CESSNOCK

RSL

SUB-BRANCH

NEWSLETTER

SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM,

Contents

Individual Highlights

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HANDY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Department of Honours and Awards	1800 11 321
ANZAC HOUSE	(02)9264 8188
RSL Defence Care	(02)80880388
Department of Veteran Affairs	1800 555 254
Home Care (Cessnock)	(02)40304706
Cessnock Council Community Services	49907247
DVA Home Care Services	1300 550 450
Royal District Nursing Service	1300 665 444
HACC Community Care Access Point	1300 731 556
Hearing Services Australia	131 797
National Hearing Care Cessnock	(02)9091 8613
Cessnock Police	(02)49910199
Cessnock City Council	(02)49934100
VVCS- Counselling Service	1800 011 046
Cessnock Hospital	4991 0555
Cessnock Taxi Service	4990 1111
EMERGENCY SERVICES	000
RSL Hall	4991 4141

SUB-BRANCH NEWS

Circular 31/21 The new RSL NSW website is now live

Dear Honorary Secretary

The RSL NSW website has been updated with a renewed focus on our members and the wider veteran community. There are some key components of the website that sub-Branches should be aware of:

Membership Applications

The RSL NSW Membership Application Forms have been updated and are now available under 'Get Involved' and in the 'Members' Suite'. The following editable PDF forms have been developed in consultation with representatives of the Forestville, Newcastle, and Wingham RSL sub-Branches and will replace all membership forms in circulation:

Service Member click here
Affiliate Member click here
Transfer of Membership click here

Prospective members can now complete an online application form on the RSL NSW website. The information that is captured in this form will be sent directly to the RSL NSW Membership Team at ANZAC House who will liaise with the sub-Branch to process the new membership. Applications will eventually be automatically directed to the RSL NSW sub-Branch email account.

The Application for Membership process is outlined on Page 46 of the RSL NSW Constitution. The Process does not include a requirement for an applicant to be reviewed or accepted at a sub-Branch meeting for 'provisional membership' and I understand that this step of the process, if followed, is causing some delay to new members joining the League. This step is unnecessary and has been removed from the new membership forms.

Some questions have been raised about the payment of the membership fee of $35 considering that membership fees will not be payable in 2022, as outlined in the 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. Sub-Branches will continue to be invoiced for membership fees in the meantime.

Find your local sub-Branch search

The search function for sub-Branches is now determined by geo targeting. If a user types, for example, postcode '2340' for Tamworth, then the Quirindi and Werris Creek sub-Branches are also included in the search return to present the user with options in the vicinity of their home, workplace, or Defence base.

Sub-Branch pages

The sub-Branch pages have been upgraded to include a 'Join Now' link and a map that shows where the sub-Branch is located. The pages have the capability to house a photo of the sub-Branch or members and to post event information etc. This is a project in itself and I will gather a working group to work through this capability. It is hoped that this will help sub-Branches save time and money on keeping websites up to date.

As exists on the current site, the email contact information for the sub-Branch is the RSL NSW email address, so sub-Branches should expect correspondence from website users/veterans who need help or have questions. This is another critical reason why sub-Branches should be accessing and using their RSL NSW email account on a regular basis. ANZAC House can drive all the enquiries in the world to sub-Branches but this is useless if the enquiries are going unanswered.

Members' Suite

The Members' Suite that contains member and sub-Branch resources has been relocated and is now titled Member Resources. The page can now be accessed from the bottom menu on the front page of the website or by clicking [here](#).

This is a temporary location for the Members' Suite while the sub-Branch and Members' Portals are being enhanced to house these resources. It is hoped that the Portal upgrade will be completed by the end of this year.

If you have any questions about the website, please contact marketing@rslnsw.org.au

Yours faithfully

Jeff O'Brien
Head of Member Services & State Secretary

9 September 2021

Circular 30/21 Appointment of two new Board Directors

Dear Honorary Secretary

I am pleased to share news with sub-Branches of the appointment of two new Directors to the RSL NSW Board, following the [vacancies noted in Circular 22/21](#).

The selection committee, which included two members of the District President's Council, interviewed candidates after receiving more than 30 applications. As noted in the [most recent Board Communiqué](#), the Chair of the selection committee said it was pleasing to see the calibre of applicants, particularly given that the RSL NSW Directors are not paid.

RSL NSW State President Ray James and Board Chair, Sophie Ray welcomed the diversity brought by these new Board appointments and the recent independent member appointments to the Board's Audit and Risk Committee. They noted that the Board and Committee members' range of age, service experience (including several reservists) and employment backgrounds, and the increasing number of women on the Board and Board committees, were important steps towards better reflecting the makeup of the veteran community, and ensuring that a diverse range of views are represented at Board level.

Louise Sullivan

Louise is a member of RSL NSW and graduate of The Royal Military College, Duntroon (GSO Reserve – 2006) and served for 13 years in both the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police and Australian Army Legal Corps obtaining the rank of Captain.

Louise has over 20 years of experience as a business adviser, leader, Board Chair and Director with broad management skills leading diverse teams in professional (legal), heavy industry, sporting and military environments. A qualified lawyer, risk and governance professional, Louise currently works as an Executive Director (Chief Operating Officer) of a leading independent construction materials business.

From 2015 Louise has been a Director and since 2018 the President (and Chairperson) of Netball NSW, one of Australia's largest state sporting bodies supporting the highest participation team sport for women and girls in both NSW and across the country. Through that voluntary position Louise also serves as Chair of the NSW Swifts and GIANTS Netball Clubs playing in the largest professional women's sports league in Australia.

Louise is a Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia, the Chartered Governance Institute and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Jason Hazell

Jason is a member of RSL NSW at the Mosman sub-Branch. He served with the Australian Ready Reserve from 1995 to 1998 as an infantry soldier, with postings to the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment and 2/17 Royal New South Wales Regiment.

Jason has over two decades of experience in the superannuation and investment management industry. He is currently General Manager of Investments at State Super and was previously the Chief Investment Officer of the Crescent Wealth Super fund. Prior to this he held senior investment and leadership roles within the MLC Asset Management business over a tenure of 18 years.

Jason holds a Master of Finance from the University of New South Wales, a Bachelor of Science from the University of Sydney, a Diploma of Financial Services from the Financial Planning Association and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).

Yours faithfully

Jeff O'Brien

Head of Member Services & State Secretary

ATTENTION!!!!

Sub-Branch meetings will re-commence on Tuesday 2nd November 21 at 10am. As this meeting will finalise preparations for our Remembrance Day Commemorative Service, it is important that as many members as possible attend. Additionally, from Thursday 14th October the hall will be open again from 9am to 1pm for *Coffee and chat* for members and local veterans. Our final members Dinner for the year will be held at Cessnock Leagues Club on Wednesday 8th December at 7pm.

RSL NSW NOTES

8 October 2021

Important changes to invalidity pensions commenced after 20 September 2007

Dear Members

Following a ruling of the Federal Court in December 2020, invalidity pensions payable under the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) Scheme and the Military Superannuation and Benefits (MSB) Scheme (commenced on or after 20 September 2007) will be taxed as superannuation lump sum payments.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has been processing amendments for past tax returns of impacted individuals who have opted-in as part of its remediation program.

Initial round of amendments

As at the end of September, the ATO has amended over 4,000 income tax assessments for individuals that either opted-in to the first phase of its amendment process or had an existing objection with them, around 60% of the individuals who opted-in to having their assessment(s) amended.

If you opted-in but have not yet had your amendments finalised, you do not need to call the ATO for an update. If your amendments have yet to be processed, it is likely because your circumstances are more complex. The ATO is working through the remaining amendments and expects to have all amendments completed shortly.

Next round of amendments

If you are affected by the Court decision and did not opt-in under the ATO's initial amendment process, it's not too late to have your assessments for prior years amended. The ATO will begin the next round of its amendment program from late October by contacting affected individuals who did not initially opt-in.

What do you need to do?

There are actions you should take now if you would like to have your assessments amended:

- Ensure that the contact details that the ATO has for you are up to date so you do not miss correspondence and so that you can be contacted you if the ATO requires additional information.
- Apply to Commonwealth Superannuation Corporate (CSC) for a determination if you believe you qualify for a disability concession. By doing this before you take part in the streamlined amendment process you will ensure that that the disability concession is taken into account as part of your amendments upfront.
- Lodge any outstanding income tax returns as the ATO cannot amend what has not been lodged.
- Consider seeking financial advice in relation to your personal circumstances as it is your choice as to whether you want to participate in the ATO's amendment process.

For more information or to receive ongoing updates about the streamlined amendment process, please visit the ATO military superannuation webpage at ato.gov.au/militarysuper

8 October 2021

Circular 34/21 2021 State Congress and AGM to be held online

Dear Honorary Secretary

Further to the Board Communiqué issued on 30 September and considering the latest advice issued by the NSW Government, the RSL NSW Board resolved that the 2021 State Congress and AGM will be a virtual event with no change to the dates on which it will be held: Monday 6 and Tuesday 7 December.

As details of the virtual event are confirmed, including how to access the online platform, I will advise sub-Branches via Circular. It remains incumbent on Honorary Secretaries to keep their Congress Delegate informed as the RSL NSW sub-Branch email address remains the primary channel of communication from ANZAC House.

If travel and accommodation has been booked for your Delegate to attend the face-to-face event that was planned to take place in Newcastle, please ensure you cancel it as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I advise as follows:

Registration

Registration for Congress and AGM remains essential. The virtual platform will allow for voting on all motions approved by the agenda committee including speaking to each motion. Please note in accordance with the sub-Branch voting rights (constitution clauses 15.48 to 15.52) only the registered Delegate will have voting rights and the option to speak to a motion.

There is now the opportunity for Alternate Delegates (both sub-Branch and District Council) to register their attendance for Congress and the AGM. Please note this attendance will be without voting rights or the option to speak on a motion.

Please contact ANZAC House should the registered Delegate not be able to attend the event and therefore require the Alternate Delegate to vote.

Thank you to the more than 100 sub-Branches who have registered their Delegate since registration opened several weeks ago.

- sub-Branch Delegate with voting rights – to register please click on this link
- District Council Delegate with no voting rights – to register please click on this link

- sub-Branch and District Council Alternate Delegate without voting rights – to register please click on this link

A point of clarification: District Council Delegates can speak in relation to motions but are not authorised to vote.

Notice of Meeting and further details

The Notice of Meeting will be issued on 8 November (four weeks before the 2021 State Congress and AGM) where the timing of each session for both days will be confirmed. I encourage sub-Branches to plan a General Meeting in line with current NSW Health regulations after this date to discuss the motions on the agenda and direct how your Delegate will vote.

As soon as details about accessing the virtual event platform are available, I will advise sub-Branches via Circular. This will include details about the technical support that will be available to Delegates and sub-Branches.

If any Delegate or sub-Branch does not have access to a computer and/or internet and wants to participate in the 2021 State Congress and AGM please contact the Member Support Team on support@rslnsw.org.au or 1300 679 775.

Yours faithfully

Jeff O'Brien
Head of Member Services & State Secretary

Hunter Valley District Council Notes

HVDC meetings are currently suspended due to the pandemic.

OUR SUB-BRANCH SPONSORS

The Businesses/Individuals on these pages are the sponsor supporters of our Sub-Branch. Their continued support is very important to the continued successful operation of our Sub-Branch. Please support them as they support us.

Bryce Gibson

Selling Principal
0422 227 668

Since starting in Real estate at the tender age of 16, Bryce has dedicated his whole real estate career to helping his many clients and customers achieve there real estate dreams.

Bryce is the Selling Principal of LJ Hooker Cessnock and leads an experienced, skilled and dedicated team to ensure your level of service is second to none.

Bryce has many qualifications including being a Licensed Real Estate Agent, a Licensed Stock & Station Agent, a Licensed Business Agent, a Licensed Strata Managing Agent and Licensed Auctioneer, Certified Practising Valuer.

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OUR SPONSORS ARE A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF THE SUPPORT FOR THE VETERAN COMMUNITY IN THE CESSNOCK LGA BECAUSE OF THE ASSISTANCE THEY PROVIDE FOR THE OPERATION OF THE SUB-BRANCH.PLEASE SUPPORT THEM.

LEST WE FORGET

(EXTRACT FROM AN ARTICLE BY DAMIEN MURPHY IN THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD OCTOBER 13TH 2017)

A THOUGHT FOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mud. Mud like wet soap. Nothing could move in the mud. Guns were bogged for three days. They put 26 horses on one gun to drag it free. A Digger fell off duckboards in the dark and sank up to his neck. His mates tried to get him with a chain of rifles but he drowned in the wet earth, begging to be shot.

The hellish landscape around a Biblically-named village in Belgium was turned into a charnel house of shattered trees, suffocating poison gas, rumbling artillery and chattering machine guns and the dead. In the trenches rats bred like flies, feeding on corpses.

Members of an Australian field artillery brigade during World War I.CREDIT:AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Thirty-five Australians died for each metre of land taken at Passchendaele.

Australia's acclaimed official war photographer, Frank Hurley, portrayed death everywhere. One hundred years ago last Thursday he took perhaps his most poetically poignant and tragic photograph of the war.

War photographer Frank Hurley portrayed death everywhere at Passchendaele.*CREDIT:AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL*

Writing about it later, Hurley said every 20 paces lay a dead body. "Most [were] desperately mutilated without legs, arms, and heads and half covered in mud and slime and under a questionable sheltered bank lay a group of dead men and sitting by them in little scooped out recesses sat a few living but so emaciated by fatigue and shell shock you couldn't tell the differences," Hurley wrote.

The Australian War Memorial's recollections include those of one exhausted British soldier who slithered into a pill box for safety at Passchendaele and fell asleep against a dead German. They capture horror and nonchalant heroism: "Next day I was awoken by a voice, 'You the Lancashire Fusiliers? Well piss off. We're the Australians and we're here to relieve you'."

The Battle of Passchendaele in the autumn of 1917 was known for years afterwards by Australians as "Wipers" because the name of the small textile town, Ypres, sat uneasily on British Commonwealth tongues. It was known as the Third Battle of Ypres but later called Passchendaele for the modest village that was the final objective. Perhaps the echoes of Christ's passion and death better explain the catastrophe.

The battle opened on July 31, 1917, with more than a quarter of a million British, French and Commonwealth soldiers attacking along a 13 kilometre front with encouraging gains, as massed artillery obliterated German defences and annihilated inevitable German counter-attacks but Passchendaele soon turned to disaster.

Advertisement

The ruins of the medieval Cloth Hall in Ypres in September 1917.*CREDIT:FRANK HURLEY/AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL*

The Australians were relieved by the Canadians on October 18 and by that time the five Australian divisions had suffered 38,000 casualties, including 12,000 dead and missing.

Total casualties at Passchendaele were estimated at some 500,000, about 275,000 British and Commonwealth and maybe more than 200,000 Germans. Nearly 15,700 Canadians and 5300 New Zealanders fell there, killed, wounded or missing.

The Tyne Cot Cemetery in Passchendaele, Belgium.*CREDIT:AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL*

Sixty-one Victoria Crosses were awarded, nine to Australians. Five months later the Germans took it all back in three days.

On Thursday, the nightly Last Post at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra was dedicated to Passchendaele. The director, Brendan Nelson, declared October 12 one of the most significant days in Australian history.

"Throughout the 1920s and 1930s whether in Australia or New Zealand, only one word was used to describe inconsolable grief and mourning and a suffering and a pain that would never go: and that word was Passchendaele," Nelson said.

The eight-month Gallipoli campaign in 1915 had cost 26,111 Australian casualties, including 8141 deaths. Strategically it achieved nothing.

But if Gallipoli was embraced as the necessary blood sacrifice of a new nation, by the time of Passchendaele enthusiasm for war back home was starting to wane. The images of men and beast floundering in a never-ending sea of mud at Passchendaele came to define World War I in the Australian public's imagination.

Australians fighting overseas in World War I had enlisted voluntarily and troop numbers remained buoyant until the enormity of Australian casualties on the Western Front hit home. Passchendaele occurred smack dab in the middle of a bitter national argument on conscription that was fought on political and class grounds and pitted workers against employers while widening the secular divide between Christians from or descended from various parts of the British Isles.

Not only were fathers, sons, husbands and lovers dying but the public became aware that despite small gains made at Passchendaele, the overall result left both sides in deadlocked positions similar to where they had started. The disaster brought condemnation on British army commanders. Military historians now make harsh judgments about Douglas Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front.

When he died in 1928, his funeral became a day of national mourning but post World War II, Haig's name has become synonymous with carnage and futility. His troops arrived at that conclusion long before the historians: they called him "Butcher Haig".

By 1916 Britain had started to pressure Canberra to send more troops and prime minister William Morris Hughes announced a referendum on compulsory overseas service. The October 28 vote resulted 1,087,557 for and 1,160,033 against. NSW, Queensland and South Australia voted "No".

Victoria's agreement to send more soldiers was perhaps surprising.

They used to say that Irish convicts left Sydney for honest work as servants for Melburnians made newly wealthy by gold, while cockney convicts stayed in Sydney to deal real estate. The World War I memorials scattered around Australian cities, towns and villages bear some but not many Irish surnames and a deep divide had opened between Irish Catholic Australians and other Christians following the British crushing of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. Yet many Melbourne Catholics voted for conscription even though one of their

leading priests said Australians were already doing enough to help the British cause on the Western Front.

After the referendum loss, Hughes was tossed out of the Australian Labor Party. He established a new party, the Nationalist Party, and won the May 1917 federal election. The following day the Irish priest, Daniel Mannix, became Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. During the election campaign Mannix had denounced the inequality of sacrifice, endorsing the justice of strikes and declaring that a vote for Hughes would be a vote for conscription.

The British demanded more Australian troops but the shadow of Passchendaele fell and on December 20, 1917, Hughes put a second conscription referendum and the people again rejected it, by a larger majority than before: 1,015,159 in favour and 1,181,747 against. This time Victoria also voted "No".

For the World War I generations, time never healed Passchendaele. But in 1936, two large stone guardian lions were donated to the Australian War Memorial by the *burgomaster* (mayor) of the Belgian city of Ypres.
The lions had originally stood on plinths on either side of the Menin Gate at Ypres. This gate was one of only two entries into the medieval fortified city. Allied soldiers, including Australians, marched to the Passchendaele battlefields through the Menin Gate. The limestone lions were toppled by shellfire during the war as the town was reduced to rubble.

The lions were given to Australia as a gesture of friendship, and reconstructed, they have been at the entrance of the Australian War Memorial since 1987.

These past few years, the Menin Gate lions have been in Ypres as part of the World War I commemorations but will return to Canberra after Remembrance Day 2017.

COMFUCIOUS DID NOT SAY

Man with no garden often looks forlorn!
Bird with no beak was born to succeed!
Man, who wants pretty nurse, must be patient.
Passionate kiss, like spider web, leads to undoing of fly.
Better to be pissed off than pissed on.
Lady who goes camping must beware of evil intent.
Squirrel who runs up woman's leg will not find nuts.
Man who leaps off cliff jumps to conclusion.
Man who runs in front of car gets tired; man who runs behind car gets exhausted.
Man who eats many prunes gets good run for money.
War does not determine who is right, it determines who is left.
Men who fight with wife all day get no piece at night.
It takes many nails to build a crib, but one screw to fill it.
Man who drives like hell is bound to get there.
Man who stands on toilet is high on pot.
Man who lives in glasshouse should change clothes in basement.
Men who fish in other man's well often catch crabs.
Finally CONFUCIUS SAY…

" A lion will not cheat on his wife, but
a Tiger Wood

The longer you've been married, the funnier this becomes!

An elderly married couple was at home watching TV. The husband had the remote and was switching back and forth between a fishing channel and a porn channel. The wife became more and more annoyed and finally said "For god's sake! Leave it on the porn channel... You already know how to fish!"

DRINK 'TIL YOU WANT ME

I CAN'T DRINK THAT MUCH

My life hasn't been the same since my accident.

What accident?

The one where I got my finger stuck in that wedding ring.

I married my wife for her looks.. but not the ones she's giving me lately.

Husband: "Why do you keep buying plants when you just end up killing them?"

Wife: "Just to remind you what I'm capable of. "

According to a statistic: 1 out of 4 men is happy

Wife: Can u stop yawning when i'm talking to you ?

Husband : I'm not yawning, I'm trying to say something!

www.funnyDuck.us

When you get super drunk and end up with the wrong group.

@SoBasicICantEven

Karl Marx is a historically famous philosopher but no one ever mentions his sister, Onya, the inventor of the starting pistol...

LEST WE FORGET

Battle of Beersheba (1917)

The **Battle of Beersheba** (Turkish: *Birüssebi Muharebesi*, German: *Schlacht von Birüssebi*)[Note 1] was fought on 31 October 1917, when the British Empire's Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) attacked and captured the Yildirim Army Group garrison at Beersheba, beginning the Southern Palestine Offensive of the Sinai and Palestine campaign of World War I. Infantry from the 60th (London) and the 74th (Yeomanry) Divisions of the XX Corps from the southwest conducted limited attacks in the morning, then the Anzac Mounted Division (Desert Mounted Corps) launched a series of attacks against the strong defences which dominated the eastern side of Beersheba, resulting in their capture during the late afternoon. Shortly afterwards, the Australian Mounted Division's 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments (4th Light Horse Brigade) conducted a mounted infantry charge with bayonets in their hands, their only weapon for mounted attack, as their rifles were slung across their backs. Part of the two regiments dismounted to attack entrenchments on Tel es Saba defending Beersheba while the remainder of the light horsemen continued their charge into the town, capturing the place and part of the garrison as it was withdrawing.

German General Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein was commander of the three divisions of the Fourth Army. He further strengthened his defensive line stretching from Gaza to Beersheba after the EEF defeats at the first and second battles of Gaza in March and April 1917, and received reinforcements of two divisions. Meanwhile, Lieutenant General Philip Chetwode (commanding the EEF's Eastern Force) began the Stalemate in Southern Palestine, defending essentially the same entrenched lines held at the end of the second battle. He initiated regular mounted reconnaissance into the open eastern flank of the Gaza to Beersheba line towards Beersheba. In June, the Ottoman Fourth Army was reorganized when the new Yildirim Army Group was established, commanded by German General Erich von Falkenhayn. At about the same time, British General Edmund Allenby replaced General Archibald Murray as commander of the EEF. Allenby reorganized the EEF to give him direct command of three corps, in the process deactivating Chetwode's Eastern Force and placing him in command of one of the two infantry corps. At the same time, Chauvel's Desert Column was renamed the Desert Mounted Corps. The stalemate continued through the summer in difficult conditions on the northern edge of the Negev Desert, while EEF

reinforcements began to strengthen the divisions which had suffered more than 10,000 casualties during the two battles for Gaza.

The primary functions of the EEF and the [Ottoman Army](#) during this time were to man the front lines and patrol the open eastern flank, although both sides conducted training of all units. The [XXI Corps](#) maintained the defences in the Gaza sector of the line by mid-October, while the [battle of Passchendaele](#) continued on the [Western Front](#). Meanwhile, Allenby was preparing for the [manoeuvre warfare](#) attacks on the Ottoman defensive line, beginning with Beersheba, and for the subsequent advance to [Jerusalem](#), and he was nearing completion with the arrival of the last reinforcements.

Beersheba was defended by lines of trenches supported by isolated [redoubts](#) on earthworks and hills, which covered all approaches to the town. The Ottoman garrison was eventually encircled by the two infantry and two mounted divisions, as they and their supporting artillery launched their attacks. The 60th (London) Division's preliminary attack and capture of the redoubt on Hill 1070 led to the bombardment of the main Ottoman trench line. Then a joint attack by the 60th (London) and 74th (Yeomanry) Divisions captured all their objectives. Meanwhile, the Anzac Mounted Division cut the road to the northeast of Beersheba, from Beersheba to [Hebron](#) and continuing to Jerusalem. Continuous fighting against the main redoubt and defenses on Tel el Saba which dominated the eastern approaches to the town resulted in its capture in the afternoon.

During this fighting, the 3rd Light Horse Brigade had been sent to reinforce the Anzac Mounted Division, while the 5th Mounted Brigade remained in corps reserve armed with swords. With all brigades of both mounted divisions already committed to the battle, the only brigade available was the 4th Light Horse Brigade, which was ordered to capture Beersheba. These swordless mounted infantrymen galloped over the plain, riding towards the town and a redoubt supported by entrenchments on a mound of Tel es Saba south-east of Beersheba. The 4th Light Horse Regiment on the right jumped trenches before turning to make a dismounted attack on the Ottoman infantry in the trenches, gun pits, and redoubts. Most of the 12th Light Horse Regiment on the left rode on across the face of the main redoubt to find a gap in the Ottoman defenses, crossing the railway line into Beersheba to complete the first step of an offensive which culminated in the EEF's [capturing Jerusalem](#) six weeks later.[Note 2]

Desert Mounted Corps attacks[edit]
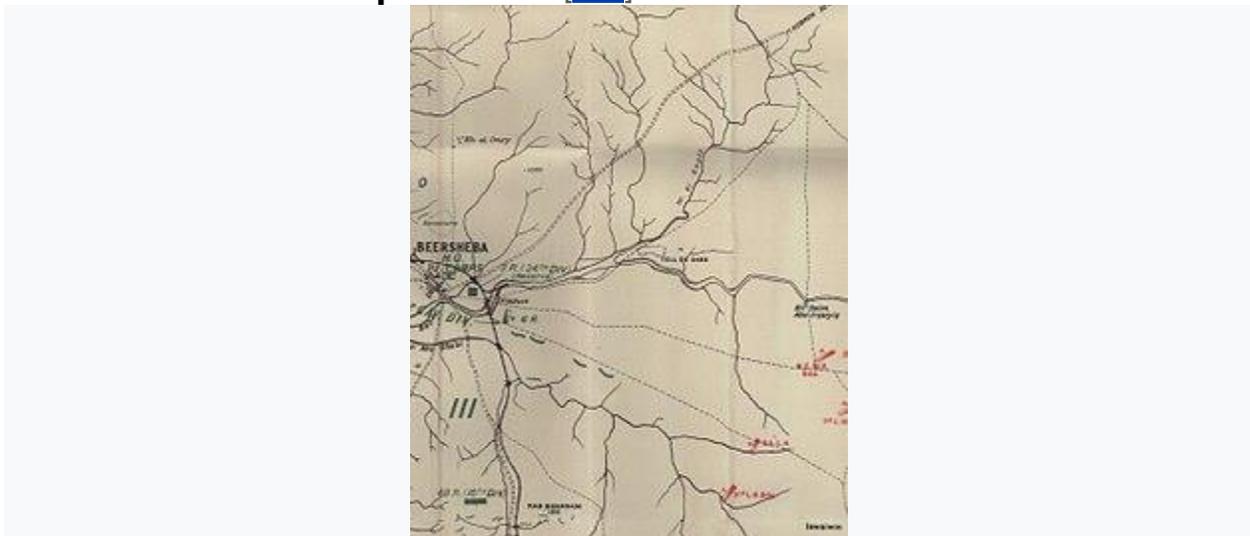
Eastern Beersheba, including Iswaiwin, Tel el Saba and the roads to Hebron (in the north) and Ras Ghannam

(in the south)

The Anzac and the Australian Mounted Divisions rode between 25 and 35 miles (40 and 56 km) from Asluj and Khalasa respectively, circling south of Beersheba during the night of 30–31 October to get into position to attack from the east.[124] The Australian Mounted Division (in Desert Mounted Corps reserve) deployed southeast of Beersheba (near Khashim Zanna) to support the Anzac Mounted Division's attacks.[109] The 8th Light Horse Regiment (3rd Light Horse Brigade, Australian Mounted Division) was deployed as a screen, linking with the 7th Mounted Brigade on their left and the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade on their right, in front of the Australian Mounted Division.[125]

The first objective of the Anzac Mounted Division was to cut the road from Beersheba to Hebron and Jerusalem, about 6 miles (9.7 km) north-east of the town at Tel el Sakaty (also known as Sqati), to prevent reinforcement and retreat in that direction. The second objective, the redoubt on the height of Tel es Saba (which dominated the east side of Beersheba north and south) had to be captured, before an attack across the open ground could be launched.[126][127] By dawn the Anzac Mounted Division was deployed with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade at Bir Salim abu Irqaiyiq, and the 1st Light Horse Brigade in support behind the New Zealanders, with the 2nd Light Horse Brigade concentrated near Bir Hammam.[76][128][129][Note 13]

While the infantry battle was being fought on the west side of Beersheba, Edward Chaytor (commanding the Anzac Mounted Division) ordered the 2nd Light Horse Brigade to attack Tel el Sakaty at 08:00 and gain control of the Jerusalem road. At the same time, he ordered the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade (with the 1st Light Horse Brigade in support) to attack the Ottoman garrison holding fortifications on Tel el Saba. These hard-fought attacks continued into the afternoon, when two regiments of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade (Australian Mounted Division) were ordered to reinforce the Anzac Mounted Division's attack on Tel el Saba.[95][130][131][132][133]

If there was one lesson more than another I had learned at Magdhaba and Rafa, it was patience, and not to expect things to happen too quickly. At Beersheba, although progress was slow, there was never that deadly pause which is so disconcerting to a commander.

— *Lieutenant General Chauvel, commanding Desert Mounted Corps*[96]

Tel el Sakaty[edit]
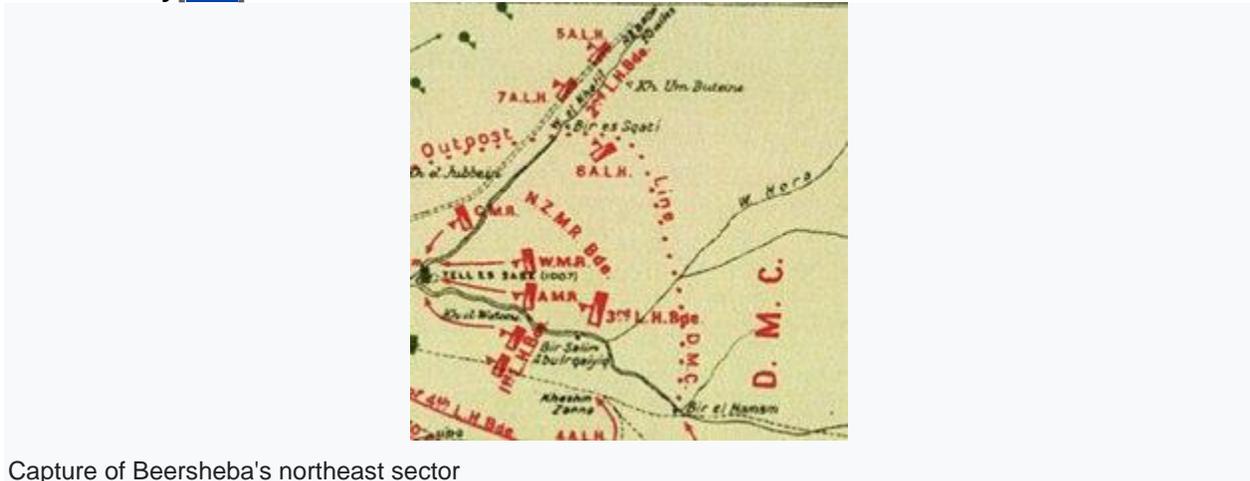
Capture of Beersheba's northeast sector

Soon after the Anzac Mounted Division's 2nd Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigades advances began at 09:00, they were targeted by heavy artillery fire from the hills on the north side of the Beersheba-to-Jerusalem road. The two brigades were also forced to slow their advance across the plain, cut by a number of narrow, deep wadis, which made fast riding impossible. At this time, shells from the XX Corps' bombardment could be seen bursting on the hills west of Beersheba.[134][135]

At 10:05, the leading troops of the 7th Light Horse Regiment (2nd Light Horse Brigade; not to be confused with the 7th Mounted Brigade near Ras Ghannam to the south of Beersheba), were seen

approaching Tel el Sakaty. By 11:17, they reported their advance was increasingly difficult due to hostile units defending the high ground south of Sakaty. An Ottoman convoy of 10 wagons was seen leaving Beersheba on the road to Jerusalem, and the regiment was ordered to cut the road before the convoy escaped. Through heavy shell and shrapnel bombardment and point-blank machine-gun fire, they galloped to a position just south of the road. While an artillery battery got into position to support the light-horse regiment's attack on Tel el Sakaty, at 11:40 the 5th Light Horse Regiment (2nd Light Horse Brigade) was ordered to engage the Ottoman left flank. As they crossed the Wadi Khalil and the road to Jerusalem, the 5th Light Horse Regiment was also heavily shelled by artillery and fired on by machine guns from the high ground north and northwest overlooking the area. Five minutes later, the 7th Light Horse Regiment cut the road and captured the convoy (47 prisoners, eight horses and eight wagons loaded with forage). However, the regiment was pinned down just beyond, in a small wadi in the rough country north of Wadi Khalil by the gun battery and machine guns located on Tel el Sakaty (above the road). With the arrival of the 5th Light Horse Regiment, by 13:30 the two regiments (supported by artillery) were advancing to attack the high ground northeast of Sakaty. At 14:45, the 2nd Light Horse Brigade reported that three Ottoman guns appeared to have been put out of action by EEF artillery fire. While they continued to hold the road to Jerusalem, the 5th and 7th Light Horse Regiments found cover in the Wadi Aiyan (although targeted from the high ground north of Sakaty by five Ottoman machine guns) where they remained until evening. The 1,100-strong Ottoman 3rd Cavalry Division defended this hilly area north of Beersheba.[69][71][89][131][136][137]

The 5th and 7th Light Horse Regiments (2nd Light Horse Brigade) continued to hold an outpost line during the night, covering the Beersheba-to-Jerusalem road and the northeastern approaches behind Tel el Sakaty. The remainder of the 7th Light Horse Regiment withdrew 1 mile (1.6 km) south at 18:00 to bivouac for the night, with the 5th Light Horse Regiment on the right. One squadron at a time was sent to water at Bir el Hamam, and a good water supply was also found in the Wadi Hora by the 2nd Light Horse Brigade. The 7th Light Horse Regiment with two men injured (one wounded in action), captured a total of 49 prisoners (39 of whom were captured in the Wadi Aiyan).[71][89][137][Note 14]

Tel el Saba[edit]
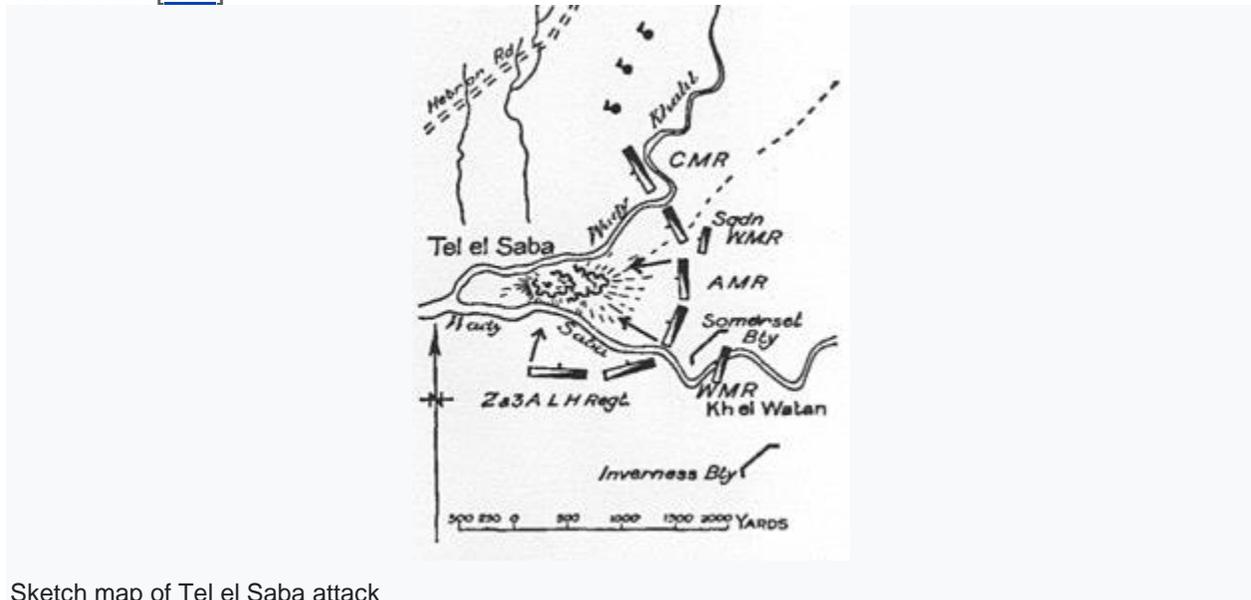
Sketch map of Tel el Saba attack

At about 08:55, some 200 Ottoman cavalry with transport and guns were seen moving north from Beersheba along the road to Jerusalem; shortly afterwards, an aircraft reported seeing a large camp at Tel el Saba.[71] This was the main Ottoman defensive position on the east side of Beersheba, located on the prominent 20 acres (8.1 ha) of Tel el Saba and dominating the eastern side of the town. With its steep sides littered by boulders, this flat–topped hill was strongly garrisoned by a battalion (described as 300 rifles and a machine gun company of eight machine guns) deployed for general defence.[134][138][139] Without trees or scrub for cover, the area "was swept by the fire of

numerous machine guns and field guns concealed in the town ... [and] on the strongly entrenched hill of Tel el Saba." Enfilade fire from two directions would have annihilated attackers.[139]

At 09:10 the Anzac Mounted Division's New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade advanced towards Tel el Saba with the intention of enveloping it from the north, supported by Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) (which came into action at a range of 3,000 yards (2,700 m)). However, at that distance the artillery was unable to make a dent on the Ottoman defence.[140][Note 15] The brigade advanced with the Canterbury Mounted Rifle Regiment on the right and the Auckland Mounted Rifle Regiment on the left, each supported by four machine guns.[141] Receiving heavy machine-gun and artillery fire, the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment formed an advance guard and rode to within 1,800 yards (1,600 m) of Tel el Saba across open country to the Wadi Saba. Here excellent cover for horses and machine guns was found, as well as good positions from which machine gunners could provide effective suppressive fire. The frontal attack would be launched on foot, since mounted attack from any direction was impossible. The Auckland regiment launched their attack under the north bank of the wadi, advancing on a narrow front under the good cover provided by the wadi. Due to heavy Ottoman machine-gun fire, from a point 800 yards (730 m) from the Ottoman position the attack was slowed; one troop at a time advanced under cover from New Zealand machine guns.[140][142][143]

By 10:00, Chaytor ordered the 1st Light Horse Brigade to reinforce the attack on Tel el Saba from the south and cooperate in the attack. The brigade sent the 3rd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade), with one subsection of a machine-gun squadron, to cover the New Zealanders' left flank. At 10:15 they made a "dashing advance" across the plain against artillery and machine-gun fire. Shortly afterwards two of the squadrons took up an exposed position on the bank of the wadi, covering the attackers' left flank. Heavy machine gun, Hotchkiss and rifle fire targeted the Ottoman position, providing covering fire for the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment attack.[144][145]

The Auckland and Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiments engaged Ottoman soldiers near a bend in the Wadi Saba southeast of Tel el Saba at 11:00; a dismounted attack was launched by the 3rd Light Horse Regiment (with one troop from the Auckland Mounted Rifle Regiment) along the south bank of the Wadi Saba. This force covered the main attack by the rest of the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment, which advanced on the north bank supported by machine-gun cover fire.[71][142][146] At the same time, the Inverness Battery attached to the 1st Light Horse Brigade came into action against Tel el Saba; it covered the advances of the 3rd Light Horse Regiment and the Somerset Battery, which had moved to within 1,300 yards (1,200 m) of Tel el Saba. By now, the attacking artillery was heavily shelling both Ottoman defensive positions and the hard-to-find Ottoman machine-gun positions. Their positions were communicated to the artillery by flags, and accurate shelling targeted them. Hostile aircraft began to circle the battlefield, dropping bombs on groups of led horses with many casualties.[140][142][147]

By 13:00 the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade) was ordered to reinforce the left of the 3rd Light Horse Regiment. About a half-hour later, the Australian Mounted Division's 9th and 10th Light Horse Regiments (3rd Light Horse Brigade) and two artillery batteries were also ordered to reinforce the Anzac Mounted Division's attack on Tel el Saba.[131][132][148][149][Note 16] The horses of the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade were all watered at 13:10 in the Wadi Saba.[71]

Orders for a general attack on Tel el Saba issued at 13:55, while the 3rd Light Horse Brigade and B Battery, Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) moved to reinforce the attack at 14:00. At 14:05, a squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade) was deployed to give effective covering fire on the right flank with machine and Hotchkiss guns and rifles, while the rest of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment attacked and captured two blockhouses. From these recent captures, they targeted the flank of the Tel el Saba defences, causing the defenders' fire to "slacken". The Canterbury Mounted Rifles Regiment was, by now across the Wadi Khalil and firing on the rear of the Tel el Saba position, but they were held up by Ottoman defenders on the slopes of the hills overlooking the Beersheba-to-Jerusalem road. The Australian and New Zealand troops from across the Wadi Saba covered the attack on Tel el Saba by the 3rd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade) on the left, while the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment on the right closed in from the northeast.[71][142][149][150][151]

The Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment began their frontal assault at 14:05, advancing steadily in short rushes under cover of all available guns and machine guns, to gain the trenches on a hill on

the eastern flank 400 yards (370 m) east of Tel el Saba at 14:40. Here, they captured 60 prisoners and three machine guns. Two of the captured machine guns were turned against the main Ottoman redoubt, greatly weakening their position. The attacking troops of the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment reorganised before launching their final assault. They "moved forward steadily, and then rushed Tel el Saba, which fell at 15:00" when a machine gun and several prisoners were captured.[142][145] This captured machine gun was turned on escaping Ottoman soldiers running towards Beersheba. They killed about 25 Ottoman defenders on Tel el Saba and several others in the surrounding country; while 132 prisoners, four machine guns, rifles, ammunition and horses were captured. The Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment had seven killed and 200 wounded.[142] One squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment and one squadron of 3rd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade) followed the retreating Ottoman soldiers to take up a position near the junction of the wadis to the west of Tel el Saba. From there, they fired on the retiring Ottoman units moving northwest over the high ground. At the same time, one squadron of the 2nd Light Horse Regiment (1st Light Horse Brigade) advanced against a counterattack launched from Beersheba, "and drove it off".[142][143][149][151][152] Orders were received by the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade at 17:50 to put Tel el Saba "in a state of defence" against the possibility of more counterattacks.[141]

Chaytor began to move his headquarters to Tel el Saba when he saw that it had been captured at 15:00. Ottoman artillery began to target Tel el Saba a quarter-hour after its capture, and several hostile aircraft bombed the Tel. The attacks continued throughout the afternoon, and when the rest of the Anzac Divisional Headquarters moved to Tel el Saba at 18:00, they were machine-gunned by hostile aircraft.[71][145] Hostile aircraft dropped five bombs at 17:00 on the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, killing four and wounding twenty-eight Australians. Forty-six horses were killed, and sixteen wounded.[153] A bomb was dropped on the 4th Light Horse Field Ambulance about the same time: "[s]ome six horses lay disembowlled, blood running everywhere".[154]

Just before sunset, the bearers returned from watering their horses ... 16 men with two horses each. As they dismounted, a German Taube came over – for the third time in 24 hours! With the setting sun behind him, and flying very low, it was impossible to see him until he was right overhead. I then saw the observer leaning out of the cockpit and the bomb leave the plane a few hundred feet up. The bomb burst on impact with the hard ground ... a direct hit on our bearer lines! He then turned and machine-gunned the camp, which added to the confusion. In the black dust and smoke, horses were rearing and neighing, while a few galloped madly away. Men were running and shrieking. Grabbed my medical haversack and ran about 20 yards to reach Brownjohn. His left leg had been blown off ... bleeding badly. His hand was also wounded. Staff Sergeant Stewart came running and together we got a tourniquet on his thigh in about 90 seconds ... Others were attending Oates, high right arm blown off, and Hay with his left buttock cut clean away. I found Hamlyn being dressed, with a bad wound over his heart, and in great pain. Gave him a shot of morphia. Cogan, Brown and Whitfield also slightly wounded. Bill Taylor was one of the worst types of casualty – shell shock. Apparently standing between two horses, only a few feet from the bomb, he was not hit. But we placed him on a stretcher, a pathetic, incoherent, weeping wreck, unable to walk.

— *Warrant Officer P. M. Hamilton, 4th Light Horse Field Ambulance*[155]

Ottoman response[edit]

During the final attack and capture of Tel el Saba, the 1st Light Horse Brigade reported at 14:20 a squadron of Ottoman cavalry leaving Beersheba and heading north.[71] At about 14:30, they targeted the Anzac divisional headquarters with high-explosive shells fired from Ottoman field guns.[71] However, after the capture of Tel el Saba "Beersheba was now untenable and, unknown to the attackers, a withdrawal was ordered".[156] German commander of the Eighth Army Kress von Kressenstein explained:

The understrength Turkish battalion entrusted with its defence doggedly held out with great courage and in so doing fulfilled its obligation. They held up two English cavalry divisions for six hours and had prevented them from expanding their outflanking manoeuvres around the Beersheba-Hebron road.[157]

Ismet Bey, commanding the Beersheba garrison, ordered a general retirement north from Beersheba at 16:00. He withdrew to the headquarters of the 143rd Regiment (XX Corps), located

about six miles (9.7 km) north of Beersheba in the Judean Hills. At the same time, the 27th Division's engineers were ordered to destroy the Beersheba water supply.[158] The 48th Regiment, which had been deployed to defend the southern sector of the Beersheba defences from the Khalasa road to Ras Ghannam with one battalion and a machine-gun company defending Tel el Saba, was the first unit to retire. They moved to establish a rearguard position on the Wadi Saba before the Australian light horsemen captured the town.[158]

Beersheba[edit]
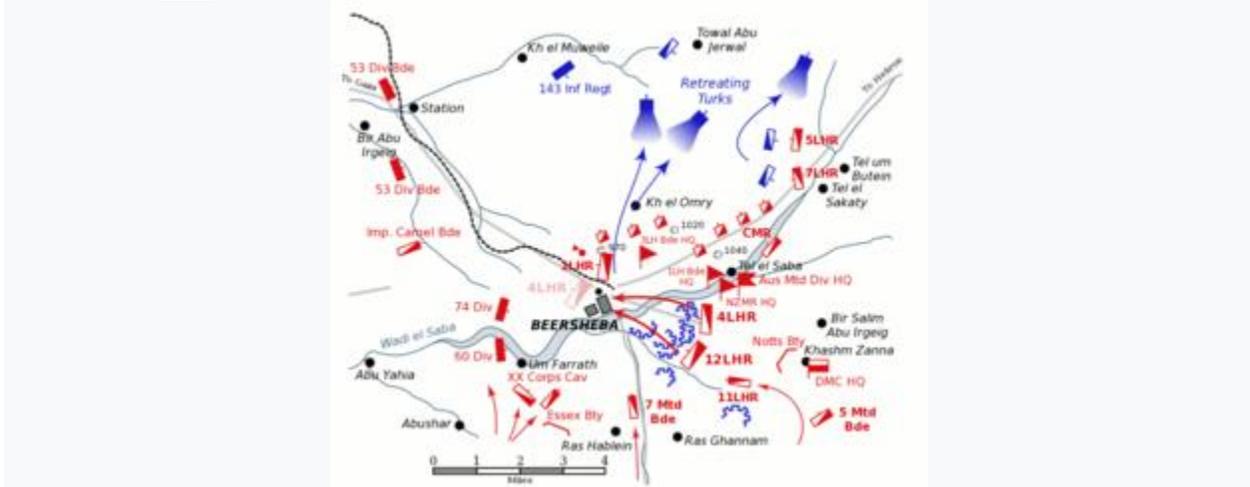
Battle of Beersheba; no evidence exists that the 4th Light Horse Regiment crossed the Wadi Saba during their attack, or the 60th (London) Division attacked south of the Wadi Saba. The Australian Mounted Division headquarters is shown where the Anzac Mounted Division headquarters moved after the capture of Tel el Saba.[Note 17]

When Tel el Saba was captured at 15:00, the Anzac Mounted Division ordered an attack on the final objective: the town of Beersheba.[145] Chaytor ordered the 1st and the 3rd Light Horse Brigades to make a dismounted advance to the Beersheba Mosque in the northern outskirts of Beersheba, on a line stretching from Point 1020 2 miles (3.2 km) northwest of Tel el Saba to Point 970 south of the town.[19][159] These brigades were deployed with the 9th and 10th Light Horse Regiments (3rd Light Horse Brigade) on the right, the 1st Light Horse Brigade in the centre, and the 4th Light Horse Brigade (Australian Mounted Division) on their left.[149][151][153]

As the 1st and 3rd Light Horse Brigades continued their dismounted attacks, they were shelled by Ottoman artillery.[160] By 17:30 the 1st Light Horse Brigade had blocked all exits from Beersheba in the mosque area, including the hospital and barracks, capturing 96 prisoners, hospital staff, a priest, medical-corps details and 89 patients. The brigade established an outpost line in this sector, having suffered seven men killed and 83 wounded, 68 horses killed and 23 wounded.[149] The 10th Light Horse Regiment (3rd Light Horse Brigade) held an outpost line north of Beersheba during the night, when a group of Ottoman soldiers approached the line at about 21:00. They were surrounded on three sides before the regiment fired on them with machine-guns, killing 50.[161]

Light Horse charge[edit]

Ottoman lancers in foreground, trench line on left and pitted defensive ground at Hareira with infantry in the distance

Allenby was at Chetwode's XX Corps headquarters at el Buqqar when he sent a telegram to Chauvel, ordering the capture of Beersheba "before nightfall".[145] However, before the telegram reached Chauvel the 4th Light Horse Brigade was preparing for their mounted attack.[122][Note 18] Aerial reconnaissance had established the feasibility of such an attack, since the trenches stretching across the direction of the charge were not reinforced by barbed wire or horse pits.[162] The commander of the 12th Light Horse Regiment said:

It was clear to me that the job had to be done before dark, so I advised galloping the place as our only chance. I had some experience of successful mounted surprise attacks on the Boer camps in the South African war.

— *Donald Cameron letter written in 1928 to Dr. C. E. W. Bean, official Australian historian*[163]

When the possibility of a charge by mounted infantry riding home, was raised in the Australian Mounted Division's Preliminary Instruction No. 1 (dated 26 October 1917); it suggested the bayonet was equal to the sword as a weapon for mounted attack "if used as a sword for pointing only". The Preliminary Instruction advised that the bayonet be hand-held, since controlling a horse during a charge would be difficult if the bayonet was fixed to the rifle.[Note 19] Divisional armourers were ordered to sharpen all bayonets "at once."[164][165]

At 11:30 Brigadier William Grant's 4th Light Horse Brigade arrived at Iswaiwin, where men and horses rested while the battle was being fought by the XX Corps and the Anzac Mounted Division, until 15:45 when they were ordered to saddle up "at once".[166][167] At 16:00 Grant sent for the commanders and seconds-in-command of the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments, issuing orders for their attack on Beersheba.[168][Note 20] The 4th Light Horse Regiment of Victorians and the New South Wales' 12th Light Horse Regiment were 4 miles (6.4 km) from Beersheba when they formed up behind a ridge about 1 mile (1.6 km) north of Hill 1280.[122][Note 21] On the left of the Anzac Mounted Division, the 4th Light Horse Regiment deployed north of the Iswaiwin-to-Beersheba road (also known as the Black W road), with the 12th Light Horse Regiment south of the road on their left. They were armed with "neither sword nor lance [but] ... with bayonets in their hands".[162][168] The regiment's "A", "B" and "C" squadrons formed three squadron lines (in that order) between 300 and 500 yards (270 and 460 m) apart, each squadron line extended to 5 yards (4.6 m). One subsection of the 4th Machine Gun Squadron was attached to each regiment,[162][167][169][Note 22] although Lieutenant Colonel Murray Bourchier (commander of the 4th Light Horse Regiment which fought in the trenches and redoubt) said "The Hotchkiss guns were useless, the fast pace affording no time to get them into action".[170]
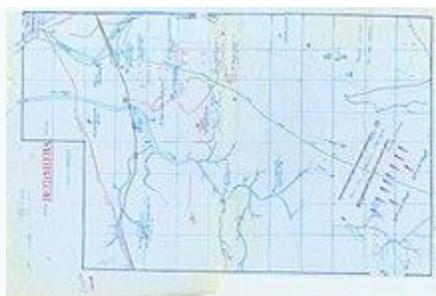
4th Light Horse Brigade War Diary sketch map, showing Ottoman defences in red and deployment of light horse regiments.[Note 23]

While "direction was given to the movement" by Grant[Note 24] and his brigade major, with Bourchier and Cameron leading their regiments[171] the first half-mile was covered at a walk.[172] Afterwards, Grant joined the reserve squadrons and regimental headquarters, while the regimental commanders remained "never far behind the vanguard";[173] "[a]t 16:30 the two regiments moved off at the trot, deploying at once".[162] As the leading squadrons, preceded by scouts 70 to 80 yards (64 to 73 m) in

front, came within range of Ottoman riflemen manning the defences "directly in their track" a number of horses were hit by sustained rapid fire.[174]

In these Ottoman trenches (primarily facing south, with a few shallow trenches facing east),[175] the defenders saw the light horsemen charge and "opened fire with shrapnel on the 4th and 12th Regiments immediately they deployed".[173] As the advance became a gallop, the 12th Light Horse Regiment was fired from the trenches on Ras Ghannam.[176] The Notts Battery opened fire on machine-gunners in the trenches at Ras Ghannam; after a second shot, the Ottoman soldiers were seen in retreat.[169][177] The two regiments had ridden nearly 2 miles (3.2 km) when the 12th Light Horse Regiment (on the left) was targeted by heavy machine-gun fire from the direction of Hill 1180, "[c]oming from an effective range which could have proved destructive; but the vigilant officers of the Essex Battery ... got the range at once, and ... put them out of action with the first few shells".[173] The charging regiments were again fired on about 1 mile (1.6 km) east of Beersheba. Here the Notts Battery silenced and drove out a garrison in a redoubt at Point 980 (indicated in red on the brigade's war-diary sketch map) which was enfilading the charge.[178] The remainder of the 4th Machine Gun Squadron and the reserve squadron of the 12th Light Horse Regiment, advanced towards Point 980 and the town in the wadi on the left, to protect the left flank of the charging regiments.[169]

I consider that the success was due to the rapidity with which the movement was carried out. Owing to the volume of fire brought to bear from the enemy's position by machine-guns and rifles, a dismounted attack would have resulted in a much greater number of casualties. It was noticed also that the morale of the enemy was greatly shaken through our troops galloping over his positions thereby causing his riflemen and machine gunners to lose all control of fire discipline. When the troops came within short range of the trenches the enemy seemed to direct almost all his fire at the horses.

— *Lieutenant Colonel M. Bourchier, commander of the 4th Light Horse Regiment*[179]

4th Light Horse Regiment attacks trenches[edit]

The charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba, 1917, painted by George Lambert in 1920, shows troopers with bayonets in their hands and .303 rifles slung across their backs. Veterans complained that the formidable defences and determined Ottoman defenders are missing.[180]

[A] great sight suddenly sprung up on our left, lines and lines of horsemen moving. The Turks were on the run and the Aus. Div. was after them. We could see the horses jumping the trenches, dust everywhere.

— *James McCarroll (New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade) at the time on Tel el Saba*[181]

As the 4th Light Horse Regiment approached the fortifications directly in front of them, their leading squadron jumped the advance trenches at the gallop and the main 10-foot-deep (3.0 m), 4-foot-wide (1.2 m) trenches, defended by Ottoman soldiers. The leading squadron then dismounted in an area of tents and dugouts in the rear, where they were joined by a troop of the 12th Light Horse Regiment. While the led horses were galloped to cover, the troopers launched a dismounted attack on the trenches and dugouts, killing between 30 and 40, before the remainder surrendered.[182] The defenders "fought grimly, and a considerable number were killed",[175] while four Gallipoli veterans were shot dead as they dismounted a few feet from the Ottoman trenches.[183] As the second line of squadrons approached the Ottoman trenches, one of the troops in "B" squadron dismounted, to attack and capture the advance trench before continuing to support the attack on the main

trenches.[184] Stretcher-bearers rode forward, working amidst the dismounted fighting around the earthworks, where one was shot dead at close range.[183] After capturing the redoubt east of Beersheba, it was consolidated by the 4th Light Horse Regiment, which held the area overnight in case of counterattack.[168]

12th Light Horse Regiment captures Beersheba[edit]
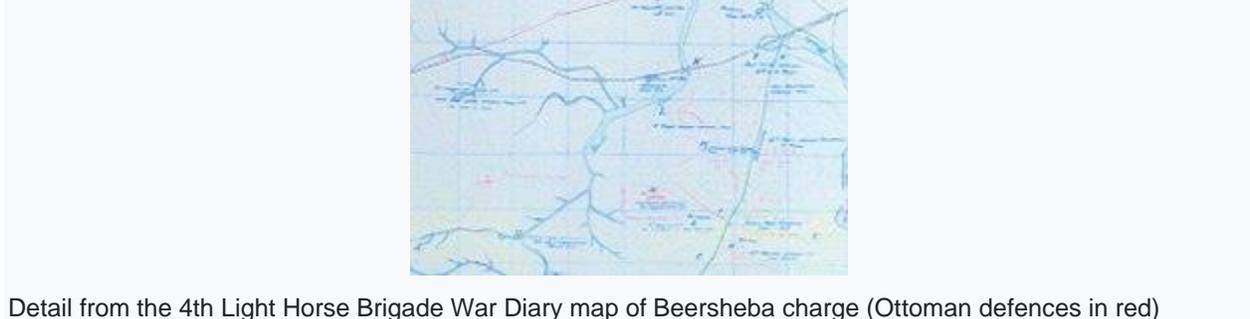
Detail from the 4th Light Horse Brigade War Diary map of Beersheba charge (Ottoman defences in red)

When the leading squadrons charged up to the trenches and the redoubt, the squadron commander and about 12 troopers of 12th Light Horse Regiment, dismounted to attack with rifle and bayonet, while the remainder of the regiment continued to gallop past the redoubt on the right, to ride through a gap in the defensive line.[184][Note 25] When the second line squadron of the 12th Light Horse Regiment approached the trenches and redoubt, most of the squadron continued mounted riding through the gap. However, as both squadron commanders had dismounted to fight in the trenches and earthworks, the troopers who continued mounted were led by Captains Robey and Davies. These leading troops stopped to assemble at a point near where the road from Asluj crossed the Wadi Saba,[Note 26] behind the main Ottoman defences. When Robey and Davies mounted troopers were reorganised, they rode along the Asluj road into Beersheba in force, to capture the town.[168][184]

When they reached a red brick building in Beersheba near the Mosque, Robey's squadron rode towards the western side of the town, towards the north, to reach a point about 200 yards (180 m) south of the railway station, then they proceeded across the railway line before turning to the right, to finish up near an oval roofed building on the northern outskirts of the town. Meanwhile, Davies' squadron rode up the main street to join Robey on the northern outskirts. Here both squadrons turned about, to stop and capture an Ottoman column, attempting to escape Beersheba. Most of the column surrendered along with nine guns. One troop "silenced" Ottoman soldiers holding trenches east of Beersheba when about 60 of them tried to escape. They were recaptured by a troop from the 12th Light Horse Regiment's "C" Squadron. A large proportion of the Ottoman troops in the town, were eventually killed or captured.[168][185][186] It has been estimated more than half the Ottoman dismounted troops in Beersheba, were captured or killed, while 15 of the 28 guns in the town were captured.[187] The 12th Light Horse Regiment handed over 37 officers and 63 other ranks prisoners to Brigade Headquarters at 23:00 with four guns and transport.[166] Together the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments captured 1,148 prisoners, 10 field guns, four machine guns, a huge quantity of military stores, an aerodrome, and railway rolling stock. Total captures by Desert Mounted Corps for the day amounted to 1,528 prisoners.[188] All available engineer units were sent to develop the wells in the town but the supply was not great. Fortunately on 25 October there had been thunderstorms which left pools of water over a wide area from which the horses were watered.[189]

The prisoners were moved to an area, near the railway viaduct on the outskirts of Beersheba, where they were assembled and counted. Only the 3rd Cavalry Division had managed to withdraw earlier in the day. Meanwhile, the 12th Light Horse Regiment established all round defensive positions, including picquets guarding the pumping station which were withdrawn at 23:00, when brigade headquarters arrived, and took over garrisoning duties. A patrol of one NCO and eight men made a reconnaissance at 23:00, towards the southwest returning at 03:00, with 23 prisoners to report "All Clear." The 12th Light Horse Regiment bivouacked at 24:00 in Beersheba before being ordered at 04:00 to stand to arms and saddled up.[168][185][186]

The capture of Beersheba by the 12th Light Horse Regiment has been largely written out of history. "The honor and the glory of securing the town went to the 4th Australian Light Horse in a cavalry charge that in notoriety ranks with the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava in 1854."[190] Allenby

overlooks the 12th Light Horse Regiment's capture of Beersheba in his report to Wigram intended for the King. According to him, only the 4th Light Horse Regiment, charged and captured the town. "Time was short, and the Brigade Commander, Brigadier–General Grant DSO, sent his leading regiment to charge the trenches. This Regiment, the 4th Light Horse, galloped over the trenches, which were 8 feet deep and 4 feet wide, and full of Turks. This ended all resistance, and put a neat finish to the battle."[191] His Despatches of 16 December 1917 to the Secretary of State for War, republished in *The London Gazette* do not identify further, the "Australian Light Horse," be they regiments or brigades.[192]

Supporting units[edit]

Chauvel ordered the 5th and 7th Mounted Brigades to move in support by following the charge, with the 7th Mounted Brigade covering the left as it advanced from the direction of Ras Ghannam; and at 16:40, the 11th Light Horse Regiment was ordered by the 4th Light Horse Brigade to advance in support.[169][176][193] These supporting units have been described as the 11th Light Horse Regiment "follow[ing] at the trot, and then came FitzGerald's 5th Mounted Brigade, while away on the left the 7th Mounted Brigade advanced briskly along the Khalasa road", there was no "substantial following in close support.[173]

The 11th Light Horse Regiment's 489 troopers and 23 officers were about 2 miles (3.2 km) to the southwest, covering the outpost line connecting the Australian Mounted Division with the 7th Mounted Brigade across the Iswaiwin-to-Beersheba road. They had replaced the 8th Light Horse Regiment (3rd Light Horse Brigade) at 15:45.[122][169][193] At 17:30 the 11th Light Horse Regiment moved to rejoin the 4th Light Horse Brigade headquarters, arriving in Beersheba at 19:30. The regiment then moved to the western and northern edges of the town, to man an outpost line against a counterattack.[194]

The 5th Mounted Brigade, trained and armed for a mounted attack, was "close behind Chauvel's headquarters," while the 4th Light Horse Brigade was "nearer Beersheba", when the decision to charge was made.[195][196] "Chauvel had hesitated for a moment whether to employ the 5th Mounted Brigade, which was in reserve and was armed with the sword unlike the Australians, but as the 4th Light Horse Brigade was close in he decided that it should attack."[197] Although the 5th Mounted Brigade was ordered to advance on Beersheba in the rear of the 4th Light Horse Brigade, the Worcestershire Yeomanry saddled up and rode to water at Hannam at 16:00. The regiment eventually "moved off as rearguard to Bde (5th Mounted Brigade)" at 21:30, arriving in Beersheba at 00:30 on 1 November.[176][198]

The 7th Mounted Brigade, with one section of the Light Armoured Motor Battery and one Ford car attached, had ridden out of Esani at 20:00 on 30 October across country (via Itweil el Semin) to Ras Ghannam on the Asluj-to-Beersheba road. They were about 3 miles (4.8 km) south of Beersheba, when they established links with the Desert Mounted Corps on the right and the XX Corps on the left, at the Khalasa-to-Beersheba road.[19][199][200][201] Their orders were to hold a line covering Point 1210, 1.5 miles (2.4 km) south of Ras Ghannam and Gos en Naam.[202] They established observation posts on a line 1 mile (1.6 km) south of Ras Ghannam stretching to Gos en Naam, established communications with the Australian Mounted Division south-west of Khashim Zanna at 09:00, and was in close touch with the XX Corps Cavalry Regiment. The remainder of the brigade assembled south of their outpost line, "ready to act."[201][203] At about 10:00 the 8th Light Horse Regiment (3rd Light Horse Brigade) reported that its headquarters were at Point 1180, that Ras Ghannam was strongly defended, and that they were in touch with the 7th Mounted Brigade on their left. The 7th Mounted reported at 13:45 that their battery had shelled the opposition *en masse* on the northern slopes of Ras Ghannam.[71]

[Ottoman flag](#) souvenired by Australian Sergeant James Offord after the Battle of Beersheba, 1917

At 16:00, when the Ottoman garrison was reported to have begun its retreat from Beersheba, the 7th Mounted Brigade received orders to cooperate (from the direction of Ras Ghannam) in the Australian Mounted Division attack on Beersheba. Verbal orders to cooperate in the attack were also received by the 7th Mounted Brigade from the 4th Light Horse Brigade half-an-hour later. The leading squadron of the Sherwood Rangers Regiment pushed forward with a squadron of the [Notts Hussars](#), which had been holding the line from Point 1210 to Ras Ghannam. They arrived at Ras Ghannam at 16:50 to find the defenders gone "without firing a shot".[158][178][201][204] The rest of the [Sherwood Rangers Regiment](#) were occupying the trenches east of Ras Ghannam when they were informed that Beersheba had been captured by the 4th Light Horse Brigade. Then the 7th Mounted Brigade rode unopposed down the Asluj road into Beersheba to water their horses at about 23:00.[178][201][Note 27]

Casualties[edit]

The XX Corps captured 419 prisoners while Desert Mounted Corps captured 1,528 Ottoman soldiers.[205] Ottoman casualties were believed to be about half that number,[1] while around 500 dead were found on the battlefield.[206]

The heaviest Allied losses were suffered by the British infantry of XX Corps (which lost 116 killed in action),[207] although the total number of the British force killed during the battle was 171.[208] The 4th Light Horse Brigade suffered a total of 35 killed and 39 wounded; of these, the 12th Light Horse Regiment suffered 20 killed and 19 wounded.[166][178] Most of the wounded light horsemen fell during the charge, with the high percentage of killed-to-wounded occurring during hand-to-hand fighting in the trenches.[187][209]

Aftermath[edit]

Main articles: [Battle of Tel el Khuweilfe](#), [Battle of Hareira and Sheria](#), [Third Battle of Gaza](#), [Charge at Sheria](#), [Charge at Huj](#), [Battle of Mughar Ridge](#), and [Battle of Jerusalem (1917)](#)

The XX Corps and Desert Mounted Corps won a tactical victory of manoeuvre, forcing the Ottoman garrison at Beersheba to withdraw.[175][210] However, although the 53rd (Welsh) Division—with one brigade of the 10th (Irish) Division attached—had been deployed to prevent Ottoman units escaping the battle, the Beersheba garrison was able to withdraw "up the Gaza road and to the north" into the Judean Hills, along the road towards Hebron, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.[211] And although the Beersheba garrison suffered many casualties; "stubborn fighting" by strong Ottoman rearguards at Hareira, Tel es Sheria and Tel el Khuweilfe, delayed the EEF for seven days, as they continued to hold the remainder of the Gaza line.[212] The Ottoman III Corps headquarters (which had withdrawn from Beersheba to Tel es Sheria during the battle) moved back to support the defence of the road to Hebron at Dhahriye, followed by the 143rd Regiment (24th Division) and 1,500 rifles of the former Beersheba Group (which had been reorganised at Tel es Sheria). The latter group moved to reinforce the defence of Tel el Khuweilfe, where the battle began on 1 November.[213]

On 1 November attacks by the Anzac Mounted Division towards Tel el Khuweilfe and the road to Hebron and Jerusalem concerned the Ottoman defenders, who feared that a major cavalry attack could breakthrough the Ottoman line and capture the Seventh Army headquarters at Hebron.[214] However, the EEF planned to break the Ottoman line in the centre, at Hareira and Sheria.[215] As the fighting at Khuweilfe continued, a minor attack on Gaza was made overnight on 1/2 November, while the main attacks on the centre at the Battle of Hareira and Sheria began on 6

November. Gaza was found to have been evacuated by its Ottoman defenders early on 7 November and Hareira was also captured that morning. After strong resistance against the 60th (London) Division's attacks against the Ottoman defenders at Sheria (supported by a light-horse charge on 7 November), the position was captured by infantry just before dusk on 7 November.[216]

The British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour contacted Baron Rothschild, a wealthy banker and head of the British branch of European Jewish causes, on 2 November (two days after the capture of Beersheba). In the Balfour Declaration, he proposed a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, published in *The Times* on 9 November 1917.[217] Also on 2 November, while congratulating Allenby for the victory at Beersheba, the War Office informed him that he was unlikely to receive reinforcements:

I wish to congratulate you, all concerned upon your success, which it is to be hoped you will be able to develop ... to press the Turks opposed to you to the fullest extent of your resources, so as to force the enemy to divert troops to Palestine and thus relieve pressure upon Maude [in Mesopotamia], and to take advantage of Arab situation. In deciding on the extent to which you will be able to carry out safely the policy, you will be guided by the fact that an increase in the forces now at your disposal, is improbable.

— *Robertson to Allenby (received 2 November 1917)*[218]

Henry Gullett's claim that "[f]rom then on to the end of the war the Turks never forgot Beersheba" and that the German and Ottoman infantry, "when galloped, as ... they frequently were, invariably shot wildly and surrendered early in the conflict,"[219] was disproved when solid Ottoman defence met the 11th and 12th Light Horse Regiments' charge during fighting for Sheria on 7 November, and the yeomanry's charge at Huj on 8 November 1917.[220][221][222]

After Gaza was occupied on 7 November, the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade (XXI Corps) rode through the ruins of Gaza to reach Beit Hanun at 13:00;[223] and the 157th Brigade (52nd Division) began the infantry pursuit along the Mediterranean shore, to reach Sheikh Hasan by 12:15.[224] In the centre of the line the Anzac Mounted Division found a gap on the eastern side of Sheria to begin their pursuit at daylight on 7 November.[225] After being held up at Sheria, the Australian Mounted Division and the 60th (London) Division advanced to capture Huj on 8 November.[226][227] By that evening, all the Ottoman positions which had made up the Gaza-to-Beersheba line had been captured, and the erstwhile defenders were in full retreat.[

As this is the last newsletter for 2021, have a Merry Christmas and hope that 2022 is free of lockdowns and pandemic panics!!!!!!!

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