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HISTORY OF ROYAL FLYING CORPS IN SINAI & PALESTINE

1917.

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HISTORY OF THE R. F. C.

--- in ---

SINAI & PALESTINE during 1917.

DISTRIBUTION.



On January 1st. the ROYAL FLYING CORPS in SINAI was represented by the 5th Wing, which was at that time composed of Headquarters and 2 Squadron, No.14 and No.67 (Australian). The whole Wing was concentrated at MUSTABIG 29 miles West of EL ARISH, with the exception of one Flight of No.14 Squadron detached for service in ARABIA, and stationed at RABEGH on the RED SEA Coast.

During January Wing Headquarters and both Squadrons were transferred to KILO 143 (UJRET EL ZOL) about 8 miles West of EL ARISH, where they remained until March 25th. Between the latter date and April 5th the whole Wing was transferred to R A F A. Meanwhile, a Flight of No.14 Squadron was transferred to DEIR EL BELAH on the 2nd April, followed during the same month by the remainder of the Squadron and Advanced Wing Headquarters.

By the end of June the whole Wing was concentrated at DEIR EL BELAH.

In August, 'C' Flight of No.14 Squadron rejoined the Squadron from ARABIA (KILO 133, 16/8/17; DEIR EL BELAH, 9/9/17). During the same month the 21st BALLOON COMPANY and Balloon Sections 49 and 50 were attached to 5th Wing, and sites were selected for balloons at UM JERRAR (4/8/17) and SHEIKH SHABASI (19/9/17).

During September the formation of No.111 Squadron (fighting Squadron) was completed; all three flights were mobilised and at DEIR EL BELAH by the end of the month, No.67 Squadron, A.F.C., having been transferred to a new aerodrome at WELI SHEIKH NURAN (17/9/17). On September 9th a Special Service Flight of No.14 Squadron left DEIR EL BELAH for service at AKABA.

'B' Flight of No.113 Squadron (forming at ISMAILIA) also arrived at NURAN and was placed under the orders of the 5th Wing (22/9/17).

On 5th October 40th WING was created and took over No.67 Squadron, A.F.C., and No.111 Squadron.

5th WING movements after that date are not officially known to the writer.

40th WING moved to JULIS during DECEMBER (move completed 13/12/17).

ATTACHMENTS OF 5TH & 40TH WINGS.

At the beginning of 1917 5TH WING was administratively under the orders of MIDDLE EAST BRIGADE (Cairo), and was attached to DESERT COLUMN (El Arish).

/On

On March 31st the Wing was attached to EASTERN FORCE (El Arish).

On the 12th August EASTERN FORCE ceased to exist and the Wing received instructions to report direct to ADVANCED C.H.Q.

After 5th October 5th and 40th WINGS both came under direct orders of PALESTINE BRIGADE, R.F.C.

The Year 1917 may conveniently be divided into four Periods :-

(1). JANUARY 1st to MARCH 8th, including the BATTLE of RAFA, THE occupation of the NURAN Position by the enemy and its evacuation.

(2). MARCH 9th to APRIL 20th, including the preparations for the attack on GAZA, and the battles on the 25th-28th March, and on the 17th-19th April.

(3). APRIL 21st to OCTOBER 27th, a period of trench warfare.

(4). OCTOBER 27th to DECEMBER 31st, including the attack on and capture of BEERSHEBA, TEL EL SHERIA, GAZA, and the subsequent advance through SOUTHERN PALESTINE.

1 ST PERIOD.

RESUME OF EVENTS.

On the 1st January information as to the enemy obtained by R.F.C. reports were as follows :-

An entrenched enemy force of about 2000 was stationed at R A F A (the boundary post between SINAI & PALESTINE) some 29 miles East of EL ARISH. The enemy's main base was at BEERSHEBA on the SOUTH PALESTINE Strategic Railway where there was a garrison of about 3200, there was a small garrison at KOSSALMA the railhead 47½ miles South of BEERSHEBA on the SINAI Border and further North another garrison of about 2 battalions at A U J A 33 miles South of BEERSHEBA. All enemy posts in the SINAI PENINSULA had been evacuated at the end of 1916 though two were subsequently reoccupied for a short time.

The main British Force was concentrated at EL ARISH and patrols were operating Eastwards to R A F A and Southwards down the WADI EL ARISH to ABU AWEIGILA.

On the 9th January our Mounted Troops moved out to R A F A and surrounded the garrison (numbering 2000 men) which capitulated before nightfall. After the battle our troops withdrew to EL ARISH and during the remainder of January and February they gradually advanced Eastwards parri passu with the railway, which was being constructed towards RAFA.

The following information (down to the evacuation of NURAN) is entirely obtained from R.F.C. reports as there was absolutely no touch during this period between our forces and the enemy troops in any of the places mentioned :-

On January the 7th. an enemy force took up a position at WELI-SHEIKH-NURAN which commanded the Junction of the roads from TEL-EL-SHARIA and RAFA and BEERSHEBA. The position was rapidly fortified and extended in a Southerly direction, so as to command the two main roads leaving to the WADI-CHUZZE from RAFA and KARM-LEN-MUSLEH respectively and before long had developed into the most extensive series of works which had been seen on this front. They appeared to be occupied by a force of at least 13000 men. By the middle of January the enemy's line ran from GAZA where there was a small Garrison, down the WADI-CHUZZE past KHALASSA to ASLUJ with forward posts at AUJA on the railway and at KHAN-YUNUS and the bulk of his forces concentrated at WELI-SHEIKH-NURAN and SHELLAL, his bases of supply being at BEERSHEBA and SHARIA. Until the end of February this situation was practically stationary. A light railway was constructed from SHARIA to SHELLAL during February and the Wadi at SHELLAL was bridged. On the 26th. February the enemy withdrew from AUJA and on the night of 4th/5th. March they suddenly evacuated the NURAN position and withdrew the bulk of his force to the neighbourhood of HUJ, leaving garrisons at GAZA, BELAH, TEL-EL-JEMMI, HARSIRA, IRJEIG and BEERSHEBA.

Minor operations were carried out during the period by Columns from SUZZE and ISMAILIA against NEKHL and from EL-ARISH against HASSANA, both posts having been re-occupied by the enemy since the beginning of the year. The enemy in the former place withdrew before the advance of our troops, the column from ARISH surprised and captured the post at HASSANA.

Before the end of February our railway had reached SHEIKH-ZOWAID (19 miles East of ARISH).

WORK OF THE R.F.C. DURING THE PERIOD.

Reconnaissance. From the beginning of the year the R.F.C. was operating very largely in new country. During January the whole of SOUTHERN PALESTINE as far north as RAMLEH and as far East as the JORDAN was reconnoitred. JERUSALEM, JERICHO, BETHLEHEM and NEFFON were visited on the 29th. (Flight of 263 miles lasting over 4 hours), and the nucleus of the defences of JERUSALEM were so well located that when these defences were subsequently examined in the following November during our advance the report of January 29th. was found to be entirely accurate.

As stated above, practically all reliable information concerning the enemy during the period was obtained by the R.F.C. and this work was carried out with the greatest regularity in spite of the fact that the enemy was equipped with machines superior to ours in armament, speed and climb.

Contact Work. Contact work was carried out continuously from dawn to 1830 during the battle of RAFA during the operations to NEKHL and HASSANA referred to above, machines co-operated with all three Columns, a special Detachment being sent to ISMAILIA for the purpose of working with the troops attacking NEKHL. Contact work was also carried out in a minor operation towards KHAN-YUNUS but opportunities for this work were few.

Artillery The battle of RAFA was the first occasion on which our Aeroplanes co-operated with the Artillery in real operations. The method employed was that of the Smoke Ball, and general corrections in reference to specified targets lettered on the plan, no squared maps being available.

During the HASSANA operations, ambulance work was added to the other duties of the R.F.C. a severely wounded man requiring an immediate operation was brought back to the Aerodrome, a distance of 44 miles over the Desert.

Jaffa Co-operation. On February 25th. the R.F.C. co-operated with the French Battle-Ship "REQUIN" in the bombardment of JAFFA. In order to arrive punctually at the rendezvous, which was just under 100 miles from our Aerodrome, our machines were obliged to start $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour before sunrise and fly for an hour and half in the dark. In spite of these difficulties the two machines arrived within five minutes of the appointed time and co-operation was successfully carried out.

Practice co-operation was carried out with the Artillery throughout the period.

Map making and Photography. The inadequacy of the local maps had in 1916 shown the necessity of supplementing them by photography, and in 1917 a close co-operation was entered into by the Wing and the Topographical Section at G.H.Q. (later the Survey Coy. R.E.) with the object of remedying the deficiency.

The plans issued for the battle of RAFA, lettered for the purpose of Artillery co-operation, were entirely prepared by the Photographic Department of the Wing, but the work of mapping the NURAN position was placed in the hands of the Topographical Section the Wing experts helping whenever necessary with their experience in interpreting air photographs. The whole NURAN Position was photographed and mapped in the course of February.

About the same period a detailed map of GAZA Town was prepared from air Photographs and the film camera was made use of to determine the course of the main road from LAIROUN through JUNCTION STATION to GAZA.

Bombing and Offensive. During January almost daily attacks were made on the enemy's communications either with bombs or machine gun fire and so successful were the attacks on BEERSHEBA that the enemy removed the Head Quarters of his Flying Corps from that place and withdrew the bulk of his machines to an unknown destination. ϕ In February however, the progress of our railway was considered of such paramount importance that it was decided to suspend active bombing operations for the time being, as the enemy had formed the habit of retaliating upon our Egyptian Labour Corps with disastrous effect upon its moral. The order, was however, relaxed upon five occasions when very successful attacks were made on BEERSHEBA and RAMLEH Aerodromes $\%.$

Between the 5th and 9th March the R.F.C. was called upon to carry on a continuous offensive against the troops and communications of the enemy immediately after his withdrawal from the NURAN position. During the four days his rolling stock, railway stations and bridges, cavalry, infantry and horse lines were constantly attacked with bombs and machine gun fire both by day and by night.

Hostile aircraft during the period were not particularly active. Our machines were engaged altogether 10 times without any decisive results.

Casualties.

24/1/17.	Lieut. T.G.N. HILLS.	Wounded, A.A. Fire.
25/3/17.	Lieut. A.J.L. BARLOW.	Prisoner, brought
5/3/17.	Lieut. E.A. FLOYER.	down by A.A. fire.
5/3/17.	Lieut. A.V. PALMER.	" " "

ϕ The R.F.C. proceeded at once to search for his new aerodrome which was discovered at RAMLEH on January 29th.

$\%$ Prisoners subsequently reported that 3 enemy machines were destroyed in the raids on the 14th & 15th.

2 N D P E R I O D .

RESUME OF EVENTS.

Between the 9th March and 25th March the enemy strengthened his defences around GAZA, HAREIRA and BEERSHEBA and proceeded with the construction of a branch railway from the main line at TIME, through KUSTINE towards GAZA (first reported by the R.F.C. March 7th when railroad was only 1 mile from TIME).

On the 26th our forces attacked and surrounded GAZA, but they were withdrawn on the following morning and on the 28th the whole of our force was withdrawn to the South bank of the GHUZZE.

About the 9th April large reinforcements were seen to the North of the GAZA-HAREIRA Road.

On the 17th April the MANSUFA and SHEIKH ABBAS Ridges were attacked and carried by our troops and on the 19th our line was further advanced on the right to SHEIKH AJLIN and SAMSON Ridge.

WORK OF THE R.F.C.

From the 9th to 25th March the R.F.C. reconnoitred both tactical areas daily, photographs were taken of the GAZA, HAREIRA & BEERSHEBA Defences and trench maps were prepared of the two latter in anticipation of those issued by the Topographical Section. The course of the railway from SHERIA to JUNCTION STATION was also determined by our photography. Bomb attacks were made on JUNCTION STATION, RAMLEN and the railway line North of the WADI EL HESI.

The First Battle of GAZA. Two flights of No. 67 (Australian) Squadron were established at RAFA with a view to co-operating in the GAZA operations, the remaining machines of the Wing operating daily from RAFA and returning to KILO 143 in the evening. The duties of the Wing during the Battle consisted in contact patrol work, artillery co-operation, strategical reconnaissance, bombing and hostile aircraft patrol. All these duties were carried out successfully. Five separate bodies of enemy reinforcements were reported as concentrating on GAZA on the afternoon of the 26th, on the morning of the 27th our machines detected a column of infantry 6 miles long marching on GAZA from BUREIR and five other bodies were located, also converging on the town. A force of 3000 was located near SHEIKH ABBAS in the afternoon, and its presence reported in time to enable reinforcements to be brought up to this point.

A great deal of bombing was done on the 27th and throughout the operations enemy troops were attacked with machine gun fire from the air.

Twenty artillery co-operation flights were made during the three days, particularly good results against enemy infantry in massed formation being obtained on the 27th when on three separate occasions the fire of our sixty-pounders was directed on targets of this nature and casualties amounting to about fifty per cent inflicted on the troops.

During the three days enemy aircraft were particularly active, several indecisive combats occurring on each day. On the 26th a two-seater biplane was driven down out of control by one of our Martinsydes and seen to crash on landing near BEERSHEBA. On the 27th one of our artillery machines was driven down, pilot and observer both being wounded, the former fatally.

Between the 1st and 2nd Battles of GAZA. Artillery work was now added to the ordinary routine of tactical and strategical reconnaissance, co-operation taking place daily in the registration of targets. At the same time a very large number of photographs were being taken to enable the 1/40,000 Map of GAZA which was being compiled from air photographs to be brought up to date.

/Hostile

Hostile aircraft was active at this time. On the early morning of the 12th enemy machines made a series of bomb raids on the aerodrome at RAFA, causing 10 casualties but doing no material damage. On the 15th April one of our machines was attacked by 5 enemy aircraft and shot down outside our lines, the enemy then proceeding to bomb the machine but without seriously damaging it. Both pilot and machine were rescued.

The Second Battle of GAZA.

The chief feature in these operations from the point of view of the R.F.C. was the very great increase in the amount of co-operation with Artillery. Conditions had begun approximate to those of the French Front with the result that it was possible to adopt European methods and to use map co-ordinates with entirely satisfactory results. That the map was sufficiently detailed for use of co-ordinates in artillery work was entirely due to aeroplane photographs. Between the 17th and 19th April 38 artillery co-operation flights were made. Tactical reconnaissances was practically continuous throughout the hours of daylight during the operations, in spite of adverse weather conditions on the second and third days and as many as four strategical reconnaissances were made on one day. On the 20th the R.F.C. were the means of preventing the enemy from making a counter-attack on our right. A reconnaissance machine having reported about 2000 infantry and 800 cavalry assembled in a wadi near HAREIRA, four machines were immediately despatched to deal with this force which they were fortunate enough to find in massed formation and which they attacked with bombs and scattered to the four winds, causing extremely heavy casualties.

Several combats took place, in one of them an enemy machine, which was driven down near SHERIA, landed on the bank of the wadi and was seen to run into and crash in the wadi. One of the pilots who failed to return was believed from accounts which were received later to have been shot down in an air fight. The remaining combats were of an indecisive character.

Casualties.

9/3/17.	Lieut. HEATHCOTE, A.F.C.	Missing, believed prisoner of war.
20/3/17.	Lieut. MACHAMARA, A.F.C.	Wounded.
26/3/17.	Capt. B. DEMPSEY, R.F.C.	Wounded in aeroplane accident.
27/3/17.	Capt. G.N. WILLIAMSON, 9th Manch. R. attd. R.F.C.,	Killed in aeroplane accident.
27/3/17.	Lieut. GIBBS, R.F.C.	Killed in aeroplane accident.
28/3/17.	Lieut. R.H. HYAM, A.F.C.	Died of wounds received in air combat.
28/3/17.	Capt. RUTHERFORD, A.F.C.	Wounded in air combat.
28/3/17.	Lieut. G.C. BELL-CLARKE, R.F.C.	Wounded in air combat.
12/4/17.	Capt. C.W. COX, R.F.C.	Killed in enemy bomb raid on RAFA.
12/4/17.	2 Other Ranks.	" "
"	7 " "	Wounded.
19/4/17.	Capt. EVAN, R.F.C.	Missing believed killed in air combat.
20/4/17.	Lieut. STEELE, A.F.C.	Missing believed killed by A.A. fire.

3 rd. PERIOD.

RESUME OF EVENTS.

The Turkish Army established itself on a line from GAZA to HAREIRA and steadily worked at the extension and improvements of this line throughout the six months, carrying the HAREIRA defences South & East to KAUWUKAH and across the railway. There were outpost garrisons at IRGEIG, BEERSHEBA & ASLUJ.

/The

The garrison at ASLUJ was withdrawn at the end of April. REERSHEBA was strongly garrisoned throughout. During May and June rapid progress was made with the FINE-GAZA Railway. On June 16th the R.F.C. reported Railroad at BEIT HANUN and this place became the Southern terminus. A branch line was also constructed South of the WADI HESI to NEJED and HUIJ.

During the six months our troops held practically without alteration the line occupied by them after the second Battle of GAZA and a railway was being constructed from RAFA to SHELLAL and TEL EL FARA.

WORK OF THE R.F.C.

Artillery and Contact Work. On the left where conditions of trench warfare prevailed wireless machines co-operated daily with the Artillery. On the right where there was a wide extent of "No-man's Land", there were opportunities for contact work during minor operations and reconnaissances by our cavalry and occasional artillery co-operation.

The most important occasion for contact work was on the 21st-23rd May when our machines co-operated with the columns which destroyed the railway line and bridges from AUJA to ASLUJ.

Reconnaissance. Reconnaissance of the tactical area was carried out twice daily during this period and resolved itself into an accurate daily report on the enemy trench line, all changes being reported and subsequently recorded by photography. Portions of the strategical area were reconnoitred daily and changes in enemy dispositions were carefully followed by means of a detailed tabulation of the strength of camps.

Combats in the Air. From May to June combats in the air were mainly of an indecisive character. Generally speaking the enemy was at an advantage over his own lines owing to the superior speed, climb and armament of his machines. Towards the end of May the Wing was in possession of two DE HAVILLAND scouts, followed in June by the arrival of VICKERS' BULLETS and a couple of BRISTOL MONOPLANES. The presence of these machines at once produced a marked change and forced the enemy to curtail his reconnaissances and to carry them out at a height from which no effective reconnaissance was possible. Our scouts were, however, unsuited to long distance flights, and the machines of No. 67 Squadron, on strategical reconnaissances, escorted by Martinsydes, continued to be at a disadvantage against the ALBATROS Scouts and two-seater machines of the enemy. This disparity was to a certain extent remedied by the arrival of BE.12a machines during the month of June, and later it was decided to escort the strategical with VICKERS' BULLETS, after which our superiority was sufficiently established to enable all work to be carried on without effective interference from the enemy. By the end of September the formation of No. 111 Squadron was completed and the BRISTOL FIGHTERS had begun to arrive. On the 7th October, at which time there were five serviceable BRISTOLS with the Squadron, the first offensive patrol was made with BRISTOLS and on the following day an enemy scout was brought down within our lines for the first time on this front, both pilot and observer being captured. Another enemy machine, a scout, was shot down within our lines on the 18th the pilot being killed and this record of successes was well maintained during the succeeding period.

¶ (Page 6) From enquiries made subsequently it was definitely established that an enemy machine was driven down near SIHAN on April 19th, wrecked and both occupants killed. Reports are definite that this machine was brought down by a Martinsyde which can only refer to Capt. BEVAN, who was brought down on the same day by another machine.

/Bomb

Bomb Raids. The principle adopted and invariably adhered to of returning the enemy at least four bombs for every one dropped by his machines. Otherwise bombing was only carried out upon receipt of special instructions.

In May the enemy made five night raids on our aerodromes at BELAH & RAFA. No casualties occurred and very little damage was done. The Flying Corps retaliated promptly and heavily on each occasion, our machines leaving the aerodrome before the enemy had recrossed our lines.

The following three bomb raids were of special interest :-

On June 23rd an attack of 7 machines was made on RAMLEH Aerodrome in co-operation with the R.N.A.S. who were making a simultaneous attack on TUL KERAM. Intelligence agents reported that two enemy aeroplanes were seriously injured on this occasion.

On the 26th June 8 machines attacked the Headquarters of the IVTH TURKISH ARMY on the Mount of OLIVES. A prisoner subsequently reported that several officers of JEMAL PASHA'S Staff were killed in this raid. The raid however, cost us five machines owing to a series of unfortunate accidents which were related in the Despatch for the month of June.

On the 28th and 29th of August three machines operating from a forward landing ground at KUNTILLA in Northeast SINAI, attacked, with excellent results, the enemy's camps, aerodrome and station buildings at MA'AN on the HEJAZ Railway and his camps at FUWEILA and ABU LISAN.

Photography & Map making. Much progress was made in this branch of the work. On several occasions gun ranges obtained from aeroplane registration were used for checking the ranges obtained from air photos. A complete series of maps covering the whole area of operations on a scale of 1/20,000 was produced almost entirely from air photographs during the six months.

Casualties.

11/5/17.	Lieut. J. V. TUNBRIDGE	A.F.C.	Severely wounded in air combat.
16/5/17.	Capt. A. W. JONES	A.F.C.	Wounded in air combat.
29/5/17.	Lieut. STONE)		
"	Lieut. MORGAN)	A.F.C.	Killed A.A. fire.
25/6/17.	2/Lieut. J. S. BRASELL	A.F.C.	Killed in air combat.
23/7/17.	Capt. R. N. THOMAS)		
"	2/Lieut. J. W. HOWELLS)	R.F.C.	Killed A.A. fire.
8/7/17.	Capt. C. A. BROOKS	attd. 67 Sqdn. A.F.C.	Killed in air combat.
13/7/17.	Lieut. G. L. PAGET	attd. 67 Sqdn. A.F.C.) Killed in air combat.
"	2/Lieut. SEARLE	A.F.C.	
8/7/17.	2/Lieut. C. VAUTIN	A.F.C.	Missing, believed Prisoner of War. (Brought down in air combat).
3/8/17.	2/Lieut. M. C. CRERAR	14 Sqdn. R.F.C.	Killed in aeroplane accident.
8/8/17.	2/Lieut. R. A. DAVEY	14 Sqdn. R.F.C.	Killed in aeroplane accident.
12/8/17.	2/Lieut. W. S. JAMIESON	2nd B.W.I.R & R.F.C.	Wounded in action.
"	Lieut. F. A. BATES	14 Sqdn. R.F.C.	Wounded in action.
17/8/17.	2/Lieut. R. S. M. BRUCE	111 Sqdn. R.F.C.	Killed in aeroplane accident.
1/9/17.	Lieut. R. M. SMITH	A.F.C.	Wounded in air combat.

/19.9.17

19/9/17.	Capt. W.E.L. SEWARD	R.F.C. 14 Sqdn.	Wounded in aeroplane accident.
22/10/17.	2/Lt. J.H.D. MILLS (5th B.W.1)	R.F.C. 14 Sqdn.	Wounded in aeroplane accident.
22/10/17.	2/Lt. E.K. JAMES	2/20 Ldnr R. & R.F.C.	Wounded in aeroplane accident.
25/10/17.	Lieut. H.W. BOWD	A.F.C.	Killed in aeroplane accident.

4th PERIOD

RESUME OF EVENTS.

On the 28th of October operations commenced on the right flank which resulted in the capture of BEERSHEVA on the 31st. On the 2nd November a portion of the GAZA defences between the town and the sea was captured. On the 7th SHERIA & KAUFUKAH were captured and this was the signal for a precipitate withdrawal of the enemy which continued during the next eight days, and during which he retreated 55 miles closely followed by our forces.

Our troops now took up a line running from JAFFA to within a few miles of JERUSALEM. On the 6th and 9th of December BETHLEHEM and JERUSALEM were occupied by our troops. On the 22nd of December we advanced across the river AJJA on our left and on the 28th of December we captured BIRKH & RANM ALLAH to the North of JERUSALEM.

WORK OF THE R.F.C. The work of reconnaissance, bombing and hostile aircraft patrols was so intermingled during the conditions of moving warfare which characterised a portion of this period that no attempt will be made to analyze these separately.

During the BEERSHEVA operations the WING was required to carry out constant strategical reconnaissance, to maintain hostile aircraft patrols during the hours of daylight in order to preclude the enemy from gaining information as to the movements of our troops, to escort the machines of the CORVING doing contact patrols and artillery work, and to photograph the bombardment area in GAZA and the BEERSHEVA & KAUFUKAH Defences. All these duties were successfully carried out in spite of 7 engagements in each of which enemy reconnaissance machines were hunted back to their lines. It was not entirely possible to keep enemy machines from reconnoitring; but the only enemy aeroplane which visited the Southern Area on the morning of the 30th of October and was in a position to report the flanking movement of our troops was engaged over KHALASSA and brought down just outside our lines and both pilot and observer made prisoner. There seems little doubt that during the operations the enemy suffered seriously from our interference with their aerial observation.

During the early days of November a great deal of photographic work was done over the SHERIA & KAUFUKAH Systems, all fresh work was transferred to the map by the special staff working at SHEIKH NURAN Aerodrome.

© For this period the work of the R.F.C. is described with a full knowledge of the 40th WING only.

/despatched

despatched the same evening together with any information of tactical importance to the CORPS, six issues of maps being made in the course of the month. On the 7th with the capture of SHERIA and the precipitate northward movement reported by our observers, a period of extreme activity began for the R.F.C. The 40th Wing in conjunction with 5th Wing and "B" Squadron now entered upon a series of bombing and machine gun attacks upon retreating enemy which continued without intermission until the evening of the 14th November. During this raid on enemy aerodromes at MENSHIYER (8th) and at TINER (9th) resulted in the destruction of at least 9 enemy machines the charred remains of which were afterwards found. Full advantage was taken by our machines of the excellent targets afforded by the enemy during his retreat, railway stations, troops, on the march, transport and material being continually attacked. Many direct hits on formations of troops were registered and the reports of our cavalry testified to the ~~axaxixaxi~~ excellence of the results obtained on every species of target. It was found for instance on the following day the attack on MENSHIYER that such extensive damage to aeroplanes and rolling stock had been caused that the enemy during the night was compelled to burn the whole of his equipment.

During enemy's retreat twenty one reconnaissances and ten bomb raids were carried out by the 40th Wing, the hours of flight of the Wing for the period averaging 54 hours a day.

Throughout the advance observer's reports were remarkable for the fullness and accuracy of the information given. There can be no doubt that rapidly moving operations of this nature when targets are numerous and moving bodies easily picked up afford an exceptional opportunity for the fullest development of the uses of the Air Service.

Enemy aircraft showed great activity during the early days of November and machines of the 40th Wing were engaged on 18 separate occasions with formations varying in number, and on practically every occasion the enemy aircraft have ~~sixxxx~~ been either brought down, or driven down to within a few hundred feet over their own lines, or, in the case of our slower types the attacks have been repulsed. On the afternoon of the 6th a determined attempt was made to challenge our supremacy by formations of from two to four enemy aircraft, of these, two were driven down and forced to land away from an aerodrome and thirteen driven off and prevented from crossing our lines and in only two instances were our machines sufficiently damaged to necessitate abandoning the work in hand. In addition to the successes above mentioned, one enemy aircraft was brought down in flames, early in November. The spasmodic burst of activity displayed by the enemy was followed by a period of quiescence which lasted until 24th November.

From the 18th November to the end of the year the work of the Flying Corps reverted to the routine of tactical and strategical reconnaissance, artillery co-operation and photography. The latter again became an important branch of the work, as material was at once required for the production of a series of maps of the new front on a scale of 1/20,000. Eight first edition sheets of this map and four 3rd Editions had already appeared before the end of the year.

In reconnaissance the enemy front line trenches both on the West and those defending JERUSALEM were reported on daily, as well as the TABSOR and TULKERAM Systems of defences. The TABSOR System after the 22nd December became the enemy front line on the West. Two enemy aerodromes were located, an unimportant at TULKERAM in November and a larger one at JENIN in December. After our troops had advanced beyond JERUSALEM on the 9th December reconnaissances of the JERICHO and JORDAN Area were also made daily. Reconnaissance was much hampered during December by gales and heavy rainclouds.

From/

From November 24th enemy machines began once more to appear over our lines, and on several occasions endeavoured to interfere with the reconnaissance machines but invariably endeavoured to avoid engagement with the Bristol Fighters. Twenty two combats occurred between November 24th and the end of the year. In these six enemy machines are known to have gone down out of control, in two cases the wings falling off in the air. One pilot engaged a formation of six and broke it up sending one machine down out of control. Another pilot drove down three enemy machines in one engagement. Another pilot on four separate occasions pursued enemy machines almost to the ground away from their aerodrome, in one case he attacked pilot and observer (when on the ground) and hit one of them.

Bomb attacks were made at the end of November on TULKERAM aerodrome (twice) and during December on the Dead Sea Port of RIJM EL BAHR (twice) on the JORDAN Bridge (twice) on KALKILIEH on the 6th (observers having reported an exceptional quantity of rolling stock and troops detaining. During the operations of the 9th aeroplanes attacked troops and transport near BIREH both morning and afternoon with bombs and machine gun fire, machines coming down almost to the ground, and again during the operations of the 22nd several attacks with bombs and machine gun fire were made on troops, transport and rolling stock near KALKILIEH.

Casualties.

12/11/17 . Lieut. F. HARVEY 1st A.M.G. Sqn & A.F.C. Killed in
aeroplane accident.
28/11/17 & Lieut. W.A. Moran 111 Sqn R.F.C. Wounded in Action.
29/11/17 2/Lieut. S. Cilham " " Wounded in enemy bomb
2 other ranks " " attack
25/12/17 2/Lieut. H.M. MATHESON R.F.C. atted A.F.C. Died of
exposure.

STATISTICS
OF
1ST. SQUADRON, AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS



Total number of hours flown since Squadron's inception to 28th. January 1919. - - - - - 14,377 hrs. 58 mins.

Total number of photographic Plates exposed - - - - - 7,294

Total Area covered by photography - - - - - 6,630 Sq. miles.

Total Number of Casualties:-

	Officers	Men
Killed -	19	2
Wounded -	23	8
Prisoners of War -	12	-
Died -	2	3
Invalided -	24	60
- - - - -		

FOR YEAR 1918.

Number of Hours Flown - - - - - 6,559 hours.

" Reconnaissances:-

Strategical - - - - - 414

Photographic - - - - - 151

" Plates exposed - - - - - 5,395

" Prints produced - - - - - 51,356

Weight of Bombs dropped - - - - - 66,262 lbs.

Number of Aerial Combats - - - - - 70

" E.A. destroyed - - - - - 29

" E.A. driven down - - - - - 53

- - - - -

HONOURS & AWARDS.

(Since Squadron's inception).

V.C. - - - - - 2

D.S.O. - - - - - 1

O.B.E. - - - - - 1

M.C. - - - - - 16

D.F.C. - - - - - 20

Order of the Nile 4th. Class - 1 M.M. - - - - - 2

M.S.M. - - - - - 9 Croix de Guerre - - - - - 1

Air Force M.S.M. - - - - - 3 Mentioned in Despatches 39.