THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF
AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR
OF 1914-1918

VOLUME VII
SINAI AND PALESTINE
THE
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE
IN SINAI AND PALESTINE
1914-1918

BY
H. S. GULLETT

With 77 maps and 83 illustrations

Tenth Edition

AUSTRALIA
ANGUS AND ROBERTSON LTD.
89 CASTLEREAGH STREET, SYDNEY
1941
PREFACE

The sole purpose of this narrative is to record the work of the Australian Light Horse in the British campaigns in Sinai, Palestine and Syria during the years 1916, 1917, and 1918. It is in no sense a complete narrative of those campaigns.

Obviously, however, it was impracticable to set out the part played by the Australians, who were only a portion of the mounted troops employed, without dealing (in broad outline at least) with the operations of the British Army as a whole. To make the activities of the Light Horse intelligible, it has been necessary to describe the strategy and tactics employed for the whole force, and at times even to give accounts of engagements in which the Australians were not directly involved.

The story, therefore, in its bolder features covers the whole British force. But, as will be apparent, it covers in detail only the fighting and the campaign life of the Australians. To readers beyond the Commonwealth this may suggest a biased sense of relative values. There is no such bias. The author is fully aware that the Light Horse achievements, although high in quality and sometimes decisive in effect, were but a contributing factor. The detailed history of the force of infantry and cavalry from the United Kingdom, from India, and from other countries within and without the Empire, has yet to be written.

Grateful acknowledgment is due of the author's debt to many hundreds of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the Australian Imperial Force who served in the campaign, for the assistance they rendered in the collection of information for this volume. Unfortunately most of the diaries of the units engaged were, until 1918, at best very scantily written. In the collection of material the author has had access to the original official papers used in the field, so far as they have been preserved. From the beginning of December 1917 he accompanied the Light Horse in nearly all their operations. But in dealing with the earlier stages
of the campaign he has been dependent for detail upon a systematic interviewing of responsible officers, and a minute examination—under the guidance of officers who took part in the fighting—of the ground of each engagement; personal narratives were obtained from a great majority of Light Horse leaders of all ranks; and by the careful comparing of all these statements, and the checking of them with the official papers, the story has been built up. Acknowledgment is due also to many Imperial officers who gave valuable assistance, and to Mr. Winston Churchill, who, as Secretary of State for War, permitted the author to study not only all the original records of Army Headquarters during the commands of General Murray and General Allenby, but also the papers of all British units engaged. But for this courtesy the volume could not have been written.

In particular the author expresses his indebtedness to Mr. Alan S. Murray, who has been responsible for the making of all the maps and the small inset sketches, with Mr. W. S. Perry working keenly and capably as his assistant. Mr. Murray, although a member of the A.I.F., served in the campaign with the survey corps working under British G.H.Q. During the campaign his work in surveying No-Mans' Land, often under fire, was recognised by high award. He afterwards made a detailed survey of all the Australian battle-grounds; and, in addition to the assistance afforded by his maps, his intimate knowledge of the country was of great aid to the author.

To Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Browne, and to Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. Foster, the author tenders his thanks for permission to use a number of sketches made by them during operations in the field.

H. S. G.

MELBOURNE,

1st November, 1922.

---


## CONTENTS

I. THE TURKS invade EGYPT .......... 1

II. AFTER GALLIPOLI ............... 18

III. THE LIGHT HORSEMAN AND his HORSE .... 29

IV. SINAI ................................ 40

V. ANZAC MOUNTED DIVISION .......... 54

VI. THE ARABS .......................... 74

VII. THE ADVANCE to ROMANI ........... 81

VIII. THE DESERT ORDEAL .......... 94

IX. Awaiting THE ENEMY .............. 113

X. THE TURKISH ADVANCE ............ 126

XI. THE BATTLE of ROMANI .......... 142

XII. KATIA AND Bir el Abd ............ 164

XIII. THE ADVANCE to EL ARISH ...... 194

XIV. MAGDhaba .......................... 214

XV. RAFA ................................ 229

XVI. TOWARDS GAZA .................... 244

XVII. FIRST GAZA ENGAGEMENT ....... 262

XVIII. SECOND GAZA ENGAGEMENT ...... 297

XIX. SECOND GAZA ENGAGEMENT (CONTINUED) ... 318

XX. CHETWODE's PLAN ................. 340

XXI. ALLENBY AND his TASK .......... 354

XXII. THE Eve of BEERSEBA ........... 368

XXIII. BATTLE of BEERSEBA .......... 384

XXIV. TEL EL Khuweilfe ............... 408

XXV. BREAKING THROUGH .............. 427
**CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XXVI. <strong>The Great Drive</strong></td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXVII. <strong>Clearing the Maritime Plain</strong></td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXVIII. <strong>Towards Jerusalem</strong></td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXIX. <strong>Nahr Auja and El Burj</strong></td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXX. <strong>The Capture of Jerusalem</strong></td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXI. <strong>The Seasoned Light Horsemen</strong></td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXII. <strong>The Advance to Jericho</strong></td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIII. <strong>The Raid to Amman</strong></td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIV. <strong>Ghoranie and Musallabeh</strong></td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXV. <strong>The Es Salt Raid</strong></td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVI. <strong>The Es Salt Raid (continued)</strong></td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVII. <strong>Summer in the Jordan Valley</strong></td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXVIII. <strong>Reorganisation and Preparation</strong></td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XXXIX. <strong>Abu Tellul</strong></td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. <strong>Allenby’s Great Scheme</strong></td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. <strong>Sharon and Samaria</strong></td>
<td>692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XLI. <strong>East of Jordan</strong></td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XLI. <strong>The Advance to Damascus</strong></td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XLIV. <strong>The Capture of Damascus</strong></td>
<td>751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XLV. <strong>Aleppo and the Armistice</strong></td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix</strong></td>
<td>793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index</strong></td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Light horse sergeant, with an Australian horse which served throughout the campaign in Sinai and Palestine .. 40
Four Australian horses which served throughout the campaign in Sinai and Palestine .. 40
Light Horsemen .. 41
General Sir Archibald Murray .. 56
Lieutenant-General Sir Charles M. Dobell .. 56
Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Chauvel .. 57
Major-General Sir E. W. C. Chaytor with Brigadier-General C. F. Cox .. 72
Brigadier-General G. de L. Ryrie .. 73
Hejaz horsemen at Damascus, October, 1918 .. 80
The Wady um Muksheib, Sinai, in flood .. 81
The hod (desert palm-grove) at Oghratina .. 81
Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Browne .. 104
Putting down a “spearpoint” pump in the desert .. 104
Camel cacolets for the transport of wounded .. 105
Sand sleighs with wounded .. 105
The line of posts held by the 1st A.L.H. Brigade on the night of 3rd August, 1916 .. 138
View from southern end of infantry position at Romani, looking south over Wellington Ridge .. 146
Camels bearing water on the desert .. 160
Machine-gunners of the Australian Light Horse .. 160
Brigadier-General J. R. Royston and Lieutenant-Colonel L. C. Maygar, V.C., with an enemy gun captured at El Arish .. 161
An Australian “camelier” .. 184
Major-General Hon. H. A. Lawrence .. 185
Brigadier-General C. L. Smith, V.C. .. 185
Magdhaba: The advance of the 9th Australian Light Horse Regiment on 23rd December, 1916 .. 224
Australians mounting their camels .. 225
The battlefield of Rafa .. 232
Ambulances of the Anzac Mounted Division moving along the beach near El Arish .. 232
Royal horse artillery in action at Rafa, 9th January, 1917 .. 232
View of Gaza from the summit of Ali el Muntar .. 233
ILLUSTRATIONS

Turkish and German soldiers (guarded by Australians after capture) ............... 274
Turkish soldiers (after capture) ............... 274
A cactus hedge at Gaza, with Arab cultivator ............... 275
Infantry advancing on Ali Muntar at First Battle of Gaza, 26th March, 1917 ............... 276
Cars of No. 1 Australian Light Car Patrol beside the Dead Sea, 1918 ............... 308
A disabled tank at Gaza ............... 308
Enemy machine-gunners in action at the Second Battle of Gaza ............... 309
The destruction of the viaduct on the Asluj railway ............... 348
Turkish cavalry in dismounted action ............... 349
General Sir Edmund Allenby ............... 364
Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode ............... 365
Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. Lawrence ............... 365
Beersheba ............... 388
Brigadier-General L. C. Wilson and his staff ............... 389
Brigadier-General W. Grant ............... 428
Captain J. R. Cain ............... 429
An Arab village on the Philistine Plain ............... 446
The Jewish settlement of Wady Hanein ............... 447
The road from Jaffa to Jerusalem running through the country of Judæa ............... 488
Headquarters of a light horse regiment encamped close to the Mediterranean ............... 489
Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives ............... 489
The advance upon Jericho by the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade ............... 536
Jericho ............... 537
Advance on Amman, 27th March, 1918 ............... 565
Crossing the Jordan ............... 566
Amman ............... 567
Amman during Turkish counter-attack on Hill 3039, 30th March, 1918 ............... 576
Ain es Sir, scene of attack on Wellington Mounted Rifles, 1st April, 1918 ............... 579
Ghoraniye bridgehead, showing "The Pimple" ............... 589
Clay hills in the Ghoraniye bridgehead ............... 594
Musallabeh ............... 595
View of Shunet Nimrin and El Haud ............... 609
Light horse and British yeomanry at Es Salt ............... 612
Dust in the Jordan Valley ............... 613
ILLUSTRATIONS

Es Salt-Shunet Nimrin road (showing where it was blown up by the retreating Turks in September, 1918) 628
Brigadier-General G. M. Macarthur Onslow and his staff 644
Nurses of No. 14 Australian General Hospital, Port Said, 1918 645
“The Bluff” 686
Dummy horses in the Jordan Valley, prepared in order to deceive the enemy concerning General Allenby’s imminent offensive 686
Transport camels 687
Scene on the Nazareth road after the advance of the 13th British Cavalry Brigade 702
Turkish prisoners captured at Jenin 703
General Chaytor with Ali Bey Wahaby 728
Turkish prisoners captured at Amman 729
The scene of the charge at Semakh 736
Light horse graves at Semakh 736
3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade marching by the Sea of Galilee 737
The broken bridge at Benat Yakub 737
The surrender of Kuneitra to Major-General H. W. Hodgson, Commander of the Australian Mounted Division 740
A halt on the ride to Damascus 740
Squadrons of the 4th and 12th Australian Light Horse Regiments in readiness for the charge at Kaukab 741
Barada Gorge 748
Damascus 749
Key to conventional signs used in maps 794

LIST OF MAPS

1 Turkey in Asia, showing Allied pressure early in 1917 24
2 Sinai Peninsula, showing main routes across the desert 45
3 Communications about July, 1916 124
4 Romani—Position at dusk, 3rd August, 1916 140
5 Romani—Position at 4 p.m., 4th August, 1916 157
6 Romani—Position at 5 a.m., 5th August, 1916 168
7 Romani-Katia—Position at 5 p.m., 5th August, 1916 177
8 British attack at Bir el Abd 180
9 Magdhaba—Position at dusk, 23rd December, 1916 224
10 Battle of Rafa 233
11 Rafa—Attack by N.Z.M.R. Brigade and I.C.C. Brigade 240
12 First Battle of Gaza—Position at Dusk, 26th March, 1917 290
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Second Battle of Gaza—Position at 2 p.m., 19th April, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>British and Turkish lines of communication, prior to Allenby's attack on Gaza, October, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Beersheba—Charge by 4th A.L.H. Brigade—Position at dusk, 31st October, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gaza—Allenby's attack—Position about 6 p.m., 31st October, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Khuweilfe, 2nd-3rd November, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Khuweilfe—Position at dusk, 7th November, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>“Breaking through,” 10 p.m., 7th November, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Advance up the Maritime Plain—Position at 7 a.m., 14th November, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Turkish attack on Nahr el Auja line, 25th November, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Position prior to fall of Jerusalem, evening of 7th December, 1917</td>
<td></td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Jerusalem water supply after the British occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Advance on Jericho—Position at noon, 20th February, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Capture of Jericho—Position on 21st February, 1918, after Turks had evacuated the town</td>
<td></td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The opposing front lines (between the two Aujas), February, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Crossing of Jordan, 22nd-23rd March, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Amman Raid—First attack by Anzacs and I.C.C. Brigade—Position at dusk, 27th March, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Amman Raid—Night attack—Position at dawn, 30th March, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Amman Raid—Position on 30th March, 1918, immediately prior to withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>The fighting at Ghoraniye and Musallabeh, 11th-12th April, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Es Salt Raid—Position at midnight, 30th April, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Turkish attack on 4th A.L.H. Brigade—Position about 8 a.m., 1st May, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Turkish attack on 4th A.L.H. Brigade—Grant's position at dusk, 1st May, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Es Salt Raid—Position just prior to withdrawal, 2nd May, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>The counter-attack at Abu Tellul, 14th July, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>British and Turkish lines of communication, Summer of 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Commencement of Battle of Sharon, 19th September, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Battles of Sharon and Samaria. Advance of British cavalry—Position at 6 p.m., 20th September, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Operations of 5th A.L.H. Brigade, 19th-20th September, 1918</td>
<td></td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAPS

41 Operations of 5th A.L.H. Brigade, 21st September, 1918
42 Chaytor's advance on Es Salt and Amman, 22nd September, 1918
43 Capture of Amman by Chaytor's Force, 25th September, 1918
44 The action at Semakh, 25th September, 1918
45 The action at Tiberias, 25th September, 1918
46 Crossing of the Jordan at Jisr Benat Yakub, 28th September, 1918
47 Advance on Damascus, 28th September, 1918
48 Damascus and environs, showing route taken by 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade through the city
49 British and Turkish lines of communication after the capture of Aleppo

LIST OF SKETCH MAPS

Action at Jifjafa
Position of 5th Yeomanry Brigade, and attack by Turks at about 5.30 a.m., 23rd April, 1916
Mazar
Tank Redoubt
Atawinhe Redoubt
Baiket el Sana
Asluj-Auja demolition
Tel el Saba
11th and 12th A.L.H. Regiments at Buteihah
Advance by 1st and 2nd A.L.H. Brigades, 9th November, 1917
Turkish counter-attack at Burkusie Ridge
Crossing of Nahr Sukereir
Yeomanry charge at Mughar
Latron and Amwas
Attack on Jerusalem
El Burj
53rd and 60th Divisions' attack on Mount of Olives
Raid by 5th A.L.H. Regiment at Amman
Attack by 6th and 7th A.L.H. Regiments at Amman
3rd Regiment's attack on Turkish M.G. post at Es Salt
McDonald's march to Maain
Capture of Amman by 5th A.L.H. Regiment, 25th September, 1918
Situation of 2nd A.L.H. Brigade and Turks at Ziza
**SKETCH MAPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The approach to Damascus</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish stand before Sasa</td>
<td>746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaukab—Attack by 4th and 12th A.L.H. Regiments</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barada Gorge</td>
<td>753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit by 3rd A.L.H. Brigade</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHRONOLOGY FROM END OF 1915 TO 1918

*Italic* type indicates events dealt with in this volume.

1915.

Oct. 5—Salonica campaign begins.
Dec. 20—Evacuation of Anzac and Suvla.

1916.

Jan. 8—Evacuation of Helles.
Feb. 21—Battle of Verdun opens.
March 15—*Despatch of Australian infantry to France begins.*
April 20—Surrender of General Townshend at Kut (Mesopotamia).
May 31—Battle of Jutland.
June 4—Aug. 11—Russian offensive (under Brusilov) in Galicia.
June 8—Compulsory enlistment in Great Britain begins.
July 1—Opening of *First Battle of the Somme.*
... 19—5th Australian Division engaged in Flanders at Fromelles
... 22—I Anzac Corps in Battle of Pozières.
Aug. 4—*Battle of Romani.*
... 27—Roumania enters the war.
Oct. 4—Dec. 23—Austro-German counter-offensive in Roumania.
Dec. 7—Mr. Lloyd George succeeds Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister.

1917.

Feb 1—Germans commence “unrestricted submarine warfare.”
... 21—Germans in France begin withdrawal to “Hindenburg Line.”
March 9—Revolution in Russia.
... 11—Baghdad captured by the British.
26—*First Battle of Gaza.*
April 6—United States enters the war.
... 9—British offensive at Arras (I Anzac Corps engaged at Bullecourt, April 11, May 3, et seq.).
... 19—*Second Battle of Gaza.*
May 4—French offensive near Soissons.
... 5—Russians falling back in Mesopotamia, Persia, and Armenia.
... 12—Italian offensive on Isonzo-Carso front.
June 7—British offensive at Messines (II Anzac Corps engaged).
... 27—*Allenby arrives in Egypt.*
July 1—Russian offensive in Galicia (under Brusilov).
... 19—German counter-offensive in Galicia, leading to defeat of Russians.
... 31—British and French offensive in Flanders (Third Battle of Ypres: I and II Anzac Corps engaged, September-November).
Aug 19—Italian offensive on Isonzo-Carso front.
... 21—Germans attack the Russian front near Riga.
Oct. 24—Austro-German offensive breaks Italian line at Caporetto.
Nov. 7—*Third Battle of Gaza.*
... 20—British offensive towards Cambrai.
Dec. 2—Preliminary negotiations for armistice between Germany and Russia.
... 6—Roumania suspends hostilities.
... 9—Capture of Jerusalem.
1918.
March 3—Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed.
      9—British advance along the Tigris.
      21—Final German offensive opens near Somme (Australian Corps engaged from March 27).
April 9—Battle of the Lys begins (1st Australian Division engaged from April 13).
May 27—German offensive against the French on the Aisne.
June 15—Austrian offensive against Italians on Piave repulsed.
     16—Bulgarian support of Germany weakens.
July 15—German thrust towards Paris across the Marne.
      18—Franco-American counter-attack north of the Marne.
Aug. 8—British and French attack from Amiens (Australian Corps engaged).
     19—General Allenby's offensive in Palestine.
     28—Bulgaria asks for an armistice.
     29—Final breaking of the Hindenburg Line.
     30—Capture of Damascus.
Oct. 4—Germany seeks an armistice through U.S.A.
     30—Armistice signed by Turkey.
Nov. 4—British and French advance beyond Scheldt Americans reach Meuse.
      11—Armistice with Germany signed.