South Wales. A militia Lieutenant in the Northern



George Achilles
Smith - AWM
P05301.119

Rivers 5th Light Horse at Murwillumbah, he enlisted in the AIF in May, 1915, was appointed a Lieutenant in the 6th Light Horse Regiment and embarked for Egypt in late June from Sydney. He had married Leila Mary Murphy 'a few days prior to his departure'. On July 1, 1916, he was seconded to the ICC to command No. 12 Company, with the rank of Temporary Captain, being finally promoted to Captain on November 1, 1916. George was known as 'Jellicoe' to his fellow officers. After the ICC had withdrawn to Sheik Zowaid from El Magruntein, at 3.00 am the next morning, his friend, Lieutenant Archie Campbell, No. 11 Company, was sent back with a Sergeant and four troopers to bury George and the other members of Nos. 11 and 12 Companies who had been killed. Rex Hall contends that Archie 'wept over [George's] dead body' and later wrote to George's widow Leila 'which started a romance leading to Archie marrying her' in 1919 after his return to Australia in December, 1918.³²

James John Benedict Kinhead, Officer Commanding Bob's section in No. 12 Company, was born in Cobar in 1888, was single and a Clerk of Petty Sessions when he enlisted in Sydney in August, 1915, and was posted to the 6th Light Horse Regiment. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in June, 1916, but admitted to hospital the following month with septic sores. In September, 1916, he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and seconded to the ICC, marching out of Abbassia with Bob in October, 1916, to join No. 12 Company. James was promoted to Lieutenant in February, 1917, and in December of that year was attached to 3rd Battalion ICC Headquarters (HQ). James was awarded the Military Cross in 1918 for commanding an advanced post under continuous shell fire for six days. When the ICC was disbanded in July, 1918, he was transferred to the 15th Light Horse Regiment, and in February, 1919, attached to AIF HQ where by April, 1919, his skills were being utilised as a temporary Captain in the Postal Corps, and he was Mentioned in Dispatches. Suffering with malaria, James returned to Australia in September, 1919, and was discharged in January, 1920. He commenced work as a clerk at the Office of the Clerk of the Peace, Department of the Attorney-General and Justice in Sydney and studied law at the University of Sydney. He was admitted as a Barrister of the Supreme Court in 1925, but resigned from the Public Service and commenced a private practice in 1928, specialising in criminal cases. He had married Teresa O'Neill in 1926 and they had one daughter in 1929. He died at Rose Bay, Sydney in 1950.³³

John (Jock) Davidson, the Officer Commanding the machine gun section in No. 12 Company, was born near Aberdeen, Scotland in 1883, and served with the 3rd Battalion, Gordon Highlanders during the Boer War and afterwards in India. He emigrated to Australia in 1911, became a farmer at Cowra, joined the Light Horse militia and enlisted in August, 1914. He served with the 1st Light Horse Regiment on Gallipoli where he received a GSW to the head in June, 1915. He rejoined his unit in August, 1915, was promoted to Staff Sergeant Major, but was evacuated two months later with pyrexia. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and posted to the ICC, joining No. 12 Company on July 18, 1916. He was promoted to Lieutenant in October, 1916, and briefly acted as Officer Commanding No. 12 Company after George Smith was killed in January, 1917, before being evacuated sick at the end of that month. In September, 1917, he was detached for duty as Adjutant with the temporary rank of Captain at various Details Camps in Egypt. When the ICC was disbanded, he was transferred to the 15th Light Horse Regiment and joined them in July, 1918, in

which year he was Mentioned in Dispatches and awarded the Military Cross. He returned to Australia on 1914 Leave in December, 1918, and was discharged in Sydney in March, 1919. In the month after he arrived, he married Christina Norrie, settled in the Cowra area and they raised six children. Jock penned his reminiscences about his time in the Light Horse and ICC in the mid-1930s. He died in 1973.³⁴

There were three men who had enlisted at Dubbo within days of Bob in early November, 1915, were appointed to the 7th Light Horse at Menangle Park with him on the same day in March, 1916, were with the 16th Reinforcements with him on the *Palermo*, volunteered for the ICC with him in July, 1916, and joined No. 12 Company with him training at Abbassia. Two were at El Magruntein with Bob. All four were labourers from mid-western NSW. Three of the four contracted venereal disease. Only Bob died while serving overseas, the other three returned to Australia.³⁵

James Rogers was born in Bourke in 1891, the ninth of 10 children of James O'Grady and Elizabeth Cottington. James Rogers was not his real name — he was born William James T O'Grady. Following the death of his father in 1902 while licensee of the Warramurtie Hotel on the Wanaaring-



James Rogers
Ancestry, Krossbain

Wincannia Road, his mother Elizabeth re-married in 1907 to John Rogers. In 1915, when James enlisted, John Rogers and Elizabeth were living at the Tinchelooka Hotel on the Bourke-Wanaaring Road, where John was licensee. James used his second forename and the surname of his step father to enlist as a 25-year-old single labourer at Dubbo on November 5, 1915. James was in hospital on board the *Palermo* with venereal disease and admitted to the Government Hospital in Port Suez on arrival, rejoining Bob and the others on June 9, 1916. While training at Abbassia, he was appointed a temporary Lance Corporal at the end of July, 1916. After El Magruntein, he remained with No. 12 Company and the Lance Corporal rank was made permanent in May, 1917. He spent five days during September, 1917, in a field hospital with a septic hand. On November 6, 1917, James was wounded with a GSW to his right arm, during an attack

on 'Flat Topped Hill', a position reminiscent of El Magruntein, at Tel el Khuweilfeh, north-east of Beersheba. He was transferred to the 65th CCS, then by hospital train to the 14th Australian General Hospital at Abbassia. He returned to Australia in February, 1918, and was discharged medically unfit in Sydney in July of that year. It appears he was still using 'James Rogers' as his name in 1960 when he applied for repatriation benefits, and based on this, the 'James Rogers' who died in 1968 at Parramatta may well be him.³⁶

Edward John Riley was born in 1891 near Warren in NSW. He was a 24-year-old single labourer when he enlisted at Dubbo on November 4, 1915. Edward was admitted to the Dermatological Section of the 3rd Australian General Hospital at Abbassia with venereal disease 11 days prior to Bob and before discharge had spent 18 days there with Bob while they underwent treatment. Following Edward's discharge at the end of September, 1916, he was posted to No. 14 Company, ICC. Like Bob, he suffered a relapse in November, 1916, but had rejoined his Company by the end of that month. He was not at El Magruntein as No. 14 Company was at Bir Lahfan at that time. In mid-October, 1917, he was transferred as a Driver to the 36th Australian Army Service Corps (AASC) Company in the AMD Train. From July to September, 1918, he was back in hospital with venereal disease and forfeited a total of £7 10 shillings (\$645) as a result. After a fortnight in a rest camp at Port Said, he was sent to the AASC Training Depot at Moascar, then on to the 37th AASC Company in late November. In March, 1919, he was with the 38th AASC Company when he was sentenced to 14 days' Field Punishment No. 2 in Moascar for drunkenness, being without a pass and being out of bounds in a brothel. He returned to Australia in June, 1919, and was discharged in Sydney in September of that year. It seems that he returned to Warren, and was certainly living there in 1939. He died at Warren in February, 1956.³⁷

Arthur MacKie, born in 1882 near Wunghnu, in the Goulburn Valley region of Victoria, was the eighth of 16 children of William MacKie and Mary Ann Smith. He was a 32-year-old single farm labourer when he enlisted at Dubbo on November 2, 1915. After El Magruntein, he remained with No. 12 Company throughout the campaign in Palestine until the ICC was disbanded in July, 1918. During February and May, 1918, he was in hospital at Moascar with septic sores, then spent time

in a rest camp at Port Said and the Australian Reserve Company at Abbassia. A month after rejoining No. 12 Company he was back in hospital with pyrexia, this time at Port Said. While in hospital, he was transferred to the 15th Light Horse Regiment. He was discharged to the Details Camp at Moascar and transferred to the 8th Light Horse Regiment at the end of July, 1918. He returned to Australia in July, 1919, and was discharged in Sydney in September of that year. Arthur died, aged 81, on June 29, 1964, at Gilgandra.³⁸

Bob's Wounding and Death

Mylles Wyamarus Cave, a Medical Officer at the El Arish Receiving Station, was born in 1885 in Levuka, Fiji. He received his MB and Bachelor of Surgery (ChB) from Melbourne University, and when he enlisted in the AIF in October, 1914, he was a 29-year-old medical practitioner in Melbourne. He embarked in February, 1915, as a Captain in the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance and served on Gallipoli from August to October, 1915, after which he spent time in hospitals in Malta and London with enteric fever. He returned to duty in February, 1916, and was promoted to Major in November, 1916. In March, 1917, he was transferred to the Imperial Mounted Division Headquarters, then in August, 1917, to the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance as the Commanding Officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He returned to Australia in May, 1919, and was discharged three months later. He re-established himself as a medical practitioner in Beeac, near Colac, and married Katherine (Kitty) Kininmonth in 1928. They had two children before Kitty died in 1933. During World War II, Mylles enlisted in September, 1942, and served as a Major with the Citizen Military Forces in Melbourne. He died at Beeac, Victoria in March, 1952.³⁹



Mylles Wyamarus Cave
1915 - *Punch (Melb)*
April 29, 1915, p. 20

Max Yuille, a Medical Officer at the El Arish Receiving Station, was a 27-year-old Melbourne born medical practitioner when he enlisted in January, 1915. He had received his MB from Melbourne University in 1913-1914. He embarked the following month and was initially a Regimental Medical Officer with the 8th and 9th Light Horse Regiments before joining the 3rd Light Horse Field Ambulance in September, 1916. He was promoted to Major in late January, 1917, and posted to the 4th Light Horse Field Ambulance. By July, 1917, he had been posted to the Anzac Training Camp at Moascar as Senior Medical Officer. Max began two months' leave in England in December, 1917, during which he married Nita Scott, a Staff Nurse with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS). Nita had to immediately resign from the AANS 'in consequence of marriage'. Between April and June, 1918, Max was seconded to the Australian Camel Field Ambulance. He embarked at his own request for England in February, 1919, to take up a position at Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading, to undertake post-graduate study, and no doubt join his wife. He was discharged in England in October, 1919, and Max and Nita returned to Australia in September, 1920. He continued to practice medicine in Melbourne and died at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 1966.⁴⁰



Max Yuille 1913
Ancestry, JeffYuille69

Charles Scott Little, the Chaplain who buried Bob, was born on February 13, 1888, in Brampton, Derbyshire, the third of five children of a Church of England cleric, Reverend Charles Edward Little and his wife Catherine. The family moved several times, following their father's appointments to parishes in Sussex, Cornwall and Yorkshire. When Charles was 13 years old, tragedy struck the family when his younger brother Hugh, only 10 years old, died. In 1908, Charles enrolled at Selwyn College, Cambridge, eventually graduating with a Bachelor of Arts. He also trained at Clergy School in Leeds before being ordained by the Archbishop of York in York Cathedral on Trinity Sunday, June 7, 1914. He was an early starter however, as by October, 1912, he was already preaching in his father's Church Mission Hall at Hornsea, Yorkshire. After his ordination, Charles was appointed as a Curate at St. John's Church, Grove Hill, Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, serving there until his decision to enlist.⁴¹

Charles was gazetted as a Temporary Chaplain to the Forces (CF) 4th Class (Captain) on October 29, 1915, and by August, 1916, he had been posted to Egypt, where he was appointed as a

Chaplain to the ICC. On January 5, 1917, he joined the 3rd Battalion, ICC Brigade at El Arish. Charles was clearly not the sort of Chaplain who remained safely behind the lines. He advanced with the Camel Brigade Battalions through the Sinai and into Palestine and was never too far from the action.⁴²

Charles was back in England by mid-August, 1918. After the Armistice in November of that year, he decided to continue on as a Chaplain to the Forces, and by 1919 had been posted to Ireland, where he remained for about 10 years, based mostly in Belfast. This was a difficult and challenging



Reverend Charles
Scott Little C 1953
Barningham Group,
Village Diary &
Newsletter [URL]

period for the British Army in Ireland, and no doubt for Charles himself, as the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) was swiftly followed by the separation of Ireland into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, with all its attendant troubles. During this time, he married Mary Kathleen Shirley in 1919. Mary was nine years younger than Charles and daughter of a Belfast Church of England clergyman. Charles also completed further studies, gaining a Master of Arts.⁴³

Charles returned to England after 1928, and by 1932 was Senior Chaplain to the Forces at the Dover Garrison. He was promoted to Chaplain to the Forces 2nd Class (Lieutenant-Colonel) in May, 1934, and had been transferred to the Colchester Garrison by the end of 1935, where he remained until the outbreak of the Second World War. He acted as Deputy Assistant Chaplain-General to the Forces in Northern Ireland during 1941 and was appointed permanently to that position in November of that year. He had returned to England by the end of 1942 and ended his career as Assistant Chaplain-General to the Forces (Colonel) from 1944 to 1945.⁴⁴

Civilian life had begun again for Charles by 1948. His first parish appointment was in Essex, but by 1953 he was Rector at St. Mary's Church of England at Baconsthorpe, Norfolk. In 1961, he moved some seven miles (11 km) west-north-west in Norfolk to St. Margaret's Church of England at Saxlingham, from whence he retired in 1973. His final years were spent in Holt, Norfolk, mid-way between his last two parishes, where he died on June 20, 1976, aged 88, pre-deceasing his wife Mary by thirteen years.⁴⁵

End Notes

Chapter 1: A Boy in Hungerford

¹ Qld Government, BDM, Births1892/C/2845. Family 'stories' suggest there may have been another female child born in 1881 that died at birth. However, no record of this birth can be found in either NSW or Queensland Birth Records, and on Bob's Birth Register entry only six 'living' children before him are listed followed by the notation 'Dead none'. AWM131,31, No. 2367 Pte. McBride, Neil Hamilton

² Swayn, Shirley Leslie, Interview by Gary Swayn, Telephone, Caloundra, March, 2017; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 19/09/1900, p. 2, 30/10/1907, p. 2, 03/02/1917, p. 2, 07/03/1917, p. 2; Johns, Barry (Comp.), *A Family of Fisk: The Story of John Fisk and Sarah Lush and their descendants*, p. 79; NSW Government, BDM, Deaths 965/1906, 12484/1918. Robert is listed on Bob's grandmother Elizabeth's Death Registration (1918) but not on his grandfather John's Death Registration (1906).

³ Birth registration dates have been confirmed from NSW Government, BDM and Qld Government, BDM. Swayn, Shirley Leslie, *Elizabeth and Alfred McBride; Australian Town and Country Journal (Sydney)*, 18/01/1896, p. 1; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 10/03/1897, p. 2; Ancestry, Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory 1905; Find My Past, Directories and Social History, Qld Post Office Directory, 1894, 1905, 1907

⁴ Henry Lawson tramped from Bourke to Hungerford in the summer of 1892-1893. His story 'Hungerford' was published in *While the Billy Boils* in 1896. Cronin, Leonard, (Ed.), *A Camp-Fire Yarn Henry Lawson Complete Works 1885-1900*, pp. vii-viii, 280

⁵ Elder, Bruce, 'Hungerford', *Aussie Towns* [URL]; *Certificate of Marriage No. A40435 Stuart Leslie McIntosh and Elizabeth Mary McBride 21 December 1903*, in the possession of Gary Swayn; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 29/09/1898, p. 5, 04/06/1898, p. 1, 29/06/1898, p. 4, 13/09/1902, p. 2, 03/06/1903, p. 2; *The Brisbane Courier*, 09/12/1901, p. 8; Rea, Malcolm M., *Hungerford*, pp. 2-3; NAA, SP32/1, Hungerford Part 3

⁶ *Western Grazier (Wilcannia)*, 13/02/1901, p. 3; *Darling Downs Gazette*, 11/12/1899, p.2; *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 03/10/1896, p. 5; *The Brisbane Courier*, 12/04/1894, p. 6, 17/11/1896, p. 2; *The Week (Brisbane)*, 28/06/1890, p. 21; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 10/03/1897, p. 2; *The Queenslander (Brisbane)*, 08/01/1887, p. 59; Garden, Don, 'The Federation Drought of 1895-1903, El Niño and Society in Australia', pp. 270, 273; *The Armidale Chronicle*, 07/05/1902, p. 8; *Mackay Mercury*, 08/04/1897, p. 3

⁷ *Western Grazier (Wilcannia)*, 13/02/1901, p. 3; *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 03/10/1896, p. 5; *The Brisbane Courier*, 17/11/1896, p. 2; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 10/03/1897, p. 2; 17/03/1897, p. 2, 03/06/1903, p. 2; *The Western Champion and General Advertiser for the Central-Western Districts (Barcaldine)*, 24/03/1902, p. 6

⁸ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 03/01/1900, p. 2, 17/01/1906, p.2; *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*, 27/03/1897, p. 7; *The Week (Brisbane)*, 28/02/1896, p. 23; *The Queenslander (Brisbane)*, 23/02/1901, p. 847; *Mackay Mercury*, 08/04/1897, p. 3

⁹ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 20/11/1897, p. 2, 08/04/1903, p. 2, 16/05/1903, p. 2; *Mackay Mercury*, 08/04/1897, p. 3; *The Week (Brisbane)*, 28/06/1890, p. 21; *The Brisbane Courier*, 12/04/1894, p. 6; *Western Grazier (Wilcannia)*, 13/02/1901, p. 3; *The Northern Miner (Charters Towers)*, 20/02/1904, p. 3

¹⁰ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 03/08/1898, p. 2, 17/08/1898, p. 2

¹¹ Bob's sister Alice and brother Alfred would definitely have been of age to attend school in 1892, and his brother John also either in 1892 or 1893. *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 09/06/1967, p. 5; 'The Fight to Save an Outback School', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 14/10/1981, p. 20; SLQ, Queensland (Wise's) official directory 1894-95, p. 235

¹² QLD Government, 'Provisional Schools in Queensland', *Department of Education and Training* [URL]

¹³ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 19/12/1896, p. 3

¹⁴ Swayn, Gary J., *Queensland State School Teachers During the Great War (1914-1918)* [Thesis], pp. 14, 25-26

¹⁵ Queensland reduced the minimum age for entry into school from 6 to 5 in 1897, but retained the 1875 Act provision for compulsory attendance for those aged 6 to 12. QLD Government, 'School admission and progression age: since 1875', *Department of Education and Training* [URL]

¹⁶ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 09/06/1967, p. 5; QSA, 12607, 14914; NSW Government, BDM, Marriages 3467/1904; NAA, B4418, Woodforde ER

¹⁷ Little Lord Fauntleroy was a fictional young American boy who becomes heir to an English earldom. Written by Frances Hodgson Burnett and published in 1886. He was depicted as having shoulder length curls, velvet knee breeches and a lace collar. Burnett, Frances Hodgson, *Little Lord Fauntleroy; Western Herald (Bourke)*, 30/06/1897, p. 2, 19/04/1899, p. 2, 19/09/1900, p. 2, 03/01/1903, p. 2

¹⁸ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 01/08/1900, p. 4

¹⁹ *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 29/11/1902, p. 2; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29/11/1902, p. 12; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 29/11/1902, p. 2

²⁰ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 08/04/1903, p. 2, *The Northern Miner (Charters Towers)*, 20/02/1904, p. 3

²¹ *Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton)*, 27/04/1904, p. 5

²² *Lithgow Mercury*, 15/04/1904, p. 3

²³ *The Charleville Times*, 17/08/1901, p. 2, *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 24/04/1895, p. 3

²⁴ *The Queenslander (Brisbane)*, 08/08/1903, p. 55; Elder, Bruce, 'Hungerford', *Aussie Towns* [URL]; QSA 12596, 11024; Ancestry, Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory 1907, The Queensland Post Office and Official Directory 1907; Find My Past, Directories and Social History, Qld Post Office Directory, 1905, 1907

Chapter 2: From Hungerford to Bourke

¹ An analysis of NAA B2455 First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920 and Applications to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force for 'McBride' reveals 93 records. None of these has a first name beginning with 'B'. Three have a first name 'Robert', one born in Ipswich, Qld, two in Victoria and all three enlisted in Melbourne. No 'McBride' is recorded as having enlisted at Cobar, and none, other than Bob, at Dubbo. No 'McBride' is recorded as having been born at Cobar

² Murray, M., 'Children and schoolwork in New South Wales, 1860-1920', *University of Wollongong Research Online*, p. 4 [URL]; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 05/12/1917, p. 2; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 27/04/1917, p. 2; Ancestry, 1901 NSW, Australia Census-Cobar

³ NSW Department of Education, *History of New South Wales government schools* [URL]; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 30/10/1907, p. 2

⁴ Elder, Bruce, 'Bourke, NSW', *Aussie Towns* [URL]; Minister of State for Home Affairs, 'Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 1911 Part XIV – Summary', p. 2254 [URL]; Australian Geographic Society, 'Australia's Afghan cameleers', *Australian Geographic* [URL]; Monash University, 'Special report: The King of the Cameleers – the rebellious patriotism of Abdul Wade', *Mojo News* [URL]

⁵ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; *The Cobar Herald*, 07/09/1901, p. 2, 09/11/1901, p. 2; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 23/02/1901, p. 4

⁶ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 17/12/1887, p. 4; Waugh, Maxwell N., *Soldier Boys: The Militarisation of Australian and New Zealand Schools for World War I*, p. 31; Stockings, Craig A. J., *The Torch and the Sword: A History of the Army Cadet Movement in Australia*, p. 20

⁷ While Part V-Cadets of the *Defence Acts 1903-1904* established the CMCC for boys aged 12-19, little was actually achieved to transition Colonial Cadets to the CMCC until the promulgation of the Regulations in May, 1906. *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 16/10/1897, p. 3, 23/02/1901, p. 4; Stockings, Craig A. J., pp. 37-40

⁸ Reports noting attendances and counts of shooting handicaps awarded in the *Western Herald (Bourke)* 1907-1909 used. Counts range from 27-39 throughout this period

⁹ *Provisional Regulations under the Defence Acts 1903-1904: Statutory Rules 1906 No. 31, 1907 No. 63 (Cth)*

¹⁰ Waugh, Maxwell N., p. 59; *Provisional Regulations under the Defence Acts 1903-1904: Statutory Rules 1907 No. 63 (Cth)*

¹¹ *Provisional Regulations under the Defence Acts 1903-1904: Statutory Rules 1906 No. 31, 1907 No. 63 (Cth)*; Stockings, Craig A. J., p. 43

¹² W.J. Trickett, NSW Minister for Public Instruction, 1887, quoted in Stockings, Craig A. J., p. 33

¹³ Waugh, Maxwell N., p. 59

¹⁴ "Our Sydney Letter" in *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 18/01/1908, p. 4, 16/05/1908, p. 4, 08/05/1909, p. 4,

¹⁵ Stockings, Craig A. J., pp. 50-53

¹⁶ It would appear that all Bourke Cadets shoots in 1907-1908 were held at the Rifle Club range as tenders for construction of a stop butt for a miniature rifle range at Bourke Superior Public School were not issued until February, 1909. See *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 10/02/1909, p. 2

¹⁷ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 30/10/1907 p. 2, 06/11/1907, p. 2, 13/11/1907, p. 2

¹⁸ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 11/04/1908, p. 4, 22/04/1908, p. 2, 25/04/1908, p. 4, 02/05/1908, p. 4, 15/08/1908, p. 4, 04/11/1908, p. 2, 07/11/1908, p. 4, 11/11/1908, p. 2; Stockings, Craig A. J., pp. 48-49

¹⁹ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 22/04/1908, p. 2, 23/05/1908, p. 4, 27/05/1908, p. 2, 07/10/1908, p. 2; Stockings, Craig A. J., pp. 50-53

²⁰ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 14/03/1908, p. 4, 21/03/1908, p. 4, 28/03/1908, p. 4, 19/08/1908, p. 2, 29/08/1908, p. 4, 20/03/1909, p. 4, 16/03/1910, p. 2; Stockings, Craig A. J., pp. 50-53

²¹ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; *Apprentices Act 1901 (NSW) Part II*, 4, 16

²² *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 08/04/1893, p. 2, 27/02/1895, p. 1, 17/04/1897, p. 2, 24/12/1902, p. 2, 30/11/1907, p. 2, 15/05/1931, p. 2, 14/10/1932, p. 2; *The Cobar Herald*, 25/02/1905, p. 2; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 07/12/1907, p. 4; *The Methodist (Sydney)*, 17/11/1894, p. 6

²³ *The Catholic Press (Sydney)*, 20/09/1902, p. 4; *Sunday Times (Sydney)*, 23/06/1907, p. 7

²⁴ *The Catholic Press (Sydney)*, 20/09/1902, p. 4

²⁵ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 02/01/1909, p. 12; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 02/01/1909, p. 4, 15/05/1931, p. 2; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 02/01/1909, p. 10

Chapter 3: Cobar Days

¹ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 09/03/1917, p. 3, 14/05/1920, p. 2; *The Cobar Herald*, 07/07/1906, p. 5

- ² *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 25/08/1922, p. 2, 30/08/1922, p. 2; *The Cobar Herald*, 14/03/1913, p. 4; NSW Government, BDM, Births 41477/1912, 3561/1913, 34063/1914, 48378/1914, 48321/1916, 30316/1918, Marriages 12787/1911, Deaths 965/1906; NSWSA, NRS5081, Elizabeth McBride Register No. 6282
- ³ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23/02/1914, p. 7
- ⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 08/04/1914, p. 25; NSW Department of Primary Industries, 'Cobar's Mining History', *Primefact* 555, February, 2007, p. 5 [URL], Stingemore, Kay, *From the Far West to the Western Front: Cobar and the Great War*, p. 1
- ⁵ *National Advocate (Bathurst)*, 25/03/1915, p. 5; *Lithgow Mercury*, 07/07/1915, p. 4; *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 24/09/1915, p. 2; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 11/10/1915, p. 10; *Wellington Times*, 18/11/1915, p. 6; NSW Department of Primary Industries, 'Cobar's Mining History', p. 5 [URL]
- ⁶ Stingemore, Kay, pp. 1-8; Swayn, Gary, *Field Work - Dubbo and Cobar*, 28/4/2017, 7-9/5/2017
- ⁷ Stingemore, Kay, pp. 8-10, 206; *Western Age (Dubbo)* 17 July 1915, p. 2, 4 August 1915, p. 2, 14 August 1915, p. 2. 'Australia Day' was initiated in NSW, but celebrated across Australia, to raise funds to support wounded soldiers. It was first held on July 30, 1915, and repeated in the subsequent years of the war. January 26 was at this time celebrated as 'Foundation Day' in NSW only. Neale, Kerry, 'For Australia's Heroes - the other "Australia Day"', 30 July 1915', *Australian War Memorial* [URL]
- ⁸ Stingemore, Kay, pp. 10, 43-44; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 24/07/1915, p. 2, 11/08/1915, p. 2; NAA B2455, Fern Charles Stuart: SERN 4440; Parliament of NSW, 'Charles Stuart Fern (1884-1918)', *Former Members Legislative Assembly* [URL]
- ⁹ *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 18/08/1915, p. 2, 01/09/1915, p. 2; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23/08/1915, p. 7
- ¹⁰ Stingemore, Kay, pp. 15, 30-31, 84-85; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 15/10/1915, p. 5; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 03/11/1915, p. 2; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 05/11/1915, p. 8; Rozentals, John, 'Gilgandra Route March', *Molong Online* [URL]; NAA B2455, Kynaston Walter Clive: Service Number - 512, Kinkead James John Benedict: Service Number - 1491
- ¹¹ *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 03/11/1915, p. 2; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 12/11/1915, p. 4; NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367

Chapter 4: Basic Training at Dubbo Camp

- ¹ *The Cobar Herald*, 18/02/1905, p. 2, 13/05/1905, p. 6; NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367. Train timetables and estimates of journey times from Cobar to Nyngan (approximately 82 miles (132 km)) and Nyngan to Dubbo (approximately 101 miles (162 km)) have been sourced from: *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 06/11/1915, p. 2, 27/11/1915, p. 2; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 10/11/1915, p. 2; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/11/1915, p. 2; Bozier, Rolfe, 'Main Western Line', *NSWrail.net* [URL]. A search of the *Western Age (Dubbo)* indicates that after the 'Complimentary Smoke Social' at the Court House Hotel in Cobar on Thursday, October 28, 1915, the next organised farewell was for Edward Booth on Monday, November 8, 1915. *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 03/11/1915, p. 2, 10/11/1915, p. 2
- ² NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367
- ³ Macquarie Regional Library, 'AIF Training Camp', *Historical Research/World War I* [URL]; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/08/1915, p. 11; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 10/08/1915, p. 2, 14/09/1915, p. 2, 10/12/1915, p. 2; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 17/08/1915, p. 1, 24/09/1915, p. 1, 29/10/1915, p. 5, 17/03/1916, p. 5; *Leader (Orange)*, 01/10/1915, p. 5
- ⁴ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* 02/11/1915, p. 2, 11/01/1916, p. 2, 18/01/1916, p.2; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 03/12/1915, p. 1, 18/01/1916, p. 1, 08/02/1916, p. 1; Neumann, C., 'Ramaciotti, Gustav Mario (1861-1927)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*
- ⁵ *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 12/11/1915, p. 4, 19/11/1915, p. 2, 11/01/1916, p. 3, 08/02/1916, p. 1, 22/02/1916, p. 1, 14/03/1916, p. 4; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 12/11/1915, p. 4, 28/01/1916, p. 3, 08/02/1916, p. 4, 22/02/1916, p. 2
- ⁶ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 14/12/1915, p. 2, 17/12/1915, p. 2; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 19/11/1915, p. 2, 07/12/1915, p. 1, 14/12/1915, p. 2
- ⁷ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 11/01/1916, p. 2, 21/01/1916, p. 4; 14/03/1916, p. 3; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 13/08/1915, p. 8, 07/01/1916, p. 1, 25/01/1916, p. 1; Grey, Jeffrey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 94 quoted in Beaumont, Joan, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, pp. 32-33
- ⁸ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 04/02/1916, p. 4; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 11/01/1916, p.1, 21/01/1916, p. 6, 18/02/1916, p. 5, 22/02/1916, p. 1, 29/02/1916, p. 4, 07/03/1916, p. 2, 10/03/1916, p. 5, 14/03/1916, p. 4, 17/03/1916, p. 1; NSW Government, 'Liverpool Riot 1916 - Soldier Mutiny in Sydney', *NSW ANZAC Centenary* [URL]
- ⁹ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 09/11/1915, p. 2, 23/11/1915, p. 2, 10/12/1915, p. 5, 21/12/1915, p. 4, 24/12/1915, p. 4, 15/02/1916, p. 2; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 02/11/1915, p. 2, 09/11/1915, p. 1, 16/11/1915, p. 2, 11/01/1916, p. 3, 08/02/1916, p. 1, 29/02/1916, p. 1; Bozier, Rolfe, 'Main Western Line', *NSWrail.net* [URL]; McIntosh, Stuart Leslie, *Diary*
- ¹⁰ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 15/10/1915, p. 2, 07/01/1916, p. 4, 15/02/1916, p. 2, 18/02/1916, p. 4, 07/03/1916, p. 2, 14/03/1916, p. 2, 17/03/1916, p. 4; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington*

Independent, 11/01/1916, p. 3, 14/01/1916, p. 4, 21/01/1916, pp. 1, 5, 28/01/1916, pp. 1, 4, 15/02/1916, p. 1, 22/02/1916, p. 2, 07/03/1916, p. 2, 17/03/1916, p. 1

¹¹ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 17/03/1916, p. 4; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 15/02/1916, p. 3, 21/03/1916, p.1; *Sunday Times (Sydney)*, 10/10/1915, p.1; NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367, Rogers James: Service Number – 2382

Chapter 5: Menangle Park Light Horse Training

¹ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 22/02/1916, p. 1

² *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 30/11/1915, p. 3

³ NAA, MP367/1, 438/4/361; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 25/02/1916, p. 4; *The Sun (Sydney)*, 18/02/1916, p. 6

⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14/03/1916, p. 5; *Young Witness*, 14/04/1916, p. 4; *Camden News*, 25/05/1916, p. 4; Campbelltown City Council, 'History of Menangle Park', *Campbelltown City Council* [URL]

⁵ *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 01/01/1916, p. 3; *Camden News*, 02/07/1914, p. 1, 02/03/1916, p. 1; NAA, MP367/1, 438/4/361; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 07/04/1916, p. 9, 27/04/1916, p.6; *The Sun (Sydney)*, 02/08/1914, p. 6; Club Menangle, 'Our History', *Club Menangle* [URL]

⁶ *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 01/01/1916, p. 3; *Camden News*, 13/04/1916, p. 1; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 08/03/1916, p. 17; Willis, Ian, 'Menangle Army Camp', *Camden History Notes* [URL]; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10/04/1916, p. 7; *Evening News (Sydney)*, 13/04/1916, p. 2; *Young Witness*, 14/04/1916, p. 4

⁷ Howard, E.J.H., 'Lenehan, Robert William (1865-1922)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; Puynter, J.R., 'Munro Ferguson, Sir Ronald Craufurt (1860-1934)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; *The Farmer and Settler (Sydney)*, 16/05/1916, p. 3; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 05/04/1916, p. 14, 13/04/1916, p. 9; Willis, Ian, 'Menangle Army Camp', *Camden History Notes* [URL]; *Camden News*, 13/04/1916, p. 6

⁸ *Camden News*, 13/04/1916, p. 6; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13/04/1916, p. 9

⁹ *Australia Prepared* c 1916, Australian War Memorial Collection Item F00143. The Light Horse at Menangle segment starts at 01:57:30:24. The film was released on July 10, 1916

¹⁰ *The Farmer and Settler (Sydney)*, 16/05/1916, p. 3

Chapter 6: Embarkation

¹ Moore Park was the home at that time of the Royal Agricultural Society's Royal Easter Show, due to commence that year on the day Bob left Australia – April 18, 1916. It was also in use then as a recruit clearing depot and a training depot for Engineers. *The Twofold Bay Magnet: and South Coast and Southern Monaro Advertiser*, 17/04/1916, p. 3; *The Farmer and Settler (Sydney)*, 18/04/1916, p. 3; *The Sun (Sydney)*, 12/04/1916, p. 3, 16/04/1916, p. 24; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13/04/1916, p. 8; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 14/04/1916, p. 9, 20/05/1916, p. 7

² The Embarkation Rolls list 106 men embarking on the *Palermo* on the 18/04/1916. This number includes 104 men (including the two officers) of the 7th Australian Light Horse 16th Reinforcements, one man of the 1st Mobile Veterinary Section 17th Reinforcements and one Medical Officer. The Veterinary Officer on board, Captain Robert Spooner-Hart, is not listed in the Embarkation Rolls, but clearly did embark, which would bring the total who embarked to 107. Lieutenant Donkin's Voyage Report is confusing in terms of numbers, stating 104 men plus an additional 4 - 2 Mobile Veterinary Section, 1 Medical, 1 Veterinary embarked – a total of 108. He later states 104 men disembarked at Suez. There is clearly 1 Mobile Veterinary Section reinforcement not accounted for in the Embarkation Rolls or incorrectly listed on the Voyage Report. Given the numerous discrepancies I have identified in Lieutenant Donkin's Voyage Report, I have accepted the Embarkation Rolls as the data to use, with the addition of one Veterinary Officer. AWM8, 10/12/4, 27/28/1, 26/99/1; AWM7, PALERMO 3; *The Twofold Bay Magnet: and South Coast and Southern Monaro Advertiser*, 17/04/1916, p. 3

³ The *Palermo* made four troopship voyages in total, three from Melbourne and one from Sydney, before being returned to P&O on January 10, 1917. On October 22, 1924, she was sold for £18,000 (\$1,430,000) to Italiana Prodotti Metallici, Italy, for demolition. P & O, 'Palermo (1903)', *P & O Heritage* [URL]; AWM244 HMAT PALERMO (A56); *The Ballarat Star*, 17/03/1915, p. 4; *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List (Sydney)*, 31/03/1915, p. 4; AWM7, PALERMO 1, PALERMO 2

⁴ AWM7, PALERMO 3; NAA B2455, Donkin Edwin Gordon: SERN Lieutenant, Turner Vivian Paul: SERN Lieut, Van Epen Theodore William: Service Number – Captain, Spooner-Hart Robert: Service Number – Captain; Swain Gary John, *Analysis of the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment*, (Excel Spreadsheet)

⁵ Gullett, H.S., *Official History of Australia in the War 1914-18 - Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine*, Vol. 7, pp. 29-31

⁶ Swain Gary John, *Analysis of the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment*

⁷ AWM7, PALERMO 3; Parsonson, Ian M., *Vets at War: A History of the Australian Army Veterinary Corps 1909-1946*, p. 50

- ⁸ *The Age (Melbourne)*, 17/03/1915, p. 4; *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List (Sydney)*, 31/03/1915, p. 4, 12/04/1915, p. 2; Anonymous, 'Old War Horses', *Oz Sports History* [URL] (This article states the refit was for 400 horses); Plowman, Peter, *Across the Sea to War - Australian and New Zealand Troop Conveys from 1865 through Two World Wars to Korea and Vietnam*, pp. 68-69; AWM7, PALERMO 1
- ⁹ AWM7, PALERMO 2, PALERMO 3; Parsonson, Ian M., pp. 50-51; *The Northcote Leader*, 01/05/1915, p. 5
- ¹⁰ AWM7, PALERMO 3; Parsonson, Ian M., pp. 186-187; Plowman, Peter, p. 60
- ¹¹ AWM7, PALERMO 3
- ¹² AWM7, PALERMO 3; Parsonson, Ian M., pp.48-51
- ¹³ *The Northcote Leader*, 01/05/1915, p. 5
- ¹⁴ Orchitis is inflammation of the testicles, most commonly caused by mumps
- ¹⁵ The Voyage Report states that the troops disembarked on May 22, 1916, but the Port Suez Hospital entries in the NAA B2455 records of each of the men taken ill on the *Palermo* state they were admitted to Hospital on May 21, 1916. I have assumed the Palermo docked on May 21 but the men did not disembark until the next day. AWM7, PALERMO 3; Swain Gary John, *Analysis of the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment*. The record for Private James Ruming 2384 indicates he had mumps from May 7, 1916, that is, while on the *Palermo*, but was not hospitalised on arrival at Suez.

Chapter 7: Training in Egypt

- ¹ *Leader (Orange)*, 28/07/1916, p. 2; *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta)*, 25/12/1915, p. 10; TMAG, Baily Diary 1915 Transcript; *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, 04/05/1916, p. 6; *Manila Express*, 22/01/1916, p. 3; *The Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser*, 26/01/1916, p. 4; *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 17/09/1916, p. 3; *Riverina Recorder*, 08/03/1916, p. 3; *The Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, 01/02/1916, p. 6
- ² Calculated from Henry Langtip's Diary entry on the time taken to unload horses. AWM Private Records, PR000053. Remount depot reference from *Cootamundra Herald*, 08/09/1916, p. 3; NAA B2455 Ruming James Thomas: Service Number - 2384; Murphy, Lyle Vincent, *During the War I Rode a Horse*, p. 33
- ³ AWM7, PALERMO 3; NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367. Two to three-day waits were reported in: *North-Eastern Advertiser (Scottsdale)*, 13/06/1916, p. 2; *Geelong Advertiser*, 24/06/1916, p. 8; *The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, 06/03/1916, p. 1; *Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers' Gazette*, 14/03/1916, p. 3; *Leader (Orange)*, 28/07/1916, p. 2; *Stawell News and Pleasant Creek Chronicle*, 20/04/1916, p. 3; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 28/01/1916, p. 4. Private E. Norris reported a seven day wait over the 1915 Christmas-New Year period - *Kyneton Guardian*, 11/03/1916, p. 3. NAA B2455, West Hedley Arthur: Service Number - 1765 - Letter in *Forbes Advocate*, 30/06/1916, p. 5. The modern district of Al Arbaeen in Port Suez is at least six miles (10 km) from the Port, which is broadly in alignment with Hedley West's description of the location of the camp. A 1916 letter from Horace Tolson refers to Arbaeen as a 'native village'. Liverpool John Moores University, 'Horace Tolson's Letters from the War', *WWI Merseyside at War 1914-1918* [URL]. Some information on Arbaeen Camp is provided with the Australian War Memorial data on the Arbaeen Camp image C00322
- ⁴ Compiled (in order) from: *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta)*, 25/12/1915, p. 10; *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser*, 04/05/1916, p. 6; *Gippslander and Mirboo Times*, 06/07/1916, p. 3; *The Northern Herald (Cairns)*, 17/03/1916, p. 22; *Rosedale Courier*, 11/04/1916, p. 4; *Molong Argus*, 10/03/1916, p. 2; *The Gundagai Independent and Pastoral, Agricultural and Mining Advocate*, 27/03/1916, p.3; *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 17/09/1916, p. 3; *Echuca and Moama Advertiser and Farmers' Gazette*, 14/03/1916, p. 3; *The Ararat Advertiser*, 27/06/1916, p. 3; *Dimboola Banner and Wimmera and Mallee Advertiser*, 25/02/1916, p. 1; *The North Western Advocate and the Emu Bay Times*, 12/05/1916, p. 4
- ⁵ *Saturday Mail (South Australia)*, 15/01/1916, p. 1; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 27/01/1916, p. 3; *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta)*, 25/12/1915, p. 10; *The Gloucester Advocate*, 29/01/1916, p. 3; *The Forbes Advocate*, 21/09/1915, p. 4, 12/10/1915, p. 3.; *Port Fairy Gazette*, 23/03/1916, p. 2; *Hamilton Spectator*, 15/07/1916, p. 8, 09/11/1915, p. 4; *Leader (Orange)*, 28/07/1916, p. 2; *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 09/09/1916, p. 9; *The Kiama Independent, and Shoalhaven Advertiser*, 13/09/1916, p. 2; *The Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser*, 20/03/1916, p. 2; *Berwick Shire News and Pakenham and Cranbourne Gazette*, 15/03/1916, p. 3; *The Richmond River Express and Casino Kyogle Advertiser*, 18/01/1916, p. 6; SLNSW, W. J. A. Allsop diary, MLMSS 1606 Item 1; AWM Private Records, PR000053; Facey, A. B., *A Fortunate Life*, p. 304
- ⁶ AWM Private Records, PR000053; *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 09/09/1916, p. 9
- ⁷ *Daily Advertiser (Wagga Wagga)*, 05/02/1916, p. 2; *The Forbes Advocate*, 21/09/1915, p. 4; *Riverina Recorder*, 08/03/1916, p. 3; *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta)*, 25/12/1915, p. 10; *Werribee Shire Banner*, 27/01/1916, p. 3; *Daily Examiner (Grafton)*, 14/12/1915, p. 2; *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 18/03/1916, p. 11; *The Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser*, 20/03/1916, p. 2; *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 20/02/1916, p. 2; Australian Government, 'The boy from the bush hits Cairo', *The ANZAC Portal* [URL]
- ⁸ NAA B2455: A review of all the service records of all the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment confirm that they were all taken on strength at Tel el Kebir on the same day as Bob. The 7th Light Horse

Regiment was part of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade - Australian Light Horse Studies Centre, *Desert Column: Australian Military History of the Early 20th Century* [URL]

⁹ Stephens, Greg, 'Training Camps: Egypt', *Following the Twenty-Second* [URL]; *Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record*, 09/06/1916, p. 3; Bean, C. E. W., *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 The A.I.F. in France 1916*, Vol III, pp. 3-4, 299, 306

¹⁰ *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 28/07/1916, p. 4; *The Colac Herald*, 25/09/1916, p. 5; NAA B2455, Dowling Edward: SERN 2467; AWM Private Records, PR000053; *Nhill Free Press*, 05/09/1916, p. 2; *The Imperial Camel Corps: Four Australians recall their memories and experiences of the Imperial Camel Corps, 1916-1918*, Australian War Memorial on YouTube, Sound Recording at 04:32

¹¹ Australian Light Horse Association, 'The Mounted Soldiers of Australia', *The Australian Light Horse Association* [URL]; *Evelyn Observer and Bourke East Record*, 09/06/1916, p. 3; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 13/04/1916, p. 5; *Kapunda Herald*, 30/06/1916, p. 3; *The Colac Herald*, 25/09/1916, p. 5; *Nhill Free Press*, 05/09/1916, p. 2; *The Northern Herald (Cairns)*, 17/03/1916, p. 22; AWM Private Records, PR000053; Hearne, Ross, *ANZAC Diary - E.G. King* [URL]

¹² *Kapunda Herald*, 30/06/1916, p. 3; *Nhill Free Press*, 05/09/1916, p. 2; *The Mercury (Hobart)*, 24/06/1916, p. 5; *Advocate (Melbourne)*, 07/10/1916, p. 30; Hearne, Ross, *ANZAC Diary - E.G. King* [URL]

¹³ Mackenzie, John, 'Battle of Tel-el-Kebir', *British Battles.com* [URL]; Idriess, Ion L., *The Desert Column*, p. 52; *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 09/04/1916, p. 2; *Nhill Free Press*, 05/09/1916, p. 2; *The Mercury (Hobart)*, 24/06/1916, p. 5; *Advocate (Melbourne)*, 07/10/1916, p. 30; *The Colac Herald*, 25/09/1916, p. 5; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 13/04/1916, p. 5

¹⁴ Gullett, H.S., p. 54

¹⁵ Australian Light Horse Studies Centre, 'Australian Light Horse Order of Battle', *Desert Column: Australian Military History of the Early 20th Century* [URL]; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 13/04/1916, p. 5; AWM Private Records, PR000053; Swayn Gary John, *Analysis of the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment*. NAA B2455, Frost Edwin George: SERN 2332. The records for Privates John Matthews 2364, Ronald Pryor 2380 and Frederick Stone 2396 state they passed grenadier school

¹⁶ TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; AWM25, 157/5, 157/9; SLV, MS10139, Hall, Rex, Papers, 1914-1971 - Diary Vol 3 Jan 1916-Dec 1916 – has details of train trip Tel el Kebir to Abbassia in July, 1916. NAA B2455, Smith George Archilles [Achilles]: SERN CAPT

Chapter 8: Abbassia and the Camel Corps

¹ AWM224, MSS39 PART 1; Swayn, Gary John, *Analysis of the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment* confirms that 17 were transferred to the Imperial Camel Corps on the same day as Bob

² *The Brisbane Courier*, 12/09/1894, p. 4; Swayn, Shirley Leslie, Interview by Gary Swayn, Telephone, Caloundra, April, 2019; Swayn, Gary John, *Analysis of the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse Regiment*.

³ The Oaks Historical Society Inc., 'Camel Corps at Menangle Camp', *Newsletter*, June 2015 [URL]; *The Farmer and Settler (Sydney)*, 16/05/1916, p. 3

⁴ Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, *Sand, Sweat and Camels: The Story of the Australian Camel Corps*, pp. 29-36; Australian War Memorial 'Sudan (New South Wales Contingent) March-June 1885', *Australians at War* [URL]

⁵ Underwood, Jim, 'The Organisation of the Imperial Camel Brigade 1916-1918', *Sabretache, The Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, 1 December 2003, No. 4, pp. 5-14; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, pp. 36, 42, 44, 47; TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; AWM25, 157/5

⁶ Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, pp. 37-38; Inchbald, Geoffrey, *The Imperial Camel Corps*, pp. 15, 18-19; SLV, MS 10139; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1. Frank Hanley wrote home with details of tram travel in Cairo: *Port Fairy Gazette*, 23/03/1916, p. 2; Middle East Institute, 'Historical Discursus for April 2: The First Battle of the Wasa'a or Wozzer', *Editor's Blog* [URL]; Conversion Table Pounds Sterling into Piastres Egyptian from: SLNSW, Allan Fraser Fry Diary and Papers, MLMSS 1159 ADD-ON 2076/Box 7/Folder 1/Item 5; LC, Geography and Map Division, Egypt - Maşlahat Al-Misāḥah, *General Map of Cairo*. [Cairo: Survey of Egypt, 1920], G8304.C2 1920.E4

⁷ Estimates of numbers calculated from data in TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916

⁸ AWM25, 157/5; AWM45, 12/36 PART 2; New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage (NZMCH), 'Camel Company Organisation Aug 1916 - Jun 1918', *New Zealand History* [URL]; NZMCH, 'The Imperial Camel Corps', *New Zealand History* [URL]; Inchbald, Geoffrey, *The Imperial Camel Corps*, p. 64

⁹ TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 178; Hall, Rex, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, p. 58; Reid, Frank, *The Fighting Cameliers*, p. 10; Davidson, John (Jock), *The Dinkum Oil of Light Horse and Camel Corps*, p. 64; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1

¹⁰ Gregory, Alan, *The Sentimental Soldier: A Life of George Furner Langley*, p. 40; Reid, Frank, p. 3; AWM15, 5212; AWM25, 861/5 PART 96. Data on the 15 'undesirables' extracted from their NAA B2455 records

¹¹ AWM25, 707/5 Part 266; AWM45, 12/36 PART 2; TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; Reid, Frank, pp. 10-11; Hogue, Oliver, *The Cameliers*, p. 3

¹² Forth, Nevill de Rouen, *A Fighting Colonel of Camel Corps: Lt Col. N.B. de Lancey Forth*, p. 92; IWM, War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, pp. 16-18, 24; Robertson, John, *With the Cameliers in Palestine*, p. 29; Reid, Frank, p. 7

¹³ IWM, War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, pp. 18-24, 27; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 48; Davidson, John (Jock), p. 62; Inchbald, Geoffrey, *The Imperial Camel Corps*, pp. 17-18

¹⁴ AWM45, 12/36 PART 2; Forth, Nevill de Rouen, p. 91; IWM, War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, pp. 1-14; Inchbald, Geoffrey, *The Imperial Camel Corps*, pp. xvii, 17-18

¹⁵ War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, p. 5; Inchbald, Geoffrey, *The Imperial Camel Corps*, pp. xvii-xviii; Gregory, Alan, p. 41-42; Reid, Frank, p. 5; Davidson, John (Jock), p. 63; Hogue, Oliver, pp. 5-6; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 47; NAA, B2455, Graham Henry: SERN 2335, Howe Joseph: Service Number – 2353, Allan Albert: SERN 2303; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1

¹⁶ IWM, War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, pp. 28-64; Hogue, Oliver, p. 4; Reid, Frank, p. 8; AWM25, 707/5 Part 266; AWM45, 12/36 PART 2; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1. Location of Mokattam Hills sourced from map in Wikisource Contributors, '1911 Encyclopædia Britannica/Cairo (Egypt)', *Wikisource* [URL]

¹⁷ Mostyn, Trevor, *Egypt's Belle Epoque: Cairo and the age of the hedonists*, p. 148; Wikisource Contributors, '1911 Encyclopædia Britannica/Cairo (Egypt)', *Wikisource* [URL]; LC, Geography and Map Division, Egypt - Maṣlaḥat Al-Misāḥah, *General Map of Cairo*. [Cairo: Survey of Egypt, 1920], G8304.C2 1920.E4

¹⁸ Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, pp. 37-38; Mostyn, Trevor, p. 133; Yapp, Arthur Keysall, *The Romance of the Red Triangle*, p. 85; Copeland, Jeffrey C., *The YMCA at War: Collaboration and Conflict during the World Wars*, p. 38; Dowling, Timothy C., (Ed.), *Personal Perspectives. World War I*, p. 242; AM, Ephemera, *YMCA Leaflet - YMCA Soldier's Recreation Club, Esbekia Gardens, 1914-1918*, Collection of Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, 1995x2.262; *Port Fairy Gazette*, 23/03/1916, p. 2; *Nepean Times (Penrith)*, 11/03/1916, p. 2; Crawford, John & McGibbon, Ian, (Eds.), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War*, pp. 370, 372-373

¹⁹ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367, Riley Edward John: Service Number - 2386; AWM 25, 861/5 PART 96

Chapter 9: Thirty-Nine Lost Days

¹ AWM4, 26/69/1, 26/67/1, 26/68/1; Entries for the 1st, 3rd and 14th Australian General Hospitals in Birtwistle Local Studies Library, 'World War One', *BirtwistleWiki* [URL]; Contributors, 'Preston Barracks: Napoleonic times to latest conversion', *My Brighton and Hove* [URL]; LC, Geography and Map Division, Egypt - Maṣlaḥat Al-Misāḥah, *General Map of Cairo*. [Cairo: Survey of Egypt, 1920], G8304.C2 1920.E4; NAA B2455, Bowman Reginald McDougall: SERN LT/COL

² AWM4, 26/68/1; AWM25, 707/5 PART 266; Hogue, Oliver, p. 3. Copy of *Inventory of Articles* used by the 14th Australian General Hospital on admission of a patient obtained from NAA B2455, Roebuck Herbert North: Service Number-2654

³ Crawford, John & McGibbon, Ian, (Eds.), pp. 269-273; Mortlock, Michael J., *The Egyptian Expeditionary Force in World War I: A History of the British-Led Campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Syria*, p. 41

⁴ *The Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser*, 20/03/1916, p. 2. Ray was killed in action at Pozieres on August 5, 1916.

⁵ Barrett, James W. & Deane, P.E., *The Australian Army Medical Corps in Egypt*, pp. 119-120

⁶ Government of SA, 'Gonorrhoea - including symptoms, treatment and prevention', *SA Health* [URL]; Boskey, Elizabeth, 'The Incubation Period of Common STDs', *verywellhealth* [URL]; NAA B2455, Riley Edward John: Service Number - 2386

⁷ Barrett, James W. & Deane, P.E., *The Australian Army Medical Corps in Egypt*, pp. 121, 209; Barrett, James W., *Management of venereal diseases in Egypt during the war*, pp. 3-4, 6-7; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., *The Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918, 2nd Edition*, Vol I, p. 188, Vol III, pp. 153, 155-156; Wilson, Graham, *Accommodating the King's Hard Bargain: Military Detention in the Australian Army 1914-1947*, pp. 135, 137; Dunbar, Raden, *The Secrets of the ANZACS: The Untold Story of Venereal Disease in the Australian Army*, p. 9; Marshall, Richard, 'The British Army's fight against Venereal Disease in the "Heroic Age of Prostitution"', *World War I Centenary Continuations and Beginnings* [URL]; Arthur, Richard, *The Military Problem of Venereal Disease: An Address to Officers of the AIF*, pp. 6, 13-16. The Australasian White Cross League was a non-denominational Christian organisation promoting 'social purity', mainly by encouraging young unmarried men to practice chastity. It focused mostly on working class men. See Wikipedia Contributors, 'White Cross Army', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [URL]. Lieutenant Colonel James Barrett served with the 1st Australian General Hospital at Heliopolis, before being discharged in England with debility in February, 1916. He subsequently served with the Royal Army Medical Corps. See NAA B2455, Barrett James William: SERN LIEUT COL

⁸ AWM4, 26/67/1, 26/68/1; NAA B2455, Maclure Alfred Fay: SERN LIEUT COL (TEMP)

⁹ AWM4, 26/68/1; Dunbar, Raden, pp. 7-8; Wilson, Graham, pp. 83-84; Benedek, Thomas, 'History of the Medical Treatment of Gonorrhoea', *antimicrobe* [URL]; Howie-Willis, Ian, 'The Australian Army's Two

Traditional Diseases: Gonorrhoea and Syphilis — A Military-Medical History During the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health*, Vol. 27 No. 1, January 2019

¹⁰ AWM4, 26/68/1

¹¹ AWM4, 26/68/1; Beaumont, Joan, pp. 223, 243-244

¹² NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; Crawford, John & McGibbon, Ian, (Eds.), p. 370 state the one shilling (1/-) charge was usual for the lowest class of prostitutes

Chapter 10: To the Sinai and Back

¹ TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 44; NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367

² NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367, Kinkead James John Benedict: Service Number – 1491; Stingemore, Kay, p. 84; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 09/03/1917, p. 3

³ TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; AWM4, 10/16/13, 1/60/8; AWM25, 455/27; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1; Davidson, John, p. 66; Gullett, H.S., pp. 200-203; NAA B2455, Langley George Furner Service Number - Lieutenant Colonel

⁴ TNA WO95, 4410, 4603, 4751; AWM4, 10/16/13, 1/60/8; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1; Map - WO/Survey of Egypt, Bir el Abd and Bir Bay-d Sheet number: Parts of 119 and 120, 1:40,000, 10/01/1917 WO 303/172

⁵ Gullett, H.S., p. 200; AWM4, 1/60/8, 1/60/9

⁶ Oddly, given that all other distances at the time were expressed in British Imperial Measures, positions on the railway were marked on British maps and referred to by all British and Australian units in kilometres from Kantara, hence 'kilo 96'.

⁷ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; Davidson, John, p. 66-67; Gullett, H.S., p. 203; AWM4, 1/60/8, 1/60/9; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1

⁸ Australian control over the wounded at the railhead and transport to hospital was the responsibility of British HQ. No hospital trains were provided, and the available train at 10.00 am was used to transport Turkish prisoners despite the protests of the medical officer in charge. Wounded men were left to lie 'for hours under shell fire in the blistering sun'. They were finally taken in open rail trucks that evening without lights or medical attendance on the 6-15-hour journey to Kantara. Some died from this neglect. At Kantara, many were in hospital almost two days without attention or food. Strong protests from Australian Military authorities produced an inquiry and some improvements afterwards. See Gullett, H.S., p. 162

⁹ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; TNA WO95, 4410, 4603; AWM4, 35/26/16, 35/26/17; Gullett, H.S., p. 162; Howie-Willis, Ian, p. 135

¹⁰ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; TNA WO95, 4603, 4720; SLNSW, Fred Harold Tomlins war diary MLMSS 1002/6

¹¹ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; TNA WO95, 4720, 4741, 4751

¹² Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I p. 188, Vol III, pp. 153; Dunbar, Raden, p. 7; AWM4, 26/68/1; Government of SA, 'Chancroid - including symptoms, treatment and prevention', *SA Health* [URL]; Editors, 'Iodoform', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [URL]

¹³ AWM4, 26/68/1; Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, 'Hospital Blues Uniform WW1', *QARANC* [URL]

¹⁴ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; AWM25, 707/5 PART 266; TNA WO95, 4403, Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; Mallett, Ross, 'First AIF Order of Battle 1914-1918', *The AIF Project* [URL]

Chapter 11: The Advance to El Arish

¹ AWM25, 705/11; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1; AWM4, 1/60/9, 1/60/10, 35/1/19; Gullett, H.S., p. 199; Davidson, John, p. 69

² An intensely irritative dermatitis attacking the arms, legs and chest, in fact any part coming into contact with the camel or on which scales alighted in the act of grooming. Particularly virulent if camels were infected with mange. See Dyson, William, 'Camel Itch', *British Journal of Dermatology*, Volume 33, Issue 3, March 1921 [URL]

³ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; AWM224, MSS39 PART 1; AWM4, 1/60/9, 26/23/9 Part 1; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Part II, p. 591

⁴ AWM4, 1/60/9, 1/64/1; Morrison, F.L., *The Fifth Battalion Highland Light Infantry in the War 1914-1918*, Chapter VIII, p. 112, 'Across the Sinai Desert to El Arish'; MacMunn, George, and Falls, *Official History of the Great War: Military Operations Egypt & Palestine From the Outbreak of War with Germany to June 1917*, Vol I, p. 271; Hadaway, Stuart, 'Life in the EEF', Egyptian Expeditionary Force in WW1 [URL]; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014; SLNSW, Fred Harold Tomlins war diary MLMSS 1002/6

⁵ TNA WO95, 4403 Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916; AWM4, 1/64/1 Part 1, 1/60/10, 11/2/1, 26/29/2; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 43; Molkentin, Michael, *Australia, the Empire and the Great War in the Air*, [Thesis], pp. 189-190; Atli, Altay, 'Aerial Operations', *Turkey in the First World War* [URL]

- ⁶ Gullett, H.S., pp. 205-208; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, Vol I, pp. 231, 251-252; AWM4, 1/9/10, 1/60/10, 1/64/1, 11/2/1; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I, p. 590
- ⁷ AWM4, 1/61/9, 11/2/1; TNA WO95, 4403 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917
- ⁸ AWM4, 11/2/1, 26/23/10; 26/29/2; WO95, 4622; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I, p. 588; Bonnici, Walter, 'Major Charles Joseph MacDonald', *British Army Medical Services and the Malta Garrison 1799-1979* [URL]; Ancestry, WW1 Service Medal and Award Rolls, Lieutenant Colonel T. (Thomas) Donovan; Baker, Chris, 'Field Ambulances in the First World War', *The Long, Long Trail* [URL]. These improvised arrangements using an infantry Field Ambulance to support the ICC Brigade proved unsatisfactory at Maghaba and Rafa. On January 24, 1917, the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance was replaced by the 1/1 Scottish Horse Mounted Field Ambulance. In turn, they were replaced by the Australian Camel Field Ambulance on August 21, 1917. See AWM4, 11/2/2, 26/60/3; WO95, 4622
- ⁹ Gullett, H.S., p. 208; Molkenntin, Michael, [Thesis], pp. 204-205; AWM4, 11/2/1; TNA WO95, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, Vol I, pp. 251-252; SLSA, Letter from Ross Smith in Egypt Camp during World War I to his mother, PRG 18/17/5
- ¹⁰ The 'lyrical' description of the march to El Arish is a compilation (in order) from MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, Vol I, p. 252, and Gullett, H.S., pp. 208-209; AWM4, 1/60/10, 10/1/29, 24/30/3; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1; Nicol, C.G., *The Story of Two Campaigns: Official War History of the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment 1914-1919*, pp. 124-125; Wilkie, A.H., *Official War History of the Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment 1914-1919*, p. 112; Davidson, John, pp. 68-69; SLNSW, Fell war diaries, 1916-1919/ Robert Valentine Fell MLMSS 1216 / Items 1 & 2, 20/12/1916; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014. The moonless state of the night is confirmed in the Moon Phases Table (1901-2000) courtesy of Fred Espenak
- ¹¹ AWM4, 1/60/10 Appendix 24, 10/1/29; Davidson, John, p. 70; War Office Survey of Egypt, *El Arish Sheet 040*, 1:40,000, 27/4/1917 TNA, WO 303/175
- ¹² Gullett, H.S., pp. 209-210; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, Vol I, p. 252; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 59-61; AWM4, 10/1/29; *The Gloucester Journal*, 24/02/1917, p. 3; Reid, Frank, p. 48; SLNSW, Frank Valentine Weir war diaries, correspondence and miscellanea, 1914-1919, MLMSS 1024/3, Item 2
- ¹³ Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I, p. 591; AWM4, 1/61/10, 26/23/10, 26/29/2; AWM25, 707/11 Part 261, 707/5 Part 268; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014; IWM, War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, p. 9; Davidson, John, p. 73
- ¹⁴ Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 57-58; SLV, Hall, Rex, Papers, 1914-1971 MS 10139; Hall, Rex, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, p. 70; Reid, Frank, p. 60; Davidson, John, p. 71; AWM224, MSS274; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014; AWM4, 26/23/10
- ¹⁵ MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, Vol I, pp. 252-253; AWM4, 1/60/10; Quotes from Kressenstein's book *Mit den Tèurken zum Suezkanal* from Contributors, 'Defences in the Sinai/Palestine border 1916/17', *Axis History Forum* [URL]; Kinloch, Terry, *Devils on Horses in the Words of the Anzacs in the Middle East 1916-19*, p. 120; Molkenntin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 205; Ancestry, WW1 Service Medal and Award Rolls, Glen, J.M.

Chapter 12: The Maghaba Affair

- ¹ Virtually all historical accounts refer to the 'Battle of Maghaba'. I have adopted the term 'Affair of Maghaba' in line with the Report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee in 1922 which stated: 'the rank of "battle" has been confined...to engagements...fought out between forces not smaller than a corps. The title "action" has been employed for the next class, the limit...being taken as the division; lesser engagements have been styled "affairs"'. See Battles Nomenclature Committee (Great Britain), *The official names of the battles and other engagements fought by the military forces of the British Empire during the great war, 1914-1919 and the Third Afghan War, 1919: Report*, p. 7
- ² AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24; Davidson, John, p. 70; Cameron, David Wayne, *The charge: the Australian light horse victory at Beersheba*, p. 72; TNA WO95, 4403, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917
- ³ Steve Becker ('Battle of Maghaba', *Australian Light Horse Association* [URL]) states that seven companies went to Maghaba, No. 7 remaining at El Arish to defend the town along with No. 3 Company. Certainly, in the initial order for the advance on Maghaba and Rafa, one ICC company was to remain at El Arish for protection, but this order was cancelled once the order to advance on Maghaba 'with all available troops' was issued (AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24). By 10.40 am on 22/12/1916, the 156th Brigade of the 52nd (Lowland) Division had reach El Arish and the rest of the Division by 3.30 pm the next day (Australian Light Horse Studies Centre, 'The Battle of Maghaba, Sinai, December 23, 1916, 52nd (Lowland) Division, War Diary Account'). There was therefore no need to leave any ICC companies to provide protection at El Arish. Whether or not No. 7 Company went to Maghaba is unclear. I have elected to accept Rex Hall's account, as he became Orderly Officer for the ICC Brigade from 15/2/1917, with direct access to the Brigade's records (SLV, Hall, Rex, Papers, 1914-1971 - Diary Vol 3 Jan 1916-Dec 1916)

⁴ Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 72; TNA, WO95, 4403, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917; Hall, Rex, p. 65; SLV, Hall, Rex, Papers, 1914-1971 - Diary Vol 3 Jan 1916-Dec 1916; AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 09/03/1917, p. 3

⁵ Cameron, David Wayne, p. 73; Gullett, H.S., p. 215-216; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, Vol1, p. 253; AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24; Davidson, John, p. 70; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 74; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary 23/12/1916, MLMSS 2942. The moonless state of the night is confirmed in the Moon Phases Table (1901-2000) courtesy of Fred Espenak, with the New Moon not due until the following night

⁶ AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; AWM4, 14/36/7, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24, 35/1/20, Appendix H; Gullett, H.S., p. 216; Davidson, John, p. 71; Woerlee, Bill, 'Maghaba and Kress', *Sabretache*, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, December 2008, pp. 5-21; McMillan, Jim, *Forty Thousand Horsemen: being the Memoirs of 7/1322 Corporal Jim McMillan, Canterbury Mounted Rifles, First NZEF, on Service in Gallipoli and Palestine*, unpublished manuscript, property of C.B. McMillan and family, p. 254, quoted in Kinloch, Terry, p. 121

⁷ AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24; AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; Davidson, John, p. 71; Reid, Frank, p. 49

⁸ I have used the numbering of the redoubts in Gullett, H.S., Map No. 9 p. 224. In MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril (British History), the redoubts are numbered differently – Sketch 12 p. 252. This is the same approach as taken in the Turkish General Staff account. In Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine* (New Zealand History), Map p. 48, the redoubts are not numbered at all. Secondary texts consulted have adopted either the Australian model – Phillip Bradley, Bill Woerlee, Steve Becker or the British/Turkish model – David Cameron, Terry Kinloch. This has made for confusing reading and difficult interpretation at times. A comprehensive explanation of this issue is given at:

https://alh-research.tripod.com/Light_Horse/index.blog?topic_id=1104498

⁹ AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24; AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; Molkenntin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 206; Smith, Alan H., *Allenby's Gunners*, p. 63; Gullett, H.S., p. 218

¹⁰ Woerlee, Bill, pp. 5-21; Gullett, H.S., p. 217; Kinloch, Terry, p. 122

¹¹ Hall, Rex, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, p. 65; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 74; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1, MSS42 Part 1; AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24, 10/1/29 Appendix LXII, 13/17/9 Appendix No. 6; Gullett, H.S., pp. 218-220; AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; Smith, Alan H., pp. 65-66, 74; TNA WO95, 4403, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917

¹² Molkenntin, Michael, [Thesis], pp. 205-206; AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; AWM4, 13/17/9

¹³ Gullett, H.S., pp. 220-222; AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24, 13/17/9; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Maghaba', *The Australian Light Horse Association* [URL]; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1

¹⁴ IWM, War Office, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, pp. 54-55; Parsonson, Ian M., p. 117; AWM4, 1/60/10, Appendix No. 24; AWM 252, Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood, A95; Gullett, H.S., pp. 224-226; Becker, Steve, 'Battle of Maghaba', *The Australian Light Horse Association* [URL]; Davidson, John, p. 71

¹⁵ The ICC did not have any issues with water at Maghaba, as the camels could go for five to six days without water and each trooper carried a five-gallon (23 L) fantasie (water tank) on his camel. See Incbald, Geoffrey, p. xv; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 75

¹⁶ Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, pp. 75-76; Gullett, H.S., p. 226; Becker, Steve, 'Battle of Maghaba', *Australian Light Horse Association* [URL]; Joseph Bolger, 1087A, No. 4 Company temporarily attached to No. 1 Company at Maghaba, quoted in Bradley, Phillip, 'Oh You Beauties: Battle of Maghaba', *Queensland RSL News*, June 2016; Gullett, H.S., p. 227; Davidson, John, p. 71; Hall, Rex, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, p. 66; SLV, Hall, Rex, Diary Vol 3 Jan 1916-Dec 1916 MS10139

Chapter 13: An El Arish Christmas

¹ AWM4, 26/39/13; TNA WO95, 4403, 3 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps December 1916-January 1917; Sergeant Ivan Forbes quoted in Matthews, Tony, *Crosses: Australian Soldiers in the Great War 1914-18*, p.105; Davidson, John, p. 71; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary MLMSS 2942, 25/12/1916, 3/1/1917, Minahan diary, 1 January 1917-3 January 1918 MLDOC 1360; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 27/12/1916, 4/1/1917; Emery, Max, *They Rode into History: The Story of the 8th Light Horse Regiment*, p. 79; Starr, Joan and Sweeney, Christopher, *Forward: The History of the 2nd/14th Light Horse*, p. 101; Browning, Neville and Gill, Ian, *Gallipoli to Tripoli: History of the 10th Light Horse Regiment AIF 1914-1919*, p. 241; Hoyte, Cady, *Farewell to the Horses: diary of a British Tommy 1915-1919*, p. 55

² Davidson, John, p. 71; *Gippsland Mercury (Sale)*, 13/4/1917, p. 4; Gullett, H.S., p. 230; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 177; SLNSW, Fell war diaries, MLMSS 1216, 24-25/12/1916; M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4

- ³ Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 57-58; AWM 25, 707/11 Part 261 and Part 262; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary MLMSS 2942, 25/12/1916, 2/1/1917; Jack Martin quoted in Cameron, David, p. 92; Jack Baly quoted in Baly, Lindsay, *Horseman, Pass By: The Australian Light Horse in World War I*, p. 42; AWM4, 10/6/21, 10/14/23, 10/15/19; SLNSW, Frank Valentine Weir war diaries, correspondence and miscellanea, 1914-1919, MLMSS 1024/3, Item 3
- ⁴ SLNSW, William Peterson Diary MLMSS 2942, 21/12/1916; Reid, Frank, pp. 61-62; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 58-59; AWM25, 707/11 Part 261 Routine Order No. 348 25/12/1916, No. 350 27/12/1916; TNA WO95, 4604; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 76
- ⁵ Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 61; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary MLMSS 2942, 26/12/1916; AWM4, 11/2/1, 1/60/10, 1/60/11, 1/64/1 Part 1 Appendix IV
- ⁶ AWM 25, 707/5 Part 268; AWM4, 14/36/7, 35/5/19; SLV, Hall, Rex, Papers, 1914-1971 Diary Vol 4 Jan 1917-Dec 1917, MS 10139; IWM, *Camel Corps Training Provisional 1913*, p. 9; Davidson, John, p. 73; Reid, Frank, p. 58
- ⁷ Mobile Rations were basically bully beef, army biscuits, cheese, raisins, dried figs, tea, sugar, Ideal milk and Marmalade – see SLNSW, William Peterson Diary 3/1/1917, MLMSS 2942
- ⁸ Howie-Willis, Ian, pp. 136-137; AWM4, 1/61/10, 10/6/20, 10/6/21, 14/36/7, 26/23/10, 26/29/2; AWM 25, 707/11 Part 261, 707/5 Part 268; AWM Private Records, PR01077, 6/1/1917
- ⁹ AWM4, 10/6/21, 26/23/10, 35/5/19; AWM 25, 707/11 Part 261, 707/11 Part 262; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 4/1/1917; SLNSW, Fell war diaries, MLMSS 1216, 1/1/1917; Frank Valentine Weir war diaries, correspondence and miscellanea, 1914-1919, MLMSS 1024/3, Item 3
- ¹⁰ Kitchen, James E., *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East*, pp. 163-164; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., p.580, 591-593; Australian Light Horse Studies Centre, 'The Battle of Maghaba, Sinai, December 23, 1916, 3rd LHFA, AIF, Unit History Account', *Desert Column: Australian Military History of the Early 20th Century* [URL]; Gullett, H.S., pp. 227-228; AWM4, 26/23/10, 26/29/2; Gammage, Bill, *The Broken Years*, p. 131
- ¹¹ An enemy aircraft in the Sinai was frequently referred to as a 'Taube' by troops, and in 1916 as a 'Taube' or 'Aviatik' in Unit War Diaries. The Rumpler Taube (meaning Dove), first flown in 1910, was a German bird-like monoplane used as a scout aircraft in the first few months of the war, but quickly withdrawn as it lacked speed and manoeuvrability. It never saw service in the Sinai. The Aviatik B.I. was also an early German two-seater biplane but was retired in 1916, and likewise saw no service in the Sinai. FA 300 was equipped with Rumpler C.I. two-seater reconnaissance biplanes, capable of carrying 220 lb (100 kg) in bombs. See: The Museum of Flight, 'Rumpler Taube (Dove) Reproduction', *The Museum of Flight* [URL]; Molkentin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 255; Wikipedia Contributors, 'Rumpler C.I.', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [URL]
- ¹² Reid, Frank, p. 61; AWM4, 35/1/20, 35/1/21, 1/60/11, 1/64/1 Part 1, 10/3/24, 10/6/20, 10/8/25, 10/13/19; TNA WO95, 4403, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917, 4565; Davidson, John, p. 72; AWM Private Records, 1DRL/0211, 6/1/1917; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary 6/1/1917, MLMSS 2942. The bombing of the parade most likely occurred when Major General Chauvel addressed the AMD and ICC after Rafa on 12/01/1917 – see AWM4, 11/8/1; SLNSW, Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, MLMSS 1219 Item 01 – entry for 10/1/1917 (Michael seems to have the actual date of the parade incorrect)
- ¹³ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 1/64/1 Part 1, 10/1/30, 10/7/22, 11/2/2; TNA WO95, 4403, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917, 4565, 4566; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary 7/1/1917, MLMSS 2942; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 72; Reid, Frank, p. 64; Teichman, O., *The Diary of a Yeomanry M.O.*, p. 96
- ¹⁴ AWM4, 1/64/11; Reid, Frank, p. 64; Hall, Rex, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, p. 70; Gregory, Alan, p. 49; Molkentin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 190; SLNSW, Frank Valentine Weir war diaries, correspondence and miscellanea, 1914-1919, MLMSS 1024/3, Item 3
- ¹⁵ 'Baksheesh' was a small sum of money given as alms – see Hall, Rex, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, p. 65; AWM 25, 707/5 Part 268, 707/11 Part 262; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 60; Davidson, John, pp. 72-73; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary 4/1/1917, MLMSS 2942; Wikipedia Contributors, 'Siege of El Arish', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [URL]; AWM Private Records, DRL/0014, 12/1/1917
- ¹⁶ Gullett, H.S., p. 185, 242-243, 787; AWM 25, 707/5 Part 268; Reid, Frank, p. 63
- ¹⁷ AWM Private Records, 1DRL/0211, 1-5/1/1917; SLNSW, William Peterson Diary 1-5/1/1917, MLMSS 2942; Reid, Frank, p. 64; SLV, Hall, Rex, Papers, 1914-1971 - Diary Vol 4 Jan 1917-Dec 1917, MS 10139; AWM4, 10/6/21
- ¹⁸ MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, pp. 263, 272; AWM4, 11/8/1; AWM 25, 707/5 Part 268; TNA WO95, 4403, 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917
- ¹⁹ Gullett, H.S., p. 230; AWM4, 1/9/11, 1/60/10, 1/60/11 Part 1, 10/1/29; Molkentin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 208; Davidson, John, pp. 74

Chapter 14: El Magruntein

¹ AWM4, 1/64/1 Part 1, 1/60/11 Part 1; TNA WO95, 4565; Cutlack, F. M., *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914-1918*, p. 50; Molkentin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 202

² Virtually all historical accounts refer to the 'Battle of Rafa'. The Battles Nomenclature Committee (Great Britain) designated it as the 'Action of Rafa' as the term 'battle' was limited to an engagement of forces of corps or higher. See Battles Nomenclature Committee (Great Britain), p. 7. I have chosen to use El Magruntein to describe the location as it was the actual site of the action, Rafa being at least a mile (1.6 km) to the north-east.

³ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 11/8/1, 13/17/10, 26/23/11; TNA WO 95, 4565; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 67; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/1/1917

⁴ AWM4, 11/8/1, 1/60/11 Part 1; Gullett, H.S., p. 231; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 68; Reid, Frank, pp. 65-66; Davidson, John, p. 74; Hoyte, Cady, p. 59; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/1/1917, Parkes, Stanley Thomas PR01077; Vernon, P.V., (Ed.), *The Royal New South Wales Lancers, 1885-1985*, p. 117; Darley, T.H., *With the Ninth Light Horse in the Great War*, pp. 64-69; TNA WO 95, 4565. The moon state this night is confirmed in the Moon Phases Table (1901-2000) courtesy of Fred Espenak

⁵ AWM 4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 1/64/1 Part 1, 11/2/2; TNA WO 95, 4403, 4565, 4566

⁶ Reid, Frank, p. 66; Teichman, O., p. 99; SLNSW, M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4; Darley, T.H., pp. 64-69; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 68; Nicol, C.G., p. 129; AWM Private Records, PR01077

⁷ AWM4, 26/23/11, 1/60/11 Part 1, 14/36/8; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 68; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 263

⁸ Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 68; AWM4, 11/2/2, 1/60/11 Part 1; TNA WO 95, 4565; Reid, Frank, pp. 65-67; Robertson, John, p. 74; Gullett, H.S., p. 232; Davidson, John, p. 75; 'Aram' quoted in Baly, Lindsay, p. 52; Reid, Frank (Bill Bowyang), 'Confessions of a Camelier', *The Kia Ora Coo-ee: the magazine for the ANZACS in the Middle East, 1918*, p. 19

⁹ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 1/64/1 Part 1; TNA WO 95, 4565; Marquis of Anglesey, George Charles Henry Victor Paget, *A History of the British Cavalry: Egypt, Palestine and Syria*, pp. 85-86

¹⁰ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 10/3/24, 10/14/23, 35/1/21; Nicol, C.G., pp. 129-130; Powles, C. Guy, *The History of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles*, p. 132; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 69; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 264

¹¹ Marquis of Anglesey, p. 85; Austin, T. S., *8th Light Horse Regiment*, pp. EM3-5; AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 11/2/2, 11/8/1; TNA WO 95, 4403; Reid, Frank, pp. 67-68; SLNSW, Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, MLMSS 1219 Item 01

¹² Howie-Willis, Ian, p. 135; Powles, C. Guy, *The History of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles*, p. 132; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 264; Gullett, H.S., pp. 232-233; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/1/1917; AWM4, 1/64/1 Part 2; Darley, T.H., pp. 64-69; Austin, T. S., pp. EM3-5; Wilkie, A.H., pp. 123-124; Nicol, C.G., p. 130; Reid, Frank, pp. 69-70

¹³ AWM4, 1/64/1 Parts 1 and 2, 1/60/11 Part 1, 11/8/1; Gullett, H.S., p. 233; TNA WO 95, 4565; Reid, Frank, p. 68; Gullett, H.S., pp. 233-234

¹⁴ AWM4, 11/2/2, 13/17/10, 11/8/1; TNA WO 95, 4403; Davidson, John, p. 75; SLNSW, Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, MLMSS 1219 Item 01; AWM224, MSS42 Part 1; Reid, Frank, p. 68; Gullett, H.S., p. 233; Nicol, C.G., p. 131

¹⁵ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 13/17/10; TNA WO 95, 4565; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 71

¹⁶ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 11/2/2, 11/8/1, 10/8/26, 10/14/23, 10/15/19, 35/2/20; TNA WO 95, 4403, 4565; Gullett, H.S., p. 234; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps', *Australian Light Horse Studies Centre* [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on', *The Australian Light Horse Association* [URL]; Reid, Frank, p. 72; Robertson, John, p. 75

¹⁷ The 5th Mounted Brigade referred to A1 as 'Green Knoll' and the NZMR Brigade referred to point 255 as 'Green Knoll' – which is somewhat confusing. See AWM4 35/1/21 and TNA WO 95, 4565

¹⁸ AWM4, 1/60/11 Parts 1 and 2, 1/64/1 Part 2, 11/2/2, 13/17/10; TNA WO 95, 4403, 4565, 4566; Hoyte, Cady, p. 60

¹⁹ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 1/64/1 Part 2, 10/1/30, 10/6/21, 10/7/22, 10/8/26, 10/3/24, 10/14/23, 10/15/19, 35/1/21, 11/2/2; TNA WO 95, 4403; Powles, C. Guy, *The History of the Canterbury Mounted Rifles*, p. 134-135; Wilkie, A.H., p. 125-126; Nicol, C.G., p. 131-132; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps' [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on' [URL]

²⁰ AWM4, 10/8/26, 10/1/30, 35/1/21, 13/17/10, 1/64/1 Part 2; TNA WO 95, 4565; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 271; Gullett, H.S., p. 236

²¹ Both the reports by Lieutenant General Chetwode and Major General Chauvel state B3 was 'taken' and 'occupied by our troops' after 2.00 pm, but it is not clear which troops did this. See 1/64/1 Part 2 and 1/60/11 Part 1

²² AWM4, 11/8/1, 1/60/11 Part 1; TNA WO 95, 4403, 4565; Davidson, John, p. 75; Reid, Frank, p. 78; Smith, Alan H., p. 71; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps' [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on' [URL]

²³ Woodfin, Edward, *Camp and combat on the Sinai and Palestine front: the experience of the British Empire soldier, 1916-18*, p. 59; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, p. 73; Blackwell, F.M. and Douglas, D.R., *The story of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Regiment*, pp. 80-82; Gullett, H.S., p. 236; Marquis of Anglesey, p. 88; Molkentin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 208; Hogue, Oliver, p. 92; AWM4, 11/8/1, 1/60/11 Part 1; SLNSW, Fell war diaries, 1916-1919/ Robert Valentine Fell MLMSS 1216 / Item 2, Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, MLMSS 1219 Item 01

²⁴ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 1/64/1 Part 2, 11/2/2, 13/17/10; TNA WO 95, 4565; Hoyte, Cady, p. 60; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1, MSS42 Part 1

²⁵ AWM4, 11/8/1, 10/3/24, 10/1/30, 1/60/11 Part 1, 13/17/10, 10/14/23, 10/15/19; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 77; Gullett, H.S., pp. 237, 240; TNA WO 95, 4565; Wilkie, A.H., p. 127-128; Nicol, C.G., p. 132; Olden, A.C.N., *Westralian cavalry in the war: the story of the tenth Light Horse Regiment, A.I.F., in the Great War, 1914-1918*, pp. 117-120; Darley, T.H., pp. 64-69

²⁶ AWM4, 1/60/11 Parts 1 and 2, 35/1/21, 1/64/1 Part 2; Molkentin, Michael, [Thesis], p. 209; Gullett, H.S., p. 239; Cutlack, F. M., p. 50

²⁷ AWM4, 1/60/11 Parts 1 and 2, 1/64/1 Part 2, 35/1/21; TNA WO 95, 4565, 4566; Powles, C. Guy, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 75-78; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps' [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on' [URL]

²⁸ Telephone contact between the ICC Brigade HQ and the ICC Battalion commanders in the firing line 'was maintained throughout the day'. See AWM4, 11/2/2

²⁹ The War Diaries for the Australian Mounted Division, and the ICC 2nd and 3rd Battalions do not specify which of the B works was to be attacked at this time. The War Diary for the ICC Brigade earlier notes the 3rd Battalion was to envelop B2, but in relation to this last attack confusingly refers only to B4. The Desert Column War Diary clearly specifies it was B2 as does the British Official War History. The Australian Official War History states on page 239 that the attack was against B1 with the HKS Battery in support, but on page 241 states it was against B4. The *Imperial Camel Brigade: Short history* compiled by Captain Hall (who was not at Rafa) also states the attack was against B4. What adds to the confusion is that the Desert Column War Diary states that by 3.15 pm B4 was 'held by our troops', something that appears to be supported by the War Diary of the 9th Light Horse Regiment that at some time between 2.00 – 2.30 pm, 'the left of the Regiment in trench known as "B4"'. There are sufficient references in the War Diaries to show that from about midday it was known that B2 was a strong position. The map in the Australian Mounted Division War Diary prepared from aerial photographs marks B2 has having '2 guns' when none of the other redoubts or the Reduit are so marked. Despite some vague references in some of the diaries, the 'guns' would clearly have been machine guns as the four mountain guns used by the Turks were captured north of the C works. See AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 11/8/1, 11/2/2, 1/64/1 Part 2, 10/14/23; TNA WO 95, 4403; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 269; Gullett, H.S., pp. 239, 241; AWM224, MSS42 Part 1

³⁰ AWM4, 1/60/11 Parts 1 and 2, 11/2/2, 11/8/1; TNA WO 95, 4403, 4565; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps' [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on' [URL]; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1, MSS42 Part 1

³¹ AWM4, 11/8/1, 13/17/10, 11/2/2; Gullett, H.S., p. 239; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 269; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps' [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on' [URL]; AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 07/03/1917, p. 2

Chapter 15: Death at El Arish

¹ Confusingly, the Warwickshire War Diary states that D Squadron was sent 'to reinforce on the extreme left...flank' at 4.30 pm but then states that 'Lieut-Col Cheape with B Squadron...and D Squadron...now (1645 – 4.45 pm) advanced ...on the enemy's central trenches under covering fire from our machine guns'. It seems unlikely that only one squadron (B) would have taken on the advance on B1 and C works. Jock Davidson related that during the advance, they saw 'the Yeomanry carrying out the retire order...but ... changed their minds, wheeled, and came thundering back, galloped straight at Jacko's trenches and over'. This may have an element of truth in it if D Squadron began to retire at 4.30 pm, but returned to join B Squadron. They would have attacked dismounted however – the Warwickshire War Diary clearly states that 'Lieut-Col Cheape...received orders to withdraw to his horses' as they advanced to the 'enemy's central trenches'. See TNA WO 95, 4565, 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry; Davidson, John, p. 76

² AWM4, 1/60/11 Parts 1 and 2, 1/64/1 Part 1, 11/8/1, 13/17/10, 11/2/2, 10/6/21, 10/14/23, 10/15/19, 10/3/24, 35/1/21; AWM25, 861/5 PART 96; TNA WO 95, 4565, 4566; Becker, Steve, 'The Battle of Rafa, The Imperial Camel Corps' [URL], 'Rafa 1917 100 years on' [URL]; AWM224, MSS39 Part 1, MSS42 Part 1; MacMunn, George, and Falls, Cyril, p. 269; Gullett, H.S., pp. 240-242; Wilkie, A.H., p. 125-126, 129; Nicol, C.G., pp. 132-133; Luxford, J.H., *With the Machine Gunners in France and Palestine*, p. 195; SLNSW, Fell war diaries, 1916-1919/ Robert Valentine Fell MLMSS 1216 / Item 2

³ Kitchen, James E., p. 85; Letter from Chaplain C. Scott Little in Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton; *The Scone Advocate*, 16/3/1917, p. 2; *The Journal (Adelaide)*, 31/3/1917, p. 10; Sergeant Major, R.A.M.C., *With the R.A.M.C. in Egypt*, p. 133; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/01/1917; WO95, 4622

⁴ AWM4, 26/23/11, 35/26/19; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I pp. 594-595; Teichman, O., p. 97, 102-103; Carbery, A.D., *The New Zealand Medical Service in the Great War 1914-1918*, p. 459; AWM Private Records, PR01077; Sergeant Major, R.A.M.C., p. 103

⁵ Colonel Downes indicated that the 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance Dressing Station left for Sheik Zowaid soon after the order was received. Lieutenant Colonel Donovan stated 'the mobile section came in about 2000 (8.00 pm) minus their tents'. If he meant to Sheik Zowaid, they would have had to leave El Magruntein almost immediately the 4.30 pm order was issued. The tents were later picked up by the 9th Light Horse Regiment who left El Magruntein at 9.00 pm. See Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I pp. 595, TNA WO95, 4622 and AWM4, 26/23/11, 10/14/23

⁶ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 2, 26/29/2, 26/23/11, 26/39/14, 11/8/1, 11/2/2; WO95, 4622; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I pp. 584, 595-596; Carbery, A.D., pp. 454-455, 460, 464; AWM224, MSS42 Part 1; SLNSW, Fell war diaries, 1916-1919/ Robert Valentine Fell MLMSS 1216 / Item 2, Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, MLMSS 1219 Item 01; Reid, Frank, pp. 79, 81

⁷ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 10/3/24, 26/23/11; TNA WO95, 4565; AWM252, A95; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, pp. 50-51; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I pp. 595-596; AWM224, MSS42 Part 1, MSS274; Teichman, O., pp. 103-104; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/01/1917. The moon state this night is confirmed in the Moon Phases Table (1901-2000) courtesy of Fred Espenak

⁸ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 10/13/19, 26/23/11, 26/39/14, 35/26/19; Emery, Max, p. 82; Teichman, O., p. 104; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/01/1917, PR01077; AWM224, MSS274; Carbery, A.D., p. 460; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I p. 596

⁹ Every trooper carried a First Field Dressing sewn into his tunic. In January, 1917, it consisted of two roller bandages each with a safety pin and attached to a pad of absorbent material, together with a cardboard tube containing an iodine ampoule. See Miller, M.G., 'The Medical Front WW1-Evacuation of the Sick and Wounded', *History: Military: WWI: The Great War 1914-1918* [URL]

¹⁰ AWM4, 26/23/9; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I pp. 584-585; Carbery, A.D., pp. 454-455. Roger Morgan (2nd Battalion, 1st Brigade) quoted in Johnston, Mark, *Stretcher-Bearers Saving Australians from Gallipoli to Kokoda*, p. 105

¹¹ AWM4, 26/23/11, 26/39/14, 35/26/19; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I p. 596; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/01/1917; SLNSW, M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4; Macpherson, W.G., *History of the Great War: Medical Services General History*, Vol III, pp. 421-422, Vol IV, pp. 604, 616; Idriess, Ion L., pp. 292-293; Wilkie, A.H., p. 103; AWM224, MSS274

¹² The Welsh Ambulance Convoy reached point 210 close to the 1/1 South Midland Mounted Field Ambulance Dressing Station before turning back. It is assumed that the wounded referred to are from the 5th Mounted Brigade. See AWM4, 26/23/11, 26/39/14

¹³ AWM4, 26/23/11, 26/39/14; AWM224, MSS274; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I p. 596; AWM Private Records, 2DRL/0014, 12/01/1917, Parkes, Stanley Thomas PR01077; SLNSW, M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4

¹⁴ An EP (or EPIP) tent - European (or English) Privates Indian Pattern tent, was originally used in the Indian Army. It accommodated between 22 and 26 soldiers, was made of multiple layers of white cloth, was 22 feet (6.7 m) by 16 feet (4.8 m), and was held up by two stout poles and a ridge pole. See: McTiernan, Mick, 'Camping in Crete - July, 1916', *The British in Crete, 1896 to 1913* [URL]

¹⁵ AWM4, 26/23/11, 26/39/14, 25/19/3; TNA WO95, 4603, 4604; SLNSW, M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4, 12/01/1917

¹⁶ AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 26/29/3, 26/39/14, 35/5/19; TNA WO95, 4603, 4604

¹⁷ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 07/03/1917, p. 2; AWM4, 1/60/11 Part 1, 26/23/10, 26/23/11, 26/39/14; TNA WO95, 4603, 4604; Macpherson, W.G., Vol IV, pp. 598-603; Langley, George Furner & Edmee Mary, p. 119; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I p. 563-564; Meyer, J., 'The Long Carry: Landscapes and the Shaping of British Medical Masculinities in the First World War', In: Daly S., Salvante, M., and Wilcox, V. (Eds) *Landscapes of the First World War* [URL]; SLNSW, M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4, 27/12/1916; Sergeant Major, R.A.M.C., pp. 104, 132

¹⁸ AWM4, 26/23/10, 26/23/11, 26/41/7, 26/41/8, 26/29/2, 26/29/3; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I p. 591; Macpherson, W.G., Vol III, p. 420; TNA WO95, 4604; AWM Private Records, PR01077; AWM224, MSS274. The Egyptian Hospital treated the sick and wounded from the Egyptian Labour Corps and Camel Transport Corps, and was staffed by Egyptian Medical Officers, medical students and orderlies under British supervision. By May, 1917, the El Arish Egyptian Hospital had 500 beds. See Macpherson, W.G., Vol III, p. 385

¹⁹ AWM4, 26/41/5, 26/41/6, 26/41/7, 26/41/8; Butler, A.G. and Downes, R.M., Vol I pp. 573, 633-636; NAA B2455, Cave Mylles Wyamarus: SERN Lieut/Col, Yuille Max: SERN Major

²⁰ Special 'Fowler' position rests for abdominal cases to keep the patient in a semi-sitting position were sometimes available at advanced dressing stations but given the mobile nature of the Field Ambulances in the Sinai it is unlikely they were at either Sheik Zowaiid or El Arish. Named after its American inventor, George Ryerson Fowler (1848-1906) who served as a surgeon in the Spanish-American War (1899). See Macpherson, W.G., Vol IV, p. 562

²¹ AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 07/03/1917, p. 2; Macpherson, W.G., Vol I, pp. 311, 476-479, 515-520

²² *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 07/03/1917, p. 2; Macpherson, W.G., Vol I, p. 477; TNA WO95, 4752

²³ Swayn, Gary John, *Analysis of the Outcomes of Identified Abdominal and Groin Wounds Incurred at the Action of Rafa*, (Excel Spreadsheet)

²⁴ AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton; Imperial War Graves Commission, *The War Dead of the Commonwealth - The Register of the names of those who fell in the Great War and are buried in Kantara War Memorial Cemetery Egypt*, p. 6; AWM4,1/60/11 Part 1; 11/8/1, 11/8/3; TNA WO95, 4565, 4604; SLNSW, Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, MLMSS 1219 Item 01, Minahan diary, 1 January 1917-3 January 1918 MLDOC 1360. The Headquarters section, 1st Field Squadron, Australian Engineers were charged with making crosses 'for the men killed during the Rafa Battle' and were probably responsible for Bob's cross – see AWM4, 14/36/8

Chapter 16: Loss Grief and Memory

¹ *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 12/01/1917, p. 3; *The Sun (Sydney)*, 12/01/1917, p. 1; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 03/02/1917, p. 2, 17/11/1917, p. 2; *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 14/04/1916, p. 3; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 22/06/1936, p. 6. The Church of England was in Mertin Street at this time, and it seems Alfred and Kate were living in the same street – see copy of letter from Lieutenant Kinkead in McIntosh, Stuart Leslie, *Diary*, in the possession of Shirley Swayn and NLA, Arthur Laycock collection of views of Bourke and region, New South Wales, ca. 1910-1921, 845761

² AWM25, 861/5 Part 88, PART 96; NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367

³ McIntosh, Stuart Leslie, *Diary*; AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton; Oppenheimer, Melanie, 'History', *South Australian Red Cross Information Bureau 1916-1919* [URL]; Government of South Australia, 'The Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau', *VeteransSA* [URL]

⁴ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 07/03/1917, p. 2; AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton

⁵ AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton

⁶ McIntosh, Stuart Leslie, *Diary*; NAA B2455, Kinkead James John Benedict: Service Number – 1491; Stingemore, Kay, pp. 86, 117; Ancestry, Australia, Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980, James John Benedict Kinkead

⁷ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; SLNSW, Australia Post Historical Office NSW, Byrock, Australian Postal Commission, Sydney, 1975, p. 28; Rosenhain, Carol, *The man who carried the nation's grief: James Malcolm Lean MBE & The Great War Letters*

⁸ AWM, Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau 1 DRL/0428, 2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton

⁹ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 03/02/1917, p. 2, 07/03/1917, p. 2; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 03/02/1917, p. 18, 31/03/1917, p. 14; *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 09/03/1917, p. 3

¹⁰ McIntosh, Stuart Leslie, *Diary*; *Sydney Mail*, 04/04/1917, p. 13; *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 22/08/1917, p. 2

¹¹ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 04/03/1916, p. 5, 11/03/1916, p. 8, 03/02/1917, p.3, 24/03/1917, p. 4, 02/06/1917, p. 2, 16/06/1917, p. 2, 30/03/1918, p. 3, 08/05/1918, p. 2, 20/07/1918, p. 3

¹² *Western Age (Dubbo)*, 07/01/1916, p. 5, 14/04/1916, p. 2, 08/12/1916, p. 4, 20/04/1917, p. 4, 27/04/1917, p. 3

¹³ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; Field Service Regulations Part II, Organization and Administration, 1909, (London: HMSO, 1913), p. 169 quoted in Ashbridge, Sarah I., 'Military Identification: Identity Discs and the Identification of British War Dead, 1914-18', *British Journal for Military History*, Vol. 6, Issue 1, March, 2020, p. 30; Luckins, Tanja, *The Gates of Memory: Australian People's Experiences and Memories of Loss and the Great War*, p.135

¹⁴ *Western Herald (Bourke)*, 05/12/1917, p. 3, 15/12/1917, p. 2, 15/01/1919, p. 2, 18/01/1919, p. 2, 17/05/1919, p. 2; 12/09/1928, p. 2

¹⁵ NAA B2455, McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367; *The Herald (Melbourne)*, 02/04/1917, p. 12; *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 06/06/1917, p. 2; *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 28/07/1917, p. 7; *The Newcastle Sun*, 10/06/1918, p. 2; *The Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 22/11/1918, p. 31; *The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 24/12/1918, p. 3; *Sunday Times (Sydney)*, 20/04/1919, p. 13; *The Grafton Argus and Clarence River General Advertiser*, 27/06/1919, p. 2; *The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)*, 15/07/1919, p. 7;

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 11/2/1 Headquarters, Imperial Camel Brigade, December 1916
 11/2/2 Headquarters, Imperial Camel Brigade, January 1917
 11/8/1 3rd ANZAC Battalion, Imperial Camel Corps, January 1917
 11/8/5 3rd ANZAC Battalion, Imperial Camel Corps, November-December 1917
 11/11/1 Parts 1 & 2 No 2 Company, Imperial Camel Corps, January 1916 to February 1917
 11/13/1 Training Depot Imperial Camel Corps, August to October 1918
 13/17/9 Headquarters, Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Mounted Divisional Artillery, Dec 1916
 13/17/10 Headquarters, Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Mounted Divisional Artillery, Jan 1917
 14/36/7 1st Field Squadron, Australian Engineers, December 1916
 14/36/8 1st Field Squadron, Australian Engineers, January 1917
 22/17/10 Part 1 1st Signal Squadron, December 1916
 22/17/11 Part 1 1st Signal Squadron, January 1917
 23/4/9 4th Infantry Brigade, June 1916
 23/5/10 5th Infantry Brigade, April 1916
 23/5/11 5th Infantry Brigade, May 1916
 24/30/3 1st Australian Machine Gun Squadron, December 1916
 24/30/4 1st Australian Machine Gun Squadron, January 1917
 24/32/3 3rd Australian Machine Gun Squadron, December 1916
 24/32/4 3rd Australian Machine Gun Squadron, January 1917
 23/34/9 17th Infantry Battalion, April 1916
 23/34/10 17th Infantry Battalion, May 1916
 25/19/2 Headquarters, Australian and New Zealand Mounted Divisional Train, December 1916
 25/19/3 Headquarters, Australian and New Zealand Mounted Divisional Train, January 1917
 26/23/7 Assistant Director of Medical Services, ANZAC Mounted Division, September 1916
 26/23/8 Assistant Director of Medical Services, ANZAC Mounted Division, October 1916
 26/23/9 Assistant Director of Medical Services, ANZAC Mounted Division, November 1916
 26/23/10 Assistant Director of Medical Services, ANZAC Mounted Division, December 1916
 26/23/11 Assistant Director of Medical Services, ANZAC Mounted Division, January 1917
 26/29/1 Deputy Director of Medical Services, Desert Mounted Corps, October-November 1916
 26/29/2 Deputy Director of Medical Services, Desert Mounted Corps, December 1916
 26/29/3 Deputy Director of Medical Services, Desert Mounted Corps, January 1917
 26/39/13 1st Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, December 1916
 26/39/14 1st Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, January 1917
 26/41/5 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, October 1916
 26/41/6 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, November 1916
 26/41/7 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, December 1916
 26/41/8 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, January 1917
 26/60/3 Australian Camel Field Ambulance, August 1917
 26/67/1 No 3 Australian General Hospital, May-September 1916
 26/68/1 No 14 Australian General Hospital, July 1916-September 1917
 26/69/1 No. 1 Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, May-August 1916
 35/1/19 Headquarters New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, November 1916
 35/1/20 Headquarters New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, December 1916
 35/1/21 Headquarters New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, January, 1917
 35/2/20 Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment, January 1917
 35/3/16 Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment, December 1916
 35/3/17 Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment, January 1917
 35/5/18 Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment, December 1916
 35/5/19 Wellington Mounted Rifles Regiment, January 1917
 35/26/16 New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, October 1916
 35/26/17 New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, November 1916
 35/26/19 New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, January 1917
 AWM7 Troopship records, 1914-1918 War
 PALERMO 1 PALERMO: Melbourne May 1915 - Suez June 1915
 PALERMO 2 PALERMO: Melbourne October 1915 - Suez November 1915
 PALERMO 3 PALERMO: Sydney April 1916 - Suez May 1916

PALERMO 4 PALERMO: Melbourne September 1916 - Devonport November 1916

AWM8 Unit embarkation nominal rolls, 1914-18 War
 10/12/4 7 LHR [Light Horse Regiment] - 14 to 20 Reinforcements (March-July 1916)
 26/99/1 Medical Officers - February 1915 - January 1919
 27/28/1 1 and 2 Mobile Veterinary Section - 14 to 18 Reinforcements

AWM15 Australian Imperial Force Depots in the United Kingdom Headquarters, Central registry files
 5212 Undesirables - List of men of Imperial Camel Corps returned to Tel-el-Kebir

AWM25 Written records, 1914-18 War
 2/154 Imperial Camel Corps: 3 Battalion ICC
 99/2 [Bases and Depots] Letter to General Officer Commanding, Australian Imperial Force Overseas Base with reference to Imperial Camel Corps
 157/3 Copy of AIF order, 6th January 1916, with reference to establishment of Camel Corps. Nominal roll of volunteer personnel
 157/5 Camel Corps. Organization - January-December 1916
 157/9 Correspondence with reference to Formation and re-organization, Australian Camel Corps
 455/27 [Light Horse] 1st Imperial Camel Brigade. Operation orders and reconnaissance reports
 705/11 Orders by Major G F Langley, Commanding 1st Battalion ICC regarding patrols etc, 1st Imperial Camel Brigade, November 1916
 707/11 PART 261 Routine Orders. 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance, September-December 1916
 707/11 PART 262 Routine Orders. 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance, January-June 1917
 707/5 PART 266 Routine Orders. Imperial Camel Corps, August-December 1916
 707/5 PART 268 Routine Orders. Imperial Camel Brigade, January-May 1917
 755/13 Personnel. Nominal roll of 3rd Battalion Imperial Camel Brigade, 1914-1915 by M Karnaghan
 861/5 PART 25 Field Returns. 1st Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance. January-December 1916
 861/5 PART 26 Field Returns. 1st Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance. January 1917 - February 1919
 861/5 PART 30 Field Returns. 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance. April-May 1915; May-July 1916; February-December 1917
 861/5 PART 88 Field Returns. Headquarters, 3rd Battalion, Imperial Camel Corps. December 1916 - June 1918
 861/5 PART 96 Field Returns. No 12 Company, 3rd Battalion, Imperial Camel Corps. July-September, December 1916; January, March-October 1917; February-June 1918
 1021/62 Reports on water supplies, Palestine, Sinai and Syria. Circular memorandum on water supplies in camp or bivouac. Notes on information received from Arab Prisoners of War

AWM28 Recommendation file for honours and awards, AIF, 1914-18 War
 2/154 Imperial Camel Corps: 3 Battalion ICC

AWM45 Extracts from British Unit War Diaries - Palestine, 1916-1919
 12/36 PART 2 Headquarters, Imperial Camel Corps, Extracts from War Diary

AWM131 Roll of Honour circulars, 1914-18 War
 31 No. 2367 Pte. McBride, Neil Hamilton
 45 George Achilles Smith

AWM224 Unit Manuscript Histories
 MSS39 PART 1 Imperial Camel Corps (Later 14th Australian Light Horse Regiment): History, Jan 1916, Sep 1918
 MSS39 PART 3 Imperial Camel Corps (Later 14th Australian Light Horse Regiment): General file, including a brief history
 MSS42 PART 1 Imperial Camel Brigade: Short history compiled by Capt Hall [typed copy]
 MSS274 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance: History from formation to Mar 1919
 MSS637B Narrative of Australian Engineers in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Appendices C-D [includes maps, architectural and engineering diagrams]
 MSS637G Narrative of Australian Engineers in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Appendix V [Photograph album]

AWM244 Troopship and cargo carrier movement cards, 1914-18 War
 HMAT PALERMO (A56)

AWM252 1914-18 War, alpha-numeric series
 A95 Operations - Palestine: New Zealand Mounted Rifles - Copy of letter from Lt Col E W C Chaytor to Gen Godley being an account of the operation at Rafa, 9 January 1917; Copy of letter dated 7 January 1917 from Gen H Chauvel to Gen Birdwood in answer to a congratulatory wire from the latter (Gen Chauvel's letter gives a brief history of the operations at El Arish and Magdhaba)

1 DRL/0428 Australian Red Cross Society: Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau
 77 Corporal Joseph Henry Murray
 1020 Private Frank Robert Morse-Kincaid
 2167 Trooper John Campbell

2367 Trooper McBride, Neil Hamilton
Captain George Archilles [Achilles] Smith

Private Records

1DRL/0211 Diary of Gordon Colin Cooper, 1916-1917, 1917-1918
1DRL/0355 Letters relating to Oliver 'Trooper Bluegum' Hogue, 1915-1927
2DRL/0014 Letters from Wilfred Evans to his family, 1916 and 1917
PR90/165 Dodd, Charles Banwell (Private, 10th Light Horse Regiment, Imperial Camel Corps)
PR000053 Typescript of diaries of Henry 'Harry' Langtip, 1916-1918 - Langtip, Henry 'Harry' (Staff Sergeant, b.1888 - d.1940)
PR00096 Langley, George Furner (Brigadier) CBE DSO, 1891-1971
PR00740 Holmes, Jeffrey Thomas (Trooper/Driver, d: 1958)
PR01077 Parkes, Stanley Thomas (Captain) 1894-1986

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Casualty Details

McBride, Neil Hamilton

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Australia, New South Wales, Cemetery, Military, and Church Record Transcripts, 1816-1982
Pedigree Resource File

Find My Past

Britain, Campaign, Gallantry & Long Service Medals & Awards
Census, Land & Surveys
Directories and Social History
England & Wales deaths 1837-2007
Newspaper Collection

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B539 Correspondence files, multiple number series with AIF Australian Imperial Forces prefix
Camel Corps Egypt AIF264/1/257
B2455 First Australian Imperial Forces personnel dossiers (World War I service records)
McBride Neil Hamilton: SERN 2367: POB Hungerford QLD: POE Dubbo NSW: NOK F McBride Alfred
Note: The dossiers of all service personnel mentioned directly in the text and/or as a reference in the end notes were consulted to confirm their name, rank and location at particular dates. The dossiers of all personnel in the 16th Reinforcements 7th Light Horse were examined in detail, as were all dossiers of those identified as suffering a 'GSW Abdomen' at El Magruntein

B4418 Boer War Dossiers

Woodforde ER

J3111 Queensland post office history files, alphabetical series

Post office history file - Hungerford - includes photographs HUNGERFORD

MP367/1 General Correspondence Files

Menangle [Park Racecourse] 438/4/361

MT1384/3 Unit Nominal Rolls, period 1914/18, extending in some cases to 1922

122 Imperial Camel Corps: Nominal Roll c 1916 (and loose papers, 1916-1917)

127 Nominal Roll - 3rd Australian Battalion, Imperial Camel Brigade including extra folios of Notes and Papers

128 Imperial Camel Corp, Nominal Roll including extra folio of typed notes

259 Nominal Roll - Officers and other ranks transferred to Camel Corps - 12th Battalion

SP32/1 Post Office Files

Hungerford Part 3 Hungerford [Hungerfords] Post Office file [Box 329] 1888-1891

Hungerford Part 4 Hungerford [Hungerfords] Post Office file [Box 329] 1891-1906

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WW1 Photograph Album-Egypt

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464079 Hungerford 1887-1910

2040 Warrego District Maps - TG2 Series

634398 Warrego District, Queensland. Sketch map embracing the country of Hungerford and Bulloo Downs 1891

12596 Statistical Returns Furnished by Head Teachers of Provisional and State Schools

11024 Hungerford State School 1892-1918

12607 School Files (Correspondence) for State Schools

14914 Hungerford No. 1440 (formerly No. 684) State School 1891-1942

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Fell war diaries, 1916-1919/ Robert Valentine Fell MLMSS 1216 / Items 1 & 2

Frank Valentine Weir war diaries, correspondence and miscellanea, 1914-1919, MLMSS 1024/3, Items 2 & 3

Fred Harold Tomlins war diary, 16 August-22 November 1916 MLMSS 1002/6

Henry Gordon Simpson letters, 1915-1916 MLMSS 9408/Folder 1/Item 1

Joseph Michael Bolger war diaries, 1916-1919 8 July 1916-6 May 1917 MLMSS 1219 Item 01
M.C. Evans war diary, 4 November 1916-16 June 1917 MLMSS 1576/Item 4
Maurice Evelyn Pearce diary, 2 September 1916-22 April 1917 MLMSS 2940/Item 2
Minahan diary, 1 January 1917-3 January 1918 MLDOC 1360
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Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG)

Baily Diary 1915 Transcript

The National Archives (TNA)

WO95 War Office: First World War and Army of Occupation War Diaries

4403 2 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps October 1916-January 1917

4403 3 Battalion Imperial Camel Corps December 1916-January 1917

4403 Imperial Camel Corps: Headquarters 1916

4410 General headquarters troops: 115 Railway Company Royal Engineers, 116 Railway Company Royal Engineers

4565 1/1 Gloucestershire Yeomanry January 1917

4565 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry (1917 Jan - 1918 Apr)

4565 5 Mounted Brigade (1/1 South Midland Mounted Brigade): Headquarters January 1917

4566 1/1 Worcestershire Yeomanry (1917 Jan - 1918 May).

4566 7 Field Troop RE, January 1917

4603 Divisional Troops: 1/1 Lowland Field Ambulance 1916-1918

4604 Divisional Troops: 1/2 Lowland Field Ambulance December 1916-January 1917

4604 Divisional Troops: 1/3 Lowland Field Ambulance January 1917

4618 53 (Welsh) Division Assistant Director, Medical Services (1916 Jan - 1919 May)

4622 1/1 Welsh Field Ambulance (1916 Jan - 1919 Mar)

4720 Lines of Communication Troops: 24 Casualty Clearing Station 1916-1917, 26 Casualty Clearing Station 1916-1918

4723 Lines of Communication Troops: Graves Registration Mobile and Stationary Units 1918 June-1919 July

4741 Lines of Communication Egypt and Palestine troops: 31 General Hospital 1916-1919

4751 Lines of Communication Egypt and Palestine troops: Ambulance Train (No. 7 1916-1919)

4752 Lines of Communication Egypt and Palestine troops: Hospital Train (No. 6 1916-1919)

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Bob McBride's Headstone, Kantara War Memorial Cemetery, The War Graves Photographic Project

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