

## **A few old memories after 4 years of war, by Lt. Frank Wood, Humbleton Hall, Hull**

*Frank Wood was one of a long line of Yeoman farmers, who lived and worked at Humbleton Hall. Family sources indicate he was a fine horseman and with a family tradition in hunting, he was very much "typical" of early Yeomanry recruits. It is thought likely that he joined the ERY as a private. Wood appears as a Sergeant in several pre-war photographs in the album of Major Jack Lee Smith – who was Wood's cousin, close friend and best man at his wedding. Wood was commissioned as an officer on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and served until June 1921.*

*These memoirs, typed and then bound into a blue cloth covered book were donated to Hedon Museum in 2013. We would like to acknowledge the museum and the donor (Frank Wood's niece) for permission to use these memoirs. Notes have been added with regard to other ERY men who are mentioned in the text. Place names have been amended to more common spellings where appropriate.*

(66 pages)

Having had an excellent time at Bisley during the National Rifle Association Annual meeting, getting third place and a bronze cross in the St., George's competition and several other minor prizes, I had once more settled down to work at home, looking forward to the harvest. On Tuesday July 27<sup>th</sup> [1914] I attended drill at the yeomanry barracks at Walton Street, Hull, everything being just as usual, never dreaming that war was so close upon us, in fact we opened the new miniature rifle range by holding competitions in which I was fortunate enough to win first place in two events. I say fortunately enough, not through modesty, but simply because it is a fact, as owing to the lighting scheme of the range, which I did not agree with, I could not see the back sight of my rifle at all, so how the bullets ever found the bulls eye is a mystery unless it was through the instinct of pointing the rifle in the right direction.

On August 4<sup>th</sup> again I attended the barracks, travelled in the train with some of the 4<sup>th</sup> East Yorks who had already received mobilisation orders that day. There was no drill that evening as the staff was busy with mobilisation papers, which they said we should receive on the following morning. I saw busy days ahead so returned home early for a good night's rest, the intention seemed good but circumstances were against me for at 11.30 pm the front door bell rang and on opening the door found the vicar Reverend J.G. Patrick with my mobilisation paper which said report at once. I immediately got into my uniform, wished everyone a sleepy goodnight and Wray drove me into Hull. On reaching the barracks **Sergeant Major J. Lee Smith\*1** said "Oh you are not wanted until 8.00am tomorrow, so come home with me". So Wray returned home after wishing me luck and saying "I do wish I was coming with you lad, but I know you will come back to us all right." I then went to Sutton with Jack.

On August 5<sup>th</sup> Jack and I went off in good time to the barracks where already small parties of khaki clad figures had gathered and more came in every hour. Oh the excitement! One officer detailed to buy horses, another to buy or requisition transport, another to find billets and stable room, mobilisation stores to issue etc. Several of us had horses to sell, and although we belonged to the regiment and had to ride the horses we sold, we did not get good prices, but who cared, war was declared. The next two days were busy ones, horses and transport had to be collected from the country [county] district, branded and numbered – I may mention that already the

officer detailed had bought one set of transport when a wire came saying "Buy transport", so away he went and secured another set.

Old timers came forward to re-enlist so we were soon up to strength. About this time wild rumours were about as to North Sea engagements between the hostile fleets, spy stories etc. On August 6<sup>th</sup> half our A squadron was ordered to the Withernsea coast without any horses while the remainder was left to finish collecting them. On August 8<sup>th</sup> the second half of the squadron proceeded to Withernsea by road taking the full complement of horse and transport for the whole squadron.

Headquarters and my machine gun section (I call it my machine gun section as we had no machine gun officer and I was in charge of it) settled down at the Holderness Hotel at Patrington where Mrs Leach the landlady made us very welcome. Now we got busy grinding our swords on any available grindstone for were we not at war? One of the legion of frontiersmen gave us great amusement here, but I must withhold details. How well I remember sleeping in the large hall at the back of the hotel, recalling many dances I had attended there before the war. On the Sunday our headquarters had to move to Withersnsea, so once more to the road. On nearing Withernsea an aeroplane came over, of course with no identification markings showing, no one could tell if it was hostile or not.

On arriving in the town, we found the holiday makers very excited and frightened, rushing for the trains to take them back to Hull. In the centre of the town a large piece of waste ground seemed suitable to halt on, here we immediately started to fill our machine gun belts with ammunition, but I had not reckoned with the crowd, they even crowded onto our backs as we stooped to fill the belts so we had to abandon belt filling for the time being. Billets had been found so away went headquarters to the Queens Hotel and the MG section to the Pier Hotel, where we soon settled down to find it as the boys termed it "a bread and butter shop". There was a war on somewhere and although we were not in it as yet, we were not to be idle, coastguard stations had to be occupied, **Lt. Clive Wilson DSO\*2**, took on this duty at Withernsea and **Lt. Rice\*3** at Tunstall, patrols had to be sent out along the coast day and night. Of course numerous stories came in of spies signalling to ships at sea by flashlights at night. Knowing the country very well I was often sent out to investigate the origin of flashing lights, usually some lover returning home with a bright bicycle lamp. One German spy was hunted out at Spurn and brought to our headquarters. So the merry game went on, most of us took it as a game thinking the war would be over by Christmas. About this time my horse "Topper" got badly bitten all along his neck and back, so on looking among the spare horse I found a chestnut mare, 4 years old bred by Mr R. Voase at Arnold, claimed her as my charger and christened her Kitty after her late rider.

About August 24<sup>th</sup> we received orders for the regiment to concentrate at Beverley, so again pack up and trek we marched by way of Nut Hill, Burstwick, where Mr and Mrs Thomas Robinson very kindly prided lunch for us all and sacks of oats for our horses. I trekked separately with the MG section and had another halt and refreshments at Sutton. At Beverley we were billeted in the hotels. My party getting billet at the Globe Inn on the corner of the Market Place. We enjoyed our duty on the coast, treating it as a game, but now it was work, returns to be sent in by the score. An order came round asking for volunteers for foreign service. I am pleased to say my

section volunteered to a man although quite a number in the squadrons held back, but to give the men credit I think it was through not being properly asked by their officers. Oh the horse parades we had on the Westwood, each horse had been numbered on the hoof as soon as bought and headquarters could not make the numbers agree.

Suddenly orders came to proceed to Kilnwick Percy so away we trekked again, what a column with our transport in the rear. At Kilnwick Percy our horses were picketed in line in the open in the usual camp fashion and the men slept in wagon sheds, granaries etc. The officers took up their quarters in the hall. I found a nice little tool house in the garden where **Corporal Hunt\*4** and I fixed up our "home". D squadron which had been on the Bridlington coast now joined us and this made us rather crowded. Now they started to pick out the volunteers for foreign service and put them into one squadron which was called the first service squadron, most of these were D squadron men. Then came recruits from Beverley and the second service squadron was formed, then A squadron volunteered and became the 3<sup>rd</sup> service squadron and all the men who would not volunteer were sent to form the second line at Beverley, whilst our regiment was called the 1<sup>st</sup> ERYV with the 1<sup>st</sup> service squadron as A squadron, 2<sup>nd</sup> as B and 3<sup>rd</sup> as C. At this time the two machine guns were put together and I took charge of the complete section of two guns. As we were too crowded at Kilnwick, I was sent with the MG section and motorcyclists to Warton Priory. How lucky we were, all billeted in the gun room with the garage as a mess and the saddle room as a kitchen; our horse had been picketed in the park just outside the lovely gardens. What a pleasant time we had here although we did a lot of training which was very necessary, most of the men being new to the guns. I had two or three days off duty with the Colonel's shooting parties. How I so enjoyed leading for the pheasant drives in the famous golden valley and at times having the privilege of a few shots.

On about November 1<sup>st</sup>, **Lt. R.N.M. Bailey\*5** was sent to take duty as MG officer. I explained the mechanism of the gun to him, but I'm afraid he gave up all hope of ever learning about the machine, so went back to his troop at his own request.

On November 4<sup>th</sup> we had to pack up and be at Pocklington station to entrain at 8am. Just as we had finished packing and were ready to move off, **Lt. H.P. Parker\*6** rode up and told me he had come to take charge as MG officer – he looked quite a sportsman on his grey Arab charger and I quite liked the look of him. He told me he knew nothing whatever about the gun, but I guessed we should get on well together. "I'll see you at the station". And away he cantered. On arrival at the station, I entrained the section on the headquarters train and away we started. It was awfully foggy that day so we could not tell where we were going except that we were heading north. At 4.30pm our train stopped at a small station which we discovered to be Chester-le-Street near Durham. We detrained and trekked away down the road, what a country; imagine a colliery district at 4.30pm on a November day, with a thick fog - however, we soon reached our destination which proved to be at Bowes House Farm, the home farm of the Lampton Castle estate. The horses were stable in wagon sheds and we slept in granaries over them while the officers took up their quarters at Bidwick Hall, a mile away. How cold it was here, sometimes snow on the ground and we had to wash out in the yard in the early mornings, but we were soldiers now and although we grouched – which is a soldier's privilege – we took it all as we found it and didn't really mind the discomforts.

On about December 1<sup>st</sup> we had a night alarm at 1.30am. Saddle up and turn out was the order and away we trekked in the darkness, our first experience of night marching and we had little thought then how many weary hours we should spend night marching in future – at about 5am we arrived at Sunderland where we put our horse under the football grandstand and waited with what patience we could command. No one seemed to know what the game was, some said an invasion, but no, at 1.30pm A squadron and the MG section trekked off again to Seaham Hall on the coast, while headquarters returned to Bowes House farm.

Seaham Hall, one of Lord Londonderry's estates proved to be an excellent place for a squadron of cavalry to be billeted at. **Major G. Buxton\*7** was in command of A squadron at the time and he gave over one stable and a cottage for the MG section away from the squadron stables. Now came trench digging and preparing gun positions, patrols on the coast as well as intensively training. Oh the mud. The squadron turned out on parade each morning spotlessly clean and went to drill in a field which soon became six inches deep in mud, but they stuck it like men, turning out spotless clean every morning.

Several times we got wind up, stood too and were confined to barracks etc. At last more excitement came – the bombardment of west Hartlepool and Scarborough – we could plainly see the flashes of the guns and shells and hear the heavy boom of the naval guns as we stood to, already saddle up ready for a move where required. Up to this time no one in headquarters seemed to take much interest in the MG.s Lt. Parker was enthusiastic, although he knew little about the guns, and he at last got them to allow us some practice. So we got a boat from the harbour and took out improvised targets about a thousand yards out to sea and then had some splendid practice from our gun positions on the cliffs. Very few at that time had seen a machine gun fire, but soon though what a great weapon it was when they saw us shoot a target to pieces at 1000 or 1500 yards away. The Colonel and adjutant came over to see us shoot at these targets out to sea and a box kite about 300 feet up in the air and we really thought that at last they were going to take an interest in our much prized guns. **SSM Muddiman\*8** of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hussars was sent to help us in our training. He was very clever with the Maxim having led the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hussars MG section before the war and also been in the school of musketry in South Africa. Things went well for a time, interest was high and we thought they had realised the value of MG's, but gradually this interest died down and we could get neither good men nor equipment for our section. Xmas came along and although it was rather like being in the workhouse compared with our Christmas at home we made the best of it and had a jolly time. The Colonel came to a concert we gave and made us a rousing speech. In January our hearts began to drop. We had been so keen with the guns all along looking after them like pets and now no one would look at us, even SSM Muddiman old soldier as he was got fed up and I began to think of transferring to something else and so get my chance in France or some theatre of war. One day Mr Herbert Sleath a friend of Lt. Parker came to a lecture I gave on the Maxim. He told me he had just got a commission in the Royal Naval Air Service, Armoured Car Division; this branch of the service appealed to me and I though now is my best chance to see some active service abroad, so I put in an application to go to the RNAS.

Weeks went by until at last the adjutant **Captain Tylden Wright \*9** sent for me and told me my papers had been returned as there were no vacancies in the RNAS. He tried hard to persuade me

to stay with the regiment but to no purpose. I had made my mind up to try and get my chance abroad, so persuaded him with the colonel's sanction to gain send in my papers.

At the beginning of February C Squadron came to Seaham and A squadron went to Bowes House. This was more interesting for me as Lee Smith (now 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.) came and lots more of my old friends. In March B squadron and the MG section were transferred to Bowes House and A squadron went to Shotten.

On March 20<sup>th</sup> the adjutant sent for me and told me I had to go to the RNAS headquarters in London for an interview, so away I went with a light heart. I stayed one night with Ted Nettleton in Gateshead and went to London on the 8am train the following morning. On arriving at the RNAS headquarters at Wormwood Scrubs my hopes were dashed to the ground for they had lost my papers in which they had granted me a commission. However I thought of Mr. H. Sleath and asked for him and he kindly helped me, so much so that I was accepted as a chief petty officer, gunnery instructor and told to return to my unit pending discharge. How pleased I was, at last a chance appeared so I wired to the regiment asking for discharge and went home by the 5.45 train from King's Cross. After two days at home I returned to Bowes House. On March 31<sup>st</sup> the adjutant said I could go, how vague, so I went to the regimental orderly room and asked him what he meant and joy, they gave me my discharge. So the following day, Good Friday, I said goodbye to Corporal Hunt and all my friends, not forgetting Kitty my faithful charger and went with Ted Nettleton to Gateshead where I spent a very enjoyable weekend having a good day's hunting with him over the stone walled country of Northumberland.

Two weeks at home before I went to London to join the RNAS. I had to shave off my moustache; I looked a pukka sailor if only a dry land one. I spent three weeks at the headquarters in London, during which time I was in a squadron for Russia and seven drafts for France and Gallipoli, but no luck. Each time the adjutant Lt. Commander Perrin spotted me on the point of leaving for embarkation and said "No we cannot spare instructors for abroad". How disappointing. However I was sent to the RNAS gunnery school at Hythe. On the way I met CPO Hardinge, the Kent County Cricketer, who afterwards became a great pal. Hythe proved very interesting to me as I had plenty of guns of various kinds under my charge – Maxim converted, Maxim, Vickers 303, Colt 303, Hotchkiss 303, Hotchkiss 3pounder and 11" trench mortar.

Each month I asked to go abroad, for although I liked the work and treasured the guns, I felt like everyone else does who has not been abroad fighting that I ought to be doing so, but each time they told me they could not spare instructors for foreign service. (On June 1<sup>st</sup> I managed to get two days leave to attend Hilda's wedding – what a time we all had, I shall never forget it – the wasps especially). Lt. Commander Rawlinson who had been a colonel on the staff of the royal Engineers gave us some very exciting moments, experimenting with the 3 pounder guns and 11" trench mortars.

On August 21<sup>st</sup> we received orders to pack everything up and return to London. Arriving at headquarters three days later we found they wanted us to go to the Motor Machine gunners or as mechanics to the air force.

At this time Lt's Lee Smith and **Sympson\*10** were doing the Machine Gun and Musketry course at Bisley, so I went down to visit them. This was the first time Sympson had seen me as a sailor and he rolled with laughter at me; he couldn't believe it after all the photographs Jack had shown him with me in Khaki.

Owing to the changes each man had to go before an Admiralty board. This board offered to help me and keep me as gunnery instructor, but as it could not promise to send me abroad I declined the offer and took my discharge, so on August 31<sup>st</sup> I was once more free of the services and went home until I could decide what regiment to join to get abroad.

Soon after I got home I received two letters one morning; one from **Colonel Guy Wilson DSO\*11** asking me if I would take a commission on his recommendation and join the 3<sup>rd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> ERYV to be the first officer to go to the 1<sup>st</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> ERYV. The other was from **Captain Woodhouse\*12**, adjutant of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> ERYV saying "as you are out of a job, will you call for an interview with the colonel with a view to taking a commission." NO. I wrote to Colonel Wilson and gratefully accepted his offer, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> one I burnt after replying that I had already accepted an offer of a commission in the FIRST line. As 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lee Smith was home on leave, he went with me to interview **Major P. Coke\*13** O/C 3/1 ERYV. Major Coke proved to be a fine old soldier of the famous 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars Regiment. He seemed very pleased to see me and had a chat saying I was just the fellow he wanted, being as he termed it an expert machine gunner. So after an interview with the GOC Humber Garrison, my papers were sent to the War Office and I was gazetted 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. on September 26<sup>th</sup> 1915. I started duty at the Yeomanry barracks Walton Street under Major Coke, whom I found to be an excellent CO.

This was perhaps the best time I had in the army as I got home every night. On October 7<sup>th</sup> I was promoted temporary Lt. and before I knew it Colonel Easton told me I was improperly dressed; of course I looked myself up and down but failed to find any fault, so he said "you should be wearing two stars". Oh joy, the first I heard of it. At this time quite a number of officers were coming into the 3<sup>rd</sup> line, which was in training with the Scots Greys at Fulford barracks York, although our headquarters was still in Hull. One fellow applied for commission and his papers were complete except that one eye was defective and would not pass the test, but as the doctor had not filled in how bad it was, it was made alright on paper, such are some of the ways of the army.

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, a draft of **Sergeant F.R. Scott\*14** and 40 men was ordered to be in readiness to proceed oversea, so 40 very clean smart men arrived from York and was detailed by the War Office on Major Coke's recommendation to be in charge of this draft. The end of November saw Lt. Lloyd Sanderson fit for duty again and although several influential persons tried to get him into my place to take out the 1<sup>st</sup> draft, they failed owing to Major Coke looking after my interests.

Every day we expected orders, but Christmas drew on and owing to Major Coke, the draft was allowed special leave from the war office. On December 26<sup>th</sup> we were recalled from leave but did not receive the final order until January 8<sup>th</sup> to depart for the port of embarkation on January 11<sup>th</sup>.

When the long looked for morning came, we paraded all spick and span, buttons etc. shining. The KOLI band played us to Paragon station, where Lord Nunburnholme, Lady

Nunburnholme, Colonel Lambert White and Colonel Easton gathered to bid us farewell. The farewell they gave us made one so proud to be taking such a fine draft to the old regiment. Away went our train amid waving of helmets and handkerchiefs, with the band playing Auld Lang Syne. On changing trains at Doncaster, I got into a carriage with four Argyll and Sutherland officers who also had a draft – they were very nice fellows (Lieutenants J Henderson, Walker, Hewison and McKay) and we stuck together all the way to Alexandria.

Mrs Guy Wilson, Lord and Lady Chesterfield met us at King's Cross and very kindly gave a dinner and a hearty farewell. Crossing London by tube was very funny – some of the lads had not been in the city before and they knocked off peoples hats with their kit bags over their shoulders was too amusing for words, everyone smiling in good humour. A special troop train took us from Waterloo to Devonport and as we passed through Exeter, the mayor very kindly provided hot coffee and buns for us all: this was greatly appreciated at 4am on a cold January morning. At Devonport we were guided to St. Budeaux rest camp for two days; here arms etc. were issued.

On the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup>, we embarked on HMS Llandovery Castle. After my draft had got on board I was leaning over the rail watching others come on board when a Major came and asked me what regiment I and my draft belonged to and on being told the ERY he said it was the smartest draft he had ever seen go on a ship – what a compliment of the training at York and how it pleased me to be in charge of such splendid fellows, all as keen as possible to be a credit to their regiment and county. After this I went below to see all of my men settle down, blankets etc. issued, so that I never saw England's shores fade away in the distance for when I came back on deck again we were well out in the channel. Everything went well and although several times submarines were reported to us by other ships, we never sighted one. Quite a number were sea sick crossing the bay as it was rather rough. About the ninth day we reached Malta where we were allowed to go ashore for eight hours, just giving us time to drive around and see the sights. The goats in the streets being driven from house to house and milked at the door struck us as very strange. The women (native) wear large hoods over their faces, which gives them a very strange appearance. The temple of bones is a novelty well worth seeing. Natives are very clever at diving into the sea for coins thrown in and they will catch them before they have time to settle to the bottom.

Although it was January it was very hot and were pleased to get back on board again at 7pm. Our crossing from Malta to Alexandria was very rough and in spite of the pitching and rolling of the ship, sports such as boxing, racing and pillow fights were set up by a Major of the RFA.

At Alexandria we lay in the harbour all one day and disembarked on the following afternoon. I took my draft all complete by tram 7 miles out of the town to the base camp at Sidi Bishr on the seashore. Here I had a pleasant surprise in finding a Col. Shirston in command of the Yeomanry base depot (he was one of my squadron leaders in the RNAS in London, but since then had come back to the Yeomanry). **Lt. Lloyd Sanderson\*15** was also at the base waiting orders to proceed to the regiment.

Alexandria was quite a novelty to us and we quite enjoyed our stay of seven days there, everyone being very fit after the lovely sea voyage. I never felt fitter in my life than at this time.

One night I was in charge of a piquet of 25 men in Sister Street. This is one of the worst streets in the native quarter of the town close to the docks. Oh the awful sights one saw in that quarter, one really could not believe such vice existed in the world unless one saw it. Personally everyone ought to see these quarters on first landing in Egypt and if that alone does not keep him clear in the future nothing will.

On February 3<sup>rd</sup> we got orders to proceed to join the regiment, how pleased we all were. At 11.30pm we entrained at Sidi Gaba station – a very crowded train, so I got in with an officer who had dined well if rather unwisely. His name was Lt. Dixon of the Egyptian Labour Corps and he was just back from Gallipoli. He had expected a lady companion and brought such a dinner, ham chicken sweets etc., not to mention the wine, but his fair companion had disappointed him, so he kindly asked me to share his spread, nothing loth, we set to and did full justice to it. We stopped at Ben Har station and he got out with his very bulky baggage to catch the Ismailia train, but who should get out of the next carriage but the lady he had expected to travel with to Ismailia. How unfortunate that I had eaten her share of the eatables – however we had a good laugh over it until the train moved on for Cairo. Now I had a compartment to myself, my thoughts naturally wandered to how I should be received by my old officers of the regiment, for I was only the third man of that regiment to take a commission from the ranks, and how pleased I felt at the prospect of meeting old friends again. At 5am we changed at Cairo for the train going south. As the sun rose and the mist cleared I was surprised to see the rich agricultural land of the Nile valley through which we were passing: every kind of crop, except turnips, growing and looking excellent. An abundant supply of water in the irrigation canals, the native villages built entirely of mud and the cattle grazing in the fields, everything, except the desert in the distance, not a bit as I imagined it to be.

We had now to change again at a junction about halfway between Cairo and Fayum. Here I met Mr. Smith, an engineer on the Egyptian state railway who was a native of Hull. Not until we got nearly to Fayum did we get an idea of what the desert was really like, sand and gravel for miles and miles, with an occasional pyramid sticking up as a good landmark. On reaching Medinet Fayum we were surprised to find a light railway was laid all over the oasis. On this railway we travelled right into the 22<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Brigade at Deir El Azab. Practically no one was about when we arrived. So we marched up to the regimental orderly room, very quietly, to report our arrival, but great was the excitement as news of us being there spread through the camp. Old comrades crowded round to hear the latest news from home.

Now the draft was taken out of my charge and I must say one need never want a finer party of men to be in charge of – they played the game splendidly and I am pleased to say kept up the reputation the Major gave them on embarking at Devonport.

Two days later I was sent to join C squadron which was on detached duty at Prince Muhammed Ali Ezbeh, twenty miles away by the light railway. An orderly met me with horses at Gharrack station about noon on the Sunday and as we rode along to camp I had my first lessons in Arabic, for all the natives we passed wished us good morning Naharak-sa-ee.

At the entrance to the camp I met 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. J. Lee Smith, then **Captain Dalton White\*16**, Lt's Scott, Lloyd, Sympson and last of all Major Reynard and the **Doc Captain Bromett\*17**. All gave

me a hearty welcome and how glad I was to be back with my old peace time squadron. On Monday AM I rode Lloyd's grey charger "Pinch and tickle" out on patrol with Jack to the Hagar Mashguk, a huge rocky cliff overlooking the Wadi Ryum[?]

Here we met an officer of the Egyptian camel police, he was a Sudanese and did not know much English, but we managed to converse with him very slowly. This Wadi Ryum is the main caravan route between Cairo and the Baharieh, an oasis 120 miles away over waterless desert. This officer showed us in the distance, 15 miles away, the approximate position of three wells in the wadi bed, which had only been visited once by white men.

At this time my energy was great after the lovely sea voyage and every day I went out after wild ducks on the swamps with an old Belgian made 16 bore gun we got from a native policeman. Ducks were always very acceptable in the mess and green peas were plentiful in the fields, so we fared well. After about a week here, I got measles, only a very slight attack but I had to be isolated in a tent away in the desert – this was no hardship for every day I went out with a gun or rifle after the ducks and managed to keep the mess well supplied, although the gun was very old and had to be fastened up with string.

About now we got a "wind up" over the Senussi tribes whom we knew of by reports of aeroplanes were occupying the Baharieh oasis, but they soon died down as the airman soon found them again still one hundred miles away over the desert. Now we moved to a new camp nine miles away which the Doc called Abu Sepsus (the land of filth) which name was afterwards changed to Gharrack West. Here again I went on patrol to the Hagar Mashguk, this time with **Lt. R.W.R. Scott\*18** who I persuaded to try and find the wells with me in the Wadi Ryum. So we left the patrol in charge of a sergeant and started out for the sand dunes with one orderly: it was very hot but our horses stuck it well and we soon found a way through 30 foot high sand dunes, discovering the wells at 2pm. The water was coming up as though from a nine inch pipe and tasted and smelt very much of sulphur, but luckily our horses would drink it. At 3pm we started back collecting the patrol on our way to camp which we reached about 8pm. The horses did wonderfully well having carried us over fifty miles of desert on a very hot day in thirteen hours. Intelligence was wanted about these wells by Brigade headquarters so I had to draw sketches showing their position and routes to them through the sand dunes and write a report. (Two months later our troop occupied the Wadi Ryum as an advanced post).

Towards the end of March A squadron relieved us at Gharack West and we trekked off to Abu Gandir where headquarters was, also a detachment of the RFC with aeroplanes/ Here our officers mess cookhouse caught fire and before anything could be done our large mess tent was ablaze, some of our rough furniture was saved, but most of it was burnt, as a quantity of rifle ammunition was in the fire and it was quite like being inaction for a time, bullets whistling in all directions. Unfortunately we lost our only two shotguns of cartridges in the blaze.

There soon came round an order asking for volunteers for an Imperial Camel Corps. I may so no one was allowed to go if the regiment wanted them, so most of the duds went. Intelligence agents reported an enemy convoy about to try sand get out to the Baharieh Oasis from the Fayum oasis so we had to do night outposts along the desert. Six nights we were all out and this

proved too much of good thing so several villages were raided and searched, arms were confiscated and the convoy dispersed.

An aeroplane accident spread a gloom over us as it crashed to earth one Sunday morning only 200 yards from our mess. Lt. Prettyman was the pilot and he proved to be no worse, but his observer was so badly damaged about his head that he died four hours later. All the RFC officers were very friendly often coming across to dine on our meagre fare and this was our first glimpse of the tragic side of war. Glanders broke out among our horses and some had to be taken out in the desert and shot. These dead horses attracted the jackals in large quantities and we got some good hunting after them, killing them after long runs with swords and revolvers.

About this time Jack (John Lee Smith) had to give in owing to dysentery and colic. He had not been well for weeks, but would not give in until forced. He went to the Fayum military hospital where I visited him a few days later when he had somewhat recovered after being nearly dead.

On April 29<sup>th</sup> we relieved B squadron at Gharack South, 10 miles away from Abu Gandir. On May 1<sup>st</sup> I left the regiment to go on a general infantry course at the imperial school of instruction at Zeitun, Cairo. Away we started, 10 miles to ride to the light railway station at Gharack, with a pack horse to carry my kit. The train was rather like an overgrown toy, one so called first class compartment, the rest half passenger and half luggage trucks, crowded with natives going to Medinet Fayum market. Parts of this district are very picturesque with the date palm trees, mud villages with fine crops of sugar, cotton, corn etc. My thoughts were strange on that journey for I wanted to see Cairo but I had no wish to do an infantry course as I had never done any infantry work and could not see of what use it would be to me as a cavalry officer, however I made up my mind to make the best of it and do my best.

At last I reached Cairo at 8pm on Saturday evening; no use my reporting to the school until Sunday, so I made my way to the Continental hotel for the night. One had heard so much of the Continental hotel and the Shepherds hotel, they both being so well known to all travellers in Egypt. Both are in the main street and have high spacious verandas, where people lounge and drink tea in the afternoon and have dinner from eight till nine or nine thirty pm under the many coloured electric lights amid the palms. There is quite a mysterious eastern air about the Shepherds hotel as one enters its large hall one wonders if it is a mosque rather than a hotel, but no the business looking counters on each side of the door reassures one. On the other hand the Continental hotel is a more modern building, decorated inside with white and gold, marble floors and high ceilings making one feel cool on entering. The Arab waiters in their black gowns and red sashes are quaint – the black hand placing food in front of one is not pleasant at first.

The infantry course was after all much better than I expected, true we had to work hard from 6.00am to 6.30pm. I lived in a hut with three very jolly Australian officers, during the week we worked together and at the weekends we went all over Cairo to see the sights. Here again I met Lt. Hewison of the A & SH, who came out with me. It was at this time I got a camera and although I knew very little about photography the results were very satisfactory.

This month was one of the hottest on record, and when I got back to the regiment at Gharack South the sun was too much for me, so the Doc put me on a diet of buffalos, milk and soda water for a week. My condition did not improve on this awful diet, so I was packed off on a

week's sick leave to Alexandria, much against my wish. Unfortunately Jack had just ben invalided to England so I missed seeing him. I stayed at the Beaux Rivage hotel, Ramleh, close to the sea where I had a real good rest. On the day I had to return I went to see Captain Dalton White in no. 19 general hospital. He was having a bad time with recurring dysentery. When he saw me he said I was not fit for duty and insisted, in fact ordered me to see the doctor, who put me straight to bed close to White, so there we were company for each other. How pleased I was to have a pal as I felt shy and strange for it was my first experience of a hospital. I was kept in bed on no diet for seven days and on the eight day when allowed to get up I felt like eating an ox. After three days up I was sent with three other officers to no.4 convalescent hospital at Garden House, Saba Pasha. This is an awfully nice place close to the sea, Mrs McLaren being in charge. This was more like home life for Mrs McLaren was awfully kind and did everything possible for our comfort. I discovered that Mr Elsworth whom I once spent a weekend with at Hornsea from school about 11 years ago lived practically next door, so one afternoon I called on him. How strange it was to meet his family again after all that time, all of them being now grown up. Three of his sons were in the army, two in France and one in the Egyptian camel transport corps. Mrs Elsworth seemed pleased to see me and to hear of Captain White whom she had met years before, so she went with me to see him in hospital.

Alexandria is rather depressing at this time of the year, in June, and I was getting no b

better, but longing to get back to work again, so after a lot of persuasion the doctor at last consented to let me go back to the desert. When I got to my men I found about 60% of them sick owing to the heat – the desert being like a furnace, the temperature often reaching 130 degrees in our double line tents. However I soon got strong again and on August 5<sup>th</sup> received orders to report at headquarters at Kom Medinet Madi camp, so packed up and away we went: Private J. Freer, and two chargers. On the way I came to the conclusion they wanted me to take charge of the MG section as **Lt. F.P. Scott\*19** had previously applied to go to the RFC. Now I had heard while in Alexandria that all machine gunners were to go to the new MG Corps and did not like the idea as it would mean leaving the regiment again. Suddenly I thought of a chat I had had with **2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Hornby\*20**, who came to us from the NW Mounted police and was very keen on machine guns and so was prepared when I reported to the Colonel on arrival. He told me that Scott would be going and he wanted me to carry on with his work. After I had explained my point of view to him, he still wished me to take on the guns, so I set to work with the same guns and quite a few of the same men as I had had in 1914 and 15.

A week later the regiment concentrated at Deir El Azab, the Brigade camp, for intensive training and the Lincoln Yeomanry relieved us. We had quite a jolly time here, plenty of work in the daytime and very jolly dinner parties in the officers messes at night, for all the regiment was together and one had not far to go on visits. On Saturdays, Lloyd, Sympson, Smith, Pearson and I would start away with our orderlies and pack horses carrying provisions for a bit of duck shooting or any kind of sport to pass the time. What lovely sporting trips these were, all of us keen and didn't mind getting wet after duck, snipe etc. Our orderlies enjoyed it too, as it was a change from military life, but only for a few hours. Major Reynard left us here, as owing to a fall from his horse, he was invalided back to England. Soon after Major Buxton left us too to take command of a battalion of Coldstream Guards in England. We were awfully sorry to lose him, but he seemed to have a roaming disposition and could not stay long in one place.

About this time, Sympson and I visited the Hawarit pyramid and labyrinth and the Lahun pyramid. These are two of the oldest pyramids in Egypt, being built about 8000 years ago. There is very little left of the wonderful old labyrinth, as it has lately been used as a granite quarry by the natives. We two were always roaming about on shooting trips after ducks, pigeons or jackals when duty allowed us any spare time. On one of these trips I shot a huge vulture with my revolver from 70 yards away.

Early in September Major D. White returned to us after his long illness with dysentery and again took command of B squadron. On September 10<sup>th</sup> B squadron received orders to proceed to Kasr Karun 34 miles away. How pleased to see in orders that I was transferred to B squadron, my plan worked when Lt. Hornby took the guns and Major White's plan worked too for he had been trying for two months to get me into B squadron.

Kasir Karun proved to be a very interesting place at the extreme north west corner of the Fayum Oasis, close to the large salt lake called Birkit Karun and on the old caravan route from Cairo to Baharieh. There is an ancient Roman castle or fort here, which is very interesting, being built of stone which must have been transported from Aswan on barges on the Nile and canals.

Now work started in real earnest, B squadron had been very much neglected under **Major Bardwell's\*21** command, who went to the Camel Corps and Major White determined to improve things and make the best squadron of all from B. How he worked with a will and a keen interest, every day training in mounted work in the morning and every afternoon I took musketry parades. Effendi El Dwaine the Egyptian police officer of this district is a very capable and pleasant fellow and he helped us out of many small difficulties with the natives.

One Saturday I had a day off duty and I went with El Ubid Saad, a Sudanese sergeant major in the camel police, on camels to the Wadi Ryum in the hope of getting a shot at a Gazelle, one of the very shy desert species of deer. The camels were splendid, getting over the desert at a steady trot of 7 miles per hour; although the sergeant major knew very little English and I very little Arabic, we managed to make one another understood and got along in great style. He was very interesting, having lived on the desert all his life, he could the various tracks like an open book, but although my eyesight is very keen, he could see as well with his naked eye as I could with prismatic glasses. Unfortunately when we reached the wells in the wadi, we found a party of Arabs there repairing the wells and of course they had frightened away the Gazelle, but we came across very recent tracks. We sat under a palm tree and had an hour's rest; at midday, making our lunch of the dates off the tree. At one o'clock we started back by way of Gehenuieh, reaching camp at 7.30pm, just after dark. This ride was awfully interesting; we covered 75 or 80v miles in 13 hours, but did not even see a Gazelle. When the Colonel heard where I had been (this he heard from our patrols who had seen me about 15 miles away from their posts) I had to end in a sketch of the country and a report.

About a week later I once more got into the doctor's hands, now suffering from quincies and I had to spend five days in a mud hut with nothing to eat, very little to drink, as my throat was too painful to swallow any food. Now Major White had to go to Cairo on a cavalry course at the cavalry school just opened by Brigadier Fitzgerald DSO, the inspector general of cavalry in

Egypt, so the Major and I travelled together to Fayum, where I went into hospital for three days and then on to Cairo to no.1 convalescent hospital for 10 days.

When I got back to Fayum on the way to re-join the squadron, I found Colonel Goodwin in a great alarm at the hospital, as a case of cholera had occurred at Karun. He did not want me to return there, but I said if my men were there I ought to be there too, cholera or no, so he rang up my colonel and was told I must certainly go on to Karun. Luckily that was the only case of cholera we had and it did not prove fatal.

Soon after this we receive orders for the Brigade to concentrate at Deir El Azab, so away we trekked again, bivouacked one night at Kargat and on again next day to find when we reached Deir El Azab that the tour outpost line was abandoned as the danger of the Senussi tribes was over. Again we did lots of training and a few more weekend shooting trips too, until on December 1<sup>st</sup> orders came for the whole Brigade to move to the eastern frontier, leaving the west to be guarded by infantry and armoured car patrols. B squadron entrained at Fayum station at 8pm on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the whole squadron, horses men and vehicles being put into the train in 13 minutes after arriving on the platform.

So the regiment said farewell to the Fayum district where it had been doing desert outpost work for just over 12 months and turned to the eastern side and the Turks.

At 6am on December 4<sup>th</sup> our train arrived at Kantara, our base on the Suez canal. After detraining we trekked across the canal pontoon bridge and away over the desert 6 miles to our bivouac area at hill 40. Here we stayed three days, during which **Captain F. Bradley\*22** and I had a trip to Port Said to buy mess stores, then away again we trekked, again 15 miles to our next camp at Duiedar. Where we relieved the Gloucestershire Hussars and 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which made to move up to the front line beyond Romani. Dueidar was an interesting place in a hollow between large sand dune with a lovely palm grove, which gave shelter from the blazing sun. This place had been the scene of a battle with the Turks only a few months previously, when the King's Own Scottish Borderers did good execution amongst the Jacko's, making a gallant stand against superior numbers and finally beating of the enemy. One regiment of the British West Indian troops was stationed here as garrison troops, commanded by Lt. Colonel Woodhill, who was a very witty and amusing man, understanding his black troops thoroughly.

Sympson, Hornby and I had great sport here after the Gazelle, but although they gave us great sport, they were too shy and cunning to let us approach within range, they even succeeded in evading such an experienced deer stalker as our Colonel, Guy Wilson DSO, who often tried to get a shot at them.

As Xmas drew on, some of the officers went to Port Said to secure some Xmas fare. So on Xmas day we had some good sports, shooting competitions and a real good old fashioned dinner of turkey and plum pudding. It rained heavily all the day, but we didn't mind that, as we had seen no rain for 12 months or so.

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, Lt. Lloyd, Stephenson, Sympson and myself were ordered to report to the cavalry school at Zeitun, Cairo for a course. We were a real merry party and better comrades

could not be found. This course was very instructive and also we had lots of fun, making new acquaintances from other Yeomanry regiments and the Australian Light Horse.

After the three weeks course, we four managed to get three days leave, so being rather tired of Cairo, we got our guns and went to Gibalie in the Fayum district. Effendi El Dwaine whom we had telephoned met us at the station and saw that we got settled in the rest house. He secured us donkeys to ride on, provisions to eat and a native to cook for us. Oh the ducks were about in the swamps in their thousands so we had a right royal time away from the war and all its responsibilities. Our bag included 11 different types of duck, also snipe plover, spare winged plover and pigeon. When we had to return, the Mudir of the village, a jolly old native, provided his carriage to take us to the station,

On reaching Kantara we were informed that our regiment had moved up the line to Romani, so we proceed there by train in open trucks. Romani was very interesting owing to the fighting that took place around there in August 1916. We had to do patrol work from here to Katia and Oghratina districts, where the 5<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade (the Warwick, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire Yeomanry) had had such severe fighting. On this occasion the Worcestershire Yeo lost the whole regiment apart from one officer and 59 other ranks, their Colonel Coventry being taken prisoner by the Turks. One came across the most gruesome sights on these patrols, on the sand where the dead, both friend and foe had been buried. They had risen through the soft sand to the surface and there they lay in the most weird positions, close to their rough wooden crosses. The Inspector General of cavalry paid us a visit here and gave us very interesting and instructive training.

About January 29<sup>th</sup> we started to trek to Bir El Abd in a sandstorm which lasted for three days. No one can realise the discomfort of a sandstorm unless they have experienced them as it is beyond description. Those of us who were not carrying sand goggles heartily regretted their neglect, as they suffered much with sand in their eyes. I always carry goggles with smoked glasses as a precaution against the glare of the sun and so was well equipped. We ate and drank sand and our clothes were full of it during the three days, for the wind even drove it through our thick riding breeches. Our camp tents were erected in the sandstorm at Bir El Abd and O the comfort of the shelter of a tent from the blowing sand.

After we had been a week here, I was ordered to take my troop to a post at Salmana, about eight miles further up the line. Here I live for about ten days in a blockhouse inside barbed wire entanglements and looked after the bivouac area and water supply for the 54<sup>th</sup> division, which was trekking up the line. Here I spent my second birthday out east. On February 16<sup>th</sup> I reported to Major Lord Cholmondeley, OC Notts. Battery RHA to act as escort during the trek up to El Arish. The Major was an excellent officer to work for and I think this trek of four days was thoroughly enjoyed by my troop.

We passed through Tilul, Mardaan, Mazaar and Bardawil, spending a night at each of these places and marched into El Arish on February 20<sup>th</sup>. The only thing which spoilt this trek was that Major Lord Cholmondeley had leg his broken by a runaway mule. This was very hard luck, especially as we were on our way up to the front line.

El Arish which was captured from the Turks at Christmas 1916 was very interesting; the mosque standing on a rise close to the sea, while the village was about a mile away on the banks of the Wadi El Arish and surrounded by fine palm groves. The water supply here was very strange as our wells for drinking water both for horses and men were on the sea beach, only about ten yards from the sea and the water was very good indeed, in fact the best we had ever had on the Sinai. When a rough sea came in, the sea water came into our wells and we had to dig new ones close by. There was an abundant supply of water and for once we were not on water supply rations. The Australian Light Horse had one Brigade here and also one Brigade of the New Zealand Mounted rifles.

On February 24<sup>th</sup> we trekked again with the ANZAC Mounted Division of which we were now part, through Burge where the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade was to Sheikh Zowaid. On this trek we met the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade returning from a fight with the Jacks; they looked fine trekking along, the Brigadier leading with his lance and red pennant, then the three regiments of cavalry and the ammunition limbers and Red Cross ambulance carts (sand carts) in the rear, with huge Red Cross flags flying on the carts.

Here we found ourselves at last in the front line, all tents, heavy baggage and comforts left over a hundred miles behind and we had to dig ourselves in or make little bivouac shelters from anything that came handy. German aeroplanes often paid us visits, but as a rule they kept well up out of reach of our Archies. Two days after our arrival, our Brigade was sent out on reconnaissance, our regiment to do the advanced guard. B Squadron was the advanced guard, with my troop as vanguard. B Squadron's objective was a place called El Musleh on the border between Sinai and Palestine. How I remember the excitement and eagerness of all. El Musleh was supposed to be occupied by the Turks; in fact our staff captain told me that our troops had never entered it as yet. This advanced guard was very interesting indeed, across a strange country, one had to find one's way by very poor maps, made years before under Lord Kitchener, and this was the real thing, no scheme. El Musleh was a disappointment to many, as it proved to be unoccupied.

El Musleh was then left for I was sent on an officer's patrol still further out. One small party of Turks was sighted, but they did not stay to see who we were. It was on this patrol that we captured an armed Bedouin and his "trusty" sword is now at home. The Bedouins are a very treacherous people and will kill any man for the clothes he wears. This was our first glimpse of Palestine and although it did not look very inviting, it certainly looked much better than the desert of the Sinai peninsula. Our time was fully occupied on outpost duty on the right flank and reconnaissance work on the front, Brigades taking it in turns. One day I had to take charge of a guard to act as escort [section illegible] to the GOC in C Sir A Murray.

All this part of the country is covered with low scrub where all kinds of creeping and crawling things live in abundance, such as snakes, centipedes, scorpions and large spiders etc. German aeroplanes now visited us about three times a day, sometimes with bombs, but cavalry is a very difficult target for bombers, so we suffered very little in this way.

On about March 1<sup>st</sup> our division trekked to Rafa when I was in charge of the flank guard, but the Turks allowed us to establish our new bivouac camp on the beach at Rafa without disturbing us.

From here each Brigade went out on reconnaissance every third day, for all of the country towards Gaza and Shebel had to be reconnoitred for our next advance. This work was very interesting and rather exciting, as at times we often came in contact with enemy cavalry patrols and had quite sharp little fights.

One day I was sent on a special reconnaissance with the New Zealand Mounted Brigade, when we took the large village of Khan Yunus. We travelled over undulating country, partly grassed and partly sandy desert until we arrived on a hill 320 feet high and there in the valley below lay the village of Khan Yunus, surrounded by gardens in which grew olive, orange and almond trees with hedges of prickly pear.

Many years ago Napoleon and his staff entered this village in front of his advanced guard which had gone astray and was nearly captured by the Turks. How we enjoyed the sight of green cultivation after so many miles of desert. We were able to buy chickens, oranges and eggs from the natives and we thought of the land flowing with milk and honey. Soon Jacko gave us his attention, by turning his 5.9 guns on us, his shells fell fairly close, but we had not much fear for he was shelling us from his redoubt at Sheik Nuran about seven or eight miles away. Needless to say we, or rather our eatables, were well received in the mess on our return.

Lieutenant General Chauvel organised a race meeting for the Desert Column as the advanced corps of our forces east of the Suez Canal was called. The race course was made on a hollow plain on the Rafa battlefield, with a hill on each side to act as grandstands. This meeting was a huge success, everything was in proper racing style, both steeplechases and flat races and to add to the excitement, we were in view of the Turks positions along the Wadi Guzze and rather expected the German aeroplanes to bring us some "iron rations" to add to our excellent days sport, but they were gentlemen that day and did not intrude. Two days later our Brigade went out to reconnoitre the Sheik Nuran redoubt. We expected some hard fighting, but were mistaken for the Turks had evacuated this very strong position. This surprised us, for that redoubt would certainly have taken a lot of storming, being situated on a hill land having excellent trenches and wire, with about fifteen hundred yards flat ground in front of it.

On March 21<sup>st</sup> we prepared for an advance and attack on Gaza about fifty miles up the coast for all of our reconnaissance of the Wadi Guzze and surroundings was complete and Jacko had evacuated Sheik Nuran which would have harassed our right flank. We moved at midnight on March 24<sup>th</sup> trekking along the beach and arriving at Deir El Belah at dawn. Here we watered our horses at a small lake amongst the palm tree, had about five minutes for a hasty breakfast and away we went to take up an reconnaissance and outpost line along the high ground overlooking the Wadi Guzze. Meanwhile the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division under Major General Dallas was marching up in our rear and should have taken over our outpost line by 7.30pm but did not do so until 10.30pm, when we hurried back to Deir El Belah to water and feed our horses, draw rations and forage and be ready to move off again at 1.30am. Each horse carried two days forage and four days rations for each man, also each troop had a pack horse which carried two days rations for each man of the troop.

War plan of campaign was: the 53<sup>rd</sup> infantry division to do a frontal attack on Gaza over the sand dunes from the Wadi Ghuzze, the Australian Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps

to cover our right flank and hold off reinforcements from Beersheba and Huj, while our ANZAC Mounted Division was to do a night march to the north east of Gaza and attack Gaza from the rear so that the town and its defences should be cut off from the enemy.

We (the Anzac Div.) trekked at 1.30am on March 26<sup>th</sup> in the dark, there was a dark fog & once the column got on the move, very little noise was made. We crossed the Wadi Guzze at Sheikh Naban, by crossings already prepared & away up the rising ground to the north east. As dawn broke, we heard the Turkish cavalry buglers in Gaza blow reveille & I guess they little thought how close we were to their rear, for the thick fog hid us from their view. This wet fog seriously delayed the attack of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division & probably lost us the day's battle. The fog cleared about 10am when two enemy aeroplanes came over and sprayed our column with machine gun bullets. Seen the first enemy shell burst about 100 yards from me, close to two limbers loaded with guncotton belonging to the divisional RE's. Then came a shower of long range shells which cut some telegraph wires we were passing under & this made our column open its formation still more.

Soon, the guns of the 53<sup>rd</sup> got busy, for we could see huge columns of black smoke as our high explosive shells pounded the enemies defences, which took Jacko's attention from us, for he left us to trek on in comparative peace to a wadi 3 miles N.E. of Gaza, where we halted. While waiting here, some of us took the opportunity & had a shave for we found some muddy water in a water hole. At last came news by wireless that the 53<sup>rd</sup> Div. was held up & our G.O.C. sent back the message that if the 53<sup>rd</sup> could not take Gaza, the Anzac Div. would. So we waited & watched the Australian Division on our right, for they were fighting hard against enemy reinforcements from the Huj & Beersheba districts, until at last orders came for us to attack, so away we went by brigades to the Gaza-Jaffa road near Jebalie, where the Australian Brigade of our Division had captured the General & staff of the Turkish 53<sup>rd</sup> Division. Here again, the enemy aeroplanes got busy raining machine gun bullets among us & spotting for his artillery, who soon started to shower shrapnel on us. We had no time to wait for casualties; our orders were "attack", so we went in fine order, in line of troop columns at the canter. Oh, that ride, under heavy & what appeared to us well directed shell fire & over about two miles of rough plain, was as good as a fox hunt, quite a few came to grief, not so much through enemy shrapnel as through their horses falling.

Action front-----and we dismounted to attack the hill on which we could already see the Jackos running, evidently our galloping advance had put the fear of something into them. As we advanced our RHA did some very good shooting, for their shrapnel was sweeping the ground only 30 yards in front of us. We took this hill, afterwards called Fryer's Hill after our Brigadier, at the same time as some of the infantry arrived on it – taking some 50 or 60 prisoners. A perfect hail of machine gun bullets greeted us on the ridge. It has always been a mystery to me why I did not lose more than one man at this time, when my troop was in front; we could not locate the enemy guns among the dense prickly pear hedges, nor could we advance, as there was a steep descent or a kind of cliff in front of us. Later, as darkness fell, we discovered these enemy guns, by their flash, to be on the minaret of the mosque. Colonel Guy Wilson D.S.O. was magnificent on this occasion. My troop was now sent out as a patrol to our left, towards Ali Muntar, but I found this enemy strong point to be already in the hands of our infantry. Darkness was now

coming on & we were ordered to retreat, so back to our horses to find who were the lucky ones that had a horse left. The Colonel had all his three chargers wounded.

At 8pm we moved back to our starting point on the Gaza-Jaffa road & at 9pm the Division started a night march back to Deir El Belah, with our B squadron as advance guard. So ended our first May in a big fight. It struck me as very strange that two armies could fight hard all day & as darkness closed in – silence & not a shot to be heard. Most of us had strange thoughts that night, for were not so many of our comrades laid in ambulance carts.

The march back in the dark was weird – at times we came across various units who were lost in that dark strange country & quite a few men fell down cisterns or wells. The Armoured Car Squadron got lost, so went to sleep to wake in the morning with Turks all round them; they fought their way out, all except one car, inflicting about 400 casualties on the enemy, for which the CO got the DSO. We were very glad to get back to Belah at 7am, B squadron having been in from the whole day & night, got to water first, so when we had watered our horses at the lake & fed them, we started breakfast, but before many could finish, even a small breakfast, the order came to saddle up & fall in. We moved again at 8am on to the beach & along to the mouth of the Wadi Ghuzze to cover the retreat of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, which was withdrawing under difficulties. Here we stayed until 8pm, when in the dark we took up an outpost line on the high ground south of the Wadi, so that the 53<sup>rd</sup> could retire through our line.

With dawn came Jacko's shells thick & fast when B squadron horses had to be moved to a convenient hollow in the cliff for shelter. At 8am, the regiment formed up on the beach in a hurry and our Colonel told us aeroplane reconnaissance had reported enemy front line trenches evacuated & that we had to go & reconnoitre. Our plan was B squadron once more in front as advance guard to the Regiment, with the Lincolnshire Yeomanry on our right flank & the Stafford Yeomanry in support. **Lt. Mark Sykes\*23** was in charge of the vanguard, consisting of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Wright's troop on the left next the sea & my troop on the right. Away we went over the Wadi mouth towards Gaza, expecting every minute to meet heavy shell fire; but no, Jacko was again playing his game of wait & see. I pushed on over the good ground to within about 400 yards of Sampson's ridge, when the enemy got up out of their front line & ran back over the ridge – However, I had seen this trick played before, but had to wait for Wright's troop on my left, for they had been delayed by the soft sand dunes. An aeroplane now came and dropped a message for me & at on [that] the Turks came back to their front line trenches & opened a hot fire on us, which we could not return because of the blowing sand clogging our rifles. The Lincolns on my right had become heavily engaged and were falling back, leaving me in a very unsafe position with my right flank open. Of course messages were continuously passing between Mark Sykes and myself; **Private Freer\*24** carried most of these and very well he did it too. However I hung to my position, keeping close observation of the enemy and getting all the information required, but was at last ordered to withdraw. This was very exciting, under hot fire from the Jackos, but once more I was very lucky and got away with only one horse killed and two wounded, bringing back with us one Turkish prisoner, a spy who had been in our lines dressed as an Egyptian camel driver. He was afterwards shot, for he had also been looting our dead.

It was 3pm when we got back to our former outpost line where we off saddled and rested for a while. Then we moved to our bivouac area one mile east of Belah on the cliff top. Oh how pleased we were to have a swim in the sea, for both men and horses were much exhausted. Our horses had done 95 hours' work and only had saddles off for a total of six hours. How we slept that night; some lay on the cliff edge, but had no fear of falling over in their sleep, for we lay just as dead men. Personally I had not been to sleep since we had left Rafa. We were given two days rest here and as rations were not too plentiful we roped and killed stray cattle, which proved very appetising after so much bully beef.

It was pitiful to hear of the gallant fighting and casualties of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, all to no purpose. Although official despatches described the operations as a success, it was really a failure. True we had advanced fifteen miles, but this could have been done at any time without any fighting at all. The attack on Gaza cost us about 6000 casualties in one day and then we had to withdraw to the Wadi Ghuzze. Someone had to be blamed for this and General Dallas was the unlucky one. He resigned his command of the 53<sup>rd</sup>, went back to England – as is so often the case, the wrong man got the blame, whilst those really at fault were not removed until later.

However it is not the Englishman's way to sit down & weep - no English Tommy's spirits are the most wonderful in the world, so we started to prepare for the second attack on Gaza. We mounted troops had to do outpost duty on the right flank and to throw out covering parties to protect working ones in the wadi, who were preparing more crossings and developing the water supply. More artillery came up by train and munitions and stores were landed from supply ships on the beach at Belah, in surf boats. The railway soon appeared and branch lines sprang up like mushrooms in the night. That railway across the Sinai from Kantara to Palestine will ever be known as one of the many great achievements of the Royal Engineers. Their record was three miles of line laid in one day, with no track prepared beforehand.

At last all preparations were complete. The gunners told us they were going to use gas shells this time. We did not like the idea of gas, as the Turks had been clean fighters when not influenced by German officers. Our division moved out on the night of 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> April to their position on the right flank close to Tel El Jemme. At 6am on the 16<sup>th</sup> the bombardment started; two British monitors and one French cruiser helping the land batteries by putting 9 inch and 12 inch shells onto the Gaza defences, paying special attention to Sampson's ridge and Ali Muntar.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division attacked, just to the south east of Gaza and took Mansura ridge and Sheik Abbas. On the 18<sup>th</sup> the Australian Mounted Division attacked the At ridge, but were driven off after very heavy casualties, as they had to attack across a flat plain, afterwards called Dead Horse Plain, two or three miles wide, whilst the Turks held a high ridge on either side of the plain. The Turkish cavalry now appeared from the direction of Beersheba, over the El Buggar ridge, but no sooner did they see us, but they turned across our front, not venturing to come near enough for us to engage them. They were in no formation, but just appeared to be in a mob about 2000 strong. How we longed to get amongst them, but it could not be done as our troops were stretched along a large front and could not be collected quickly enough. Our RHA failed us at this moment, for they were too far back to engage this good target. About this time we were heavily bombed by aeroplanes, while watering horses. Luckily our regiment had just got clear, but the Australians suffered, losing one troop completely by a direct hit. On the 20<sup>th</sup> April,

Mark Sykes had to be sent to hospital with very bad septic sores on his neck, leaving to act as 2<sup>nd</sup> in command of B squadron to Major Dalton White. At 8pm that night we left our outpost position, about 2 miles in front of the 74<sup>th</sup> dismounted Yeomanry Division, who were digging in on our new battle line at Mendur. Moving at night is very nerve trying, so close to enemy lines in a dark strange country with so many wadis, open wells and cisterns. One needs to be very efficient in the use of compass, map etc. and it is essential to have a good sense of direction.

We took up this position with only one accident; one man fell down a wadi and broke his leg. Having dug in we waited for dawn, when I took out a troop to do observation duty during the day of enemy snipers had been in the habit of coming close to our lines here. We captured two snipers who had crawled out with their rations of hard bread, enough to last two days, evidently to take up positions from which to pick off any of our men who chanced to show themselves.

Here we stayed for two days doing reconnaissance patrols towards the Atawineh ridge, in the daytime and outpost work at night. The Turks pout quite a lot of 5.9 shells over us here, but luckily did not accurately locate our position. We now moved at 8pm to Abu Sitta, which on the map is not a place, but just a name written across a plain and it took some finding in the dark. Here we were told that we were to have three days' rest for the second attack on Gaza, or rather the outflanking movement failed, although our position had been greatly improved by the taking of Mansura ridge and Sheik Abbas, where our infantry had dug in successfully. As usual our rest proved a myth, as we were out early in the morning filling up our water cisterns and digging trenches. Water was our chief difficulty, as we had had no rain for two months. Men came in very thirsty and I have seen them kneel down and lick the wet canvas of an empty horse trough, when their cistern had run dry. We received our long looked for English mail here and English papers with accounts of the first battle of Gaza in them. How eagerly we read these accounts, but only to laugh at them.

Our second operation against Gaza cost us about 12,000 casualties, which could be ill spared from such a small army.

On Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup>, we moved up to the Tel El Fara in support and on the 27<sup>th</sup> took our place in the outpost line along the wadi overlooking the plain towards Abu Hareira. We dug elaborate defences as this was to be our future front line and did reconnaissance patrols to El Buggar ridge, where we established day observation posts, having to drive the Turkish cavalry patrols in every morning. Enemy Taubes were very active and often came over and bombed us, but with very little effect, for they were not as accurate as our bombers. Septic sores were very numerous now, for we had been living on bully beef and biscuits for so long. Water was very scarce and these sores could not be properly washed or dressed, although our Doctor Captain Dolan worked very hard, he could not cope with them. I had one on my left hand which gradually got worse until my arm and hand became useless and on May 5<sup>th</sup> I had to go to the Casualty Clearing Station at Deir El Belah with Captain Pearson.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> we were put in a hospital train and sent down the line. How lucky we were to get away from the Belah hospital, for on the night of May 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> German aeroplanes bombed and machine gunned the hospital, causing many casualties, including Captain Hunton RAMC and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Gresham ERY\*25, who were both killed, the former being killed whilst dressing a wounded

man. Captain Pearson and I arrived at Ghezah hospital on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> and were put in bed side by side. Oh how we enjoyed getting into a comfortable bed again. My hand was a long time in healing and it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> June after a week's convalescence in Alexandria, that I was fit to return to the regiment. I found them in a camp at Kilo 9.5 about 5 miles east of Rafa and 15 miles behind our front line.

At this time General Allenby came out from France to take command from General Archibald Murray, who returned to England and took over the Aldershot command. Divisions were reorganised and new ones came to us. Our Brigade left the Anzac Division and came into the Yeomanry cavalry division, newly formed under Major General Barrow, who came from France. Our division now consisted of the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Bucks, Berks and Dorsets), the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade (3 London Yeomanry regiments) and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (Staffs, Lincolns and East Ridings). So now we had three mounted divisions (Anzac, Australian and Yeomanry), which formed the Desert Corps. Things now proceeded at pace with the new GOC in command. He was here and there and everywhere and very little escaped his attention. The RFC got a number of new machines and pilots from France, who were superior to the Germans. Many were the exciting air fights we saw. Training was all the go for us in the back area, for we were supposed to be resting, with the occasional alarm and trek up to the front line, generally to find we were not needed, for the Turk rarely attacked, but only made demonstrations.

On July 19<sup>th</sup>, Major D. White and Lt. Simpson left us to go on leave to England. Every Saturday went down to the sea near Khan Yunus for our weekly swim, which we thoroughly enjoyed, more like school boys than soldiers. At times I visited Khan Yunus to buy necessities for the mess and whilst thus engaged one day, I made the acquaintance of an Egyptian cavalry officer who was assisting Colonel Parker, the military governor. He was awfully interesting for he had lived 12 years in the Sinai in the government administrative service and to escape El Arish when the Turks advance don the Suez Canal.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> we had our brigade sports which were a great success and on August 18<sup>th</sup> we trekked up to El Sauth to relive the Australians and take our turn in the front line.

This camp proved to be one of the most interesting we were ever in; first we had a week on night outposts and day observation posts in front of our infantry lines, then came our turn for minor operations. Our first "stunt" was to try and capture some enemy cavalry which watered at the El Buggar wells. While doing a personal reconnaissance for this, Captain Robinson won the first MC for the regiment by rescuing a man under heavy fire. C Squadron trekked out to the left and A Squadron to the right and hid in wadis overnight whilst B Squadron and headquarters trekked out at midnight to Karm. I acted as guide don this night march. The plan was for the three squadrons to close in on the wells at 7am, but unfortunately As the Turks came out from Beersheba, one of their scouts looked over into the wadi and spotted A Squadron and galloped off to warn his comrades. This was 6.50am, so A Squadron gave chase, but the Turks managed to gallop away through the gap which C Squadron was timed to fill 10 minutes later. From this unsuccessful plan we only got one prisoner and a packhorse, laden with figs, which were soon eaten. The Lincoln Yeo was in support of this movement behind Ges-El-Gileb as two enemy aeroplanes came over and dropped 20 bombs on them, getting a direct hit on one troop, killing 8 men and wounding 11 and killing 23 horses.

Two days later our Brigade trekked away to the south east by Bir-El-Esani, our object being to reconnoitre the Kalassa and Asluj districts. About 7pm we bivouacked in the moonlight near point 750, 4 miles SSE of Bir El-Esani. At 3.30am we move doff again in the dark, with my troop doing vanguard and I was responsible for direction, no easy job in the dark and country we had never seen before. However direction was maintained all right, for we came to the ruins of Kalassa village about dawn and turned a little more east along the Asluj road. B squadron reached Asluj about 10am having encountered nothing more than a few small enemy cavalry patrols which did not cause much trouble. A few hostile Bedouins were met and taken prisoner.

Asluj was rather interesting with its few white government buildings, including a mosque with a minaret, looking like a lighthouse. This place is on the railway Beersheba to the Palestine-Sinai border and had been a military post in peacetime. Wells are very numerous in this district; we took some time to collect the necessary information regarding them. Large parties of Bedouin were seen to hurry away, but they were allowed to go with a few shots to hurry them on their journey. Having finished our reconnaissance by 3pm, our posts were withdrawn and we trekked back to Bir-El-Esani where we watered our horse in the wadi and bivouacked for the night. We moved again at dawn and reached our camp at El Shauth about 10.30am. This reconnaissance was very interesting indeed over strange enemy country.

Now we had one day's rest and then the whole division went on the Beersheba reconnaissance. This was very interesting for we had to drive in the enemy observation posts and occupy the high ground about 4 or 5 miles south and east of Beersheba. The Turks shelled us most of the day with light mountain guns, but did us little damage. We got back to camp at dawn on the third day, very tired and our horses looking very thin. We had two days rest and out we went again to take up the same line round Beersheba for infantry officers had to go out and see the lay of the land and RE officers to make calculations for water supply etc. for troops that were to do the attack on Beersheba when the time came.

On this day I had the most difficult reconnoitring patrol to do to some springs at Abusher. However when I got about 600 yards from the springs, the enemy shelled me out of it with 75's (high explosive shells) at a range of 1600 yards, but I had a good look at his redoubt and had a drawn a sketch of it. Lt. Bailey had an exciting time of it too, for he fought two enemy troops with his troop for two hours, thereby covering hour withdrawal at dusk. The 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade got heavily engaged with enemy infantry, artillery and cavalry and had to fight a rear-guard action in which they had about 80 casualties. Again we got back to camp at dawn on the third day, the trek back being very slow, for our horse were very exhausted and the men were equally done up.

On September 18<sup>th</sup> we were relieved by the ANZAC division, so we trekked away to our resting ground on the beach at Tel El Marabah. Although the sea and the rest had great attractions for us, we did not like leaving El Shauth, for it was a comfortable camp and our work had been very interesting indeed.

Now training started, but also leave for General Allenby had said "the next time you / cavalry go out you will move faster and faster than you ever did before, so both horses and men must be as fit as possible". My turn for leave soon came; I went down to Cairo and stayed a week in

Shephard's hotel and although far from home, it was a treat to be in civilisation and forget for a few days one's responsibility of military duty.

On October 18<sup>th</sup> Major White arrived back from his leave in England. How pleased I was to see him and hear of the home news. He took second in command as **Major Reynard\*26** who had joined us a month previously from England had to go in hospital and the Colonel was away, so Major Moore was in command of the regiment.

Preparations for our big attack were nearing completion and on October 27<sup>th</sup> we packed up ready for an early start the following day. That night came a very violent thunderstorm; the rain fell in torrents, soon everyone was soaked to the skin. However we got moving by 8 o'clock on the following morning and trekked to Shellal. On arriving there we were told of the heroic stand of one of the Middlesex yeomanry squadrons; they had been sent out to protect the 53<sup>rd</sup> division who were marching to take up position along the El Buggar ridge. The enemy was not allowed to get any aeroplanes over this part of the line so he did the reconnaissance in force, which came up against this Yeomanry squadron. They stuck to their two posts to the last man and so saved the 53<sup>rd</sup> division. The squadron leader was awarded the VC for his gallantry.

The general plan was for the XXth army corps to operate from the sea around Mendur, then came some black troops holding from Mendur to about Ges-El-Gileb, then the XXIst army corps from Ges El Gileb to south east of Beersheba, with the Australian and Anzac divisions on their right, while our division was held as GHQ reserve. It will be seen that practically every available man was in the line and had the Turks driven in the two divisions against us between Merndur and El Fara, at the time we attacked Beersheba, the whole operation would have changed, probably failed, but the Turks were not allowed by our RFC to get their aeroplanes over the lines to do any reconnaissance.

At Shellal I had to reconnoitre the numerous and complicated wadi crossings in order to be able to guide the regiment over to any given point should it be necessary to turn out in the dark.

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, Beersheba was suddenly attacked by the 60<sup>th</sup> Division and the 74<sup>th</sup> Division with the Anzac and Australian divisions doing a flanking movement on their right. So sudden was the attack, that by 3 o'clock the town was in our hands, for as soon as the infantry took the defences which were 3-4 miles from the town, the mounted troops galloped to the town from the right. Supplies were at once pushed forward into Beersheba on a large column of motor lorries, which had come in from Kantara by train for this purpose. By 6pm Wright's troop was sent out to Towel-El-Habari to bring in prisoners and at 2am on November 1<sup>st</sup> the remainder of B squadron was also sent out to collect and bring in prisoners from Beersheba. This was not a nice duty for they were in a very exhausted state, not having had any water for 40 hours. Quite a number of them fell on the way and laid like dead men, these we carried on pack horses. We brought in about 1700 to Karm railway station, where we gave them water and rations, for which they were very grateful and loaded them onto trucks like sheep and away they went down the line. We did not finish with these prisoners until 1pm on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and when we re-joined the regiment, they were holding a line in front of Ges El Gileb, for XXIst army corps had pushed on to the north of Beersheba, thereby leaving the centre of our line weak.

Our division was moved into this weak part of the line. On the 5<sup>th</sup> our division was relieved by the Australian division who had been in the Beersheba attack. We now trekked to Beersheba, arriving there at dark. The column was so long and water so scarce that it took until 18.30pm to water our horses and at 1.30am on the 6<sup>th</sup> we trekked north. At dawn we were about 15 miles north of Beersheba and about 5 miles south of Khewelfieh Hill, at an isolated place called Khel Maweileh. The flashes of the guns and the bursts of the shells told us there was a fight going on, but until daylight came we could not tell which ground was occupied by friends and which by the enemy. At about 7am, we saw a wonderful sight, for we were on high ground, down on the plain was our artillery, in front of them the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division infantry, closing up with the enemy infantry, further away we could see the enemy artillery and in the distance his moving columns and tents. The whole battlefield as it were, on a table in front of us. We manoeuvred about the supporting infantry until 3.30pm when we went into action dismounted. As second in command of B squadron it was my duty to look after the led horses, much rather would I have been in the firing line, for we got nearly all the shells. At 8pm I received order from Major White to take the regiment's horses to Beersheba for water and forage. I started out at 8.45pm, each man in charge of 4 horses on the 12 mile trek over broken hilly country, which I had never seen in daylight. Compass bearings were of little use, for even the brigade staff did not know to 5 miles where we were on the map. However thanks to a natural instinct for direction, and providence, we arrived at Beersheba at 2am. Watering horses with only one man to four is no easy matter in the dark, with other regiments crowding in for water too. Several horses were cast loose and others (better ones) taken in their place.

Not until 4.30am did I get my 600 horses watered and collected into a rough formation again. Then we lay down and slept for an hour and a half. At 6am we filled the nose bags and trekked away back to the regiment, only to receive a hearty reception by the enemy artillery when we arrived back, for the dust as we trekked rose above the hilltops and gave away our position to the enemy gunners. The 53<sup>rd</sup> Division fought with great dash and evidently meant to get their own back for the 1<sup>st</sup> Gaza attack. They stormed and took Tel Kheweilfe, a hill 2000 feet high, without artillery support, were counterattacked and driven off, rallied again and took the hill and held it, punishing the enemy severely, for his dead were piled up in heaps. One company of the Imperial Camel Corps distinguished themselves here, saving the situation for one of the infantry brigades which had got into difficulties, for which they were awarded 2 DSO's, 5 MC's and 11 DCM's.

On November 8<sup>th</sup> we again advanced, three brigades in line each with an advanced guard out, a very pretty sight as they streamed across the plain, close on the heels of the Jackos. Both horses and men were badly in need of water, so B squadron was sent to reconnoitre the wells at Ain Kohte, Bir Abu Khuff and Bir Kheweilfe. Only the Kheweilfe well had any water in it, just enough to give each man and horse a good drink. This information we sent to the division by heliograph. How they flashed that day from all directions, sending important information. Then we re-joined the brigade. At 6pm the division concentrated and trekked to Sheria, taking with them about 400 prisoners (the 60<sup>th</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Divisions had captured Sheria about 24 hours previously). This trek was cruel, for both men and horses were exhausted for want of water and sleep. Every few minutes a revolver shot rang out, putting some poor exhausted horse out of its misery. At last we reached Sheria and after much waiting and crowding we got our horse watered by 4am, when we lay down to sleep on the ban of the wadi. This was one of the occasions when

I hesitated whether to make tea or sleep, sleep won. At 6am the order to saddle up came and we trekked away to Huj, about 5 miles north east of Gaza – for Gaza had been taken by the XXth Army Corps and we were needed to continue the pursuit of the retreating enemy.

No forage or rations had reached us for two days and the order was to “live on the country”. Now the natives had nothing, for the Turks had taken all, but had left numerous dumps of grain such as wheat, white beans, lentils etc. The wheat was very dry and we had no water or time to soak it, so we had to use the lentils to feed our horse on. On every enemy dump were numerous sewing machines, one could not understand why these were here, for the Turks uniforms were very ragged and showed no signs of having been sewn since they were made.

We reached Huj at 8.30am to find an awful site on the plain, for the 5<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade had been cooperating with the XXth Army Corps the day before and one squadron of the Warwick Yeomanry and one squadron of the Worcestershire Yeomanry had combined in a charge against 7 field guns, 3 5.9 howitzers and 5 machine guns across an open plain of about 2000 yards. The Turks and Austrian gunners stuck to their guns to the last, but the cavalry won the day in brilliant style taking 200 prisoners and all the guns. From here the New Zealand Brigade and the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade went to attack Sim-Sim, a town 5 miles to the north of Huj, which they took early in the afternoon.

Rations and forage had been delayed in coming up, so Major White was sent out with limbers to collect forage from anywhere they could. ~The RFC which had done splendid work all through had by this time accounted for every enemy aeroplane, so we were able to march in close column for two days until new enemy aeroplanes arrived from Germany. Twenty five aeroplanes came over in one flight, carrying bombs for the Jackos; we could distinctly see the bombs bursting about three miles in front of us. The Turks are very frightened of them. The YMCA sent us large quantities of cigarettes with the aeroplanes, which they dropped in sacks.

On November 10<sup>th</sup> we again trekked to the east to Tel El Negile, where our horses were again watered, then north to Arak El Menshig; on the way we passed a large ordnance store full of new German mauser rifles and huge piles of shells etc., also at Kh. Umm Rujini we passed through the large orange grove where General Von Kress had previously had his headquarters. Everywhere there was signs of fierce fighting and huge piles of booty taken from the enemy. At Menshiye the Turks made another stand, but as dark drew on, we had to abandon the fight and wait for dawn, when the Lincoln Yeomanry and our regiment were ordered to attack, supported by the Staffords Yeomanry. However the enemy decided to move on again so we had no trouble. Our horses were now very much in need of water, so orders came for us to break up into squadrons and reconnoitre for water. Our squadron tried the villages of El Falque, Keratuja and Hatta, before finding a well with plenty of water in them. The well was 150 feet deep and the water could only be drawn by a large skin on one end of a rope and a mule tied to the other end to draw it up. At 3pm we had got two troops watered, when the order came to concentrate at once, so the other troops had to come away again without a drink. How we hated coming away from that well with some horses so badly in need of water, but orders had to be obeyed, so at 4.30pm on the 12<sup>th</sup> we concentrated at El Faluje where rations and forage awaited us. How pleased we were to see these rations, for we had received none for about 4 days. After I had issued the forage and rations to the squadron I sat down for a rest on the ground, for I was tired from so

much work with little sleep. Soon I felt an awful sensation of things fading away, so I went across to the Doctor 30 yards away to get one of his small arsenic pills, which we often took when exhausted. Evidently I had gone too far for when I came to myself again I found it was the following day and I had been moved in an ambulance cart to the divisional dressing station at Medjel. I soon felt much better and wanted to re-join the regiment who were then attacking near Julis 4 miles to the north, but Captain Stanley RAMC refused me, sending me on a motor ambulance at 5pm to the Deir El Belat, where I arrived at 2.30pm

So I was very annoyed at having to leave the regiment, I was pleased to take off my boots and clothes and climb into bed for the first time in the past 16 days. At 8.30 that morning, I was sent by hospital train to El Arish station hospital, the following day to Kantara hospital and from near to no.19 general hospital in Alexandria, then on again to no.1 convalescent hospital. Here I developed quincies and diphtheria and had to be moved to the isolation ward at no.21 general hospital at Ras-El-Tim on the side of the Alexandria harbour. The sisters and nurses were awfully good to us and by December 14<sup>th</sup> I was fit for convalescence and so went to no.10 convalescent hospital at Hebrameh and on about December 20<sup>th</sup> went to the base camp at Mustapha.

Meanwhile the regiment was taking part in the big advance and the taking of Julis, Esud, Ramleh and Ludd. The 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade made a brilliant charge taking 2000 prisoners. Lord Rothschild was killed in this charge, whilst leading a squadron of the Bucks Hussars. Owing to the hilly country being unsuitable for cavalry, our horses were left at Ludd and the Division pushed forward into the Indian [Judean] hills as infantry. They had a very hard time in these hills, being there three days with no rations and hard pressed by the Turks who had been reinforced by three fresh divisions from Aleppo.

However the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division arrived in time to take over from our division before they had lost more than a mile and a half of the ground won. It was about this time that Lt. Bailey was badly wounded in the head and I'm sorry to say that he died a few days later in hospital at Cairo. He was one of the coolest and bravest men in action and as everyone said "the gentleman of the regiment".

Our division was now withdrawn from the line for squadrons were down to twenty or thirty men instead of a hundred and thirty.

So Christmas once more came and I found our regiment at Medjel, where everyone had a very cheerful time in spite of the heavy rains. I was at Mustapha base camp for Christmas and as Captain Scott was also there, we had a merry time together and visited the Colonel who was in Ras El Tin hospital with a bad attack of dysentery.

I was quite pleased to join the regiment at Medjel on December 29<sup>th</sup>, but how it had changed through casualties and sickness. Only about seven men of my old troop remained and five horses. Kitty was amongst the casualties; this favourite charger of mine was very kindly attended to and buried in the India hills, out of reach of the jackals and vultures. I felt very grateful (to him) Private E. Horsley, my servant for doing so much for her as he was so very tired to. "Poor old mare", the same one I got in 1914 at Withernsea and she had carried me through all the

fighting I had been in and on many a long trek in England, Egypt, Sinai and Palestine; she was a faithful old friend lost.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Lloyd and I rode around the ruins of Ascalon on the cliff top where huge blocks of masonry and marble columns mark the site of the ancient Roman fortifications. On January 2<sup>nd</sup> the division trekked to Gaza where we bivouacked on Fryars ridge. On the way we passed the remains of a Turkish ammunition train, which had been blown by a 12" inch shell from the naval guns. How interesting it was to see the scene of our first big action and to view the battered Turkish positions. Gaza was a filthy place under the Turks, none of our dead had been buried and there they lay just in the place they fell; some as long ago as March 26<sup>th</sup>. The following morning we trekked to Deir El Belat and made our bivouac camp between the lake and the sea. We had a complete rest and then started training under our new commander Brigadier general Fitzgerald, who was a very clever and capable soldier.

On Sunday January 13<sup>th</sup> Lt. Lloyd and I rode over to Gaza to see the ruins of the grand mosque, which stood on the ruins of the temple which Samson pulled down. This temple or mosque has been rebuilt at least three times for one can trace the ruins of each building. The Turks use it as an ammunition store, so we were obliged to put a few shells into it and blew up their ammunition, so once more it is in ruins.

We also visited the Turkish trenches, where our shrapnel bullets lay thick on the ground, like gravel on the sea shore and the ground had been torn and rent by our high explosive shells. Two of our disabled tanks lay out there as a sort of reminder that tanks had been employed. The tanks were not a success against Gaza, true they could get over the sand very well, but the country was so open that the enemy gunners could concentrate on them and knock them out with a direct hit.

At Belah Lt. R. Stephenson built a very good rifle range, with six changeable targets, where as well as training we held some very interesting competitions in which the men showed great success.

As no other officer with better claim wanted to put in for English leave, I put in my application. On February 12<sup>th</sup> Captain Robinson M.C. and I left Belah by the 11pm train, for three weeks leave in England. We travelled down to Kantara in open trucks, had breakfast and a much needed wash there and on to Alexandria at 8.30pm on the 13<sup>th</sup>. At the Savoy hotel we found Lt. Stephenson, Duffield and Purnell, who had just got commissions on leave, so we made up a little dinner party. The following morning we reported to base camp at Mustapha and then to the embarkation officer.

At Mustapha I saw Private J. Freer, my late servant. He looked quite well, although suffering the effects of the eastern climate. On February 15<sup>th</sup> Captain Robinson embarked on the HMT Abasica and I on HMT Kascar, on which boats we sailed on the 17<sup>th</sup> at 10.30pm. The only excitement we had on the voyage was at 2am on the 19<sup>th</sup>; one of the Japanese destroyers of our escort shot away out of sight, returning an hour later and reported that they had sunk a German submarine. We arrived in the outer harbour of Taranto at 2pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> and on the 21<sup>st</sup> we disembarked onto barges which took us through the inner harbour to the rest camp called Cimono camp. The inner harbour is ideal being beautifully sheltered and the greater part

of the Italian fleet was there. At the rest camp there was a huge crowd, some going east and some going west, both naval and military officers. On the 25<sup>th</sup> we left Taranto by special troop train on which everyone had to cook one's own food etc., passing through Brindisi, Foggia and Ancona to Faenza, a quaint old Italian town, where we had baths and dinner. How interesting it was to see the lovely orchards covered with blossom and the coast defences on the shores of the Adriatic. On again we went by the same train through Voghera, Rouco and Genoa, where the civilians gave us a hearty reception at 10.30pm. One English lady and her daughter who had lived in Genoa for 12 years came to the station and talked to us. At Mentone the French frontier town, the pretty French nurses gave us coffee, tea, Oxo etc. We continued our journey through Nice, Monte Carlo and Cannes, where the scenery is really beautiful, to La Arcs, Tolone to the outskirts of Marseille. Then leaving the coast we passed through Montelimar & Leone to St. German, where we again had baths and dinner at a rest camp. On February 28<sup>th</sup> we passed through Saint Gaza Bourges Tours & so on to the docks at Cherbourg, where we had dinner and embarked on HMT Viperat at 9.30pm, after 8 days in the train.

The weather was so rough we were not allowed to sail on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, fearing mines being loose in the channel, which had to be swept in front of us. How cold it was, snow falling and how we from the east found it particularly so. However we sailed on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6pm and crossed the channel in fine style at 22 knots per hour in a very rough sea, luckily I kept up my reputation of being a good sailor and landed at Southampton at 8am the following morning in good form, but bitterly cold.

It was glorious to be in England once more and see the lovely green fields, for after all there is no green like the English green.

I arrived home on March 5<sup>th</sup> (leaving) and having been exactly three weeks on the journey from leaving the regiment.

My leave expired on March 25<sup>th</sup>, but the regiment was coming to France as machine gunners, so I was left at home until May 11<sup>th</sup>, when I received instructions from the war office to proceed to Grantham to the MGC on a course which started on May 16<sup>th</sup>. At Grantham I found **Captain Robinson\*27** and several other Yeomanry officers, who had been out east, so we were a jolly party again.

On May 26<sup>th</sup> a medical board decided that I should go into Belton Park military hospital as I had a tropical disease called Haemotobia Bilharzia. I had no treatment as they knew very little about it and after another board I was given three weeks sick leave and two months home service. During this leave I got influenza, which quite spoilt matters. On July 17<sup>th</sup> I again reported to Grantham and started another "right wing" course and although I was not very fit, I passed this course satisfactorily when it finished on September 13<sup>th</sup>.

There was a new call from the War Office to re-join my regiment, but this could not be as my category was C1. I put in an application for harvest leave, which was granted. On October 20<sup>th</sup> I again reported to Grantham and was put on the officers company and on the 25<sup>th</sup> had another medical board and although I tried to get passed GS the Colonel would not hear of it and gave me another three months home service. I was transferred to E. Lines, Belton Park and there I met a young officer of the Arab Legion who told me he was in Palestine during the Turkish

fighting there and made his escape through Constantinople to Moscow, Vladivostok and then by boat to America and then to England. He was a native Arab of Palestine and now belonging to the King of the Hedjaz Arab Legion.

On Monday November 11<sup>th</sup> came the official news that the Germans had signed the Armistice terms at 5am that morning; this making it practically impossible for them to resume fighting. Oh the rejoicing, everyone treated it as peace – flags were hoisted, church bells rang out and hooters sounded, most people acting like school children, highly excited on holiday, scarcely being able to realise that the fighting had ceased after over four years of terrible war and bloodshed.

## Notes

\*1 John (Jack) Lee Smith (1874?-1968). See introductory paragraph. He probably joined the regiment in 1902; early photographs show him as a Corporal and then as a Sergeant. Ultimately, he reached the rank of Major.

\*2 Clive Henry Adolphus Wilson (1876-1921). A member of the wealthy shipping line Wilson family, of Tranby Croft and Hull. Retired due to ill health in 1916, with the rank of Major. He bequeathed the land on which the Hengate war memorial in Beverley now stands, but died before it was completed.

\*3 Harry Talbot Rice (1890-1947?), who was commissioned in 1912 and later served in the Welsh Guards.

\*4 Probably Corporal (later Acting Sergeant) William E. Hunt, service nr. 688.

\*5 Robert Neale Menteith Bailey (1882-1917), who was a clerk at the House of Commons. He was wounded in action in Palestine on 14/11/1917 and died in hospital in Cairo.

\*6 Herbert Philip Parker (1888-1958), previously of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion the Liverpool Regiment. He joined the ERY in September 1914.

\*7 Geoffrey Charles Buxton (1879-1958), who lived at Hoveton Hall. He joined the ERY in February 1913 and later served with the Coldstream Guards.

\*8 William Charles Muddiman (1877-1962), who began his army career as a private and reached the rank of Captain. He was born in Woolwich and worked as a footman.

\*9 Warrington Royds Tylden-Wright (1880-1945), who served in Boer War and came to the ERY from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hussars. As a regimental Adjutant, his signature appears on numerous attestation papers.

\*10 Thomas Mansel Sympson (1889-?) who was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. on 2/3/1915 from the Inns of Court Officer Training Court. He came from Lincoln.

\*11 Guy Greville Wilson, DSO (1877-1943), who joined the ERY in December 1904 and commanded the regiment in the Middle East during the war. He was another member of the wealthy Hull-based shipping line Wilson family.

\*12 Gerald Herbert Woodhouse (1889-1971), who was commissioned in August 1911. An Adjutant with the 2/1<sup>st</sup> ERY for a time, he reached the rank of Major, but was demoted to Captain in 1923 after being charged (in a civilian court) with assault. ERYC Museum Service has numerous items of uniform and equipment that belonged to him.

\*13 Percy Coke (born 1859) was brought back from retirement to command the reserve 3/1<sup>st</sup> ERY in 1915. He is most likely the retired army major in the 1911 census, living at Scarborough.

\*14 Sergeant Frederick Robert Scott (1891-?), who lived in Holderness Road, Hull. Service number 2048.

\*15 Edward Lloyd Sanderson (1893-1927?) who reached the rank of Captain in the ERY. He lived in Hessle.

\*16 Joseph Dalton White (1882-?), who joined the ERY in April 1903 and reached the rank of Major. He ran a fruit import business.

\*17 Edward Bromet (1867-?) was ERY's medical officer, attached from the Royal Army Medical Corps in about 1915. In civilian life he was a surgeon.

\*18 Lt. (later Captain) Robert Wise Richardson Scott, of Easingwold, previously of the Yorkshire Hussars

\*19 Lt. Frank Pilkington Scott, later an officer in the RAF. Joined the ERY early in 1915.

\*20 Lt. Albert Hornby, of Holme/Kiplincotes, commissioned in November 1915.

\*21 Thomas G.N. Bardwell (1884-1957), who reached the rank of Temporary Major in 1914. He lived at Bolton Hall.

\*22 Frank Bradley (1885-1960), who was a veterinary surgeon. He later served with the Royal Horse Artillery. Probably joined the ERY in mid 1915.

\*23 Nigel Charles Mark Sykes (1894?-1968), later a Captain in the 4<sup>th</sup> Hussars. He was born in Kirk Ella.

\*24 Probably Private James Freer (50647), later with the Labour Corps and the Royal Engineers. He died in France on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1918.

\*25 Leonard Stanley Gresham (born 1895) was a timber merchant's clerk and lived in Bridlington. He was commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. on 2/7/1915. Died of wounds received during the bombing of Kantara military hospital, Egypt, on 6/5/1917.

\*26 Captain (later Major) Claude Edward Reynard, of Sunderlandwick, near Drifffield.

\*27 James Frederick Martyn Robinson, who was awarded the Military Cross.

