

Typso Record.

CAB/45/75

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JERUSALEM OPERATIONS

Desert Mounted Corps.

Nov. 16^m 1917 - Nov. 26^m 1917

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Nov. 16^m.

Jaffa captured.

On the morning of November 16th the Anzac Mounted Division moved on Jaffa. Patrols of the 1st L.H. Brigade were fired on from the German colony of Wilhelma at 7.45 a.m.; otherwise no resistance was encountered. The Wellington Mounted Rifles, riding through Yazur, three miles south-east of Jaffa, entered that town soon after 8.0 a.m. "Jaffa the Beautiful" was intact, with about 8,000 inhabitants out of a normal population of 24,000. The troops were received by the townspeople with acclamation. The Yeomanry Mounted Division meanwhile carried out its orders to reconnoitre Amwas, to take it if not strongly held, but to avoid becoming heavily engaged. The 22nd Mounted Brigade encountered strong opposition here and withdrew to Ramle. The 2nd ~~Heavy~~ Light Horse Brigade, still attached to the Australian Mounted Division, was in support of this movement, while the 4th Brigade held as a line of observation Tell et Turmus, Tell es Safi, Qezaze.

G.H.Q.'s orders for the 17th need not be given in full, as they were changed afterwards. The intention was to secure a defensive line in front of the XXI Corps, while pushing forward the XX Corps and part of the Desert Mounted Corps to Bire, 9 miles north of Jerusalem. The XXI Corps was to take over Abu Shushe, Ramle and Lydda from the Desert Mounted Corps; the latter, less one division and the Imperial Camel Brigade, was to advance eastward, the right flank on the road from Junction Station to Latron as far as Qaryet el Inab, thence north-east through Biddu on Bire, while the left flank followed the tracks from Lydda directly on Bire. The third Division (Anzac) was to hold the line of the Nahr el Auja meanwhile. On this date the Yeomanry Mounted Division occupied Annabe. The Anzac Mounted Division, which had withdrawn its advanced troops for the night from Jaffa, reoccupied the

town at 8.40 and the village of Sarona, another German colony two miles to the north-east, at 10.30. Patrols then pushed forward to the Nahr el Auja. This river was found to be 35 feet wide, and from four to ten feet in depth. Three crossings were discovered: a bridge south of Kh. ~~Hadra~~ Hadra some three miles from the coast, a dam and mill at Jeriseh, south-west of this, and a ford at the river's mouth.

The Battle of Nabi Samwan.

Nov. 18th

Advance of Yeomanry
Mtd. Div.

November 18th saw the beginning of the Yeomanry Division's advance on Bire, while the Australian Mounted Division had orders to attack Latron and Amwas. This attack was to be carried out after a preliminary bombardment of an hour and a half, in which artillery of the 75th Division was to participate. The 4th Brigade was to attack Latron and Amwas, while the 3rd carried out a turning movement on its left towards Yalo. Before the attack, which had been postponed from 2.0 p.m. to 4.30 to permit the completion of preparations, could be launched, a message was received from the Desert Mounted Corps cancelling it. The operation was to be carried out by the 75th Division next day. The forcing of the passes to the Judean highlands was, indeed, not an operation suited to mounted troops. *Not receiving the cancellation of the order, the 9th A.L.H. carried out a bold advance on Yalo which was probably the main cause of the Turkish evacuation of Amwas that night.* If however, the main drive against Bire had been taken over by the infantry from the Australians, the Yeomanry Mounted Division was to carry on its advance on the former's left, and was to be very highly tried within the next few days. The 8th Brigade was ordered to move on Beit Ur et Tahta, a hill village about 7 miles north-east of Amwas and about 8 west of Bire, the final objective. The 22nd Brigade was ordered to Shilta, while the 6th remained in divisional reserve. The advanced ^{8th} guard of the ~~22nd~~ Brigade, the 3rd County of London, advanced with great difficulty owing to the nature of the country to a point within two miles of Beit Ur et Tahta. The 22nd Brigade, moving to Shilta, was forced to send back ^{and} all wheeled transport, ~~including~~ the Leicester Battery to Ramle.

On the front of the Anzac Mounted Division patrols of the 1st L.H. Brigade occupied the large Jewish colony of Pethah Tiqva (Arabic, Mulebbis) six and a half miles north-east of Jaffa, where unlimited water and great stocks of hay were found. The 7th Mounted Brigade was attached to the division from this date. It was found that the crossings of the Nahr el Auja were held in considerable strength.

On November 19th the Yeomanry Mounted Division continued its difficult advance. The 22nd Mounted Brigade was ordered to move against Ain Arik, on the track to Ram Allah and Bire, and the 8th Mounted Brigade on Beitunye, some three miles south-west of Bire and ten miles north-west of Jerusalem.

These troops were thus called upon to pass through the most difficult and trackless area of the Judean hills. ^{The} ~~22nd~~ 8th Brigade ~~brigades~~ passed through Beit Ur et Tahta* but was soon afterwards held up in the Wadi es Sunt by a comparatively small number of Turks esconced behind boulders, in a position from which it was found impossible to dislodge them. The 22nd Brigade moved also very slowly, owing to the length of time necessary to crown the precipitous heights on either side of its line of ^{brigade} march. The column had to move in single file and was nearly six miles long. Slight opposition from the enemy was encountered; the conditions of the terrain were the most serious obstacle. The brigade eventually bivouacked just west of its objective, the village of Ain Arik. Supply was a matter of greatest difficulty, as rations could ~~only~~ be brought by the train no further forward than Annaba, about 12 miles as the crow flies west of Ain Arik, and had to be fetched thence by the units with first line transport and pack. Some units got no supplies on this date and those more fortunate received them very late.

On the 20th the attempt was resumed. The 6th Brigade, which had bivouacked the previous night at Beit Ur et Tahta, was now ordered to move on Beitunye, by a route slightly south of that taken by the 8th Brigade, through Beit Ur el Foqa*.

* Beit Ur el Foqa and Beit Ur et Tahta are respectively the upper and lower Beth-horon of the Bible.

with the Hongkong & Singapore Mountain Battery attached. The advance was not at first contested, but at 11.30 the Dorset Yeomanry in the van came upon the enemy in strength on a high, steep ridge two miles south-west of Beitunye. The Berks Yeomanry, moving up on their left, succeeded in occupying the high ground ^{east of} ~~at~~ Kh. er Ras, but no further progress could be made. ~~At 4.30 p.m. the Dorset received orders to fall back on Foga. Harassed by the enemy, who had advanced on its right flank, the regiment suffered severely in its retirement, losing altogether 4 killed, 26 wounded, and 21 missing.~~ The Berks remained all night on their ridge facing the enemy in torrents of rain, their horses in a ravine behind. Meanwhile the 22nd Brigade had struggled into Ain Arik, the head of the column reaching the village at 20 p.m. and the tail not till 11.0 p.m. Two squadrons Stafford Yeomanry, pushing on towards Ram Allah, established themselves for the night on the high ground (EL Muntar) north of Beitunye.

The other two divisions of the Corps had meanwhile had a quiet period. The Anzacs had settled down to the holding of a line south of the Nahr el Auja, through Halin, Budrus, Yehudiye, thence ^{running} ~~to the sea~~ north of Sarons to the sea. This position was held by the occupation of tactical points some 800 yards apart, each with a fire trench and support. The Imperial Camel Brigade was brought up into line on the 19th. On the 20th the 54th Division ^{(less one brigade,} came under the orders of the Desert Mounted Corps and took over the eastern portion of the front. The line of the Auja was strongly held by the enemy, as was proved by various probings of his line by the mounted troops. The Australian Division was ordered on the 20th to withdraw to the area of Hammame and Majdal to rest, handing over its transport to the Yeomanry Mounted Division. Its 5th Mounted Brigade remained on the right of the 75th Division and under the orders of the XXI Corps. In this brigade the Gloucester Yeomanry was exchanged with the 10th A.L.H., partly

19th
20th
Anzacs + Aus.
MTD Divs.

because the latter regiment was fresher and had suffered less in previous fighting than the Gloucesters, and partly, it appears, to allow the Australians to participate in the fight for Jerusalem. ^{*/}

*Nov. 21st.
Yam. Mto Div.*

On November 21st the attack on Beitunye was continued by the 6th Mounted Brigade, the 22nd being ordered to advance on Ram Allah, west of Bire, while the 6th was kept in reserve. The Berkshire Yeomanry attempted to advance eastward from the position it had gained over night, while the Dorsetshire attacked Beitunye from the south. The Bucks, at first in support, were ordered to capture a ridge due west of Beitunye. To reach this a stiff climb was necessary, and on getting to the top the Turks were found very firmly installed on the crest behind a breastwork, with a rock redoubt as a second line of defence. On the right the Dorsets made little progress, in face of heavy fire. The Turks were supported by at least four batteries of field artillery against the single mountain battery attached to the Yeomanry Division. Their observation was good and they inflicted heavy casualties not only on the troops working dismounted but on their horses in rear. The 6th Brigade moved up the City of London Yeomanry and 3rd County of London Yeomanry, but without being able to give sufficient strength and impetus to make the attack successful.

Meanwhile the 22nd Mounted Brigade had sent forward the East Riding Yeomanry in the direction of Ram Allah. The extreme exhaustion of the men, suffering severely from exposure and short rations, was as important a factor as the resistance of the enemy, and but a short advance was made. At 12.47 p.m. the Lincoln Yeomanry was ordered to move southwards on Beitunye to assist the advance of the 6th Brigade. Here again, though the determination of the troops brought them to within 800 yards of the enemy's position, the objective

* Australia in the War. Vol. VII. p. 495.

could not be reached.

At

✓ ~~From~~ about 2.30 p.m. the Turks began a strong outflanking movement on the right of the Dorsets, who were compelled to fall back. The Bucks, in view of this situation, were ordered to fall back on the position held by the Berks, and at 6.0 p.m. this ridge was evacuated, the wounded being removed with great difficulty. The 6th Brigade was ordered to fall back on Beit Ur el Foqa, the 22nd on Beit Ur et Tahta, the retirement being covered by the 8th Brigade. The East Riding Yeomanry report that the retirement took nine hours, during the first five of which horses were led. The Berks Yeomanry of the 6th Brigade did not reach Foqa till 4.0 a.m. on the 22nd. The rearguard of the 6th Brigade did not arrive till 5.30. The total casualties of the day's fighting, many of them incurred in the retirement, were 196, while 106 horses were killed or foundered.

The difficulties of this abortive but gallantly conducted operation can scarcely be exaggerated. ^{The ground was rocky, boulder-strewed, often precipitous, slippery after rain.} ~~The first place it~~
~~must be remembered that~~ The division had suffered heavy casualties in previous fighting and had had few reinforcements. In many cases squadrons in the firing line, with horse-holders back, numbered no more than ~~some~~ 20 rifles with four Hotchkiss sections. The fighting strength of the division was about 1200. ^{It} ~~was~~ opposed by some 3,000 Turks of the 24th and 27th Divisions, with four batteries, which ^{completely} ~~completely~~ outranged the Hongkong & Singapore Mountain Battery. The question of communication between the 22nd and 6th Brigades was also a matter of difficulty. The wireless section of the former brigade had broken down, and cloud made the use of helio impossible. All messages had to be taken by officers' patrols, at great risk, as the enemy was between the two brigades. Horses and men were half starved. The Bucks Yeomanry reports that its horses had neither food nor water from the night of the 19th until the morning of the 22nd. The East Riding Yeomanry

reports that in 60 hours the men had one half day's rations and some figs, which, with a little tinnen, were found in the basket of Ain Ariq. Five hundred camels had been supplied by the XXI Corps in exchange ~~for~~ ^{did not reach} G.S. wagons of the Yeomanry Mounted Divisional Train, but they ~~arrived too late at Beit Ur el Foqa~~ ^{fell the night of November 22nd} at Tehta to be sent on to Ramle ~~for the night~~ ^{on the 23rd} for their rations. They were kept thenceforward at Tehta to work between it and the front line, supplies being brought up from Anasbe to Tehta ^{by the 1st Echelon,} by the now comparatively good track between those villages. That the sacrifice and devotion of the Yeomanry Mounted Division ~~this date were~~ on November 21st were not in vain is apparent when it is recalled that on this date Nabi Samwell was captured by the 75th Division to the south.

Nov. 22nd & 23rd.
1/6 am AHO. Div.

On November 22nd, the day of the Turkish counter attacks on Nabi Samwell, the Yeomanry Mounted Division was not in a case to continue its diversion. The 8th Brigade held ~~the~~ ^{Beit Ur el Foqa}, with a squadron of the City of London Yeomanry at Zeitun, on the edge of the ridge east of the village, while the 22nd Brigade sent forward the Lincoln Yeomanry to watch Ain Ariq. On the following day, the 23rd, the division came under the orders of the XXI Corps, an obviously convenient arrangement, since it was assisting that Corps' operations. The responsibility of the Desert Mounted Corps had on the previous day extended from Beitanye to the mouth of the Nahr el Auja, a distance of 27 miles. ~~General~~ Major-General Barrow obtained permission from Lieut.-General Bulfin to send back to Ramle and Lydda all horses, excepting those required for the machine guns, the Hotchkiss rifles and a few for pack; the shortage of water and the difficulty of bringing up supplies made it useless to attempt to keep the division mounted.

Plans for Nov. 24th

November 24th marked the final attempt of the 52nd Division to take El Jib and advance to the Nablus road through

Qulundia. On the coast the Anzac Mounted Division was to seize a bridgehead across the Nahr el Auja, to give the enemy the impression that the advance was to be continued in that direction. The Yeomanry Mounted Division was ~~to~~ to demonstrate against Beitunye and watch the left flank of the 52nd Division. The three brigades advanced dismounted. On the right the 8th Brigade occupied the high ground east and north-east of Beit Duqqu, finding touch with the infantry of the 52nd Division; its left, at ~~the~~ Et Tire, being within half a mile of the nearest post of the 6th Brigade, which held Zeitun with fifty rifles and Hill 2200, known to the troops as "Jonquil Hill", a mile south-east of Foqa. On its left again the 22nd Brigade advanced direct of Beitunye. The troops were withdrawn to the neighbourhood of Foqa at night, though the small post at Zeitun was left out. With this day's fighting the Battle of Nabi Samweil is concluded.*

Nov. 24th m.
 4^{pm}. Mto Div.
 3³⁰ m. has included the 1st Mto Div for this day in the memo. has dealt with Des Mto Corps, but as it is here it may be left. I shall carry on from this basis forward with Des Mto Corps on the east only, and include the fighting with 22nd Corps operations. C 4
Nov. 24th m.
 Anzac Mto Div

The plans for the Anzac Mounted Division's demonstration across the Nahr el Auja had to be very swiftly made. Desert Mounted Corps' orders to establish a bridgehead and seize Sheikh Muannis, a village half a mile north of the river and a mile and a half from the shore, and the hillock of Khirbet Hadrah to east of it, were received at 12.15 a.m. on November 24th; the orders, approved by the Desert Mounted Corps, were issued at 10.0 a.m., and the advance took place at 1.0 p.m. The division had been given a call upon heavy artillery attached to the 54th Division, but, as it was found ~~that~~ this could not be brought up in time, it was

* The official Battles Nomenclature Committee's Report dates the Battle of Nabi Samweil 17th - 24th November, concluding it at the latter date presumably because the British attempts to advance then ceased for a fortnight. The next battle or action in the Report is the Capture of Jerusalem, 7th - 9th December. In the interval the Turks had carried out an important counter offensive, for which it appears desirable to find a name — for the purpose of this History, at least, even though the award of battle honours is based on the Report. It seems preferable to refer to this fighting as the Action of Beit Ur el Foqa, naming it after a central point in the fighting, rather than extend the ~~the~~ ~~to~~ ~~November~~ ~~29th~~.

as the Turkish Counter Offensive of November

decided to attack without its support. The division had therefore only two horse artillery batteries, as the 1st L.H. Brigade, with its attached Inverness Battery had been withdrawn from the line to rest, ^{and the Brigade R.F.A., 6th Division, less one battery.} The Inverness Battery was, however, ordered to march up from Sdud to Jaffa by the following afternoon, in case there should be need of it.

The main operation was to be carried out by the N.Z.M.R. Brigade, which was to be relieved on the banks of the Auja opposite Jerisheh by two battalions of the 161st Brigade, 54th Division, at the disposal of the Anzac Division. The New Zealanders were to cross the ford at the river's mouth, turn east, ~~and~~ clear the right bank for two miles, and attack Sheikh Muannis from the west. On the right the 2nd L.H. Brigade, less the 6th Regiment (attached to the 54th Division at Lydda) was to make a demonstration from Mulebbis. At the last moment it was decided that the battalions of the 161st Brigade, the 4th and 6th Essex, were also to cross at the mill at Jerisheh, and these battalions only received orders to co-operate while their relief of the New Zealanders was taking place. A squadron of the Auckland Mounted Rifles was to demonstrate on the right against another ford, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles inland.

The little operation was carried out without a hitch, completely surprising the Turks. The Canterbury Mounted Rifles crossed the ford at the gallop, the Turkish post defending it taking to flight. Pushing out a squadron to secure the high ground to the north, the regiment wheeled right-handed. Sheikh Muannis was captured at 1.55 p.m., and at 3.30, the Wellington Mounted Rifles, which had followed the other regiment across the ford, took Kh. Hadrah and the bridge on the road to Arsuf just south of it, with the support of the 5th L.A.M. Battery. A company of the 4th Essex crossed at Jerisheh and moved into Sheikh Muannis. At night the line was strongly organised, with two companies of the 4th Essex at Hadrah and ^{two and a half companies of} the 6th Essex at Muannis, covered by the N.Z.M.R. Brigade. The C.R.E. was instructed to take in hand the construction of ~~the~~ bridge.

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at Jeriseh to take wheels and to improve the crossing at Hadrah. The captures in the action included 29 prisoners of the 31st Regiment, a machine gun, a Lewis gun, and some rifles, while the British had no casualties.

Nov. 24

The Turks quickly gave proof that they did not intend to permit this bold movement north of the Nahr el Auja. At 4.15 am on November 25th the covering squadron of the Auckland Regiment ~~was~~ north of Kh. Hadrah perceived the enemy concentrating in an orchard north-east of that point, and a few minutes later the Turks began their advance. The led horses were sent back to the infantry position at Kh. Hadrah, upon which the squadron also fell back at 5.30 a.m. The enemy now began to shell Kh. Hadrah heavily. The ~~Wellington~~ Mounted Rifles were ordered to make a demonstration against the right of the enemy attacking Kh. Hadrah from the ford at the mouth of the Nahr el Auja, but before this could take effect it was found necessary to abandon the position. The two companies of the 4th Essex fell back first, at 8.15 a.m., across the bridge, their crossing covered by the A.M.R., which then crossed also. This was a difficult movement, under heavy fire. In some cases the wounded were swum across by good swimmers on either hand. The enemy occupied Kh. Hadrah but did not appear on the hill in strength, being harried by the fire of the ~~230~~ ~~CCLXX~~ Brigade R.F.A. and the Somerset Battery.

At 9.30 a.m. about 2,000 Turks advanced rapidly from the direction of El Jelil and attacked the village of Sheikh Muammis with great energy. Here also a withdrawal was necessary to avoid annihilation. The companies of the 6th Essex were first withdrawn about 10. a.m., crossing by the pontoon bridge at Jeriseh and by boats. Then the mounted troops withdrew by the ford at the mouth of the Auja, except for a ~~21st~~ rearguard of ~~the~~ two troops C.M.R., which, having sent back their horses to the ford with the rest, themselves finally crossed by boats with about forty of the infantry. The Turks were in Muammis

7 books #.A

$$6 \text{ - in } 46 = 12$$

$$8 \text{ - in } 12 = 6$$

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$$\begin{array}{r} 20 \\ 74 \\ 79 \\ \hline 264 \\ \hline 437 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 154 \overline{) 437} \quad (3 \\ \underline{411} \end{array}$$

All reports 1 million to 1,200,000 £
at Beijing.

Turk exp 335,500 @ annual.

Present capital expn 450,000

with 350,000

retaining 150,000.

Reserves 130,000

Expenditure Feb. 22.00.

by 10.30, but attempts on their part to advance on the ford at the mouth of the Auja were checked by the fire of the New Zealanders. At 1.0 p.m. a strong attack against the ford was reported to be developing, but it came to nothing.

The 2nd L.H. Brigade meanwhile on the right had not been attacked. The infantry now took over the line of the river from south-east of the bridge at Hadrah to the sea. The other two battalions of the 161st Brigade, the 5th and 7th Essex, had arrived at Sarona at 2.0 p.m. They relieved the 4th and 6th, which withdrew into brigade reserve. The N.Z.M.R. Brigade was concentrated behind the left flank, while ^{the reserve} a battalion of the I.C. Brigade was brought up to Dahr Selmeh. The 7th Mounted Brigade was ordered by Desert Mounted Corps to ~~move~~ ^{Rishon le Zion} to Ziyona, the 1st L.H. Brigade back at Sdud was ordered to be prepared to march at shortest notice the following morning, and a 60-pounder section of the ~~CXXXIX~~ Heavy Battery was ordered to Jaffa. These preparations would have sufficed to make any attempt to cross the Auja, even by the four to five thousand Turks who had been engaged in this day's action, unavailing. The enemy, however, was apparently satisfied with the measure of success he had attained and did not try seriously to extend it. The casualties in the N.Z.M.R. Brigade for the day were 54; those of the 161st Brigade 120, which included some men drowned in the Auja. The enemy consisted once more of the battered 3rd Division, which may have been received some reinforcements by this time, with possibly detachments of the 7th Division.

During the night the Turks were heard digging in in places close to the river bank, but on the afternoon of November 26th a patrol of the 161st Brigade crossed the pontoon bridge at Jerisheh and met only a few snipers. Sheikh Muannis was apparently deserted. Orders were issued to strengthen the line. The 7th Mounted Brigade was required to move on the ~~morning~~ to join the Yeomanry Mounted Division, but its place

The remainder of the Brigade continued to hold the line on the right of the 2nd L.H. Brigade on the high ground between El Yahudiya, 10 miles east of Jaffa and a hill known as "Bald Hill."

Nov. 26th

END

12.

was to be taken by the 1st L.H. Brigade from Sud, which was to be stationed in Corps Reserve, less one regiment, attached to the 54th Division, at Rantieh.