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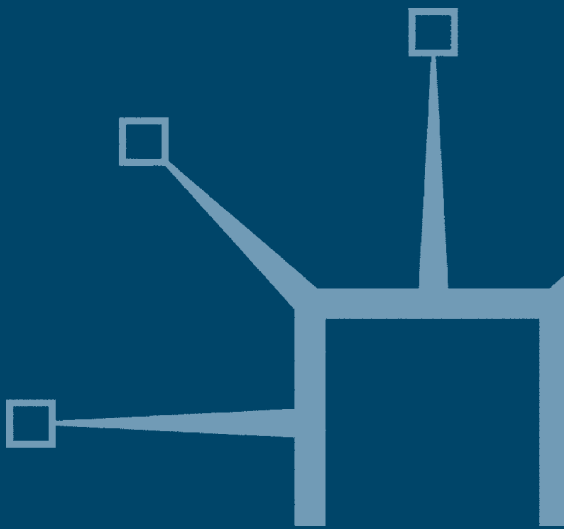
Camp and Combat on the Sinai and Palestine Front

The Experience of the British Empire Soldier, 1916–18

Edward C. Woodfin



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The Experience of the British Empire Soldier, 1916–18

Edward C. Woodfin
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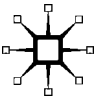

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To my darling wife Robin

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Library (for manuscripts and a photograph) and the sound archive of the National Library of New Zealand; the State Library of South Australia (for manuscripts and photographs); the State Library of Queensland (for a photograph); and the State Library of Victoria.

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Every effort has been made to trace rights holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers would be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

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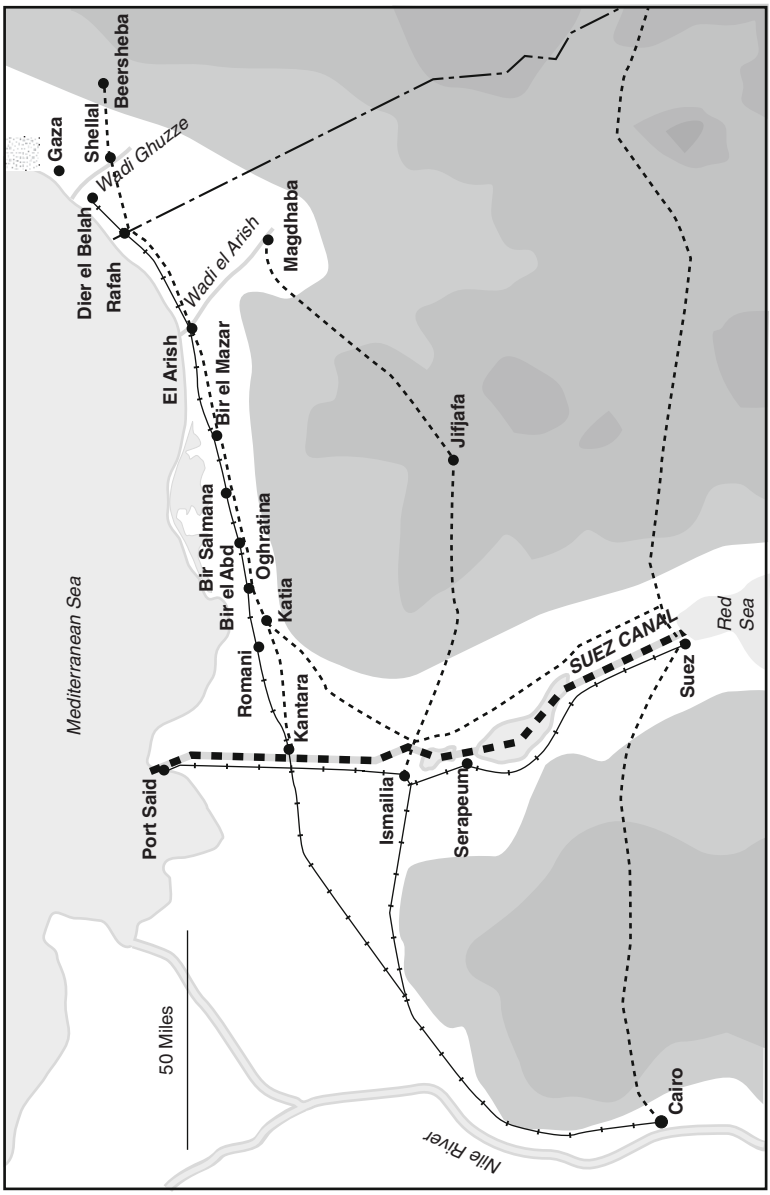
List of Abbreviations

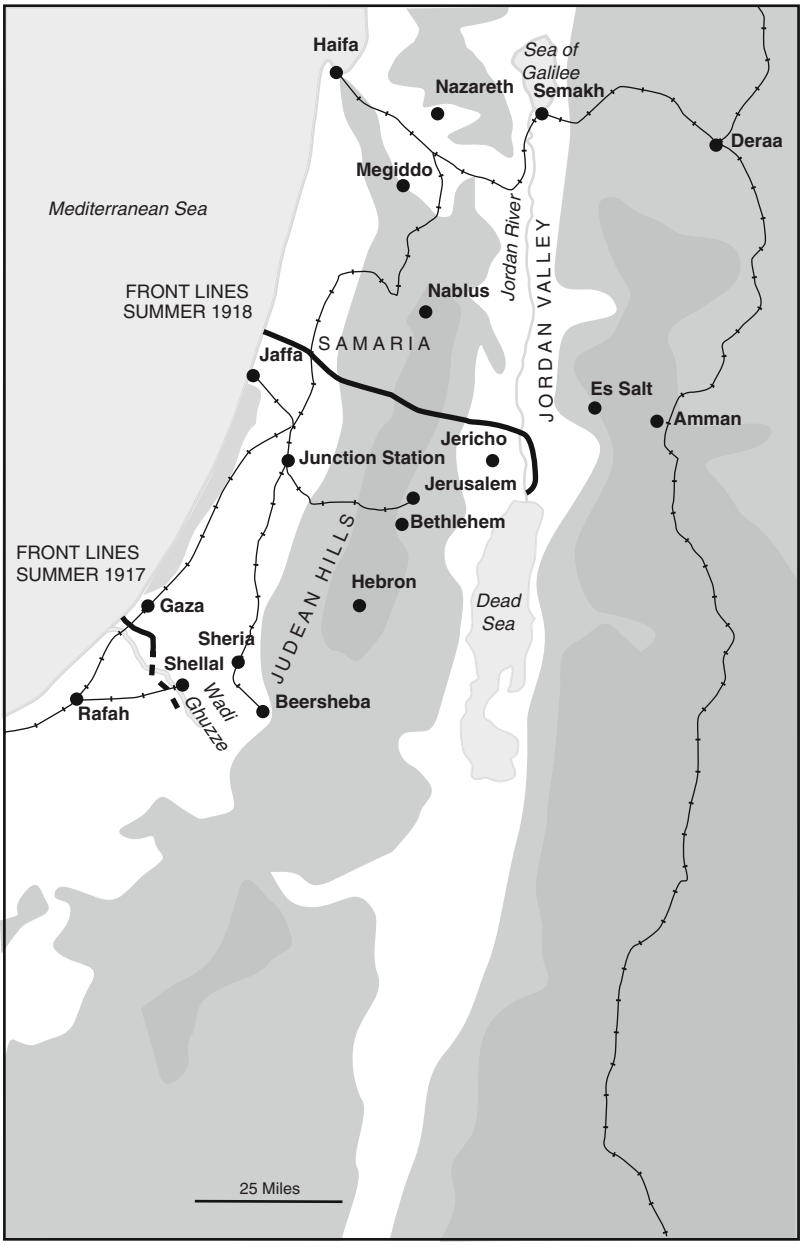
Auckland Museum	Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland
AWM	Australian War Memorial, Canberra
BL	British Library, London
CAM	Correspondence of General Sir Archibald Murray, British Library, Manuscripts Collections, 52461-3
CCL	Christchurch City Library, Christchurch, New Zealand
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
ICC	Imperial Camel Corps
IWM	Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum, London
IWM-S	Sound Archive, Imperial War Museum, London
KMA	Kippenberger Military Archive, National Army Museum, Waiouru, New Zealand
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London
LOC	United States Library of Congress, Washington, DC
Lt	Lieutenant
Lt Col	Lieutenant Colonel
NAA	National Archives of Australia, Canberra
NANZ	National Archives of New Zealand Te Whare Tohu Tuhituhinga O Aotearoa, Wellington
NAUK	National Archives of the United Kingdom (formerly Public Record Office), London
NCO	Non-commissioned officer, such as a corporal or sergeant
NLA	National Library of Australia, Canberra
NLNZ	National Library of New Zealand, Wellington
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
NWMS	National War Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh Castle

PD	Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)
Sgt	sergeant
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales, Sydney
SLSA	State Library of South Australia, Adelaide
SLV	Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne
SLWA	State Library of Western Australia, Perth
Turnbull Library	Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington

Maps



Sinai 1916–17



Palestine 1917–18

Introduction

Historical writing on the Great War has concentrated largely on questions of leadership, policies, and military operations. Works about the personalities and decisions of generals take up the lion's share of shelf space, along with discussions of tactics, weapons, and strategy. A small minority of works discuss the experiences of common soldiers, though these men did the bulk of the fighting, suffering, and dying in the war.

Most of the scholars who have written on the soldier's experience in the war have described the terrifying trenches of the Western Front, and rightly so, because that was the war that most soldiers saw. For hundreds of thousands of soldiers from nearly every part of the British Empire, however, the war was a desert and mountain conflict in Islamic lands, bewilderingly exotic and complete with its own wartime horrors. Their reality is as valid as the more famous European one, but it has been largely overlooked in most social histories of the Great War. In the war between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, one of the greatest wars in Middle Eastern history, both in size and in importance to the region's future, the soldiers in Gallipoli have received the closest analytical attention, while historians have not served as well those who fought in the more critical campaigns in defense of the Suez Canal and in the invasion of Palestine.

Many of the studies of soldiers on the Western Front have concentrated on the question of whether there was a single experience or a single set of war experiences that most soldiers shared.[1] These studies chart the similarities and contrasts within the trenches of France and Belgium, but they too often overlook one of the war's greatest contrasts: that between the European and Middle Eastern faces of the war.

The Great War in the Sinai and Palestine was as fluid as the war on the Western Front was stagnant. The life of a soldier on the Western Front was fairly similar in 1915 to his lot in 1917, with significantly different experiences only in the first six months and the last nine months of the war. The lives and experiences of most of the British soldiers in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), on the other hand, changed rapidly and utterly a number of times through the course of the war. A comment that is undeniably true about a soldier's life in 1916 is often absolutely false in relation to 1918. One might almost say that they fought a series of strikingly different wars within the years 1916 to 1918.

It is, therefore, impossible to find a single common set of experiences of British and Dominion soldiers in Sinai and Palestine. For British Empire soldiers, there were, in essence, at least five different wars in the Sinai and Palestine in 1916–18—five distinct sets of experiences that men faced in these campaigns, based on when and where they served. Some men experienced only one, others saw all five.

These sets of experiences can be divided roughly into the following categories: the Sinai (1916), a transitional period on the Palestinian Borderlands (early 1917), the Gaza-Beersheba trench line (March to October 1917), the Judean Hills (October 1917 to January 1918), and the Jaffa-Jordan Valley trench line and final breakout (1918). Men who saw only one of these parts of the war would have had little concept of many of the realities of the other four; those who fought in all five saw more faces of hardship and conflict than any other soldiers in the war except the Turks in the opposite trenches.

Of course, there are threads of war experience that virtually all the soldiers in the Palestine theater shared (and, arguably, some experiences that all soldiers in every conflict share). Fear, death, sickness, and monotony followed the fighting men continuously, but other elements—heat and cold, sand dunes and mountains, open fighting and trench fighting—shifted several times during the war, altering much of the soldier's experience. Three main factors created and defined the dramatic changes in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns: the soldier's physical surroundings, the nature of contact with the enemy, and the political and strategic decisions made in London.

The first factor is intuitive: geography and weather have an influence on every outdoor activity, especially warfare. In this case, however, the entire environment shifted noticeably several times during the war. The Sinai desert, the craggy and often cold mountains of Southern Palestine, and the orange groves of the Palestinian plains were vastly different from each other. The men of the Egyptian Expeditionary

Force inhabited each of these places in turn and their lives changed dramatically with each change.

It is true that British and Dominion soldiers on the Western Front dealt with very different physical conditions from one section of the line to another, from the mud bogs of Flanders to the chalk hills of France, and that they saw seasonal weather changes. Still, the topography and weather they faced remained relatively constant. They did not move far enough during the course of the war to reach different geographic regions or climatic zones. The men fighting in the Sinai and Palestine did.

The second factor, the nature of contact with the enemy, distinguishes this part of the war from all others. The open warfare of the Sinai Desert, where patrols and lonely redoubts saw much of the action, bore little resemblance to the trench fighting on the Western Front or elsewhere. It also was a world apart from the trench battles of Southern Palestine, or the hilltop-to-hilltop skirmishing in the Judean Hills, or the trenches on Palestine's plains and in the Jordan Valley.

The Turks themselves were a very different enemy from the Germans or Austrians in Europe. Religious and cultural differences made them inscrutable to many of the British Empire soldiers and drew them closer to others. The differences revealed themselves in a myriad of ways. For instance, informal truces, like the famous Western Front "Christmas Truce" of 1914, in which soldiers sometimes interacted pleasantly with their enemies, were rare in most periods in the Sinai and Palestine.[2]

The third factor interlocks with the other two. Political decisions drove the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns forward into the new lands and dictated the contact with the enemy. A debate raged in London about the merits of the campaigns, and it was plain to see in the orders and in the supplies sent to the theater which side was winning the political battle at any given moment. Feast or famine were decreed a continent away, and everything from the rations a soldier ate to the intensity of the combat he faced depended on the outcome of those political battles. The decisions of the local commanders, so often considered the most critical question of military history, also made an impact on the soldier's lifestyle, but not nearly as profoundly as those choices made by the men who controlled the purse strings of the campaign.

* * *

The sources at the center of this work are the words of the soldiers who fought in the Sinai and Palestine. The diaries, letters, and memoirs of these men form its backbone. The collection of letters and diaries in the bibliography do not constitute (or even pretend to constitute)

any sort of scientific or statistical cross-section of the population of soldiers in this theater. In fact, shockingly few sources exist, compared to the gigantic numbers of men involved in these campaigns; there is likely not enough information left to allow for any sort of meaningful quantitative approach. Instead, in a qualitative way, with an eye on the humanity of each writer, this work pulls together commonalities and shared experiences among those testimonies that have survived.

In some ways they are wildly misrepresentative of the EEF. For instance, frontline soldiers are overrepresented. This is partly because this book concentrates mostly on frontline life, but also because men who served on the front lines seem to have preserved their papers more often than those in support roles, probably because they had more of a sense of the historical importance of their actions.

Soldiers who died in the war are overrepresented, as well. One imagines that relatives were more careful to safeguard the papers of a lost loved one (and eventually donate them to an archive) than survivors were to keep their own papers. It is more likely, too, that survivors of the war had descendents who still own their papers and have not shared them with archives.

Soldiers of European backgrounds are greatly overrepresented. High levels of literacy allowed many men, even of the lower classes, in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand to have their memories preserved. There were also great campaigns and wealthy institutions in those countries that collected those memories. In contrast, soldiers from the British West Indies, for instance, left very little for posterity, and there is no single source that collected their memories during their lifetimes (or, for that matter, even now). The voices of West Indian and Indian soldiers, especially, have been difficult to gather with my resources, and this remains a very fertile area for further work.

Of the European sources, the Australasian soldiers are the most clearly overrepresented group in this work. This is partly due to the fact that in the Antipodes—in Australia, especially—a much higher percentage of men from this campaign left their papers in public hands than in Britain or elsewhere. Mostly, however, the more mundane reason was that I simply had far greater access to those records. Remarkably, the grand majority of key points that defined the soldiers' experience seem to be universally repeated, regardless of the nationality of the soldiers. Thirst or lice, for instance, acted on all these men similarly (though not identically), and many aspects of the routines of trench-life or of desert camping were widely shared across nationalities. As the testimonies of these men—men of such different backgrounds, views, and

beliefs—multiplied, out of the cacophony of voices a sort of harmony emerged. Though complex and full of individual differences, sets of common experience did appear, and those experiences are what this book has worked to capture.

With the soldier's experience as the focus, this book only touches the narrative of battles, the strategies and tactics of generals, and the movements of military units to the extent that they are necessary in explaining the life of the common soldier. Many solid works offer traditional campaign narratives[3] and military biographies of many of the key figures in the campaign,[4] especially Colonel T. E. Lawrence,[5] whose life has been especially well studied. Some later books have offered more treatment of the common soldier, and a number have used first-hand accounts to add a human dimension to their narratives.[6] This trend is wonderfully enriching to this subject, and it is sincerely to be hoped that even campaign histories will be forever touched by this approach. The priority in this present work, however, is to treat as primary the issues that traditional military histories often treat as secondary. In other words, the soldiers and junior officers are the principal actors and the generals and politicians are the supporting cast. Also, while many of these later works offer a glimpse into the lives of certain groups of British Empire soldiers, this present work seeks to cast a wider net and attempt to bring in information concerning multiple nationalities in its attempt to analyze the Egyptian Expeditionary Force's experience as a whole.

This work speaks for British Empire soldiers alone, often reluctantly passing over the voices of so many who interacted with them and so many who suffered near them in the war. The Egyptians who served in the army's Labour Corps, the people of cities and villages in Egypt and Palestine where soldiers marched and spent their free time, the innocent victims of bombings and the ravages of war, and the Turks and other enemies who faced the British across the battlefield: their voices are heard only through the ears of the British Empire soldiers. Such a great deal of work remains to be done on the realities of this crucial Middle Eastern war that this work can only be seen as one of the early challenges to open one corner of a vast subject, a subject that has implications to Middle Eastern conflict even today.

Author's note

Place names have not been modernized. I have retained the names and the spellings as they were commonly used among British Empire soldiers during the period. When, as was often the case, many variant

spellings were in circulation, I have tried to use the spelling that seems most broadly used. I have also often taken the liberty, as most British Empire soldiers did, of referring to subjects of the Ottoman Empire, soldiers of the Ottoman Army, and even the Ottoman leadership as "Turks"; it is an imprecise and often inaccurate term, but it is a useful bit of shorthand. All quotations have been rendered as faithfully as practicable, without corrections to spelling; my own explanatory notes or adjustments to quotations have been marked by ellipses or brackets, as appropriate.

1
Prologue

Timothy Hogg was a bold Camelier,
From the land of the setting sun;
All the girls gave Timmy a rousing cheer
When he started to mop up the Hun.
He trekked over Egypt and Sinai;
He led the Jacko's [*sic*] a dance,
And he gleefull cried as he winked his eye:
"I'm lucky I'm not in France."
"Trooper Bluegum" [Oliver Hogue]
"Lucky Tim"[1]

During the Sinai Campaign in 1916 and 1917, a popular story circulated among the soldiers of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF). They said that a particular ship passing through the Suez Canal was full of wounded Australian infantrymen heading home from the Western Front. As they sailed along the flat, barren waterway, with the beige deserts of Egypt on one side and the seemingly endless sands of the Sinai on the other, they passed through one of the narrow stretches of the canal. The ship sailed close to a group of fellow Australian "Diggers" camped beside the canal, a unit of light horsemen, men of the EEF, sent to the Sinai to fight the Ottoman Empire. The Australians in the ship called out to their countrymen in the desert camp below, "Ullo, you blokes! Bin 'avin' a good picnic out 'ere?"[2] By this sarcastic question, the men on deck meant that those who fought in the Middle East were shouldering less of the burden of the war than those on the Western Front.

Whether or not this incident really happened, the popularity of the story certainly reflects an insecurity that saturated the British Army in the Sinai. Many soldiers were constantly aware that people at home

thought that the war in the "sideshows" was somehow "cushy" and safe. They knew that their work in the desert was not at all safe and far from being cushy.

A similar legend that made its way through the troops was one of a poor New Zealander in the Sinai Desert who was overjoyed at receiving a new pair of socks from an anonymous woman down under. In the toe of one of the socks, according to the story, he found a note that said she hoped that the sock would go to a brave boy in France, not a "cold-footed" horseman in the Middle East. The story caused a "sulphurous air" to fill the entire mounted division. The thought of their countrymen on comfortable leave in England, while also receiving all the respect of those at home, "profanely angered" the men in the desert.[3]

"The new chaps now arriving now tell us that at home they think the Light Horse are having more or less a great picnic out here," Australian Corporal Selwyn Metcalfe wrote to his brother; "all the time we've been thinking they knew what we've been going through & were thinking quite a lot of us." Stung by this realization, Metcalfe wished that those who called it a picnic could experience the hardships of the EEF's soldiers. Then, he said, they would not "have quite the same ideas as to its being a holiday."[4]

The poem at the beginning of this chapter carried the same message in an Anzac soldiers' magazine published in Egypt. Like many soldiers of the EEF, the fictional Timothy Hogg considered himself on his way to an easier war than the one in France. A later verse told a variation of the same story.

> At Rafa and Magdhaba Timmy fought,
> Got a holiday wound as well:
> "It's no such joke as the home folk thought,
> For Jacko[5] can fight like hell."
> He opened his mail in careless glee,
> Then swore and looked askance.
> Said his "bint" and his Ma, and his sisters three:
> "You're lucky you're not in France."

Like the soldiers shocked by the sock story, Hogg deeply resented the idea from his relatives and girl (his "bint"—a word the soldiers picked up in Egypt) that he was not in the "real" war.

The poet uses the second and last stanzas to try to destroy this concept with the idea that it was no more pleasant to be wounded or killed in the Middle East than it was in France.

When Abdul[6] came with a mighty charge,
And Romani was fought and won,
Tim stopped some shrapnel good and large;
For a while his work was done.
They packed him off with his blood-soaked gear
In a rickety ambulance;
But the driver laughed as the shells dropped near:
"We're lucky we're not in France."
. . .

At Gaza's heights the Light Horse dashed,
Bold Cameliers charged in vain;
The Welsh were slaughtered, Scots were smashed;
In the Wadi blood flowed like rain.
Then Tim heard an officer—who at Mons [on the Western Front]
Had stemmed the Hun's advance—
Exclaim, 'mid the roar of the murdering guns,
"I wish I was back in France."[7]

The London *Times* correspondent in the region, W. T. Massey, agreed wholeheartedly with these soldiers. He, too, saw that the British public thought that the men in the EEF were not pulling their weight in the war. Many soldiers had shown him letters from home and from friends in France that proved this fact. One of Massey's own colleagues in France had written that he hoped "that the war in Egypt would soon be over, for then 'the good boys out your way will be able to come to France to see what war is.'" For Massey, this letter was the last straw, and he began writing the book *The Desert Campaigns* to counter what he saw as a serious misconception.[8] After the war, the impression remained, despite Massey's effort. This was so clearly true that in 1920 the writer of a regimental history of service in the Sinai and Palestine found it necessary to insist in his preface that "our War was not a picnic."[9]

In one sense, the critics made an excellent point. The Sinai and Palestine definitely were safer than the Western Front. Of course, that is no great boast; few episodes in human history can match that horrible place. On the Western Front, about one in seven of all British and Dominion combatants died, and there were more than seven casualties for every ten men who fought.[10] In Egypt, the Sinai, and Palestine, by contrast, only about one in 26 British Empire combatants died, and there was less than a single casualty for every ten men who fought. Thus a particular fighting man was almost four times as likely to die on the

Western Front as in Egypt and Palestine, and about 34 British Empire soldiers in France did die for every one in the EEF.[11]

Part of the reason why the statistics show a less intense war in Egypt was because, through the first year and a half of the war, Egypt was indeed something of a picnic, at least compared to France and Belgium. In 1914 and 1915, Egypt was a country that was technically independent but was really under British control. Tens of thousands of British soldiers serving there faced only garrison duty or training or transport to a more active part of the war. An uprising of Senussi tribesmen in Egypt's Western Desert and a few minor attacks from the Sinai were their only worries. One of the most dramatic and well-known "battles" of the period was the so-called Battle of the Wassa in March 1915, in which Australian and New Zealand soldiers destroyed a row of Cairo brothels and challenged the British military police in the streets.[12]

In these years, Egypt had been most important as a distant staging area for the attempted takeover of the Dardanelles Strait, the naval stronghold of the Ottoman Empire. The idea had been to break through the strait, capture Constantinople, and knock the Turks out of the war. This would rob Germany and Austria-Hungary of a key ally and allow the British to move ships and supplies to their own allies in Russia. An amphibious invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula, including men from Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, was the keystone of the strategy.

This was a very controversial strategy, one that lay near the heart of a larger political struggle in London, a struggle that raged through the entire war. It was based in a disagreement over grand strategy in the war, in which generals and politicians took sides as so-called Easterners and Westerners.

The Westerners, who believed that the war could only be won in France in a direct confrontation with Germany, dominated the army high command at Whitehall and also much of the War Cabinet, the group of politicians, drawn from across party lines, who held ultimate responsibility for the war's direction. This powerful contingent included such formidable forces as the prime minister, Herbert Henry Asquith, and most of the senior generals, such as the Commander in Chief of the British Expeditionary Force in France Sir John French, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) Sir Archibald Murray, and the Chief of the General Staff in France, Sir William Robertson.[13] Through the latter two men, this group controlled much of the actual disposition of troops and supplies in the war and held most of the practical power; through the prime minister and others, the Westerners also controlled the War Cabinet.

The Easterners, on the other hand, believed that the Western Front was hopelessly deadlocked. Action there was pointless and costly; the best way to break the stalemate was to invade and destroy Germany's allies in the East. Several of the most influential politicians gave the Easterners the bulk of their power, men like First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, one of the key movers behind the Dardanelles attack, and Minister of Munitions David Lloyd George, the rising power in the government.[14] For these men, the withdrawal from the Dardanelles represented a defeat, and Churchill suffered the political price for having championed it. At the same time, the withdrawal from the Dardanelles and the release of the Turkish armies defending them brought many Easterners and Westerners together in trepidation about the fate of the canal.

The invasion of the Turkish heartland failed miserably, as the Turks raised a passionate defense. After eight horrible months and the loss of tens of thousands of men, the British abandoned the campaign at the end of 1915 and beginning of 1916 and evacuated the Peninsula completely, leaving little to show for their effort but wreckage and graves. This was a devastating blow to the entire Easterner idea of pressing the war against the Ottoman Turks. Churchill paid a heavy political price for championing the attack, and it seemed that the entire East would fade into quietness while all attention turned back to France.

Most of the battle-scarred veterans of Gallipoli waited in peace and safety in Egypt for ships to take them to the Western Front. These hosts of men, as well as those who served or trained in the desert in these years, formed an idea that the war in Egypt was puny and safe, and they carried their perceptions away with them.

In 1916, however, the Egyptian theater of war lost its picnic atmosphere and never regained it. The garrison that remained in Egypt joined the fighting war with a vengeance, with the beginning of the Sinai Campaign and the Palestine Campaign that followed it. Though the fighting never reached the horrific levels of the Western Front (see Tables A.1–A.3 in the Appendix), the British and Dominion soldiers in the Sinai Desert and in Palestine were destined to suffer some of the most extreme physical conditions of the war. They would also be thrown into a bloody struggle against a determined enemy, many of whom were victorious Turkish veterans of the brutal fighting at Gallipoli.

This fact explains the rancor felt by British veterans of the campaign when they heard people refer to the Sinai and Palestine as a holiday.

It also explains the ending of the story about the passing Australian's comments told at the beginning of this chapter. When the Australian infantryman on the ship in the canal yelled, "Bin 'avin' a good picnic out 'ere?," his comrades in the Sinai camp reminded them of Gallipoli and the toughness of the Turks: "Aw, not too bad! jest bin moppin' up the —s that cleared you orf the Perninshuler!"[15]

2
The Rotten Wilderness: The Sinai

> This wilderness is rotten,
> All flies and dust and tears,
> But the Israelites they stuck it,
> For years and years and years.[1]

On a blazing summer day in 1916, a little party of 15 English soldiers, including a chaplain and medical officer Major O. Teichman, labored their way across the high sand hills of the northern Sinai Desert, their horses plodding slowly through the deep sand. In the depressions between the high dunes all around them were small *hods*, tiny oases of brackish water, common in the area around the Katia Oasis. Finding the water in the hods too salty, they stopped in an Australian camp to fill their bottles with the water that camels had hauled from miles away and to ask for a guide to lead them deeper into the desert. They "tried to get some sleep," Teichman remembered, "but the extreme heat down in the hollow and the enormous number of flies made this difficult."[2] As they journeyed onward, they hid behind a sand ridge as a Turkish patrol crossed the dunes far in the distance. Then they finally reached their destination, the large sand hill and oasis of Oghratina, one third of the way across the Sinai Desert and near the very outer outposts of the British army.

On the hill and on hills nearby they found what they were seeking: the wreckage of a skirmish from two months earlier. Dead horses, camels, and men lay on the sand; Turkish and British bodies lay in the open near where they had fallen, most stripped naked by Bedouins. The British, men from Worcester, had been buried by the Australians who had found them, but the desert winds and shifting sands had pushed them again to the surface. The sad little party had come to record the graves and rebury their comrades, stacking sandbags on top of them to

protect the new gravesites. In years to come, Graves Registration officers would have to search for them again, along with hundreds of other lonely graves in remote dunes.

As this mournful group returned to their camp, passing the strong outpost at Romani, where the sand hills were crowned by "trenches, wire, guns, and strong posts," they had their first glimpse of anything that seems to most present-day readers like a typical scene of World War I.[3] To men who served in the British army in the Sinai, though, their experience stands as an ideal summary of the pain, suffering, and difficulties of their Great War.

Politics and military movements

As in Sir John R. Seeley's famous 1883 comment about the British Empire itself, the British captured the Sinai Peninsula "in a fit of absence of mind." The soldiers who sat in Egyptian camps in early 1916 had not been sent to capture Sinai, nor was that plan even being seriously discussed. The great change that diverted tens of thousands of men from meeting their destinies on the Western Front, propelling them instead into combat in a wasteland of sand, thirst, and death, grew from fear in London—fear for the Suez Canal.

From the beginning of the war, the spectre of an enemy force crossing the Suez Canal had been a key worry among British leaders. The canal was the main artery of the British Empire, uniting the home islands with India, Australia, and other principal British colonies. Losing the canal would not only hurt the British war effort, it would have enormous ramifications for Britain's post-war position in the world, even if the British Army were successful otherwise. Such a loss would have the potential to shatter the Empire.

Turkey's entry into the war in autumn of 1914 had posed a credible threat to the canal, with early reports at the time of a force of 88,000 Turks massing in Syria and Palestine. The British garrison in Egypt had been strengthened and the British Army had raised posts along the length of the waterway. There was even discussion of a preemptive invasion of Syria, but Lord Kitchener, the war minister, placed the needs of Egypt behind the more pressing crisis in France. He decreed that the canal area would remain a defensive zone.[4]

Early one morning in 1915, explosions jolted the bored defenders of the Suez Canal out of their complacency. Some 14,000 Turks had marched across the desert and attacked the canal, landing several pontoon boats on the western side.[5] Although British defenders quickly

repulsed the attack and captured the advanced Turkish guard, the canal itself became, for a few hours, no-man's land, as the Turkish artillery and British gunboats exchanged fire. When the British guns found the range of the Turkish commander, the invasion was over and the Turks slipped away.[6] The British, unprepared to move into the Sinai and armed with conservative orders from London, did not follow, but simply began repairing the damage to the canal and continued their plans to invade the Dardanelles.[7] The seed of fear, though, had been planted.

Later that year, as the disaster in Gallipoli wound down, the outlook for the canal looked much bleaker. After the British evacuation, 125,000 victorious Turks were released from the Dardanelles. Lord Kitchener, on his inspection tour of the region in November, found that rather than the British army defending the canal, the soldiers were treating the canal as a defensive trench, a fact that he found deplorable. The image of the canal becoming a battle zone, with the vital waterway turned into a moonscape like the trenches on the Western Front was as frightening as the idea of losing it to the enemy. He recommended a more active defense, based in the Sinai rather than along the canal.[8] By December 1915, the idea, in the words of the official historian, "of defending the Suez Canal upon its own banks had now been definitely abandoned."[9]

Politicians and generals in London found it difficult to argue with this idea, even those who hated the concept of operations in the East. Though he was a confirmed Westerner, General Sir Archibald Murray, the CIGS, was especially worried.[10] The idea of leaving Gallipoli terrified him because he predicted that "Egypt will be attacked early next year [1916] and this time it will be no feeble attack."[11] This, then, became the key decision from London to start the invasion of Sinai—an invasion dominated by a defensive rather than an offensive strategy.

In early 1916, the politicians and generals who directed the grand strategy of the war ordered the defensive line of the Suez Canal pushed out into the Sinai Desert. This meant a shift from a passive to an active defense of the canal, changing the soldiers' lives dramatically, forcing them into extreme conditions and into direct contact with the enemy. As the strategy met with success, the British defensive cordon continued to move eastward, all the way to the borders of Palestine, pushing the soldiers deeper and deeper into their hot ordeal.

* * *

The new strategy would be the framework behind the lives of the soldiers in the Sinai for the next year. British troops would move into the desert, would dig trenches out of artillery range of the Suez Canal,

and would create a buffer zone from the Turks.[12] Ironically, as soon as General Murray sent these orders to Egypt, there was a shakeup in the War Office. The man who was sent to see it done was Murray himself.[13] He found himself on a boat to Cairo, on his way to take command eventually of the British Army there, which was soon renamed the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), in honor of its new mission.

Murray's orders told him to realize his own plans of an active defense of the canal, "as active a defence," in fact, "as possible." The new CIGS, Robertson, wrote that not only should the British forces keep the Turks out of artillery range of the canal but that the EEF should also "use every endeavour" to disrupt Turkish operations in the Sinai.[14]

The question was how far out from the canal the soldiers would have to go to keep it safe. Both Robertson and Murray leaned toward the idea that a truly secure zone would have to include most or all of the Sinai Desert. As they imagined defensive lines in the Sinai Desert, they could not find an acceptable place to build a trench line anywhere in the western end or the middle of the Sinai (see the Sinai Map at the beginning of the book). The only lines that seemed reasonable were on the eastern end, 100 miles from the canal in places like El Arish, or even in Turkish Palestine.[15]

The men and the advance

The moment when Murray arrived in Egypt transformed the war in the region. Murray found most of his army, the recent veterans of the disastrous Dardanelles Campaign, camped near Cairo, and began to press them into action.[16] The fruit of the grand strategy discussions ripened quickly, and in February 1916, long lines of infantry and cavalry crossed the pontoon bridge at Kantara and entered the Sinai Desert. Murray declared it a "mobile" defense, which was to move forward rather than become stable.[17]

The desert that they entered was one of the oldest and most inhospitable highways and battlegrounds in the world. Its rolling, scrubby sand dunes in the northern coastal plains hosted the main thoroughfare through the desert, an ancient pathway that hopped from oasis to well to oasis a few miles inland from the Mediterranean. Further south, another path crossed the rocky hills of Central Sinai, and finally a rough pilgrim road wound through the jagged mountains in the extreme south of the peninsula.[18] Everywhere the climate was, as T. E. Lawrence had described it before the war, "trying": "blisteringly hot" in summer and "in the winter cold with the unbridled cold of a country over which

the wind can rage in unchecked fury."[19] Most of the few inhabitants were nomadic groups of Bedouins.

The army fortified the desert in stages, moving out eastward from the canal and building trenchworks in the sand. The main jobs that occupied soldiers were digging and manning a trench line and then working to control the area ahead of the defensive line. Support services, like roads, pipelines, and railways, which recently had been virtually nonexistent in the land east of the canal, rushed to catch up to the fighting men.[20] When the area east of the lines was clear of Turks and Bedouins and the railroad and pipes neared the troops, the army would move forward and dig new trench lines, and thus they crept steadily across the desert for the next nine months.

The backbone of the force that marched into the Sinai was the infantry. Of 14 divisions of infantry that began 1916 in Egypt, only four would stay for the advance through the desert. These men were all British Territorial troops (considered the least valuable of the 14 to Whitehall). They were the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division, with men from Lancashire and Manchester, the 52nd (Lowland) Division, comprised of both Lowland and Highland Scots, the 53rd (Welsh) Division, with Welshmen and a hodgepodge of men from various parts of England, and the 54th (East Anglian) Division, drawn from not only East Anglia but also London and Northampton. Attached to these divisions were smaller groups of infantry from many scattered backgrounds: Gurkhas, Punjabis, Sikhs, men from Devonshire and Cornwall. Each of these divisions (with many specialty troops like engineers, artillerymen, and medical personnel) was meant to have about 20,000 men, but after Gallipoli, they were generally short of this number. Most of the rest of the infantrymen in Egypt, including large numbers of Australians, embarked for France by June 1916.[21]

The infantry could easily claim to have had the hardest job in the desert. They carried at least 40-pound packs, rifles, and ammunition across the shifting sand. Altogether the weight of their burdens could exceed 100 pounds, because they had to carry everything they needed to live in the desert. According to English Private R. H. Sims, this included

> a full set of equipment, 120 rounds of ammunition, a water-bottle of water, water-proof sheet & blanket, mess-tin, field service cap, overcoat, towel, two pairs of socks, one shirt, cap comforter, holdall including knife, fork, spoon, razor, tooth brush & powder & comb, one clasp knife, housewife or sewing material, stationery, pairs of glasses & cleaning stuff of all kinds.

"I can tell you," he said, with the British flair for understatement, "that it is no light weight."[22] They dug trenches and redoubts in the sand, with the help of a large number of native workers from the Egyptian Labor Corps, and then manned the defenses and waited for an attack.

Though far fewer in numbers, the mounted units are by far the most famous of the EEF's men. There were three distinct types: yeomanry, light horse/mounted riflemen, and camel corps. The yeomanry, drawn mostly from the British midlands and London, were traditional cavalry, carrying swords and expected to fight on horseback. There were also some troops of Indian lancers, who performed the same sort of function. Secondly, the Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifles were "mounted riflemen," a type of reconnaissance and rapid strike force who were trained primarily to move by horse and then fight on foot. They were meant to operate, in historian Jean Bou's words, as "an abbreviated form of cavalry."[23] These men were, even more clearly than the British Territorials, all volunteers for overseas service. (Near the end of the war, some of the light horse soldiers received swords and took on more of the roles of traditional cavalry.)[24] Finally, the mounted infantry of the camel troops, dubbed "The Imperial Camel Corps," hastily put together in a brigade in the early months of 1916, consisted of volunteers from the other two types of mounted units.[25]

With these units and behind the lines, hosts of men worked in jobs that gave little glory (and often little danger) but carried heavy burdens of responsibility. As John Bourne has correctly pointed out, the industrial nature of the Great War caused soldiers like these to become more and more specialized, almost like technicians in a factory.[26] This was especially true of the engineers who, with their sappers and native labor corps working on railway and water lines, deserve a huge share of the glory for the success of the campaign.

By the last half of 1916, the EEF totaled between 150,000 and 160,000 men, including all of the men in Egypt in garrisons or staff jobs (of which there were scandalously large numbers) or fighting Bedouins in the oases of Western Egypt. At this early point in the war, more than four out of five of these men hailed from the British home islands.[27]

By June, in Murray's words, the British were "complete masters" of the area within 45 miles of the canal.[28] Unfortunately, Murray exaggerated. In April, a Turkish force of 3500, led by a German colonel, swept out of the desert and demolished several of the forward positions in Murray's area of mastery.[29] The garrisons at the oases of Katia and Oghratina, one third of the way across the desert, were so completely wiped out that in his June dispatch, Murray was still unable to describe exactly what happened.[30]

This small attack, however, was the thin edge of a dangerous wedge. The Turks continued to advance toward the canal, and, in July and August, they proved the soundness of the idea of a defensive line in the desert, as they made their move to take the waterway. In the Battle of Romani, on August 4, 1916, the largest and most critical battle of the Sinai Campaign, the Turks tried to cut through the British line less than 15 miles from the canal. After heavy, bloody fighting, however, which hit the mounted troops especially hard over three days, the British Army blunted the Turkish attack and pushed them back into the desert.[31]

After the Battle of Romani, the tide turned and the Turks never gained ground or won a battle in the Sinai again. The next seven months saw the British Army advance steadily eastward, driving the Turks before them. Though the Turks made stands at a number of oases and villages, most notably at Magdhaba in December 1916, they never regained their momentum. One after another, these strongholds fell to the EEF's tactic of attacking suddenly and swiftly, enveloping or trying to envelop the Turks with mounted men, who would then dismount and close in.[32] After capturing Magdhaba and El Arish near the borders of Palestine, the British controlled the entire Sinai Desert.

In late 1916, the basic concept that ruled the advance, that of creating an active defense, remained the central motivation of the force. The early hopes that Murray and Robertson had expressed, the optimistic notion of a defense line at El Arish or even at Beersheba, were within grasp.

Physical conditions

Decisions about where the line of defense for the canal should rest, made hundreds of miles away in Whitehall, were the foundations upon which the daily life of British soldiers in Egypt were built. They found themselves constantly pushed forward, out of the relative comfort and safety of Egypt and into the Sinai Desert. The pressures from London and the harsh environment of the Sinai worked together to leave most soldiers with one dominant memory: suffering.

They suffered through scarcity of water, food, and shelter. The chronic lack of the basics of life, along with the desert's vermin, heat, and sand, drove many men to their limits—some past their limits—and even overrode conventional notions of right and wrong. The apparent indifference that higher officers showed to the soldiers' physical needs caused a potent source of strain in relations between ranks.

The most striking and overarching problem with the environment of the Sinai was its emptiness. There were very few settled towns and those

few were quite small; there was little water, and there were no roads that were more than footpaths. There were few crops or local sources of food. The wandering Bedouin tribes that inhabited most of the desert barely supported themselves and could not begin to provide any aid to a passing army.

In fact, the British Empire soldiers looked on Bedouins, even women, children, and old men, as potential enemies. Australian Corporal A. D. Callow described them as "very crude and uneducated. They still light fires with flint. They are bare footed, miserable, almost naked (men & women); are very timid." He later noted the trouble the British Army had from these "timid"-looking people.[33] Bedouins not only scouted for and fought alongside the Turks, but they often took their own opportunities to harass the British, sometimes taking shots at them with whatever old weapons they could scrounge, including old muzzle-loading rifles and blunderbusses.[34]

Accusations of Bedouin theft and grave-robbing were nearly universal, and the stories even circulated as far away as New Zealand newspapers, where one correspondent, Trooper P. W. Burgess, wrote that "The Bedouin is the worst type of man I have ever seen . . . I need only say that these devils have been known to come along at night, dig up the dead, strip them of their clothing and leave them on the sand."[35] Imperial Camel Corp Trooper Beethoven Algar recalled more than 70 years later that the most difficult part of losing a comrade in a desert battle was leaving him behind, buried in a sandy grave. Part of the pain was the expectation that the Bedouins would soon open the grave and put on the dead man's clothes and boots.[36] Some other British graves were lost in the desert when the locals took the wooden crosses for firewood.[37] After a battle, Australian Ross Smith saw them "cleaning up the battle field & looting everything they could find."[38] Even when camped in the emptiness of the deep desert, Lancashire soldiers kept their supplies piled in a single tent per company with a constant guard keeping watch for Bedouins.[39] Ambulance driver Arthur Johnson recalled that, later in the war, a soldier who had just finished guiding an ambulance and was returning to his unit met with a group of Bedouin. They stripped him of horse, saddle, and clothes. Thereafter, the ambulance men received side-arms to defend against the locals.[40]

A number of the scarce locals were rounded up and removed from the areas near the troops, often roughly. Edwin McKay and his New Zealand comrades brought in a suspicious group, and their suspicions were heightened when they were searched at headquarters. The impoverished-looking, flea-bitten people were found to have

money; one "dirty old man" was in possession of 20 sovereigns. McKay speculated about whether they had gotten their riches from the Turks for "services rendered." If the troopers had imagined what they owned, he said, they "might have done a bit of preliminary searching before handing them over to our H.Q."[41] Harold Judge noted how his troop of New Zealanders placed Bedouin women (or "bints" as the British Empire soldiers generally called them) and children on the fronts of their saddles to turn them in behind British lines.[42] Trooper Ion Idriess' Australian comrades were ordered to bring in a group of Bedouin women and children who were camped near them. The women refused, and one of the Australians picked up a child and began carrying him. The child's mother cried and pressed herself against the leveled bayonet of one of the soldiers, trying to reach his hands and kiss them. "The job," he concluded, "was too difficult for our fellows. They cursed the women and let them go." "No doubt," he worried, still distrustful, "the English are fools"—to let them go, that is.[43] The mistrust and hatred between the British Empire soldiers and these desert people would only increase throughout the war.

The lack of a local infrastructure, added to transport difficulties, translated into shortages of virtually everything. All that the soldiers needed, they had to carry into the desert themselves. The most persistent of the difficulties that came with the movement into the Sinai was scarcity of water. The army pushed quickly and far ahead of the comfortable structure of Egyptian water supplies, like the Sweet Water Canal that supplied the garrisons on the Suez. The existing local wells and oases could not begin to support an army of any size.

Virtually every dispatch and order mentions water; hundreds of Murray's engineers and support troops were devoted to it. A water system of pipes and pumping stations followed the fighting troops into the desert, with construction crews building the necessary aqueducts, sometimes only a few miles behind the fighting lines.[44] This water system was the lifeblood of the British campaign in this region.

The pipeline, though, could not keep up with the soldiers; it often fell many dry miles behind the advance. At its best the hot pipes only brought water to one spot along the wide front line. From there, donkeys and camels carried the water outward in large fantasses (or, as some thirsty men called them, "fantassies") strapped to their sides (see Figure 2.1). The camel transport companies deposited this precious cargo into large tanks along the front line. Men would then walk from their far-flung units for their water rations, a task that Suffolk soldier Claude Dawson recalled as the most time-consuming job of the desert

Figure 2.1 Oliver Inglis, New Zealanders bringing water to the front lines in fantasses (Image courtesy of the State Library of South Australia; SLSA: PRG 844/2-Photos of Oliver Inglis, No. 18)

war: trudging to the water tank with the bottles of his sectionmates dangling from his trenching tool.[45] At the best of times, this system provided each man with a gallon of water a day for all of his drinking, cooking, and washing; in leaner times the ration was slashed to half or even one-fourth of that.[46]

It was almost never enough. As Australian Roy Dunk later said, "I can honestly say that, except on special occasions, I was thirsty for the whole 9 months we were crossing the Sinai Desert."[47] When the camel supply train dumped their water into the communal vats, parched soldiers stood and watched like vultures. The water in the vats was forbidden, but when the pouring stopped, they descended on the empty fantasses, tipping them up to drip the remaining drops into their canteens.[48]

Obviously, there was seldom enough water left for hygiene and grooming, and men seldom washed or shaved, and when they did it was a minimal operation. In May 1916, after a couple of days without an issue of water, Harold Judge wrote that "apparantly [*sic*] we are supposed to clean ourselves on the sand the same as we do our mess utencils [*sic*]." The next day, when the men received a treasure of a gallon and a quart of water, he said, "I stripped & had a wash all over in my quart."[49] "The greatest disadvantage of this life is the inability to wash," judged one of his countrymen, "One has to clean his teeth, shave wash & wash up plate out of a mug full of water."[50]

At the worst of times, problems in the water system reverberated throughout the army. At one point, the engineers spent three months in autumn 1916 laying pipe from Romani to Bir el Abd. Amid joyous anticipation, the pumps fired up; nearly every section of the pipe failed from heat and sand damage. The entire section had to be re-laid, and thirst was endemic for several months.[51] On other occasions, sandstorms or bombs from enemy aircraft disrupted pipes and camel trains, causing temporary water crises.[52]

The lack of water threatened the soldiers' lives every time they went on a long march or ride through the desert. Trooper Idriess wrote in his diary about the return of an infantry column from a training march or "route march" near Serapeum, along the canal. Dragging their heavy packs, they seemed near death from exhaustion and thirst. The next day they showed him blisters on their tongues from exposure and lack of water.[53]

The old novelists' cliché of men being driven mad from thirst crops up often in period letters and diaries, and not without reason. The need for water pushed many men to do things that were foreign to their natures and pressed some to commit illegal, dangerous, and foolish acts.

In several recorded cases, thirst reached such a level that men defied orders and rushed their water vats, trying to take the water by force.[54] In one case an Australian doctor and one of his men had to fight a mob off of his water cart; in their thirst the men "were out of hand altogether, and took no notice of neither commands nor entreaties on behalf of their commander."[55] Scottish NCO Alexander Burnett later remembered that at Romani, the men of his corps were so thirsty and hot that they, too, rushed the water reserves in defiance of orders. They "had a tin each and started pouring it over their heads to keep them cool." From that time on, he said, there were guards posted at each corner of the container.[56]

Taunted by the water vat, Ion Idriess tried the direct approach. He simply walked boldly to the vat, drew off a pint, and walked away. No one noticed. This brazen strategy only worked once, though. One of Idriess' comrades tried to repeat the stunt moments later but was caught in the act by an officer, who confiscated the water and roared at the thief in anger.[57]

Others, like the Scots in Burnett's unit, resorted to carefully planned theft to satisfy their thirst. One man would distract the guards, while another soldier, laden with half a dozen water bottles "all tied together" would sneak up to the dark tanks, slip under the protective netting, and fill the bottles.[58]

Clearly, some of these men were performing acts that violated their consciences, but thirst and need had overridden their normal moral codes. Welshman John Evans recalled his thoughts as he watched Egyptians being flogged for stealing water. Rather than judging the thieves, he pitied them, because, in his words, he himself, "would have done anything for a spoonful of cool water to moisten [his lips]."[59] Burnett remembered that one man among his band of thieves said, "we never thought we had to steal water"; Burnett himself seemed to agree, justifying himself with a hint of pathos in his voice: "you only got one bottle of water a day, that was all . . ."[60] These men knew that thirst was altering their normal morality in regard to theft; they did not, though, simply blame the circumstance or the desert, but the ration, and by extension, they blamed their superiors for their wounded consciences.

Officers were not always limited by the strict rules that kept their men suffering, though in most cases junior officers received the same water rations as their men.[61] When Trooper Idriess and his friends boldly stole water from the forbidden vat, the thirsty men did not fail to notice that the officers were enjoying a case of beer, brought by the same camel train that had brought the water. In fact, the officer who confiscated the troopers' stolen water, a man dubbed "the deathadder" by his men, sat conspicuously holding the confiscated water and sipping his beer for some time afterward.[62] In defiance of this sort of privilege, a New Zealand trooper remembered with pride how he and his friends had "waylaid" a major's batman and had "forcibly" stolen half a bucket of water from him. More than 20 men, he recalled, washed themselves in the stolen water, leaving only the other half of the bucket for the major's own bath.[63] This type of double standard, in which officers suffered less from thirst and lack of water than their men, increased the tension between the ranks, and no doubt explains why so many men were so willing to defy their officers' orders about the use of water.

Even the threat of disease was not enough to discourage thirsty men. Scottish Captain Eric Townsend had a terrible time keeping his highlanders from drinking the untreated water that they found on salty flats just beneath the surface of the sand.[64] A group of New Zealand scouts, at the end of a long, dry ride, finding a Bedouin well full of revoltingly dirty water, also ignored the health danger, dunked their heads in their horse buckets, and drank "as if it was as clear as crystal."[65] Likewise, some Australian light horsemen, on a day when their camp had no water at all, drank the only liquid in sight, from the "forbidden and brackish" horses' well.[66] They expected diarrhea "and worse" from it, but "in this weather," they rationalized, "men must have something to drink."[67]

The "worse" that this man mentioned was cholera, a threat that was very familiar to the men. They would all have known about the quarantine line that went up at the Suez Canal in early 1916 because of cholera in the Sinai.[68] Still, thirst overcame their judgment, and in August and September 1916, cholera killed 6 British soldiers and infected as many as 19 others. In the ensuing round of investigations and inoculations, medical officers found at least 500 recent cases of diarrhea that had to be tested for cholera.[69] Though the overall impact on the fighting strength of the army was negligible, the soldiers' reactions to the incidence of cholera show their desperation for a drink. Their comments reveal that they were aware of the danger and disregarded it in the face of the tremendous power of thirst.

The little water the soldiers carried often tasted horrible, especially that which came from desert wells. English Sergeant Sidney Blagg added lemonade tablets sent from home to "take the muddy flavor off the water" (though he found that the patent thirst quenchers that his mother sent him, like "acid drops" and "thirstlets," did nothing to quench thirst).[70] Most soldiers tried to mask the taste of the water by boiling it into tea, which, as one medical officer noted, seemed to make it taste worse. The salinity in the water, he explained, in some places up to 200 parts per 100,000 (at—or maybe a touch above—the upper limit of human tolerance), made this tea a "nauseating drink," but at least more potable than the water alone.[71] If the tea made from the brackish water were ever allowed to cool, however, it went from nauseating to vomit-inducing. It became, as one field ambulance stretcher bearer put it, "a very efficient emetic." This particular bearer took pride, however, in the fact that the EEF's soldiers learned to tolerate water that even the locals refused to drink.[72] The use of tea, a diuretic, to mask the taste of water meant that the cure was almost as bad as the disease. The main antidote to the horrible water quality, used and endorsed by their medical staff, intensified the suffering and dehydration of the soldiers.

Of course, in tandem with the lack of water went the extremes of temperature in the desert. The blazing heat soaked the energy and the moisture out of the men. Captain Townsend noticed after a long hot march through soft sand that his highlanders' perspiration beggared belief. "Most of the men after such a march look just as if they had had a plunge in the sea–shirt, arms & head literally dripping," he wrote. "The marvel is where it all comes from for they don't get so very much to drink."[73]

Many soldiers were certain that it could also drive them insane. English Ambulance driver F. S. Hook recorded that the heat had driven

half a dozen men in his brigade "quite mad."[74] An Australian lieutenant agreed, saying that the heat was so terrible that any wind felt like a blast of steam.[75]

The Scots, accustomed to the cold of their native land, suffered more than most. In May 1916, on a 110°F day, a group of Scottish artillerymen, recently arrived in the desert, sweltered as they read their mail from Inverness. The letters told them about "severe snowstorms" going on at home. "They thought," said an amused observer, "that was just about the last straw."[76]

The heat and lack of water played havoc with men on marches and patrols. On one trek in March 1916, when men of the 160th Brigade had to trudge through Egyptian sand for 5 hours in the morning, 150 fell out and 50 fainted. When Private Sims wrote home that day, he glowed with pride because only six of the weakened men were from his own Royal Sussex Regiment and only one was from his company.[77]

On another day, when the temperature was 125°F inside the medical tent, a New Zealand regiment, returning from a long reconnaissance patrol, was stuck *en masse* with heatstroke. Their comrades at the base camp sprayed them with well water and revived most of them, but 30 went to hospital.[78] One New Zealander later suggested cheerfully that his sunstroke in the Sinai was simply compensation for the frostbite he had had at Gallipoli.[79]

Food, too, became an increasing problem as the men moved from the comfort of the canal zone into the deep desert. The Sinai was even more devoid of food than it was of water; with little organized agriculture, there were no local supplies available to support an army. Like water, then, food had to be brought to the lines on the backs of horses or camels. This method of supply meant that soldiers experienced a constant swing between feast and famine, with the bias too often toward the latter. When the supplies arrived, plenty reigned, but in between times, shortage became the central fact of life.

What little they did have was often short on variety. The official ration scale called for each man to have a pound of fresh meat, along with small portions of bread or rice, tea, jam, potatoes, dried vegetables (or lime juice), milk, cheese, and spices. There was even a provision for cocoa and rum on occasion.[80] Men seemed to favor dumping this food into pots and making stews, which were simple to make and hid any defects in the quality of the materials.[81] Of course, it did not take long for the "monotony of alternate 'stews' and 'tea'" to take hold.[82] This became clear on special occasions and days when they had a chance to buy food from an army or Y.M.C.A. canteen or on days when parcels

containing food would arrive from home. Then the men often would write the entire menus into their diaries, with the emphasis on the number of different foods available at once.[83] London Trooper Leo Holman rejoiced over his (late) Christmas parcel, carefully savoring one item each day: "Sausages for breakfast one day; Black Currant jam for tea another, bloater paste another afternoon: and then the Christmas pudding heated one evening for supper."[84]

In reality, however, even the foods on the official rations list were only available in settled camps with regular supply arrangements. Even then, the entire ration was often unavailable. For instance, in the heat of the summer, cheese was impractical and the men lived on "only bread, jam, bacon, meat."[85] On patrol or on a "stunt" (a march or ride toward a possible fight), rations were much shorter; often only "iron rations" of hard biscuits and tinned beef. These rations were standard fare on the Western Front, too, but they posed additional difficulties in the Sinai.

The quality of the rations was often quite poor and seems like a modern nutritionist's nightmare, which made the fact that the men were, on the whole, remarkably healthy throughout the campaign (at least in comparison to later years) that much more remarkable. The tinned corned beef, known universally as "bully" or "bully beef" was the main staple, but seems from descriptions to have had large amounts of fat rather than meat—half and half, according to the memory of Australian Walter Hewitt.[86] The men complained that extreme heat would "liquefy" the contents of the beef tins and make them impossible to eat. This raises the question of whether Hewitt was being too generous in suggesting that half of the bully beef was meat. By much later in the war, Englishman A. S. Benbow had developed a system for eating it: "I found it best early in the morning after leaving the tins out in cold water all the hours of darkness, when their contents became solid once more."[87]

The soldiers themselves showed a humorous interest in the mystery of what was really in the bully beef tins. One spoof in a trench journal announced the unveiling of a new variety: "Caborse." This new product, they jibed, was guaranteed to be free of hair and horse shoes.[88]

The biscuits that usually accompanied bully beef were often a challenge in themselves; they were so hard that they could not be eaten without water to soften them. While this defect might have posed little problem on the Western Front, in the desert this often meant that a soldier without water was also a soldier without bread. One old soldier later offered his theory that postwar tooth problems in New Zealand were the result of biscuit damage rather than sweets; in fact, he joked

that the biscuits should be added to the lists of "war atrocities."[89] The biscuits, as another soldier pointed out, made the term "iron rations" seem "most appropriate."[90]

Out in the Sinai, as the advance caused the supply lines to stretch thin, even these poor foods ran short. Engineers worked frantically to build the railroad up to the troops, fighting with the shifting and blowing sand. In their hunger, men could not turn to local towns as their comrades in France could. Instead they relied on military canteens, shops with stores of food and personal supplies for sale, to make up the deficit. They bought food in groups or cooperative arrangements or turned to the Y.M.C.A. huts, which followed the advance and often had small stores. There were 30 Y.M.C.A. centers by the canal and in the Sinai in 1916.[91] Though the proprietors of these canteens considered their work a public service and their prices very reasonable (under the circumstances), the men often complained bitterly about the cost of this extra food. [92] "The general opinion," said one man in 1918, "is they are a lot of frauds & a big money making (American) concern for the benefit of the syndicate or heads of the show."[93] He was quick to qualify this opinion by saying how much the men would miss them if they were gone and how much the men valued the Y.M.C.A. writing tables and free stationary (on which a reasonably high percentage of the letters mentioned in this study were written).

These huts did certainly seem popular, whatever the prices. One Y.M.C.A. secretary in charge of a hut complained of long hours with "queues literally hundreds of yards long of men waiting to be served."[94] The free lime juice and cocoa that the huts offered (one of the reasons for the high prices of other items) seemed to be one of the biggest draws, perhaps even more than the various types of games and entertainments they brought. One of the Y.M.C.A. secretaries told a story of one soldier who walked three miles to the nearest hut to get a cup of cocoa. On two consecutive nights he arrived too late and when, on the third night, he finally had his cup, he said "That cup of cocoa . . . was worth the fifteen miles it cost."[95]

The time and effort to buy extra food was indeed considerable. In August 1916, Australian Stanley Parkes, armed with £40 gathered from his comrades, went on a desert odyssey to find food. He journeyed for 5 days through the desert, back and forth to a canteen at Kantara. He borrowed several camels to haul his purchases and trekked back to the front amid a convoy of 800 camels. On one of the days, he traveled eight hours and only made 17 miles; he judged the ordeal to be "the worst trip I have experienced." He finally arrived at his camp with his

treasures and spent the entire next day passing out the food and settling accounts with his mates.[96]

The financial burden of this system of forcing the soldiers to buy part of their daily sustenance was a heavy one for poorly paid men. One regiment of Scots, according to a soldier on canteen guard, spent every bit of their meager fortnightly salaries on tinned peaches and pineapples, pooling their money in groups of five to afford the additional food.[97] In fact, some soldiers had to turn down rare and precious leave because they had spent all of their money on food.[98] English Lieutenant Herbert Best said that his astronomical mess bill in the desert (£5/month) was balanced by the fact that he was saving money in other ways. "[I]n France," he wrote, "one half the expense was incurred in drinks owing to the Café crawl habit so prevalent there" while since he had been there [in Egypt, presumably], he had only had 6 glasses of anything other than water, limejuice, and tea.[99]

When soldiers happened across fresh food in the desert, therefore, they were understandably excited about a chance to add variety to their meager diets. The rare discovery of watermelons or dates in an oasis was thus a major event, worth writing home about. In September, Australian Wilfrid Kent Hughes wrote joyfully that "[t]he dates are ripening faster than ever we can eat them and so are the water melons." In his enthusiasm while writing five exclamation points on the next sentence, the sandbag table he was using collapsed.[100]

The monotony and scarcity of food cut the deepest on special days, especially Christmas. Yule celebrations in 1916 were muted in many parts of the world, but in the Sinai the holiday was especially dreary, largely because of the food. One Australian listed his holiday meal as 2 hard biscuits, half a tin of bully beef, half a pint of tea, and marmalade: a general disappointment.[101] A society columnist of a New Zealand weekly newspaper, hearing of the dismal conditions of Christmas for the men in the Sinai, was shocked and irate. She urged her readers to stop "overloading" the men in Britain with comforts and food and to send them instead to the needier men in the "awfulness of the desert" where they "lack everything but the hardest and commonest of fare."[102]

Theft of food under these circumstances, like theft of water, became completely justifiable in the soldiers' minds. Those who found watermelons and dates that someone local had clearly cultivated often seem to have given little thought to their owners. Similarly, Scottish officers, whose battalion had openly stolen fresh food from the camp of an Australian unit that had gone off to attack El Arish, later spoke almost proudly of the theft. Their summary comment shows that the Scots

believed that circumstances had relieved them of their normal moral obligations: "People who like bacon shouldn't leave it lying in deserts in front of hungry Scotchmen."[103]

This scarcity of water and food not only caused a tremendous amount of suffering among the men. It also undermined discipline, prompted defiance and anger toward officers, and sapped morale. It even went so far as to challenge and change the soldiers' ideas of morality and make thieves of men who would never have stolen anything under other circumstances. Under these conditions, theft and disorder became understandable and even praiseworthy to these men. Their actions were justified in their own minds by the unreasonable living conditions, for which they tended to blame officers close at hand, rather than the men in London who had ordered them into the desert in the first place.

* * *

Though scarcity was the desert's first and most difficult challenge, the Sinai was not content to be a passive barrier. The sands and winds constantly attacked the soldiers, whipping around their bodies and grabbing at their feet. The ubiquitous sand became an obstacle of enormous proportions.

During long marches, the sand found its way into boots and between toes, where it caused painful sores. Sims's feet were already bandaged and sore on one march in the Sinai when he discovered a hole in his boot. The sand worked its way under his bandages and into his sores and became so painful that he had to walk with a stick for support. Though proud that he had "stuck it" to the end of the march, he was shocked when he removed his boot and poured out "jolly near a cup-ful" of sand.[104]

One of the most routine jobs of the First World War soldier, trenching, was extremely difficult in the fluid sand. As men dug, the sand would sift immediately back into the trench. Even after being dug and shored up, the sand refused to succumb; a small sandstorm would fill the trenches in and even a light breeze would fill the bottom with sand.[105] As General Murray wrote in frustration, building a trench line in the Sinai was "like digging water," and all of the work of days or weeks could vanish in a single storm.[106]

The differences between creating defenses on other fronts and in the Sinai are most dramatically shown by the different uses of wire netting in each place. After Gallipoli, "many tons of rolls of close mesh wire netting" lay in great heaps on the docks in Alexandria.[107] This wire was left over from the failed Gallipoli Campaign, where it had shored up the sides of trenches, in the style of the Western Front. It was quickly

obvious that the wire was useless for trenching in the Sinai; the fine sand streamed through the wire as if it were not there. Instead, the EEF rolled the wire out on the sand to make a mesh road on which men could move without sinking. Walking became vastly easier, quicker, and less tiring. This road eventually stretched the entire length of the northern Sinai Desert, and was the primary route for the infantry for the rest of the campaign. The praise bestowed by the soldiers on the unknown hero who had had this brilliant idea was voluminous.[108] Before this genius devised the scheme, however, and everywhere except the single track along the main road across the desert, soldiers still slogged through thick sand (see Figure 2.2).

The sand also offered obstacles to the horsemen, just as to the infantry. The giant dunes made riding treacherous, as the horses struggled to keep their feet in the steep slopes. One light horseman told his parents that the sides of the sand hills were "almost perpendicular"; every ride called for exceptional horsemanship.[109] At night, the uniform color of the sand made the hills treacherous even for expert horsemen, as it was "almost impossible to see the difference between a steep drop & level

Figure 2.2 British soldiers showing off their sand shoes. Many men only received them in February of 1917, when the Sinai was mostly behind them. French Official Photo, Australian War Memorial, H15708

going." "If you do not get lost," another light horseman commented, "it is even money you fall down a sandhill."[110]

The soldiers surprisingly found ways to turn the sand to their advantage. The canal defenders, for example, before they moved their defenses into the desert, had used the sand to warn them of saboteurs and spies. Each night they dragged sledges behind horses or camels along the eastern side of the canal. The next morning patrols would inspect the smooth sand for suspicious footprints.[111] Canal traffic was held up each morning until these patrols announced that the "swept track" was clear and there was no danger of mines or sabotage.[112] Later, in the desert trenches at Romani, the same trick warned the British soldiers of surprise attacks and probes.[113] If there was any disturbance in the sand, they knew the Turks were near and active.

One of the most disturbing challenges that the desert sand gave the British soldiers was the difficulty in burying their fallen comrades. When they were placed into their shifting graves, many did not remain buried, as the Worcester Yeomanry in the story at the beginning of this chapter discovered. Other isolated gravesites disappeared forever beneath the sand, impossible to find again in the shifting dunes.

The sand was bad enough when it was underfoot, but the fury of desert winds and sandstorms shocked the British soldiers. The seasonal storms called "khamseen" or "khamsin" brought life in the Sinai and Egypt to a grinding halt. Named after the Arabic word for "fifty," suggesting that the worst storm season was 50 days long, from March to July (just as the army was first marching through the desert), the storms would arrive suddenly and stay for hours or days. A "brownish-black cloud" would appear on the horizon on a clear day, and then the British camps would be completely engulfed. To Captain Kent Hughes, it seemed like the sun had "darkened, as though an eclipse were in progress."[114] "In my folly and arrogance," wrote Captain Townsend in April 1916, "I imagined that I knew what a sandstorm was. I am now realizing that I did not know."[115]

The wind intensified the desert heat, making it like "a blast from a furnace."[116] Australian Stanley Parkes had been complaining about the heat and noting temperatures of 105˚ to 111˚ Fahrenheit in the days before the winds started; when the hot wind began he wrote that the temperature in his tent was 117˚ Fahrenheit.[117]

Even in the heat of the tent there was little relief from the whipping sand. The sand billowed inside until Private Sims could not see the faces of his friends across the tent.[118] Captain Kent Hughes told his grandmother that in one storm "gravelly pebbles & small bricks took

wings and flew," making the storm seem like a "hail storm."[119] The sand stung "any part of the body that is exposed." Sims tried to describe the blowing sand to his Scottish relatives by comparing it to "a blinding snowstorm," the only weather phenomenon he had ever seen that was as miserable and debilitating as the blowing sand.[120] He woke in one of these sandstorms to find his blanket and other gear buried by the blowing sand. Sand was in his ears and eyes, and more than a week later, he still had a sty and spent the first part of each morning (as long as 25 minutes) prying his "groggy" eye open.[121] Without clean water for cleaning his eye, Sims was fighting a losing battle.

Later in the year, a Lancashire Yeomanry soldier, on a break from night guard duty, vanished completely near his post on the knife edge of a sand hill. His officer and comrades thought he must have lost his way and would find the camp in the morning light. On searching for him, his comrades found him exactly where he had been posted, buried in the blowing sand; he was saved only by the greatcoat he had wrapped around his head and by his comrades' fortuitous arrival to dig him out.[122]

The sand tended to collect in clothing and at joints and wear small sores on soldiers' bodies. These tiny abrasions on unwashed skin formed painful infections that the soldiers called "septic sores."[123] Lieutenant Best said that these sores kept him from exercise or even walking for more than a week. The infection gave him a fever of over 104 degrees, and he found himself evacuated to a hospital in Egypt.[124] A. S. Benbow, a soldier from Liverpool, joined his brother's unit in the Camel Corps in 1917; he was shocked at the sores on his brother's fingers, elbows, and knees, covered only with dirty bandages. The newcomer suddenly became aware of his own strange appearance: in his new unit, he alone was free of sores and bandages and of clothes tattered by the desert.[125]

For many soldiers, the heat and the parched landscape were bearable, but not the constant plague of flies that surrounded the army wherever it went. They were one of the dominant memories of British NCO Edwin Bowyer. He recalled with emotion more than 45 years later how they and the fellow torments of sand and scorpions made the campaign an ordeal even when there was no fighting.[126] Private Sims agreed; the flies were "something terrible" and they "torment one so." He had flies in his eyes, nostrils, and mouth, and he found it hard not to eat them as they clustered on his food.[127] "[E]very piece of bread a [*sic*] and jam," explained another man, "had to be carefully guarded till actually in one's mouth."[128]

Virtually every aspect of army life seemed to encourage the flies, which found irresistible the refuse and latrines of camps, as well as the carnage of battles and raids. After the bloody fights at Katia and

Oghratina, for, example, one soldier commented on the half buried bodies of men and camels, noting that the stench could be smelled miles away. There were so many flies, "millions of them everywhere," that he declared the place unfit for habitation: "I reckon it will be years before anybody could live there."[129] Special sanitation units and sanitation officers in every division fought an endless battle against these disease-ridden pests.[130] These sections buried and destroyed refuse and animal carcasses and cleaned animal carcasses from battlefields in an attempt to control the flies.[131]

Lice also swarmed over the ranks, burrowing into clothing and packs. New Zealander P. E. Kyne wrote that as soon as his unit reached the desert trenches, they were attacked by the "greybacks": lice. "I believe," he said, "they were bigger and in better condition than any we had to deal with on Gallipoli."[132] In censoring his English signal platoon's letters home, Lieutenant Herbert Best discovered that his men also were complaining of lice, either from blankets on their troopship or from the animals in the Sinai.[133] Even in units that claimed no instances of lice, Australian Light Horse sanitation officers found between 10 and 45 per cent of the men infested to some degree.[134]

In March 1916, Captain Townsend and his company of the Highland Light Infantry launched a full scale assault on the vermin. They washed their blankets in creosol (cut with water), stripped off their infested clothes and burned them. Townsend was under no illusions about having solved the problem; the "foul" ground, he told his mother, "helps the little fellows." He himself was relying heavily on insect powder, though it seemed not to do much good.[135]

Fears that transferred soldiers would take the lice (and the relapsing fever that they spread) with them to the Western Front drove the medical services to find a solution to this problem. Thus the EEF's engineers set up an ingenious system for attacking these little pests. A bright and now forgotten engineer rigged a railroad car as a steam tank, sealing the doors and windows and running pipes from the steam exhaust of the locomotive. The car became a steam pressure cooker, pumping scalding vapor into clothing and packs.[136] The machinery broke down constantly, and there was a constant shortage of fuel and precious water for the steam.[137] They also shrank regular uniforms and utterly destroyed leather riding breeches, but the vermin problem was so extreme that these faults were overlooked.[138]

Men were marched to the steamer in battalions, where they would hand over all of their clothing and then take a creosol bath themselves, waiting, as one New Zealander put it, in their "bare pelts."[139]

"One dip & out you come," recorded Londoner Jim Galloway in his diary, "Everyone walking about drying in the sun & smarting horribly."[140] The native laborers, he noticed, got a double dose of the bath; he imagined they "must have hides like leather."[141] The hour standing naked in the sun, officers and "other ranks" together without badges of rank or even identity discs, was a strangely democratic moment, which many men found extremely funny in its social implications.[142] As the men waited, an Australian colonel shocked his men by laughing for the first time in two years.[143]

The lice-dipping and fumigation is the most jovial moment that a number of soldiers record. The temptation for the modern historian might be to see a homo-erotic element in the mass nudity, but that interpretation seems poorly supported by soldiers' writings. The process is generally presented as a novelty, which corporate nudity among common soldiers certainly was not. The myriad swimming parties, to which the soldiers took no bathing suits, are very well recorded in diaries and photographs.[144] Official newsreels, too, show the casual way that nudity was treated among the enlisted ranks, showing soldiers working oblivious to their naked comrades bathing near them.[145]

Since soldiers did not seem to notice the humor in these other, similar situations, the delousing parade certainly contained another quality, unique in this situation: the equal mingling of ranks and social classes. As a contrast, during a similar delousing at Romani, in which officers did not join the fumigation, Australian soldiers did not laugh but protested by "baaing" like sheep being dipped.[146] The social discomfort and novelty of the first situation offers an unusual glimpse into the expectations and norms of their social divisions.

Australian Corporal Herbert Billings's story about bathing in the ocean while waiting for a train in the summer of 1916 is also a lighthearted story of corporate nudity. When the train arrived unexpectedly, the men all jumped onto the cars still naked. He obviously recalled the incident, not because the nudity of his comrades was interesting or new or stimulating, but because of the unusual experience of naked railway-riding.[147]

The desert landscape itself challenged the soldiers more and more as they moved away from the settled and well-marked canal zone. Maps, explained General Murray, could never give someone an idea of the "enormous desert spaces" that his men had to face.[148] The faceless and identical sand dunes in the northern Sinai became a serious problem, because it was easy for men to lose their way in the wide, trackless waste.

Private Sims, for example, found patrols unnerving because of the lack of landmarks. He strained to see "trees or huts of any kind" to guide him, but the desert was "exactly the same whether you look north, south, east or west." It was always a great relief to him to find a military telephone wire running along the ground; he and his comrades would run this line in their hands as they marched to keep from losing their way.[149]

On a route march on 15 May 1916, this fear of becoming lost became grim reality for an English patrol. A brigade of Lancashire Fusiliers was trudging through the Sinai when their scouting party and their signalers disappeared into the desert ahead of them, lost in the dunes. One man, Private North, came stumbling back into camp during the night "in a state of collapse"; search parties went out the next day, a day when the "rocks radiated heat until they were too hot to touch."[150] All but three members of the lost signal patrol found their way back to camp or were discovered by search parties, but they had no encouraging news of their wandering comrades. Instead, they told horrible stories of extreme thirst. The leader of the patrol had used his revolver to force the others back from their dwindling water supply. Some of the lost men had resorted to drinking oil and their own urine.[151] Three days after the party had become lost, one of the men was found dead on the dunes, and within a week the two remaining men had also been found, both dead.[152]

Stories like this one circulated widely, emphasizing the dread the soldiers felt about being lost in the wastelands. An English ambulance driver wrote that after the Battle of Romani a Somerset Yeomanry unit had become lost and that two of their men had died in the summer sun and others had gone mad.[153]

Desert navigation was much harder on the horsemen of the English Yeomanry than on their Australian Light Horse counterparts. The Tommies had trained and lived in the lush and varied landscape of England, while a number of the Anzacs (though by no means all[154]) had learned to ride in the dry and harsh vastness of outback Australia. "When I first sent [the English Yeomanry] out," wrote General Murray, "they always got lost and the Anzac Cavalry had to find them and bring them home." It took the British soldiers more than half a year to learn their way around the western Sinai.[155]

The proud Australians, though, had their own share of trouble with the landscape. Those leading the column were not always the best navigators, and sometimes they had to make a public and embarrassing admission of that fact. Alan Campbell, who served with the 1st Light Horse Brigade, recalled that whenever his brigadier (presumably Lt Col J. B. Merideth, who seems not to have had the excellent bush skills of

the brigadier of the 2nd Brigade, Granville de Laune Ryrie[156]) would lose his way at the head of 1500 horsemen, he would send word back through the column for an officer with greater bush skills, a Major Mick Shanahan, to come to the front. Even in the dark, Shanahan, who had gained a reputation on Gallipoli as a man who "looked more like a bagman than a soldier," would guide the column back to camp.[157] When Shanahan lost his leg at Romani, the regiment lost more than a popular officer; it lost a skilled navigator.

Australian Private R. F. Bourne explained that even bushmen who were accustomed to desert life and prided themselves on their senses of direction often got lost in the Sinai because all of the sand hills looked just alike. Inexperienced officers had little chance of finding their way. The weary soldiers would murmur "caustic remarks" about their superiors like "the old b_____ has lost himself again."[158] The men seemed resigned to the knowledge that it would happen again.

The 1st Light Horse Regiment is a perfect example. They got lost in May 1916, and had to ride in circles to find the tracks of the support units and, after much discussion among the officers, chose a direction and followed the tracks to a town.[159] The next month, this unit again found itself in the same situation. The regiment stopped in the desert and a number of officers were called to the head of the column to give their opinions, and the men knew they were lost again. This time the unit found itself "still wandering around [the] desert" at 2 a.m. that night. In frustration, they pitched camp and sent out patrols. The situation was deadly serious, because each man had been issued only half a bottle of water the previous day, and that was no doubt gone; the horses, too, were "getting knocked up."[160] The men had, as one signaler put it, "a pretty gruelling [*sic*] time."[161]

Fortunately for the Australians, one of their officers came back into camp an hour later and announced that they were only one mile from their base at the oasis of Oghratina. The regiment moved immediately, and probably a little sheepishly, over the sandhills to pitch camp again at their base.[162] Not surprisingly, the regiment's official war diary entry fails to mention getting lost and, contrary to its custom, omits the time of arrival in Oghratina.[163] The brigadier's report of the regiment's performance avoided saying the word "lost," explaining that the "frequent change of direction" was due to a "shortage of compasses."[164]

All of these desert hardships and the suffering of the soldiers were intensified by the attitudes of many senior officers, who seemed remarkably cavalier about the way they treated the desert's dangers, especially the heat and the supplies of water for the men. "When there is no urgent

military reason," wrote Captain Townsend, "I can't imagine why they move us in the hottest part of the day, as it is hard enough marching in the cool of the morning or evening."[165]

Many officers believed, as another junior officer recalled, that "discipline" and "practice" could teach the men to overcome the heat and lack of water.[166] Even when sufficient water existed for a full bottle for each man, the officers often still maintained "water discipline" by forcing each man to show a full water bottle at the end of a long day's march in the desert.[167]

Even the EEF's Director of Medical Services questioned water discipline policies, insisting that the reason behind the high incidence of heatstroke among the mounted troops was "simply that the men were not getting enough water." The daily gallon that the men needed to maintain their body temperatures had been halved (or less) under the circumstances of the advance.[168] Sadly, there is little evidence that the medical director's report caused any change in official thinking. The push into the Sinai had pressed the men beyond healthy limits, and their superiors seemed, then and in retrospect, shamefully unsympathetic.

Combat

Though the decisions of politicians and generals pushed the British and Dominion soldiers forward into a harsh environment, the sharp edge of the experience was the Turkish Army. Bold, resilient, and hardy, the Turks, with their German and Bedouin allies, set the tone of the entire conflict with their tactics of speed, surprise, and mobility. Although the British won most of the engagements, the Turks managed to make the campaign hard on the British and Dominion forces.

In stark contrast with the Western Front, battles and skirmishes in the desert were infrequent and short: some men (particularly infantrymen) saw no fighting at all and no individual battle lasted longer than three days. Conflict happened suddenly and swiftly, with soldiers relying on surprise and ambush more than on weaponry and machinery. Only in the later stages of the campaign, as the mounted troops continually struck at the fleeing Turks, did the fighting become slightly more regular for these men.

The fact that there was very little direct contact with the enemy, especially in the first part of 1916, meant that a huge proportion of the soldier's life was dominated by boredom and monotony. Though many diaries and letters reflect a generally cheerful and positive tone, the tedium (along with other hardships) seems to have laid a psychological

strain on other men. "Curse this inaction," was Ion Idriess's typical response, written by a man who had already complained in his diary over and over that the "cursed desert" was "sickeningly monotonous" and bemoaned the "miserable routine of camp life."[169] Men tried to break the boredom by such pastimes as football and even putting on fights that pitted tarantulas and scorpions against each other while the soldiers cheered them on.[170]

For Australian Pelham Jackson, the silence of the desert allowed psychological traumas to arise, as his mind was filled with terrible images from Gallipoli. He wrote to his mother, "In my dreams I see over again some of my comrades suffering once again their death agonies after being torn open with pieces of bursting shells. Many chaps who were so good & unselfish that I loved them more than a brother have died in terrible pain, some of them in my arms." These visions did not assault him "as the Angel of Death is hovering over us all[. T]hen one goes in daily & hourly expectation of a violent & terrible death, but afterwards when one is temporarily relieved of the mental strain of actual warfare, the memory of such scenes is ineffaceable, for a time at least." He longed to go to the Western Front "as anything is better than inactivity."[171] For this tortured soul, any diversion, even combat, would have been a relief from his nightmares.

In their boredom and dissatisfaction in the Sinai, soldiers often glorified the idea of fighting in France. Any rumor that a unit might be going to France was greeted with great joy and hope.[172] One poetic soldier wrote in rhyme that the idea of going to France "sounded like an old romance."[173] An Australian was "disgusted" and "ashamed" to tell his family that he was still in Egypt, "practically doing nothing" to help those on the Western Front.[174] He hoped his luck would change so he could do his "bit" in France. The phrase he used—*doing our bit*—was commonly used for men enlisting for war service in general, so his use of it suggests that he felt as though he had not joined the real fight at all since he had not yet been to France.[175]

Some men imagined that conditions in France were better than those in the Sinai. Australian Corporal Selwyn Metcalfe told his brother that "[e]veryone here would give worlds to get to France, where at least a chap can get his regular ration while he's kicking, and can talk to white women occasionally."[176]

This unrealistic glorification of France was not absolutely universal, though. New Zealander Beethoven Algar, for example, had had no illusions about France and no desire to go. His unit had received a shipment of tunics from the Western Front and had found them

absolutely full of dead lice. This evidence was apparently sufficient to deaden any romanticism he might have felt toward the main front.[177]

The monotony was so bad that the idea of stowing away on a ship to France appealed to many men. Rumors about soldiers who had attempted this trick ran throughout the ranks.[178] New Zealander Doug Dibley claimed later to have succeeded in transferring himself surreptitiously to France. He said he accompanied an officer to Alexandria, the first leg of a trip to England, and, on the officer's suggestion, had simply walked with him onto the boat. After stealing a British helmet so that he could blend in with other soldiers on board, he arrived in England and the officer worked out his paperwork to have him sent to the front. Dibley explained that he never faced consequences for this action, because he fell ill in his first week on the Western Front and was shipped home.[179] The very idea that this would have been a desirable thing to do is evidence of men's negative attitudes toward the inaction of the Sinai.

Because of the chronic boredom, the coming of battle caused more celebration than dread. On the eve of the Battle of Romani, for example, the men of an Australian machine gun company, hearing of a large body of Turks heading their way, threw their hats in the air at the prospect. They had been "fed up and wondering if there really was a war on."[180]

When the British Army did engage the Turks in battle, beginning with the raids on Katia and Oghratina, the contact was usually sudden and often terrifying. British officers who underestimated the danger and volatility of this type of warfare and the danger of confrontation with the Turks brought their men to grief. In early 1916, for example, British yeomanry troops camped in isolated oases and settled into a picnic-like frame of mind, bringing dressing tables and golf clubs with them to their outposts.[181] At the attack on Oghratina and Katia, even the first reports of the Turkish guns caused more curiosity than alarm; the British passed it off as random shots from a Bedouin, according to a regimental doctor, James Brown. Soon artillery shells began landing in the camp, Turkish machine guns played, and an enemy plane swooped overhead. A short and fierce fight followed, and an officer lying behind a bush next to the doctor fell backwards with a bullet in his forehead. Rushing to tend to the wounded, Brown was only vaguely aware of how badly the fight was going, except when he saw the body of one of his orderlies, shot down in the middle of the hospital tent; eventually, the few survivors surrendered. Dr Brown's work that day had only just begun, and then he spent the rest of the war in a Turkish prison.[182] Complacency and lack of understanding of the type of war that they were waging cost this group dearly.

As contact with the Turks increased, tension ran high in the silence of the desert, where short, sharp skirmishes could begin at any moment. Many men wrote often that they expected Turkish attacks at any time.[183] Trooper Idriess, spending a night in an exposed outpost, wrote in his diary of the "unpleasant feeling" that Bedouins were creeping up to stab him in the back.[184] A New Zealander in the Camel Corps lamented that there could be hundreds of unseen men "in hiding in the hollows and valleys of this front," whom even a patrol a stone's throw away might not see; a surprise confrontation could begin at any moment.[185]

Many of the most terrifyingly sudden actions that the Turks launched were aerial attacks. As the army moved forward, enemy airplanes became more and more threatening to the British and Dominion soldiers, often strafing and dropping bombs. The so-called Taubes (a term commonly used to mean "enemy airplanes" in the EEF) were the most common means of contact with the enemy. The soldiers treated them with such awe that some recorded every single passage of an enemy plane in their diaries.[186]

The sensation of being under attack from the air was unnerving to many soldiers, especially at this point in the campaign when the British planes were fewer, slower, and less maneuverable than their enemies' machines. The men on the ground felt helpless. Medical Officer Brown claimed that simply keeping the plane in sight made him feel more control over the situation, but he knew that there was no real chance of dodging a bomb even if he did spot it falling.[187]

The open and featureless desert sands intensified the feelings of helplessness, making men feel naked before the aerial assaults. Some officers reportedly told men that when airplanes appeared, they should hide under bushes. The soldiers found this idea ludicrous, especially considering the fact that bushes did not stop bullets or bombs and also the shortage of bushes in many parts of the desert. One trench journal offered the tongue-in-cheek announcement that "[i]n case of hostile aircraft, bushes may be secured at the Q.M.'s store."[188] In their eyes, the military authorities had done little to protect them except offer useless advice. In another part of the same journal, the order to lie under bushes comes under fire again in a poem, where the writer says that the officers who suggested this remedy were "a lot of cranks" and that "I'll eat my 'at if they're not shickered [drunk]!'"[189]

The desert's lack of cover was not only a problem when airplanes attacked but in every combat situation (see Figure 2.3). For the individual soldier it was the single most immediate and important factor in the experience of combat in the Sinai.

Figure 2.3 "Soldiers operating machine guns near Quatia [Katia], Egypt, during World War I [detail]," August 1916, unidentified photographer. Note how the gunners are totally exposed to enemy fire. Powles Family Collection, PA1-q-604-50-3, Alexander Turnbull Library, NLNZ, Wellington, New Zealand

After the Battle of Romani, for example, a light horseman wrote home nostalgically of Gallipoli. He missed the "nice deep trenches" and cover in the Dardanelles, contrasting it with the exposed feeling at Romani. "I have never before," he said, "been exposed to such a hot fire."[190] As the men moved into the eastern end of the desert, this feeling became worse, as the EEF's active defense put them in the position of attacking Turkish trenches across open ground. Under fire, the men had to do their best to keep "under cover from place to place" in the open country as they advanced.[191]

The contrast between these types of battles and those of the Western Front could not be sharper, with open sand in place of the cover of trenches. As we will see in later chapters, the Sinai battlefield also stands in contrast with the other battlefields of the EEF's campaigns, where trenches and solid ground offered a completely different experience of war.

Because of the poor cover and the openness of most actions, the sniping that had been a staple of life on Gallipoli followed the men into the Sinai, adding another unnerving element of danger to every movement and encounter in the open desert. "We were an open target," one veteran recalled many years later, "all the time."[192] Similarly, New Zealander Charles Malone's diary recorded his uneasy feeling on patrols in the eastern Sinai. As he captured a Bedouin with a camel train, he expected a bullet from the man's "hidden companions"; he strained to see them, and insisted that they were there somewhere, unseen.[193] One Australian soldier warned his brother, who was soon

to arrive in the Sinai, that a lot of men "cracks it up" in the face of sniping. He himself believed that the best response was to give the Turks "dinkum oil" and repay the violence in kind.[194]

Snipers were ever-present in battles, too, as a regular element of the Turkish defense plans. British scouts would scour the flanks in any tiny battle, looking for snipers.[195] They, however, often became the targets, as one Australian officer discovered in July 1916. On a patrol, he looked over a ridge at a Turkish camp and a sniper shot him; his men had to take a winding trip home to dodge his killers.[196]

The attack on Magdhaba offers an excellent case. Australian scout Henry Bostock recalled that the entire battle was spent running from the cover of one sand dune or bush to another because the sniping was so treacherous. His friend Charlie Jones, lying against him behind a bush, was struck in the chest; Bostock's vivid memories of his friend's shudder and of the violent impact of the bullet highlight the terrifying psychological effect of sniping. Immediately thereafter, Bostock had to carry his sergeant, with a sniper's bullet in his leg, back from the battle line.[197]

Behind Bostock's position, a highly respected Australian veteran of Gallipoli, Captain Mervyn Higgins, a lawyer and the son of a high court justice, was moving forward with his men, rushing from cover to cover. A single bullet from a Turkish sniper struck him in the forehead. This death, witnessed by dozens of men up and down the line, affected the men deeply and sparked angry accusations about the morality and fair play of the Turkish shooters.[198]

Though sniping was a regular feature of every theater of the Great War, the openness of the Sinai Desert gave it a special quality of terror. Western Front-style sniping duels, carefully orchestrated and lasting for days on end, in which snipers in opposite trenches maneuvered for position, trying to shoot each other through holes in trench parapets, were rare in the Sinai. Here the culture of sniping was completely different, because the front did not stay long in any one place. With the constant movement of the troops, sniping was a matter of ambush, stealth, and surprise.

The enemy

In this sort of war, the enemy often remained faceless, an abstraction to a large number of men. Some of those who had met the Turks in Gallipoli, like English Lt A. B. Sackett, wanted revenge against the Turks for the "false coin" of the past, but many others seem detached or blandly respectful of their enemy.[199]

For example, Australian machine gunner Ted McCarthy, having tried to size up Turks from a distance in the early desert battles, finally saw them up close after his comrades overran a Turkish redoubt in late 1916. He came face to face with a captured Turk, who, badly wounded, was quietly smoking a cigarette. Though the Australian said he "scowled" at the "poor devil," the Turk winked. McCarthy winked back and both smiled. "The terrible turk," he concluded, "is not really so terrible after all." "Somehow I pity the turks—all our lads say they fight fairly—but the German, I detest with all the loathing that's in me."[200]

By June 1916, New Zealander Harold Judge had recorded over and over in his diary that his unit failed to sight any Turks, though they made many attempts to catch them in the desert. Though he recorded no direct contact with them, he still had a high opinion of the Turks and wanted to treat them with fair play. He objected to his orders to fill up a desert well to deny it to the enemy. He declared that it was a "very foolish & inhuman proceeding" considering that "Johnny Turk . . . has so far played very fair."[201]

Other British Empire soldiers seem completely detached from the Turks as their enemy. When Australian Ross Smith described combat in the Sinai, he gave no hint of animosity toward the Turks, describing them only as "living targets." He explained that he fought them in a natural "'Fighting Madness' . . . an exalted determined-to-kill-and-not-be-killed sort of feeling" that temporarily allowed a man to fight effectively and even enjoy killing.[202] Later that year, as a pilot, Smith described a chance to machine-gun Turkish camel trains as "fun." The sight of them scattering under his guns was so entertaining he said he "nearly fell out [of the airplane] from laughing once or twice."[203] This flippant attitude toward combat and the Turks reflected the atmosphere of the Sinai Campaign, in which combat was far more faceless and less frequent than in later times.

The dual fight against the Turk and the Sinai

While fighting may have eased the soldiers" psychological burdens, the mobile nature of the conflict with the enemy tended to intensify the hostile environment of the Desert. Thirst, hunger, heat, and vermin struck soldiers even harder in combat and while moving quickly to follow a retreating Turkish army. During the fight, the Desert itself became crueler.

Despite the Herculean efforts of camel transport and railway engineers, supplies came only fitfully to men on the move and in combat. For those on the front, food and water became even scarcer than

before, especially in the eastern end of the Sinai. In November 1916, an Australian unit arrived in the front areas from leave. As soon as they arrived a swarm of hungry Tommies descended on them, begging for food, saying they had been marching in the desert all day with one biscuit apiece.[204]

With supply so limited, the infantryman on the move left all but his most precious possessions behind, hoping to lighten the load in his pack and leave room for those things that sustained life. A subaltern from Nottingham wrote to his sister his grief on receiving three prized books while on the march. He had only asked for one, but now he would have the "sorrow of seeing his treasures burnt or thrown away" to ease his tramp through the desert.[205] Many men chose instead to discard blankets, which seemed useless in the desert heat, and then suffered severely when the cold of the desert winter began.[206]

The problems of thirst and heat did not disappear during a fight, either; they took on a deadly new importance. Forced marches drove men past the limits of their endurance. An Australian light horse regiment discovered this fact in May 1916, while chasing a Turkish patrol through hills of deep sand. After a fruitless pursuit they had to turn and ride back through the heat of the day. The unit's official diary records what happened next as a "very punishing march"; an apt description as some of the horsemen found themselves walking back to camp after their horses collapsed. The stragglers wandered into camp late that night, and the next day 15 men (including four officers) went to the hospital for "sunstroke and heat exhaustion."[207]

At the Battle of Romani, the 125th Infantry Brigade, made up largely of men recruited from Lancashire, began a forced march early on 6 August, chasing the retreating Turks. They had had no time for a full breakfast, but they had had to march into the heat of the day on half iron rations. The brigade left behind almost 1000 men, mostly recent reinforcements and sickly soldiers, taking only those who were Sinai veterans and "fit for desert operations." They began their march with 2802 fully fit officers and men, but they ended the day with about 2162. During the day, about 640 fit and seasoned men fell out along the way "from heat and exhaustion."[208]

Their Lancashire neighbors in the 127th Brigade had a difficult march, too. The officers, many of whom had lived through Gallipoli, claimed that "they knew nothing to surpass in horror the sufferings of the 127th Brigade" at that time.[209] One of them testified that the thought of a dry and hungry advance through the desert under these conditions was "far more alarming" than meeting any number of Turks.[210]

The period after Romani hit the men even harder, as they raced to catch the retreating Turkish army. Every trouble that the desert had offered when the lines moved out from the canal ballooned with the pressure of combat. As one old soldier recalled many years later, the entire campaign was "a tough show," but the toughest period was chasing the Turks in the weeks and months after Romani.[211]

Conclusion

Casualties in the Sinai were light by First World War standards, but the desert terrain and the extreme temperatures of sand and sun made the experience a memorably harsh one. The steady escalation of the intensity of the Sinai Campaign caused the soldiers' misery to intensify as well, but the favorable balance of victories must have been a source of encouragement through these struggles. Still, desert fighting had discouragements and terrors unknown in Europe and even in later stages of the Middle Eastern war.

The story that began this chapter, the story of the grim trek of the Worcester men to bury their comrades, illustrates so many of the faces of the Sinai Campaign. The heat, the flies, and the slow wallowing through thick sand were familiar to all the men who fought there. The Worcesters found their slain comrades on a lonely hill in the desert, far from a town or even from lines of trenches, revealing the infrequent and scattered nature of the fighting. The scene would have been alien to anyone used to the fighting front in France. Perhaps only the stench and sting of death would have seemed familiar.

3
Crossing the Line

> . . . El Arish is Egypt land—but dare not cross the line,
> When Turkish armies stand supreme in olden Palestine.[1]
> W. M. MacDonald

An Australian soldier penned these lines in the aftermath of the Battle of Rafah, where he and his comrades fought in January 1917. To him, the British Army's first steps out of the Sinai Desert and its first battle in the Holy Land were momentous, a turning point in the war. In his verse, he replays the gunfire and shrapnel of the battlefield, recounts the Turkish surrender of the border town of Rafah, and muses about the meaning of the conflict. The threshold of Southern Palestine is the "promised borderland," beyond which the war would change, with "milk and honey" flowing for the men and with "British arms" controlling the Holy Land.[2]

Private W. M. MacDonald, the soldier-poet, had an insight that few at the time could have appreciated, for both of his predictions would come true. The war did change dramatically for the fighting men as soon as they crossed the line. The victory he predicted would also come in time, but it would take much longer than he realized, and he would not live to see it.

The war in the Sinai, though it did not compare in scale or intensity to that on the Western Front, had turned into a genuine fighting war in 1916. This new reality for the common soldier, this "active defense" of the Sinai Desert, was only the overture to an even more demanding and devastating conflict. This new period saw a second distinct experience for the fighting men of the EEF.

The original concept behind the EEF's move into the desert had revolved around creating a defensive line in the most stable and advantageous

spot in the Sinai. The most ambitious goal in General Murray's plans at the outset of the campaign had been a line on the eastern edge of the Sinai desert, at El Arish—Egyptian territory, as the poem says—some 15 miles from the border of Ottoman Palestine.[3] Thus, had the original concept remained in place, a line of trenchworks would have arisen in El Arish, with redoubts and patrol posts eastward to the Gulf of Aqaba. For the soldiers, the remainder of the war would likely have degenerated into garrison duty, guarding and patrolling a quiet line of trenches that would eventually be supplied by rail and water connections to Egypt.

The concept did change, however, in December 1916. A new government in London, led by David Lloyd George, shifted the emphasis of the campaign from defensive to offensive and pushed the EEF out of its desert lines and into the harsher and deadlier war in Palestine. In a short period of confusion at the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, orders to move forward were unsupported by additional materiel or reinforcements. An advance that began with an initial enthusiastic rush, reflected in MacDonald's triumphal poem, ended in death and disillusionment as the men saw two shifts in their experience. First, their contact with the enemy became more direct, brutal, and deadly: frontal assaults on entrenched positions replaced rolling cavalry duels. Second, their physical environment changed from the virtually uninhabited dunes of the desert to the barley fields, craggy canyons, and cactus-walled villages of Southern Palestine.

Politics and military movements

In December 1916, Lloyd George took the office of prime minister. As his star eclipsed that of Westerner H. H. Asquith, Lloyd George's Easterner ideas came into the focus of power. Within a few months, the entire character of the Sinai Campaign would change and with it the lives of the men serving there.

In the EEF's desert victories, the new premier saw the possibility of scoring a major blow against the Turks, even of knocking them out of the war. Lloyd George had long cherished the idea of attacking Palestine or Syria, and the EEF, on the very border of Palestine, was in the perfect position to realize his hopes. "When I became Premier at the end of 1916," he wrote later, "we were still maintaining a defensive attitude on all the Turkish Fronts, although we had overwhelming forces at our disposal in those areas."[4]

This scheme was so important to the new prime minister that it filled his first days on the job; he "at once" consulted the War Office about

"a further campaign into Palestine when El Arish had been secured."[5] On the day that Lloyd George formed his War Cabinet, in fact, Murray received the first of several telegrams, sent under the signature of the CIGS, General Robertson, but under the orders of Lloyd George. It asked his requirements to move past the edge of the Sinai Desert into Southern Palestine.[6] Murray estimated that while he could accomplish his original defensive mission with his present force, he would need as many as two new divisions to change from an active defense to an invasion of Palestine.[7] Robertson then told Murray that the prime minister wanted him to "make the maximum effort" during the winter, even hinting strongly that he might receive his reinforcements.[8] This was a fundamental shift in the role of the EEF that would transform them from a defensive to an offensive force.

The new strategic direction distressed Robertson, the man who as CIGS wrote orders for the various theaters and controlled their reinforcements and supplies. He said that before Lloyd George's accession ministers and generals had a sense of unanimity about the conduct of the war (namely the primacy of the Western Front) that the new premier's ideas destroyed.[9] When Lloyd George's Government was less than three weeks old, Robertson wrote to General Sir Douglas Haig on 24 December 1917, about "a very dangerous tendency becoming apparent for the War Cabinet to direct military operations."[10] This statement hints at a struggle that would go far deeper than a squabble over strategic policy in the Middle East; Robertson and Lloyd George had begun a battle for control of the war effort, a battle that would have profound influence on the men of the EEF.

Robertson staved off Lloyd George's "hankering" for troops from France to support the EEF by emphasizing Britain's shortage of shipping.[11] Three days after sending the demand for "maximum effort," Robertson sent off a message to Murray that instructed him that "notwithstanding the instructions recently sent to you" Murray's defensive responsibilities had not changed and that the reinforcements he would need for the advance were probably not coming.[12] At this point Murray began to be confused, not understanding that the messages from Whitehall had two contradictory sources: Lloyd George and Robertson.[13] He would complain in an official dispatch several months later that "the policy of the War Office, as communicated to me in instructions from the War Office, underwent several changes between the end of 1916 and April, 1917."[14] The EEF had become the rope in a political tug-of-war for control of grand strategy, and the soldiers in the theater would be the ones to feel the strain.

By the time a compromise emerged in London, it was too late for the men of the EEF. Robertson and Lloyd George agreed in January that while the concept of the invasion of Palestine would continue, it could wait until the autumn; Murray's new instructions told him more clearly to settle back into his defensive role.[15] Unfortunately, two days before he received this notice, Murray had already pushed past the defensive line at El Arish and captured the Palestinian town of Rafah, which was not a naturally defensible town.[16] The EEF was in an awkward position. He could abandon Rafah and retreat to El Arish, where a substantial *wadi* (a dry gully that filled with water in the rainy season, in this case occasionally becoming the "River of Egypt" mentioned in the Bible in connection to King David) formed a natural defense line. He believed this retreat "would have a deplorable effect" among Britain's allies in the area. Otherwise, he had to push on to the stronger position at the much larger Wadi Ghuzze gorge just south of Gaza.[17]

Preferring to move forward, and believing that the advance to Gaza would be easy, Murray thus had made the fateful choice to move further into Palestine rather than fall back on his natural defensive line at El Arish.[18] The continuing Turkish withdrawal from village after village inside Palestine reinforced Murray's idea that he would take the country with little resistance. The success whetted his appetite for capturing the fleeing Turkish Army and the city of Gaza, an effort he now considered "very important" and urgent.[19] Even Robertson seemed to catch some of Murray's enthusiasm, assuring the general that the EEF would lose no more troops to other theaters and hoping he would "pull off big things."[20] With this encouragement, the EEF crossed and secured the imposing Wadi Ghuzze gorge, and advanced on Gaza.

The Turks, however, shocked the British and repulsed them at the very doorsteps of the city in the First Battle of Gaza on 26 March 1917. The outcome was a near-run thing—several EEF units even fought through the streets of the city of Gaza before the order to retreat reached them—but it was clearly a defeat for the British, the first they had suffered in a very long time. In his diary, Murray summarized the result as "disappointing."[21]

Then Murray made an enormous mistake, perhaps unforgivable to the men of the EEF. In his report, he stretched the truth to its breaking point and called the failed attack a "[m]ost successful operation just falling short of complete disaster for the enemy."[22] His reasoning was that, from a defensive strategic standpoint (his guiding principle in the Sinai and of some of his orders that spring), the EEF had done well.[23]

The giant *wadi* they had captured was a perfect natural line of defense; once Murray set up trenches and redoubts there, the canal would be safe from attack for the rest of the war.

Of course, the strategic direction of the campaign had changed to an offensive one, and Murray's inflated reports were ill-fated. Robertson, who had read between the lines of Murray's declaration of victory, scolded him for writing too glowing a report about the battle; he knew what an energizing effect the news would have on the Easterners.[24] As the CIGS feared, London caught the spirit of the advance. Newspaper headlines trumpeted victory, the king sent letters of congratulations to the troops and there were cheers when Andrew Bonar Law read Murray's telegram in the House of Commons.[25] The War Office ordered Murray to break the Turkish line and move deeper into Palestine, an effort they said would justify "severe casualties" and one that they wanted to see made very quickly.[26]

Murray's enthusiasm and exaggeration had maneuvered his men into an impossible position, that of attacking an entrenched and determined enemy with, by his own estimates, sufficient supplies and manpower only for setting up a defensive cordon. On the orders of the War Office, he had just sent away his best division to serve in France and had no prospect of seeing the two to three divisions that both he and Whitehall agreed he would need for success.[27]

Unwilling to admit his mistake and stinging from Robertson's "reproach," Murray followed his orders and quickly pressed another attack on Gaza, a frontal assault on a strongly held set of defenses.[28] The Second Battle of Gaza was an unmitigated disaster for Murray and the EEF. After only three days of bloody and useless assaults along a broad front, from April 17 to 19, 1917, Murray abandoned the attacks and settled his men into a static trench warfare that would last for half a year. Historian Matthew Hughes may be too unkind when he suggests that Murray's actions in ordering this assault were "criminal," but the EEF commander certainly piled one colossal mistake upon another, and his soldiers paid the price.[29]

Ultimately, the political momentum from the Sinai Campaign, fleeting and changeable in the early days of 1917, drove the EEF past their original goal and forward into southern Palestine, and the soldiers of the EEF saw the most turbulent and disappointing times yet in their war. The invasion of southern Palestine began in exhilaration, with heady victories and an end to the desert, but ended in demoralization, bloody repulse, and the beginning of a stagnant trench war.

Combat

The most dramatic change that British soldiers faced under their new offensive orders was a shift in their interaction with the enemy. They moved into southern Palestine expecting it to be like the Sinai: sudden, mobile conflicts in the open, against a foe that often seemed willing to retreat. Indeed, this was still the experience at border towns (though Turkish resistance there was already stiffening), but at the city of Gaza everything changed. There, the EEF soldiers found the Turks entrenched and determined, and the war degenerated, as in France, to a trench war with frontal assaults across a broad no-man's-land.

The great shock of this change did not hit the soldiers at first. In fact, they did not seem to notice a change in strategic direction at all. The Palestinian town of Rafah fell to the same desert mobile tactics that they had used for months: quick cavalry envelopment, charges in the open without trenchworks. Even here, though, the EEF began to feel a breath of change as the Turks held their entrenched positions more doggedly and fought "like the fox cornered."[30] As one New Zealander put it, after making several charges across 600–800 yards of open grassland, "The enemy defended the position very stubbornly." After the battle he saw the dead Turks lying three deep in their trenches and marveled at the low British losses.[31]

Despite the increase in Turkish resistance at Rafah, a general mood of overconfidence pervaded the EEF's soldiers. An Australian corporal displayed a typical attitude when he wrote in early March 1917 that

> Poor old Abdul has long since given up molesting us, in fact, ever since that big mistake he made last August [i.e. the Battle of Romani], as from then on the boot has been on the other foot & now their strongholds are about 150 miles from the Canal & our people are still annoying them.[32]

Spirits rode high, and the men expected to sweep the enemy from Gaza in the same way that they had pushed them across the desert.

In mid-March 1917, however, the First Battle of Gaza brought the awareness of a change to every man in the army. Clearly, the men expected that battle to be similar to those that they had fought in the Sinai: they expected to envelop the enemy quickly, charge in the open without trenchworks, and take the city of Gaza quickly. They, like their superiors, had not grasped how inadequate to this new task were their supplies and numbers.

The manner of the defeat caused a wave of discontent among the troops, mostly because it was so nearly a British victory. Most units met their objectives and a few even walked or rode in the streets of the city before the fog of war (and real fog), along with warnings of Turkish reinforcements, convinced the general in direct command to make the controversial (and widely considered to be mistaken) decision to pull back.[33] Historian Yigal Sheffy's insightful comment that the real command blunder in this battle was rooted in unreasonable expectations (based on underestimation of the enemy) and "over-confidence" describes the situation beautifully.[34] His assessment of the leadership's attitude can be extended to the common soldiers, as their reactions to the battle clearly show.

The disillusionment exhibited by nearly every soldier at their first major failure in almost a year reveals how deeply their expectations had been shattered. The English yeomanry soldiers were "bitterly disappointed at our failure," especially after making a "splendid" cavalry charge, like those that had worked in the Sinai.[35] Infantryman John Evans, whose unit, too, had performed well and taken their objective, refused to admit that the men had failed to take the town, but insisted that it was an official "blunder" that called them mistakenly back to their lines; he recalled hearing that his brigadier had wept at the very thought of giving up the ground.[36] Australian Light Horse scout Bostock wrote more philosophically to his parents about the loss: "we have struck something solid at last, and we did not get it all our own way this time."[37] In total, the men experienced "a disappointment scarcely less than that felt at the evacuation of Gallipoli."[38]

In the weeks after the First Battle of Gaza, the EEF transformed itself from a mobile force to an entrenched army. The men went into a flurry of digging in front of the Turkish strongholds at Gaza and several points south and east.

The men began a routine of rotation in and out of the front lines and of patrols into no-man's land that would have seemed familiar to Western Front soldiers. Trooper Bostock wrote that as early as the beginning of April, the EEF soldiers were making night patrols in front of their lines to ambush Turkish patrols, a routine reminiscent of the Western Front.[39] As another echo of France, many who fell in this no-man's land would lie untended for months; a New Zealander recalled six months after the spring battles collecting the bodies caught in the wire and carrying them in chaff sacks to a mass grave 100 yards long.[40] From this time until October, the men of the Palestine Campaign would begin to see a new reality of trench warfare similar in some ways to that of the Western Front.

Even more different from their experience was the Second Battle of Gaza, their first trench-based battle, advancing across no-man's land under concentrated artillery and machine gun fire. It punished the EEF in a way that the force had never experienced, with more than 7000 casualties in a three-day period. Australian Sergeant A. D. Callow summed up the artillery and intense fighting: "It was hell."[41] Another man, for whom this was the last day of the war and the last time he would use his left arm, recalled it as "a terrible hiding" by the Turks.[42] Unlike the short and sharp engagements of the desert skirmishes, fading almost as quickly as they began, one Australian wrote in his diary of a different kind of encounter, for "as the day grew older the fight grew fiercer."[43]

These two battles changed much of what the EEF's soldiers had come to accept as the reality of the war. A glance at Table A.3 in the appendix, showing the casualties in this theater, will reveal that blood now flowed freely from this small force. The number of casualties in March and April 1917 (more than 11,000) more than doubled those of the previous two years combined (around 4800).[44] Pessimism and disillusionment grew among the men in the EEF.

The heavy concentration of enemy fire was a novel experience for the men of the EEF (at least for those who had not been at Gallipoli), who in the Sinai had dealt more with sniping and cavalry charges. They first experienced massed artillery and machine guns in large numbers at the First Battle of Gaza. Private Sims, lying on a hill above the city, expected "every minute to be my last"; the fire was so intense that "if you were to put your hand or head up about two feet from the ground you would have been able to have caught one of the Turkish shells."[45] An Australian watching a far-off Welsh unit advance through the artillery said that after each round of artillery shells "they plodded out of a haze of earth and smoke and into another barrage. . . . Every yard must have seemed death to them." The severity of the attack and the guns "was grand, awe inspiring, but it was terrible!"[46]

In shades of the Western Front, shelling had passed from being a rare occurrence to being a permanent feature of life in Palestine, with guns firing often and without warning even in the quiet times after the First Battle of Gaza.[47] Shelling reached a crescendo in the battle that followed, when the guns sounded like "thunder rolling for miles."[48] It was a fundamental shift in the men's interaction with their enemy, and it infused fear and death into the daily routine in an entirely new way. A New Zealander who returned in late April from a month in hospital, wrote to his father of the dramatic change. The firing, he said, "takes you back to the [Gallipoli] peninsula days & trench fighting."[49]

Turkish snipers were still among the most daunting enemies; trained in the open spaces in the desert, they made the trench-digging work harrowing and dangerous, causing the British officers to don the same uniforms, packs, and rifles as their men. The digging became a night labor, while in the day men crouched in the half-dug trenches.[50]

Even more daunting was the terror from the sky: the Turkish domination of the air. The Turks had more and better planes in the area than the British, and many (some newly arrived) were flown by accomplished German pilots, while General Murray's repeated begging for new planes fell on deaf ears in London.[51] With only five antiaircraft sections in the entire EEF, the men had almost no protection against the enemy planes.[52]

As in the desert, the planes made the men feel exposed and defenseless, though at least they could dig "funk" holes in the barley fields to protect themselves from the attacks, but these did little to curb the fear and helplessness felt by the men on the ground.[53] The Turkish and German planes bombed regularly, sending men scattering from every camp, even sending them scurrying from field hospital beds, wounded and half-dressed.[54] At the Second Battle of Gaza, a plane dropping bombs came so close to the Australians that they "could see the pilot quite distinctly," while their return fire "had no effect at all."[55] As men advanced toward the Turkish trenches, the planes strafed them mercilessly and spotted for the artillery.[56] One Australian, around whom the bombs were "exploding with earth-shaking crashes," noted that the men on the ground never saw British planes attempt to protect them and wondered if there were any British planes left.[57]

Australian pilot Captain Richard Williams (later Air Marshal, often referred to as the father of the Royal Australian Air Force) explained that this perception was essentially correct. He recalled that he had never fought an aerial duel in this period of the war in Palestine, because the British planes could not match those of the "Hun" who "could make and break contact any time he wished." Most of the German pilots, in his opinion, had not been very good and thus did not penetrate as far as they might have over the British lines, but the men in British planes could not afford to fight them. The British had to restrict themselves to reconnaissance and, if attacked, fight their enemies off and go back to reconnaissance.[58] The virtual abandonment of the men to the mercy of the enemy planes explains their despondency, even when they were in rest areas, miles from the front.

As a result of the new direction of the war, men's roles underwent disorienting changes. Many mounted men, like the mounted infantry

of the Australian Light Horse, saw a shift in their role, from being the shock troops at the front of desert assaults to acting as scouts and as support for the main force of infantry. After the First Battle of Gaza, where one New Zealander's dominant memory was of "seeing them coming across the flat.—Riderless horses, and empty limbers," the mounted troops had to adjust to their less prominent role in trench warfare.[59] Infantrymen who had seen little action since the Battle of Romani the previous August saw more than they wanted in the two battles for Gaza; they became, as on the Western Front, the front-line soldiers.

With the increase in intensity of the conflict came the British introduction of gas at the Second Battle of Gaza.[60] For the first time, in preparation for that battle, EEF soldiers received gas helmets. The gas training they also endured was an unwelcome sign of their changing relationship with their enemy. As one stretcher bearer put it, the "[g]eneral feeling" of the soldiers opposed the use of gas against the Turks.[61]

The attitude of the men of the EEF swung from their previous confidence and high spirits to disillusionment about the war and their part in it. An English stretcher-bearer, Douglas Calcutt, arriving at the front for the first time in April 1917, found his new comrades grumbling and swearing. He quickly discovered why as he carried his first wounded men: "painful cases" that made him "more anti-war than ever."[62]

Physical conditions

The decision to invade Palestine brought to the men two major changes in their physical environment: a shift in terrain and a widening of the distance between the EEF and Egypt. The former change, the change from sand to dirt, pleased the men, at least at first. Their minds began to change, though, when they saw the defenses the Turks could build in that dirt and when they began to feel the strain of distance from Egypt.

The Sinai changes near the Palestine border from sandy wasteland to solid ground, generally flat with a few hills, but occasionally craggy and cut with deep gorges. Shifting sands still dominated some areas, especially close to the sea, but most of the ground was hard.

The fields and hills of Palestine were covered with vegetation, mostly grass and cacti, which thrilled and energized the men of the EEF at first sight. At his first sight of grass near the border, Welsh Private John Evans recalled, "How refreshing it looked I cannot bring forth words to express' after 'so long without seeing a bit of green anywhere."[63]

On reaching the edge of the green land, an Australian noted that "some of the chaps that did not generally notice anything, stood and gazed at it and drank all the beauty of nature in and said 'thank God we have got over the sand and hope we never see any more of it.'"[64]

Like these men, many noticed the beautiful soil in contrast to the sand.[65] The horses, especially, found the barley and grass a refreshing change from sand (see Figure 3.1), and their riders were hard pressed to keep the horses from ruining all of the crops of the region (though many did not try).[66]

The wildflowers had a similarly cheering effect, as spring made the land around Gaza bloom. New Zealander Harold Judge commented in his diary that the gullies he crossed were "ablaze" with "poppies of all hues."[67] "All ranks," proclaimed another man, "were intoxicated with delight."[68] An Australian unit's scouts alarmed everyone with shouts as they entered Palestine; they had caught sight of the fields of red flowers marking "the end of the everlasting desert!"[69]

The beauties of the land became more ambiguous to the men as they began to see them in the context of the more deadly war and began to relate the advantages of the new terrain to their disillusionment about the death and failures around them. For example, an English soldier advancing in no-man's land in the middle of the First Battle of Gaza was struck by beauty of the wildflowers "in the midst of shells, shrapnel & bullets."

Figure 3.1 The day of the crossing into Palestine, a great relief to men and horses, who had campaigned for more than a year without seeing grass, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, neg. no. 115478

"You may bet," he added, "I never stopped to pick them . . . when chaps were getting shot down on each side."[70] Even at that moment, he saw the irony of beauty amid death, and illustrated perfectly the transition from heady enthusiasm to disillusionment.

The widespread cactus hedges held similar irony (see Figure 3.2). They formed part of the beauty of the green hills, but in the context of war, they turned deadly and disheartening. Private Calcutt, who had clearly never had experience with cacti, tried to eat the cactus's bulbous fruit, the prickly pear; later he found to his "great surprise" he was "[c]overed all over with prickles."[71] Men found them a "terrific obstacle," such an impediment in the battlefield that the fields in front of Gaza had nicknames on trench maps like "the Labyrinth" and "the Maze."[72] The men had to hack their way through the thick plants with bayonets, often to discover Turkish soldiers firing at them "point-blank" as they passed through.[73] The barrier, though, was only visual; bullets from unseen enemies whistled easily through the broad leaves of the cacti. The green plants that had been such a beautiful sight thus became objects of fear and frustration.

Figure 3.2 Frank Hurley, Guns of the British Honorable Artillery Company in front of typical cactus hedges near Belah, Palestine (Crown Copyright); Australian War Memorial, B01471

The men began to enjoy the comforts of the solid ground again in a multitude of ways. Some units set up mess tents and tables rather than eating out on the sand.[74] They were also glad that the ground was stiff enough for digging holes and trenches for protection from ground and air.[75] The nakedness that they described in the conflict on the desert dunes was at least partly solved by this welcome change of landscape.

This benefit of the hard ground, though, had its darker side, as the Australians discovered at the Battle of Rafah; one of the men who had written so glowingly about the beauty of green grass changed his mind when it prevented him from digging a hole on a machine-gun-swept slope. He and his comrades had to cut through the turf with their sheath knives before they could begin to hollow out any protection from air that was "thick with bullets."[76] A dispatch runner, called to carry a message, gave up his work of scratching a shallow hole and moments later saw the man who replaced him shot dead in his ineffective trench.[77] The ground that afforded them protection and the grass that had offered such cheer squelched the men's enthusiasm by putting up barriers to their safety.

Another factor that created the initial burst of enthusiasm for the movement into Palestine was its religious connotation for many of the men. New Zealander Edwin McKay recalled his commanding officer stopping his unit at the boundary post; he "bared his head and offered thanks to God that he had been spared to see and tread upon the sacred soil of the Holy Land."[78] Soldiers searched their Bibles for the names of the outposts where they marched each day.[79] Chaplains converted their sermons to include discussions of the areas around the army, giving their talks titles like "The Israelite and the enemy lines," capturing the attention of many of the men.[80] As literary scholar Eitan Bar-Yosef has suggested, the places and stories were so familiar to the rank and file British soldiers, that their perceptions of the entire campaign were colored by what Bar-Yosef calls a kind of religious "sentimentalism" (and not, significantly, by the common "Orientalist" "modern crusade" perceptions that so many of the upper-class officers reveal).[81] As historian James Kitchen has pointed out, these reactions were not universal, considering the non-Christians in the ranks, as well as those who held "anti-religious" views.[82] Still, for many, this sentimental attachment to the Biblical lands increased the excitement of the first steps into Palestine.

When the EEF moved into Palestine, they had less sand,[83] but they continued in many ways to face the wrath of the desert's climate. The winter rains and a powerful west wind brought the sands of the desert to them in "clouds."[84] The harsh cold of the winter desert nights,

which could be as daunting as the desert's heat, descended on the men through the winter and well into the spring. General Murray worried about sending the men forward "without other shelter than their blankets" (as they had lived since August 1916).[85] His worries were well founded, as Trooper Bostock discovered on his night patrol in no-man's land, where he "nearly froze" as he lay flat in a barley field.[86] Australian Selwyn Metcalfe wrote his brother that the cold during outpost duty "almost equalled the nights on the [Gallipoli] peninsular which is saying a lot—a freezing wind thunder lightning & rain all night, & we simply had to sit & shiver all night." He hoped his brother could read his handwriting, for he said "my hands are almost too cold to hold the pen."[87]

The sandstorms and other extreme weather hampered the men's military efforts and even endangered their lives. During a sandstorm, for example, men on the ground could not spot enemy planes to fire at them and the enemy could "have it all their own way."[88] More importantly, the heavy fog on the morning of the First Battle of Gaza was widely cited as a major factor in the British loss.[89]

The vermin that had plagued the men in the Sinai only grew worse in Southern Palestine. The "filth & carrion" of the battlefield at Gaza made the flies multiply and become more dangerous.[90] English Lieutenant Herbert Best said that he felt no "lack of usual comforts but the presence of unusual discomforts—vermin," especially flies and fleas.[91] A New Zealander, entering a native hut, was so overpowered by fleas that he had to strip his clothes off twice and shake them out to get relief.[92]

The sandy desert was behind them, but the problem of water continued. Since the EEF moved quickly ahead of their water and rail lines and then fell short of taking the Turkish supplies, the attack on Southern Palestine began very dry and lean. Water still had to travel by camel from the pipehead that was still under construction miles behind the advance. At the First Battle of Gaza, one of the driest moments of the campaign, water was so "extremely scarce" that English yeomanry soldiers dug in the ground searching for more. It was, as one recalled, their "only hope."[93] The day before that battle, two New Zealanders had a serious discussion over whether to try to boil their tiny supply of water for tea at breakfast. While it was on the fire, one of the men knocked it over. The other, Harold Judge, wrote that "this may not sound like much of a calamity to anyone reading this diary who has never been thirsty (that is to say really suffered from thirst as most of us have out here more than once & more than

twice) but it was a serious enough matter for us."[94] To these men, a small spill meant a long day's suffering.

The trench diggers in April 1917 worked in the heat with so little water that some passed out. Thomas Minshall of the King's Shropshire Infantry saw "fine big strong men crying like little children for water."[95] Long waits at the few and distant water troughs started "[a]ll the boys growling."[96]

Another problem of the move into Palestine was that recreation and comforts became scarcer all the time; boredom, a staple of the Great War, reached its pinnacle in this theater in 1917. The Sinai separated the frontline soldiers from large towns, and they had no access (as their counterparts in most other parts of the war had) to shops or entertainment. Quick movement even meant that men's unnecessary personal articles, which might have offered comfort or entertainment, rode the rails back to Egypt to be stacked in warehouses (some to be stolen and others to remain unrecovered until war's end[97]). Even the ubiquitous camp followers who provide services to soldiers in almost every army could not brave the harsh conditions of the advance and were almost nonexistent (with the exception of those depicted sarcastically in the soldier's sketch in Figure 3.3).

Supplies came only fitfully; day after day some men's diaries repeat phrases like "Rations short," "Tucker short," and "Rations v[ery] short."[98] This matches the Australian trooper's comment mentioned earlier: that every man in the EEF would "give worlds" to be in "France, where at least a chap can get his regular ration while he's kicking."[99] To him, the greater chance of death on the Western Front was more appealing than the short and irregular supplies in Palestine.

Firewood was a chronic problem, too. Men scrounged to find local wood to heat their stews and to "boil up" their tea. Judge and three comrades found a cache of wood in a Bedouin village; unfortunately for the locals, it was a pair of heavy doors that the New Zealanders pulled down, chopped up, and carried away, "much to the amusement of some Tommies & to the anger of the Bedouins."[100]

Leave to Egypt became scarcer for the common soldier that spring, as the army was already stretched to its limit by the orders to move into Palestine. Officers tried to arrange recreation that suited the desert, like soccer and rugby, swimming in the Mediterranean, or horse races.[101] The Desert Column (the new unit that included most of the mounted men of the EEF), for example, set up races less than a week before the First Battle of Gaza, when little leave could be offered; they raced on the recently cleared battlefield at Rafah, using the Turkish earthen trenchworks as a "grand stand."[102] Likewise, some men of the Highland

Figure 3.3 Otho Hewett, "Camp Followers." A sarcastic reference to the army's lack of services in the Sinai and Southern Palestine. This sketch comes from one of the most popular 'trench journals', written and edited by EEF soldiers, but officially sponsored. 15 June 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, US Library of Congress

Light Infantry spent a day off in March with a game of soccer, followed by a "concert" consisting of eight men in a small dugout listening "with rapture" to a borrowed gramophone.[103] Selwyn Metcalfe and his Australian Light Horse comrades played a great many games of football, against Welshmen, New Zealanders, and other Australians. They even enjoyed football and swimming together as they played football on a Mediterranean beach, close enough "to practically roll off" into the water afterwards.[104]

Many idle men discovered a new interest in archaeology (or treasure hunting) and spent their spare time probing the ruined towns and crusader castles on the edges of Palestine. Bronze coins and bits of glass and mosaic staved off boredom: one man wrote in his diary that he had spent three hours cleaning an ancient coin that he had found.[105] The men did not have to look far to find artifacts, either, as their trench-digging often

uncovered treasures, like the field of Greek-lettered pottery which the Australians unearthed in April 1917 or the old tomb the New Zealanders found while digging a cesspit in March.[106]

There was even a tragic story (tragic, at least, to a historian) about soldiers camped by the beach near Rafah who were spending their time (both soldiers and officers) digging "with sticks and shovels" for coins and artifacts. Several men found an ancient mosaic, and a group of men, led by two chaplains, cleared it off to find multicolored designs and Greek letters around a threshold. They ended their work at dusk, but when they returned the next morning, some treasure hunters had ripped up this floor searching for treasure that might be beneath it, not realizing that the mosaic itself was the treasure.[107] Other finds were handled more carefully, and one magnificent mosaic, found at Shellal, now graces a wall at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, one of the jewels of their impressive collections.

Educated soldiers, especially chaplains, answered questions and led searches for new discoveries. Others, like Londoner Leo Holman, collected glass and coins from some old ruins because they were pretty. He tried in vain to find anyone who could tell him "what sort of people they were who inhabited these ancient places."[108] Boredom sent men who had no particular interest or background in archaeology into these digs.

The great distances to the army's permanent facilities in Egypt had an even more serious effect on many men, separating them from the British hospitals in Egypt. The farther the army moved, the more dangerous became every wound and illness, as treatment generally was very long in coming.

As in many other places in the war, many wounded men first spent an agonizing time in no-man's land, suffering from heat and thirst before beginning the long journey to Egypt for treatment. At the First Battle of Gaza, for example, Sussex men pinned down by enemy fire had to listen helplessly to "the crying & groaning of our wounded & dying."[109] A wounded Australian in no-man's land in the second battle complained that he did not mind the wound but did "strongly object" to waiting several hours for the firing to let up enough to let him move back to his lines.[110]

Once the men finally did reach safety and first aid, they faced a trying trip westward. New Zealander C. L. Somerville's diary shows that he traveled all night in a sand cart with two bullet wounds and did not have the bullets removed until his second temporary hospital three days later. He did not arrive at the proper hospital in Egypt until nine days after his injury.[111] Another man wrote of his five day trip to Cairo, during which

his leg wound, which "would have been all right" became infected and "pretty dirty-looking."[112] Australian Trooper Clive Newman had his elbow shattered by a bullet. He described the long journey from first aid at a field dressing station (see Figure 3.4), then to a casualty clearing station, then by train to a desert hospital, where he begged the doctors not to amputate his arm in their haste, and finally to the Australian General Hospital in Abbassia, Egypt, where almost two months after his wound he finally received an operation to save his arm.[113]

Newman was more fortunate than many, for whom that long trip was fatal. After one of the Gaza battles, an Australian nurse, Alice Williams in Alexandria, recalled with pity receiving trainloads of Welshmen "covered in dust, bearded and lousy," many of whom died before receiving treatment.[114] The distance from the front to proper medical care had doomed these men and many others, an unexpected consequence of the press forward into Palestine.

Clearly, the shift onto the hard ground of Palestine caused as many problems as it solved for the men. Water, food, supplies, and recreation were as scarce as they had been in the desert, because they had pushed

Figure 3.4 "Advanced Field Ambulance Dressing Station on the Gaza Front." It appears that the men being treated here may be suffering from the ubiquitous "septic sores" that had plagued men from the beginning of the campaign. Official British pictures of the First World War, 1914–18 (Crown Copyright), US Library of Congress, Lot 7882-1, #87

so far beyond the infrastructure of the railway and pipeline. Lice and flies and boredom assaulted with renewed fervor, and the weather, both hot and cold, remained one of the chief enemies. Though the move forward into Palestine did not dramatically worsen their living conditions at first, it certainly did not improve them either.

Conclusion

The decision to move forward into Palestine, made amid debate in London and too hastily and eagerly acted upon by General Murray, put the men of the EEF through an entire cycle of the wheel of fortune. An initial exuberance in January and February 1917, brought on by the change of scenery and the conveniences of the new terrain, came crashing down in March and April. The crash came as a result of the bitter disappointment at the First Battle of Gaza, blamed by the rank and file on the higher command (though few, if any, mentioned Murray by name at the time), and as a result of the disillusionment of a new style of combat, in which the Turks had the advantage both in no-man's land and in the air. These despondent feelings were fueled by the difficulties of distance and the new terrain, and resulted in the poor attitudes and morale that have been so often noted in Summer 1917.

Private MacDonald, the soldier-poet whose lines appear at the beginning of this chapter, foresaw that Lloyd George's decision to push forward would bring a distinct change to the lives of the men. He did not foresee, however, how bloody and difficult that change would be for his comrades. He did not see how their initially high spirits would plummet amid the new realities of artillery, bombs, and trenches.

Though MacDonald did not foresee this darker side of his predictions, he lived just long enough to see it come about. He was wounded in the Second Battle of Gaza and evacuated to a hospital in Egypt, where he died. His triumphant poem was published posthumously.

4
The Gaza Trenches

At Gaza's heights the Light Horse dashed,
Bold Cameliers charged in vain;
The Welsh were slaughtered, Scots were smashed;
In the Wadi blood flowed like rain.
Then Tim heard an officer—who at Mons
Had stemmed the Hun's advance—
Exclaim, 'mid the roar of the murdering guns,
"I wish I was back in France."

"Trooper Bluegum" [Oliver Hogue]
"Lucky Tim"[1]

As this poem suggests, the Second Battle of Gaza and the days that followed were some of the darkest of the war for the men of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. In many ways trench lines recreated the underground life that was common in other theaters of the Great War. Artillery barrages, sniper duels, and raids became a matter of routine, just as they were in France and had been in Gallipoli, though often with a distinctly Palestinian air.

The scarcity that had characterized the previous year in the Sinai and Southern Palestine still haunted the men of the EEF as they began their stint in the trenches, and their morale remained at its lowest ebb. This situation changed suddenly, however, in the middle of the summer of 1917.

General Sir Edmund Allenby, who arrived at this critical moment, has usually been credited with single-handedly salvaging the broken morale of the EEF with his personality and policies. Matthew Hughes, for example, lays the entire credit for this change and the success of the army in 1917 and 1918 squarely at the feet of this one man, seeing this as proof of the "importance of personalities in making history."[2]

There is certainly a good deal of truth in this standard interpretation, though the answer needs to take more into consideration than a single man's abilities. Allenby's arrival and his new ideas and energy did have a powerful impact on the troops. More important, however, to the life of the daily soldier and to his improved morale, were the supplies and materiel that arrived in abundance at the same time as Allenby, supplies that had little to do with the general's policies but everything to do with compromise politics in London.

Political changes in London in spring 1917 elevated the war in Palestine to a position of higher importance, and the War Cabinet and Whitehall became committed to an advance in the theater. Because of this new commitment, the floodgates opened and supplies and reinforcements arrived in large quantities, and the lives of the men of the EEF changed utterly once again. In addition, the timeframe set by political agreement in London meant that the brutal trench warfare that the EEF had tasted in April 1917 would dominate their lives for half a year. It also meant that they would enjoy the problems and advantages of a static, entrenched front for the first time since crossing the Suez Canal.

Politics and military movements

The Second Battle of Gaza soured the Cabinet's enthusiasm for the immediate capture of Jerusalem. The battle also unleashed a firestorm of criticism on General Sir Archibald Murray, criticism which continued for decades.[3] The War Cabinet immediately began searching for a replacement, and, fearing that Murray would continue to follow orders and press the attack, they cancelled their instructions for the EEF to drive toward Jerusalem.[4] They sent the soldiers in Palestine into a period of waiting, ensconced in trenches facing a determined Turkish enemy.

The battle between Easterners and Westerners reached a high pitch during the discussions about the future of the EEF in 1917. The Cabinet were clearly stunned by the useless losses in the theater, but Lloyd George still refused to surrender his favorite project. The premier was in a difficult position in this struggle, because not only had the Gaza battles hurt his Easterner cause, but he was dealing with failures in France, as well.[5]

Though Lloyd George began backing down from his ventures in another unpopular "sideshow" in the Balkans,[6] he was inspired more than ever to continue the Palestine Campaign. Even in the premier's weakened state, the War Cabinet was receptive to his ideas; far away,

in Petrograd, seemingly a different world from Palestine, the Russian Revolution shook the foundations of a key ally, and Russia's military strength began to crumble. The Cabinet feared that Ottoman armies that had been fighting against the Russians in the Caucasus might soon be free to flood into the Middle East. These concerns made the issue of Palestine, in politician Leopold Amery's words, "one of the most vital for the whole of the British Empire."[7] Even Robertson himself wrote in a secret report to the War Cabinet his worry that the Russians had caused "an entire change in the situation" and had left "the Turks free to send large reinforcements" southward.[8] Despite the failures at Gaza, therefore, success in Palestine remained critical in the minds of both Easterners and Westerners.

So the Easterners and Westerners struck a bargain: push Palestine and cripple Salonika. Lloyd George backed down from his Balkans project and put off any ideas of an attack in Palestine until the autumn. Robertson accepted the basic concept of the offensive campaign in Palestine, as long as most of the necessary troops would come from Salonika, not from France.[9] In a strange twist of fate, the fallout from failures in France and Palestine fell on the Salonika expedition, while Palestine grew steadily in importance.

After a great deal of discussion, the War Cabinet settled on General Sir Edmund Allenby to replace the hapless Murray.[10] Allenby was a man with a mixed record at that point in the Great War, having recently failed to exploit a breakthrough at the Battle of Arras on the Western Front.[11] Whether Allenby possessed the skills of a "great captain," as is often suggested, he did possess fortunate timing in this case. He held the rare and enviable position of the general who has the firm commitments of a willing political leadership. Lloyd George and the War Cabinet were ready to offer him any support within reason. The prime minister promised Allenby in Robertson's presence that the premier himself would ensure the EEF's supply, saying "If you do not ask it will be your fault. If you ask and do not get what you need it will be ours." He then gave Allenby the famous charge to "take Jerusalem before Christmas."[12] Robertson, though he hated the idea of such a guarantee, followed Lloyd George's prescription and prepared to fill Allenby's requests.

The level of commitment from both the politicians and Whitehall can be seen in the allocation of shipping. As Robertson had pointed out to the War Cabinet, the availability of transport ships was one of the main hurdles that had hampered the EEF's supply to this point, and Great Britain herself hovered at a crisis point in shipping in

1917.[13] The Mediterranean had become a killing zone for German and Austrian submarines. Submarine aces like Austrian Captain Georg von Trapp intensified the shortages that politics already had decreed for the EEF. In the months of April and May 1917 alone, no fewer than eight transport ships bringing supplies and men to Egypt had been sunk, but the War Office ordered five more to ferry men and weapons from Salonika.[14] This was a clear sign of the priority given to the Palestine Campaign, a priority that would change the lives of the men in the trenches.

As Allenby arrived in Egypt to take his command in June 1917, hosts of men and masses of materiel arrived with him. The 60th (London) Division, Territorials who had been serving in Salonika, arrived in June. The 10th (Irish) Division followed several months later.[15] By the end of the year, the force in the Mediterranean, Egypt, and Palestine would number over a quarter of a million men, about 100,000 men more than during the first two Battles of Gaza in the spring.[16]

The EEF also received many of the supplies and materials for which Murray had begged and scrounged in vain, including three squadrons of airplanes of faster and newer designs, along with new artillery and motor transport. "War materials of all kinds poured into the area," one officer recalled.[17] A soldier remembered his shock at seeing supplies arrive in "a camel train that seemed to stretch to the horizon," as "[a]mmunition dumps, ration dumps, fodder dumps sprang up overnight" (see Figure 4.1).[18] By November, the numbers of lorries and of antiaircraft guns had doubled.[19] New artillery was accompanied by the EEF's first sound-ranging companies for artillery sighting, which arrived in August.[20] Allenby's needs were filled so quickly and completely that he wrote a thank you note to Robertson in July "for the way in which you are meeting my demands; and I am glad that you recognize the importance of my being able to take offensive action, if necessary, in September."[21]

The change is illustrated especially well in regard to the supply of aircraft. By the Second Battle of Gaza, Murray had felt such an "urgent need" for more airplanes to protect his offensive that he had even attempted to recall an Australian Flying Corps flight that had been loaned to the Sherifan rebels in Arabia.[22] This request, carrying more than a whiff of desperation, was cancelled after Allenby's arrival.[23] He did not need them. The shortage in airplanes, as in many other materials, had vanished.

Allenby did not, however, receive quite everything he requested, as Lloyd George had promised; for soon after his arrival, he wired a request

Figure 4.1 Frank Hurley, Supplies prepared for transport to the front in early 1918 (Crown Copyright), Australian National Library, nla.pic-an23478272

for an astronomical number of reinforcements—13 additional divisions of infantry—but the War Cabinet balked.[24] To be fair to General Allenby, though, overestimation of one's needs, even intentionally, is certainly not an unusual tactic among military commanders (or indeed among administrators of any kind). If Allenby, having been so fortunate in the filling of his requests thus far, squeezed the golden goose too tightly, it is certainly difficult to blame him. It is clear, however, that Allenby was already receiving everything that he genuinely considered essential for pursuing an invasion of Palestine, because after the rejection of his inflated requests, he offered little complaint and immediately proceeded with his plans for the advance.

Throughout the summer of 1917, the EEF held its trenchlines and prepared for the assault to come in the autumn. Allenby reorganized his staff and his army, grouping the mounted men from England, Australia, New Zealand, and India into a single corps and his hugely reinforced infantry in two other corps, totaling seven divisions. As the official history noted, the army was now "of considerable size judged by any standard except that of the Great War."[25]

As the time for the attack arrived, at the end of October 1917, much of the force went into motion. The bulk of the cavalry arm (designated the Desert Mounted Corps) and much of the infantry moved away from the seaside city of Gaza and toward Beersheba, far inland to the east. Stretched in many cases far beyond their supply lines, the army poised to strike their tremendous blow against the Turks in the autumn. This realignment was the first step in fulfilling the EEF's orders to take Jerusalem by Christmas. They were preparing to put an end to the soldiers' experience of trenching in Southern Palestine.

In the meantime, however, the enlarged army saw the direct effects of the political decisions about the EEF. The decision to stop the assaults on Gaza for several months caused the development of a stationary, stagnant trench line, while the increase in the priority of the Palestine Campaign caused a host of changes in the size of the army, in supplies, and in weaponry.

Combat

The War Cabinet's decision to halt the movement of the EEF meant that the trench warfare that had begun after the First Battle of Gaza settled quickly into the routines that marked many of the other theaters of the Great War. It was a type of warfare unknown to most of the men who had joined the force in the Sinai, but to those who had served in the Dardanelles or to the many arriving from European fronts it held disturbingly familiar elements. It was so familiar to one Scottish captain that rather than offer a full description of trench life to his mother, he wrote "For further details see letters of July 1915!" In other words, the conditions were identical to those on Gallipoli.[26] By the autumn, New Zealand soldiers sent to the front for the first time were carefully instructed to expect fighting "as severe as . . . the fighting on the West [Front]."[27]

Trenches sprang up in front of the strongly held Turkish positions at Gaza and eastward. The Turkish strongholds ran east to Beersheba while the British lines curved southeast to reach across and along the mighty gorge system they had crossed (see Palestine Map at the beginning of the book). Beyond Beersheba lay open, arid, unfortified country. At first, large stretches of the eastern Turkish line had no fortifications either, their remoteness and ruggedness acting as their only bulwarks until the Turks could rush to create a string of defenses; British trenches and barbed wire at the far southeastern end of the line were intentionally never contiguous but were made up of strong points separated by empty space. The size of no-man's land differed widely, from a few

hundred yards' depth near Gaza to miles of empty space further east; at the far southeastern end, the British positions were some nine miles from the nearest Turkish trench and many more miles from the end of the Turkish line at Beersheba.[28] This empty space would narrow significantly only in the last days of the summer, as British infantry moved into new lines in the area west of Beersheba, closer to the Turks, in preparation for the coming offensive. Throughout this period, though, the men on the right side (the Beersheba side) of the line had a different type of interaction with the enemy, and some, in fact, had to travel many hours to reach the Turkish lines for an attack.

The type of ground varied greatly, with sand in some portions of the line making trench-digging "a heart-breaking job"; as in the Sinai, the sides of the trenches collapsed as quickly as the men could dig them (see Figure 4.2).[29] In other places, the hard and rocky ground made for better trenches but far more difficult digging.

In the sandy areas, even the graves that they dug seemed hopeless. When Graves Registration officers visited the old trenches at Samson's

Figure 4.2 "British Trenches in the Sand Dunes on the Gaza Front." Note how the walls are shored up or "revetted" by sandbags to hold the sand in place. Official British pictures of the First World War, 1914–18 (Crown Copyright), US Library of Congress, Lot 7882-1, #85

Ridge, near Gaza, a year later, they found many of the bodies of the British victims of the battles lying on top of the blowing sand, while in one place half of a makeshift cemetery had vanished under drifts of sand, grave markers and all. The officer in charge predicted that the entire plot would soon be under 40 feet of sand, and he considered the idea of declaring the interments as the equivalent of burials at sea. Finally he had to bow to the gargantuan task of removing 1000 bodies to firmer ground.[30]

Barbed wire barriers, rare in the shifting sands of the Sinai, appeared in the no-man's land of this new battlefield. The Turks, short of the wire, also dug tight rows of holes (4 feet, 6 inches deep) in front of their lines to break any British attack.[31] More daunting than these holes, however, were the cactus hedges that the English soldiers considered "almost as bad as barbed wire" in making the Turkish lines "very formidable."[32]

The daily life of the soldier who moved from the open desert into the trenchlines altered dramatically. In areas around Gaza, where British and enemy trenches lay close together, the entire world of the soldier moved under ground level.

Men who had adjusted to navigation in the open desert now had to learn to move through the labyrinthine curves and angles of the trench network. Trench street signs sprang up along the length of the works, directing men to such places as "Picadilly Circus"[33] and "Salisbury Crags,"[34] whose English names reflected homesickness and an ironic view of this bleak and hostile environment. The stationary no-man's land, too, became familiar to men on patrols, with landmarks like "Burnt Tank Hill," where stood a grim and blackened reminder of the Second Battle of Gaza.[35]

The monotony of trench routine set in, as in the front trenches men "stood to" in the early morning, awaiting dawn and watching for an enemy attack. As on other stagnant fronts, units began to move in and out of the front lines on regular schedules, with spells in the front trench of as much as six weeks to as little as one week.[36] The first move back for the Highland Light Infantry was a great relief to them, as one mile behind the firing line they were able to take their boots off for the first time in three weeks.[37] A New Zealander explained in his diary that the reality of the system was that the men at the front line usually received orders to pack up in a "great hurry," and then they spent long hours waiting for the relieving units to arrive.[38]

Artillery and gunfire, previously a rare and sudden experience in this theater, became a regular feature of life. "I no [*sic*]", wrote an Australian to his brother, "what the experience of being under heavy artillery fire

now is." This man, a veteran of service since August 1914, estimated that 160 guns "of all calibers" were "plastering" his redoubt.[39] An English soldier in a staff billet behind the firing line described how the peaceful Palestine nights were marred by "lightning like [*sic*] flashes in the sky, accompanied by the roar of guns." On such nights, "the rattle of musketry and machine guns" would accompany his "quiet read" and make him think idly of the men on patrol who were braving those bullets.[40] The noise reminded one signaler, fresh off the boat from Australia, of "constant thunder," which he found "very exciting."[41] The "old hands" later reassured him that even the "bravest men . . . feel shakey [*sic*] and nervous, or 'get the wind up'" during "heavy bombardments." "It just sounded," he explained, "as if everything in the world was being turned upside down."[42] Even men of faith found the new type of combat daunting, as in the weeks after the Second Battle of Gaza, eight Roman Catholic chaplains asked for reassignment from the front line to bases in the rear.[43] Putting a brave face on the situation, Captain Townsend reassured his mother that the shelling was "paltry," but he admitted, at the same time, that a shell had just wiped out his dugout.[44]

Even in the relatively lighter action of the eastern portion of the line, the fighting was frequent enough that General Allenby's visit to the front lines was a cause for concern. To ensure his safety during his inspection, Anzac mounted troops attacked in two "stunts" near Beersheba in July to drive the Turks back.[45]

This constant action meant that this part of the war, unlike those that had gone before for the EEF, saw a continual, though relatively light, stream of casualties, the "wastage" that was so common on other fronts. In May, an English stretcher-bearer wrote in his diary that there were so many wounded that everyone in his unit had to lend a hand with them and that his partner on his stretcher was a lieutenant colonel.[46]

Even so, for many men, the main experience of this period of the EEF's war had more to do with trench routines than with fighting, especially if they were posted in quiet parts of the line. A man like English Private Les Moore, a summer arrival from a long stint in Salonika, could even claim that by September he had never yet fired his rifle at an enemy.[47] Oswald Evans, who had recently arrived in the theater, serving with a unit of Londoners, found the routines terrifically boring and eventless. So little happened to break the monotony for him that he longed "for the more strenuous times of France."[48]

The culture of no-man's land in Southern Palestine, however, became somewhat distinct from that created by the soldiers in France. There was little pleasantry between the lines and almost none of the apparent

informal truce behavior that was common on the Western Front and had happened occasionally at Gallipoli.[49]

Rather than cherishing feelings of camaraderie or respect for the enemy, British soldiers in the trenches of 1917 seem charged with paranoia. Worries about spies abounded, with military police issuing orders to challenge every unfamiliar person near the front lines, even those in British uniforms, and to watch for Turkish and German agents in disguise as Arabs.[50] In fear that the few Arab locals might pass information to the Turks, British soldiers cleared many villages, rounding up and removing the tribesmen, a process that had begun in the Sinai but continued in Southern Palestine.[51]

Sniping duels like those in other parts of the war were a commonplace of life in these trenches, and a major contributor to the "wastage" of lives.[52] A battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment, for instance, rotating out of the firing line, were "thankful indeed to God" to have lost only one man to sniping.[53] Official orders finally allowed the men to replace metal buttons and insignia with leather or embroidery substitutes to protect them from snipers; of course, many officers had informally given this order already.[54]

The most direct and bloody confrontations with the enemy came from night patrols probing enemy lines across no-man's land and horse patrols scouting in areas too deserted for trenches. Small groups of British soldiers, loaded down with bombs, dodged sniper bullets and enemy patrols in the darkness between the trenches, usually searching for information or trying to counter similar Turkish patrols.[55] In the darkness, fear and confusion mingled, and men could be shot by either friend or foe at any moment, as one New Zealand unit discovered after a firefight in no-man's land left two men mortally wounded. No one could tell if they had been shot by Turks or by their own comrades, or, indeed, if the Turks had even been there in the darkness at all.[56]

British and Turkish horsemen often patrolled the same areas of the wide emptiness of no-man's land at the eastern end of the line, exchanging gunfire when they happened to meet.[57] The British horsemen staged larger raids, too, to study enemy formations or, at one point, to destroy a Turkish rail line.[58] A New Zealander recalled the patrols as "a bit nerve-racking" and told of a typical incident in which his mounted troop and a similar Turkish troop vied for control of the same low hill in no-man's land near Shellal. The New Zealanders outmaneuvered the Turks and dislodged them from the position but had to give it up at the end of the day to return to their own lines.[59] "We lay ambushes & traps for them every day," another man told his parents, "but they are always too cunning."[60]

Sometimes the cavalry patrols did manage to surprise each other and start running fights that could turn into bloody "hand to hand" conflicts with revolver, lance, and sword.[61] The fighting, and sometimes the artillery shelling, became intense, so much so that these skirmishes became issues of extreme significance to the men fighting them. One Australian officer bitterly complained in his diary about another lieutenant who was absent from a "stunt," marking his absence as evidence of cowardice.[62]

The disconnected nature of some of these fortifications made them as dangerous as an open pit, as an Australian ambulance proved. They made a wrong turn in the dark and pitched camp in the middle of no-man's land, closer to Turkish lines than to the British. They lit a fire to make tea and to prepare to sleep in blissful ignorance. Then they heard a vexed voice from the darkness, telling them to put their fire out. An Australian scout appeared and told them where they were, and the ambulance men rushed out of the danger zone.[63]

For much of the late summer and early autumn, the men trained intensively for the upcoming advance to Jerusalem. Marches, wearying sham battles, and gas drills filled the days of those who were not in the front trenches or patrol areas.[64]

The change in support from London made life in Palestine's trenches less daunting in some ways, with new artillery and reinforcements arriving in large groups to challenge the Turkish hegemony over the line. The EEF had, by the end of the summer, as Matthew Hughes puts it, "a formidable artillery pool."[65] By late October, the guns would be able to deliver what the Official History called the heaviest bombardment "carried out in the course of the war outside the European theaters."[66] Most importantly, as the new airplanes began to arrive, the British gained control of the sky above their own trenches for the first time.

Throughout the summer, the men still felt helpless in the face of enemy planes. Repeated attacks left them "feeling pretty sore about the lack of any effective protection from the bombings," while they remained "proverbial sitting ducks."[67] "By jove," wrote one man to his parents after the enemy bombers had arrived and left with impunity, "these bombs have a tremendous crashing, ripping, tearing sound."[68] Another soldier later explained the fear inspired by these bombing raids by saying that even some men who were courageous against bullets and shells would 'tremble with fear' at the approach of an enemy plane.[69] This fear was a powerful drain on morale, and a dominant feature of life in these trenches, repeated in many diaries and letters.

The men on the ground were well aware of the balance of aerial power, as virtually all dogfights happened within their view during this period, before British pilots were bold enough to venture far into Turkish territory. It was clear to them at the beginning of September that "enemy aeroplanes absolutely rule the air here easily."[70]

In September, however, the tide of the air war changed, and a major source of fear and helplessness for the men on the ground evaporated. During the summer, men in the front lines already had begun to a new degree to witness the effects of antiaircraft guns.[71] Now they saw victories in the air, too, as Allenby's new planes arrived.[72] The first encounters with German and Turkish planes were spectacular successes; as one pilot recalled, a German plane attacked a new Bristol fighter for the first time, and the British plane "turned around and bit him."[73]

Thousands of men witnessed the first British aerial victories, and they had an incredible effect on the spirits of the men who had felt so helpless against the enemy planes.[74] A New Zealand trooper described every twist and turn of one dogfight, noting that the enemy plane lost a wing and "fell like a stone," to the joy of the men on the ground.[75] In September, British planes were engaging the enemy so boldly and successfully that by the end of the month, the British had taken the upper hand in the air war.[76] The demoralization that came with the unchecked air attacks began to subside, and though the Turks and Germans still strafed and bombed the men, they no longer did so with such complete and terrifying impunity.

The harshness of the war in the trenches came as a shock to many of the men of the EEF, with the devastating weapons of modern war, particularly artillery and machine guns, becoming a part of everyday life. The increased danger of this change, however, was tempered by the weaponry and men sent by Whitehall for the coming advance. The momentum of the war above and inside the trenches shifted in favor of the British and lifted the pall of despair from the men, energizing them for the most deadly fights just ahead.

Physical conditions

The breaking of the supremacy of the Turks was not the only factor in the shift of morale in the EEF in mid-1917. The physical conditions in the theater also rapidly improved, offering the soldiers not only better weather but also better food and water and more leisure opportunities.

In 1917, because of the orders of the War Cabinet, the soldiers of the EEF had given up their nomadic life for a stationary one and traded

their sand redoubts for a more standard line of trenches. Many of the problems of the desert, however, had not changed along with the terrain. Most importantly, they were still in an arid region, and water was still scarce.

As the army became more stationary and dug trench lines to face the lines of the Turks, water delivery became somewhat more regular and water problems were reduced as long as the men remained in their lines. There was still only enough water for the most basic needs, but occasionally men had enough to take rare baths. As the water carts were filled from the pipehead, some fortunate men received half a canvas bucket of water for their ablutions.[77] The common technique for bathing in these few pints of water was to hollow out a basin in the sand, line it with a waterproof sheet, and use it as a tiny bathtub.[78] The very fact that baths were possible, however, contrasts with the earlier Sinai Campaign, and though they represented only an incremental change, it certainly was an improvement.

Though the weather was cooler than in the desert, some environmental enemies followed the EEF into Southern Palestine, especially the sandstorms that had been so trying in the Sinai. The storms, though, now brought both sand and a fine, powdery dust from the harder ground. In such a storm in May, New Zealander Harold Judge spent a night of picquet duty with his head in a makeshift tent made of his greatcoat and saddle, and in the morning he had difficulty pulling his blanket from the silt that had buried it.[79]

Even without a storm, the dust became a "chronic" problem, especially when kicked up into clouds by columns of marching men.[80] The chocolate brown dust, "as fine as rouge,"[81] caked on the body, infiltrated everything, and reduced visibility to as low as 50 yards. Some men considered it worse than the desert sand.[82]

The vermin that plagued the men in the deep desert followed them with a vengeance to their new lines. Scottish Captain Townsend considered himself "very lucky" at the end of April, as his unit had just received precious bits of mosquito netting.[83] The stationary camps and trenches also bred flies in great numbers, insects that one English soldier thought showed "Oriental patience" in their persistent attacks.[84] They swarmed in such "unbelievable numbers" that men said it was almost impossible to take a cup of tea or a biscuit with jam without swallowing a few flies.[85] Yet again, these pests multiplied in the carnage of the battlefield, as they did near Shellal, where 12 horses killed by airplanes lay festering for two weeks, allowed by their hard-pressed unit to become "fearsome remains" that poisoned the air and became a haven for flies.[86]

Scorpions, too, were abundant, and the men had a healthy fear of them. An English private, stung on the hand, feared that the sting would be fatal and gladly submitted to having part of his finger "cut & the sting burnt out."[87]

The spring of 1917 was a lean time for the soldier in the trenches of Southern Palestine, but the summer brought the new priority of the theater to the attention of the common soldier. As one New Zealander put it, once Allenby arrived in Palestine, people at home began for the first time to notice the theater: "We were NEWS."[88]

With Allenby's arrival, the entire character and attitude of the EEF changed, a sea-change that is reflected widely in soldiers' accounts. Many have attributed this change to the force of the man's character or at least to his change in tactics. The famous Australian poet, Major A. B. "Banjo" Paterson, for example, from his remount service billet in the Sinai, remarked on how "everything altered in the twinkling of an eye"; useless staff officers in Cairo disappeared, and by "some sort of mass psychology" the troops accepted their new leader with respect and fear. Paterson even saw Allenby as some sort of messiah, calling his arrival his "Second Coming," an allusion to Jesus Christ arriving in Palestine in glory at the end of time.[89] Even the men on the front lines knew that Allenby had cleaned house of the "backsheasch [*sic*] officers."[90] Many soldiers were impressed by his personal visits to the front lines, bringing an infectious energy with him.[91] His arrival was like a new breath of life for the EEF.

Overnight, famine turned to feast. The supplies that had been so unreliable and inadequate began to shower down on the amazed men of this front. Transport became more regular, as rail lines reached the front before Gaza and ran inland to Shellal and other points on the eastern end of the line,[92] and the delivery of food was more reliable. Luxuries, like canteens and recreation tents, became far more plentiful as the stationary army became easier for these auxiliary services to find. Finally, leisure activities and leave, severely curtailed by the push across the desert, again became regular staples of the soldier's life.

Throughout the summer, the EEF's support services began to catch up with the men—most importantly, the train tracks and water pipes. Reinforcements coming up the line did not always trudge through the deep sands of the Sinai, but walked on the completed wire mesh roads across the desert from Egypt.

Rations changed from dismal to abundant because of the increase in supplies. Though he did not understand its origins, one man saw a "notable increase in the quantity and quality of our rations" during the

summer.[93] By October, a signals lieutenant wrote home to Staffordshire of the variety of fruits available, saying "We *do* live well and no mistake."[94] Lieutenant Robert Wilson, whose letters in April speak favorably of his full diet of meat, potatoes, bread, and jam, simply glows with delight over the menu in August, including fruits, beer, whiskey, sardines, tea, and other extravagant items.[95]

The increase in canteens and leisure opportunities that came with a stable, entrenched front altered daily life dramatically. According to Captain John More, the summer of 1917 saw increases in "[s]uch creature comforts as canteens, short leave, tent accommodation."[96] One company of Highland Light Infantry was so excited about the arrival of a canteen that they spent 100 pounds in two days.[97] The men bought supplemental food like tinned fruits, as well as cigarettes and tobacco, though the prices were "so very dear."[98] From time to time there was even a chance to buy beer, doled out in one canteen from latrine buckets into the men's mess tins.[99]

The summer of 1917 also saw a boom in leave time, when thousands of soldiers who had spent little time away from their units during the campaign in the desert were released for leave, both locally and in Egypt. This change stemmed directly from the political decisions to reinforce the EEF and to stop the assault against the Turks until autumn. These decisions meant that greater numbers of soldiers were available to man the trenches and that the men were seeing their first break in offensive action for more than a year. Thus, many soldiers could be spared temporarily from service in the front lines.

Of course, leave to Britain or the Antipodes was almost unheard of, as both destinations would have meant losing soldiers for months at a time. German and Austrian submarines also made the Mediterranean passage to Britain extremely dangerous. A few fortunate men, mostly officers, did get home leave, but their cases were exceptional.[100] This lack of home leave became a bone of contention for many men, like the New Zealand veterans of the "Main Body" who had served since the beginning of the war. These men had expected home leave, but in mid-1917 they were gathered and told that shipping made a trip to New Zealand impossible. One of their countrymen saw this as "the shame of our Government."[101] This situation was unfair to men in Palestine, he argued, for in France, British Empire soldiers had leave in England and lived daily among friendly French people.

Local leave in Southern Palestine, however, was somewhat stark, especially compared with the experiences of the British troops in France and Belgium. There was still no local infrastructure of hotels, bars, or

eateries. Many men seemed especially upset that there were still very few women in the "Eveless Paradise" of Southern Palestine.[102] One man, wounded at Beersheba in late October, was shocked at hearing an English nurse's voice. He had been so long immersed in the man's world of the desert and Palestine trenches that he thought the women "sound[ed] very funny with their little voices."[103]

There were few sights to see and little to do (see Figure 4.3[104]). Even newspaper vendors could not come within miles of the British lines, no closer than El Arish, as native men wandering in those hostile lands were likely to be arrested as spies.[105]

Amusements like music and sports thus remained important for those who could not leave the forward areas. In many cases, these diversions were mandatory, as when the Queen's Westminster Rifles were marched in formation to watch football games and concerts.[106] At one such performance, a so-called Divisional Concert, the men were so unhappy with the order to attend, that some defied the order with shouts of "F[---] the Concert." It was, as one of them put it, not like the Y.M.C.A. entertainment but rather "the Army ordering us to be cheerful by numbers."[107] The men looked forward to the Y.M.C.A. entertainments but revolted against being forced to the same type of function.

Figure 4.3 Oliver Inglis, Australian soldiers playing cards. Gambling was a favorite pastime on the isolated front in Southern Palestine, and, indeed, throughout the war. Some men even went so far as to stage scorpion fights as gambling opportunities. The ubiquitous Australian coin-flip game "two-up" was impossible for disapproving officers to stamp out. (Image courtesy of the State Library of South Australia; SLSA: PRG 844/2-photos of Oliver Inglis, No. 20)

The men felt just as much antipathy when the compulsory function was religious, a so-called "church parade." At one mandatory Anglican service, with the sound of the guns at Gaza rolling in the background, staunch Salvationist William Knott noted that among 500 men in attendance, only about a dozen sang "disinterestedly." The entire service was "a time of absolute hypocrisy," he concluded. He arranged an informal service later that day, which, presumably, was attended voluntarily by some of the same men who had shown no interest in the official service.[108]

The rest camps that the army set up for rotation out of the trenches were little better, isolated and boring, and they received mixed reviews from the men. In the rest camp at El Arish, for example, the soldiers enjoyed the surf but found the food scarce and "disgraceful for a tent camp."[109] Since generous and high quality rations were by then reaching the front lines, the poor food at the rest camps was a resounding disappointment. Another man, who sarcastically called one of the camps "the Palestine Riviera," was willing to overlook the poor rations because they were served on tables and followed by a ragtime band, bathing, and "pyjamas."[110]

Leave to Egypt, on the other hand, was extremely popular, especially to the desirable cities of Cairo and Alexandria. In their diaries and letters that summer soldiers described the pyramids, mosques, and Esbekia Gardens. Soldiers inundated the inexpensive Y.M.C.A. "Anzac" hostel in Cairo in summer 1917, and its 500 rooms could not handle the influx. The organization had to buy another hotel to keep up with demand.[111]

Far away from the front, food and entertainment were in steady supply throughout Egypt, even to greater levels than in torpedo-besieged England. One of Allenby's new soldiers, alighting from the boat in October 1917, gaped at the abundance and variety of food, especially the sugar that he "distinctly tasted" in his tea. Amid all of Egypt's Oriental curiosities, "the most striking change" he discovered was that there was "absolutely no stint of food."[112]

Of course, the surge in taking leaves to Cairo caused a host of problems, including disorder and disease. The city's darker side beckoned many men. Dark whiskey and opium dens, often connected with brothels, flourished in Cairo's back streets. Soldiers could disappear for long periods into these districts; military police in one raid on a group of brothels found nine "absentees" who had vanished into the darker side of Cairo.[113] Already having a bad reputation in 1914 for its seamy underworld, Cairo's sinful hospitality to soldiers on their way to

Gallipoli in 1915 reinforced its ill repute. As one New Zealand chaplain wrote late in 1915, "To deny the existence of unspeakable vice and grossly open immorality in Cairo is unhappily impossible."[114]

Venereal disease cases increased rapidly in the summer of 1917, so much so that the changes in the soldiers' living conditions and leave can be tracked on a chart of venereal hospital admissions. Venereal cases peaked in midsummer 1917 in an Anzac clinic, sloping off dramatically in September and October as the autumn offensive approached and leave became scarce again (see Table A.4 in the appendix).

Official sanctions against the worst parts of Cairo had come down late in 1916, before Allenby's time, placing the infamous "Wassa" District out of bounds for troops on leave or recovering in Cairo hospitals.[115] General Murray, who kept few news clippings from Egyptian newspapers among his personal papers, carefully preserved one that praised his efforts in this area. In the clipping, translated from Arabic, the "General Public" praised Murray for closing the markets a half hour after sunset, for "stamping out . . . immoral houses," and for ruling "certain districts of Cairo" with "the rod of iron." The writer was quick to point out, however, that the job was only partially done and that many disease-ridden areas of vice still flourished untouched.[116]

This last caveat showed itself to be true, as the wave of leave in the summer of 1917 breathed new life into Cairo's red light districts, and the EEF attempted to battle the effects of the brothels and disreputable drinking establishments. Provost officers tried to stop the flow of poor quality alcohol, which was seen to be at the heart of much violence among the men on leave (but these officers also seem to have spent a good deal of their energies on seeing that the men were properly uniformed, which was a constant annoyance to those on leave).[117] Military dispensaries in Cairo and in various rest camps began to offer a "lavage treatment" to men who had been exposed to venereal diseases; no names were taken, but men were given water and ointments to wash "the parts" "after connection."[118]

Chaplains and officers usually relied on sermons, leaflets, and lectures to convince the soldiers to stay away from Egypt's evils. When they went on leave in summer and autumn 1917, New Zealanders received cards that warned them that intercourse with prostitutes would cause them later to have "imbeciles or blind children."[119] The cards also urged them with patriotic arguments to avoid prostitutes or to take advantage of the disinfection facilities.[120] In September 1917, English stretcher-bearer William Knott went to a "lantern lecture" on Egypt. The subject turned out not to be Egyptian sightseeing but rather the low

morality of the country. The chaplain offering the lecture insisted that "a nation can never rise above the standard of it's [*sic*] womanhood," and that the women in the brothels should be channeled into some kind of hard work.[121] Knott, though a deeply religious and moral man, reacted badly to the lecture, thinking that the chaplain's solutions were unreasonable.

The Y.M.C.A., too, waged a campaign against the red light districts in Cairo, providing concerts and entertainment as alternatives and even sending men with leaflets to the brothels to turn soldiers away from them. Among the most popular of the Y.M.C.A. ventures was the Esbekia Gardens Club, offering food, roller skating, and billiards within two blocks of the most notorious hubs of prostitution.[122] The club was a great success, largely because the men found the food "delightful . . . a complete contrast to [their] army meals."[123]

Others joined into the campaign to offer comfort and wholesome diversions to the soldiers on leave, notably New Zealander Ettie Rout, who had set up a soldiers' club in the Sinai in 1916, offering such delicacies as cocoa, fresh fruit, and bread to men at the base in Kantara.[124] Australian Alice Chisholm took up Rout's calling and her club and planted a series of Empire Soldiers Clubs for Anzacs, based around a canteen and restaurant. The guiding spirit in the main club at Kantara (and later at Jerusalem) was the young and blue-eyed Australian Rania MacPhillamy, who was very successful in stocking the club with fresh food (often including fresh meat and sometimes ice cream made on site) and good service and who won the praise and hearts of many servicemen. In September of 1917, their club in Kantara recorded 4500 visits a day.[125]

A more subtle problem caused by the boom in leave time to Egypt was an increase in the men's awareness and resentment of rank and class structures. Officers and other ranks enjoyed sharply different facilities and opportunities in Egypt. For instance, many of the best restaurants and hotels were off limits to the enlisted men, even if they were willing to pay for them. On the other hand, some cheaper establishments (where thefts were common) were off limits to the officers, however penniless, and were reserved only for other ranks, whose social status, it was assumed, better fitted those venues.[126]

A dramatic demonstration of the power of the class divide was the case of a young Australian, Private Arthur Johnson, who, on leave in Cairo, visited his distant cousin, a leading man in Egyptian society and politics. The pair went to an upper-class café, usually off limits to common soldiers. The situation was so uncomfortable for Johnson that

he later said that he was not sure "who was the most embarrassed, the Lords, Ladies, Colonels, etc. or myself."[127]

Train cars were also segregated by rank, a distinction that, throughout the war, caused some ire among the enlisted soldiers. Two accounts from the previous year capture the disparity and disharmony. On a trip in eastern Egypt, an Australian trooper and his comrades were crowded into a "lice-infested" third-class railway car half full of "dirty Arabs."[128] As the Australian soldiers scuffled with the Arabs and munched bully beef, they passed another train with a brilliantly lit dining carriage, officers sitting at the "white tables." The other ranks could not fail to notice and begrudge this "bit of a contrast."[129] A train moving the opposite direction, perhaps the very train these men saw, carried an Australian officer, commissioned only two weeks before, who was shocked at the new luxuries of his rank, having an entire first-class car to himself, where he, unlike his erstwhile comrades, "made [him]self comfortable."[130]

Likewise, an English enlisted soldier in 1918 found the class distinction strange when he and his father, a chaplain and officer, met in Kantara. Though they were traveling together during their leave, each time they boarded a train, they had to split up, the "Tommy" in the third-class car and his father in first class.[131] In both of these cases, regulations that equated military and social rank seemed strange to men in the citizen-soldiery of the EEF. The officers, in these cases, generally from the same social rank and stock as the enlisted men, did not, in the minds of these soldiers, deserve this special treatment.

The increase of leave in Egypt, a result of the changing mission and size of the EEF, at once caused problems, like friction between the ranks and venereal disease, but it nonetheless offered a morale boost to the soldiers. Along with the improvement of rations, this development counterbalanced some of the environmental drawbacks of the area, like the ever-present vermin and dust. The environment of the trenches of Gaza and Beersheba, though it was far from comfortable, was at least stable and stationary, allowing the men more comforts than the deserts of the Sinai or the open plains in early 1917.

Conclusion

The men of the EEF began their trench experience in Southern Palestine in dismal spirits, with the shock of the new and more dangerous underground war adding to the despair of their losses in March and April 1917. Their fortunes and spirits turned sharply, however, in June, at

the same time as Allenby arrived. Rations improved, the scourge from Turkish aircraft lessened, and increased leave allowed them to break the monotony of the desert war. Pessimism gave way to optimism that even the fear and monotony of trench life did not fully quench. These changes had something to do with local leadership changes but everything to do with compromises and commitments far away at the heart of the empire.

5
Mountains of Mourning

In September 1917, Lewis gunner Oswald Evans wrote to his mother in England of the monotony and boredom of the Palestine trenches. "Nothing seems to have happened to help pass the time," he complained, almost wishing he were back in the more active theater in France.[1] This wish, though, appears to have been an idle one, for Evans made no effort to return to France. On the contrary, he tried fruitlessly to have his brother Joe transferred away from the Western Front to join him in the far safer environment of the EEF.[2]

Clearly, Palestine still held a reputation for relative quietness and safety for the men, even after the devastating battles of spring 1917. Yet a decision that had already been made, months before in London, had laid the groundwork for yet another sea change in the fortunes of the men of the EEF. Because of that decision, the last part of 1917 would be the bloodiest and most challenging of their war.

David Lloyd George's challenge to Allenby to take Jerusalem by Christmas offered both London's commitment to the project and a timetable for completing it. This timetable and commitment thrust these soldiers into the bloodiest fighting of the war in Palestine and into a new set of extreme environmental conditions, in the Judean plains and hills in winter.

Politics and military movements

The pressure from London for a victory in the East remained very much on the minds of the leaders of the EEF. Their supplies and reinforcements, received in abundance in the summer, were held in trust for the effort to take Jerusalem.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1917, the War Cabinet encouraged Lloyd George's ambitious plans in the East, as the previous chapter showed, in spite of Robertson's disapproval. The War Cabinet had rallied behind Lloyd George's plan, whether, as historian Matthew Hughes has suggested, because they wanted to control the Levant, especially Syria, after the war or, as Robertson believed, Lloyd George had "hypnotize[d]" them and they were weak in his hands.[3] In fact, the Cabinet were pushing so hard for Allenby to advance rapidly that Robertson's primary concern was no longer trying to stop an offensive in Palestine. That was hopeless: the Cabinet had already given Allenby the goal of reaching the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. Now his main effort became convincing the Cabinet not to press Allenby to advance *north* of the Jaffa-Jerusalem line.[4]

Allenby, for his part, aided Robertson in the latter's attempt to discourage the War Cabinet,[5] but he still seems to have taken the idea of capturing Jerusalem by Christmas to heart. His letters to Robertson reflect his anxious haste. "I want to advance in Palestine, early," he wrote in one letter and "we ought to lose no time" in another.[6] He worried, rightly, about the coming of the rainy season, and believed that any advance had to begin before foul weather intervened. When Allenby moved at the end of October 1917, little time remained before his deadline of Christmas.

The country into which Allenby's EEF advanced had several faces, a low maritime plain in the west and rocky uplands in the east; each was about 30 miles across at its widest point (see the Palestine Map at the beginning of the book).[7] The eastern edge of the mountains was terminated in a great rift that ran down the Jordan River to the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on the planet. Beyond this steep valley lay the narrow Transjordan plain and beyond it the Arabian Desert, a place too inhospitable for armies of any size in 1917. The mountainous spine of Palestine moved northward from Beersheba, past Jerusalem, and then angled westward toward the Mediterranean Sea in the northern part of the region.

The first series of the EEF's battles were direct assaults on entrenched Turkish positions. The attack was a shocking jolt to the Turks, far from Gaza. Rather than attack at the heavily defended trenches near Gaza, a majority of the force moved in the last days of October toward the rocky eastern end of the Turkish line at Beersheba. On 31 October, the British infantry near Beersheba drove the Turks back, a spectacular charge by the Australian Light Horse burst into the town, and the EEF thundered into the city and then on toward the promontory of Tel el Khuweilfeh to its north.[8]

In subsequent days, the army attacked on the western end of the line, northward up the flatter coastal plain, pushing the Turks back in the Third Battle of Gaza. At that point, as Robertson had pessimistically predicted, the Turks fell "slowly back on prepared lines in rear"[9] and forced the EEF to launch another series of frontal assaults on isolated hills, like the one at Sheria in early November. At Sheria, on 6 and 7 November, the formed Turkish lines folded. The Turks left their prepared redoubts and began to fall back more quickly, closely followed by the EEF.[10]

Enthusiastic about the success, the War Cabinet repeated its charge to move forward to a Jaffa-Jerusalem line, pressing Allenby to follow up his victories, despite Robertson's suggestions to the contrary.[11] Robertson, ironically, may have added to Allenby's sense of urgency, as he strongly suggested that because of the latter's success, he would take away much of the EEF to fight in France in the spring.[12]

Allenby did not wait for his infrastructure of water or rail to reach the advancing men. By the time his engineers could bring the British Sinai railroad up to the Palestinian rails of the Turks (where the two railroads ran on two different gauges), nearly a month would pass; the EEF had to press on without it and let the transport rush to catch up.[13] The British pushed forward slowly but steadily throughout the late autumn and winter, fighting a major battle at the Turkish railway crossroads at Junction Station, then taking the coastal city of Jaffa, and finally turning much of the army eastward toward the Judean highlands, pressing several costly but ultimately successful engagements in the mountains around Jerusalem.

Allenby made several critical strategic mistakes, identified by Matthew Hughes, that slowed the advance. Still the EEF's progress, at least in terms of most of the actions of the Great War, was rapid, reaching central Palestine in a matter of weeks.[14]

Allenby doggedly pushed his men forward, still feeling the pressure to move quickly, as reflected in letters to his wife, where he complained that in the Palestine terrain and weather "units don't march with the rapidity which my impatience would desire."[15] This hurried movement would plunge his soldiers into a different style of warfare than they had known before.

The Holy City fell in early December, right on its political schedule, and Allenby's triumphal entry on the 11th became one of the vivid icons of the Middle Eastern war, second only to the image of T. E. Lawrence on his camel. Lloyd George saw this moment as a vindication of his ideas, and the Easterners in London reveled in Allenby's success, just at the moment when the Westerners were smarting from defeat at Cambrai on the Western Front.

On the day that Allenby made his celebrated entry into Jerusalem, Lloyd George began a fresh attack on General Robertson. The prime minister, realizing that Robertson wanted to use this moment of success to shut down the Palestine Campaign, pressured the CIGS to exploit the "victory with a view at least to securing the whole of Palestine."[16] The War Cabinet charged Robertson to ask Allenby what he would need to continue his northward advance.[17] Lloyd George even felt strong enough to discuss removing Robertson and Haig but was thwarted by the opposition of War Minister Lord Derby.[18]

As Allenby was drawing close to his objectives, then, his success had ignited a new campaign, this time in London over the ultimate control and direction of the war. The question of whether the men in Palestine would move forward in a new offensive or sink back into trench warfare would rest on the outcome of this battle between Robertson and Lloyd George in the beginning of 1918.

In the meantime, however, the last of Allenby's men reached their goals on the Jaffa-Jerusalem defensive line in early March 1918. By that time, most of the army had already taken positions along a trenchline across the plains of central Palestine, up into the craggy Samarian hills, and then down to the Jordan River. The army began to consolidate its gains and ready itself for a possible new strategic direction as a high-priority offensive campaign. The change would never come, however, for in March 1918 the Germans would begin their devastating Spring Offensive on the Western Front, and all ambitions in Palestine were ignored for the next six months. The shift in conditions in Europe would mark the decisive end of the period of offensive northern movement in Palestine and would send the theater into its final entrenched phase that would last until the final breakthrough in September 1918.

Combat

Once again, the experience of combat and the British Empire soldier's relationship to the enemy shifted completely in these months, as the men of the EEF left their trenches and fought in the open or in hastily made fortifications. In the coastal plain, the soldiers advanced with little or no cover in a largely open countryside, dotted with villages on the crests of hills. Some of these hills, "tels" in Arabic, were partly man-made, the accrual of thousands of years of civilization and warfare. In the rocky crags and mountains to the east, into which the army turned afterwards, soldiers faced the utterly different dangers of brutal hill-fighting.

This short period saw the peak in the number of deaths in the EEF (see Table A.3 in the Appendix). These losses are reflected more poignantly on a personal level in personal accounts, like one by Irish Sergeant Robert Vance, who kept careful lists of casualties among his men. Names are scattered thinly in every part of Vance's notebook, but on 7 November 1917 alone his list reaches 30 men, marking a day when his Irish Fusilier infantrymen and others attacked a Turkish hilltop redoubt, facing machine guns and double lines of trenches.[19] The soldiers, unaccustomed to such wholesale death in the EEF, were horrified by the "long rows of corpses" that they gathered after these battles.[20] In his memorial poem at the end of the war, though he offers romantic words about Jerusalem, Australian Edwin Field Gerard's dominant memories of the campaign were reversals and wounds: "Ah! There were checks and gory falls, / Without a Requiem, / Before we reached the lofty walls / Of old Jerusalem."[21] The advance brought to the EEF for the first time the carnage that had become such a feature of other fronts.

The men were further unnerved by the fact that many of those lost were experienced and admired men and officers. For instance, the death of Australian Victoria Cross winner Colonel Leslie Maygar in the assault on Beersheba caused a wave of shock among his men that is reflected in their writings.[22] It was a new reality of war, more like the Western Front, where heroes died early and suddenly.

One of the differences between this theater and the Western Front, however, was that replacements for lost and wounded men were more difficult to obtain. The EEF faced stiff competition from the BEF in France for every man. Once a soldier had orders for Egypt, he took valuable shipping space, and often months passed before he finally stepped down onto an Egyptian dock. Faced with such a slow replacement rate, Allenby reported in January that his combatant infantry and cavalry strength had, since 30 October, shrunk from 97,000 men to 69,000.[23] On the front lines, this meant more work and more combat for each man, as few troops were available to relieve them on the firing line.

Casualties were severe because, as the army moved forward beginning in October 1917, British soldiers faced a steady series of direct assaults against entrenched Turkish positions or against retreating Turkish rearguards.[24] The offensive nature of their task made this the most punishing work of the war for the men of the EEF. In many of these actions, the British infantrymen advanced toward Turkish trenches or tels in small, half-platoon "blobs" across open fields, through artillery and machine gun fire, "with shoulders hunched and heads bent instinctively forward" against the "showers of lead" in the air.[25] At the end,

many of these assaults degenerated into extremely short-range fighting or even hand-to-hand combat with bayonets in the enemy trenches.[26] Though the Turkish lines bent and broke under the superior numbers and artillery of the British, each battle became both a test of courage and a charnel house.

Men fell suddenly and in huge numbers, in scenes reminiscent of the war on the Western Front. An Australian scout came upon a battlefield where the English infantry had just assaulted a Turkish trench, and he counted 180 British bodies in one acre of ground, all "mowed" down by machine gun fire.[27] Another Australian in the front line near Jaffa described seeing nearby New Zealanders attacking a Turkish trench who were "literally flung from the ridge" by the Turkish artillery barrage. "The whole line," he recalled, "roared under rifle and machine gun fire heightened into an inferno" of grenades and artillery that "nearly burst my ears."[28] One ferocious battle followed another through this winter, and in almost every one, British attackers suffered tremendously before capturing Turkish positions.

The mounted troops also bore a great deal of the burden of this part of the war, as they spearheaded a number of charges against entrenched positions, beginning on 31 October 1917 with the famous charge of the Australian Light Horse at Beersheba, which secured the important wells of that town.[29] As one modest trooper recalled of that attack, "the only way to get at the back of [the Turks] was to charge the trenches, and we jumped our horses right over them."[30] "We had to gallop," another man explained to his mother, "across a couple of miles of open country under shrapnel & High Explosive gun fire."[31]

Similar cavalry charges by English yeomanry troops, though perhaps less celebrated (and less successful[32]), were fully as dangerous and dramatic. One such case was a half-mile charge by the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomen at Huj, some 10 miles east of Gaza; only 50 out of 120 men reached the Turkish trenches before the Turks fled.[33] At Gaza itself, John Evans watched such a charge from a far-off hill. "[O]ur cavalry," he wrote, "burst through in the centre of their line. Looking through the telescope I saw them all advancing over the plains, galloping on their horses, and their swords drawn were shining like silver in the sun. I watched them until they went out of sight, leaving hundreds of prisoners behind them to be picked up by our comrades behind." Seeing their success made him feel "so excited and pleased."[34]

The emotions of the mounted men swung between jubilation and terror as the success of this type of attack led to repetitions again and again through the lowlands of Southern Palestine. At Sheria,

for example, Australian Light Horse Sergeant Gordon Thistlethwaite described the battlefield as a "terrifying Hell." As he rode toward the Turkish trenches, he recalled seeing both men and horses "falling around [him]" in a "scene" of "veritable carnage," as he himself was severely wounded by machine gun bullets.[35]

One of the greatest advantages that the British soldiers in this period of the campaign enjoyed, however, was effective artillery support. When Robertson had filled Allenby's artillery requirements that summer, he had acknowledged that "The Turk has never yet had a good shelling, I suppose."[36] The new artillery were meant to change this. The boost in the number of British artillery pieces in the region meant that many of Allenby's attacks were more effective and that his own men suffered fewer casualties than they might have done. It also reduced the helpless feelings that had been so pervasive among the men of the EEF under spring bombardments in their trenches south of Gaza.

The most stunning example of this artillery superiority's importance came during the Third Battle of Gaza, where massed land and naval artillery rocked the Turkish trenches at Gaza for days before the assault. The artillery was, as historian Matthew Hughes puts it, "the unsung hero" of the attack.[37] When the Royal Navy guns first opened fire, some Gallipoli veterans, jolted out of sleep as "the ground underneath [them] started to shiver," thought briefly that they were back on the peninsula.[38] The British bombardment was so powerful that one man recalled being virtually lifted from the ground by the shaking of the earth beneath him.[39] Even at remote Beersheba, which saw a much smaller concentration of firepower, one man recalled that smoke and dust from the British artillery fire had obscured the enemy trenches, and the noise of the guns was "highly stimulating."[40] The balance of the artillery war, tipped by the supplies of the summer of 1917, had a profound impact on success, life, and death on this mobile battlefield.

The men who fought the Turks in the crags in the eastern part of the country faced a different set of challenges and terrors. The country was rocky and steep and the fighting fierce and sudden. "You could scarcely imagine," one soldier wrote to his parents, "how rough [the rugged hills of Judea] are."[41] This man's statement leaves a bit of ambiguity about the meaning of "rough," but it is difficult to imagine a sense in which it was not true.

The men fought from hilltop to hilltop, seldom in sight of their enemy except when he was very close, but always within instants of coming under fire (see Figure 5.1). An Australian patrol near Jerusalem, for example, walked blindly into the middle of a large group of Turks

Figure 5.1 Frank Hurley, Australian soldiers advancing through the forbidding landscape of Judean boulders (Crown Copyright), National Library of Australia, nla.pic-an23478298

hiding among boulders. In moments, a hail of bullets and bombs killed at least one man; the rest spent the duration of the war in a Turkish prison camp.[42] After a night battle in the green light of Turkish flares, another Australian was surprised in the morning to see, by the bodies, how close the combatants had been to each other.[43]

Among the rocks and ridges, men had to remain hunched and under cover at all times, as any man cresting a hill or standing in a high place became a perfectly framed target.[44] Rather, the preferred tactic was to creep among the rocks, often in the dark, fighting for control of each summit at dawn. One man called this process "ridge snatching," measuring ground hill by hill.[45] A unit of the Civil Service Rifles learned these lessons quickly, as it unsuspectingly crested a hill and received sniper fire from three or four different directions at once, hitting one man "through his nose" and sending ricochets through the rocks around the others.[46] An Australian patrol, similarly, had to "run the gauntlet" up a rocky hill under constant fire from the Turks at the summit; the Australians remained pinned in a small rock quarry,

piling stones to hide behind, until British infantrymen came to their rescue.[47] Bullets, said one man, fell "around us like hail Stones [*sic*] at some times."[48]

One of the most sobering accounts of the stress and fear of these mountain battles comes from Australian Trooper Conrad Schmierer's brief Christmas card to his wife. The card begins with Schmierer pleasantly reflecting on his good luck. After an apparent break in the writing, his mood and message change dramatically, and his thoughts become more fragmentary. "finish war for me. If I have the luck to pull through this . . . Dont worry over me (Darling) XXX. God's will, might Spare me to get back. I will never leave home again, . . . Guns—going off all—round me. Jhony [*sic*] Just over the, Hill, So (be-ware.)"[49] His desire that his wife wouldn't worry, after reading the distraction and worry in these hastily-scrawled lines, seems like a forlorn hope.

A man who was wounded in these circumstances faced a particularly horrific fate, destined as he was to endure rugged transport by foot, by camel cacolet, and then by motor ambulance before he reached the rail lines.[50] The camel transport was by far the most dreaded, but often the only, choice as no wheeled vehicle could reach the summits of the hills (see Figure 5.2).[51] Since the Sinai Campaign, the ambulances had employed the camels, with a stretcher or chair slung on each side, to evacuate men from treacherous areas. The jerky gait of the camel, though, was torture to the wounded men and no doubt killed some whose severe wounds were aggravated by the movement.[52] As an alternative, men of the Egyptian Labour Corps were added to each division's medical units to carry men down mountainsides to the roads.[53]

Even after men reached casualty clearing stations, transportation difficulties and the sheer volume of the wounded (7992 in the first 15 days of the advance alone and in less than three weeks 17.5 per cent of the entire EEF) held up evacuations of wounded men for days, despite what Eran Dolev has judged to be the valiant and rapid efforts of the EEF's Medical Corps.[54] Wounded at Sheria and carried out by cacolet, Sergeant Thistlethwaite first saw a doctor six days after his wounding, when his many gaping wounds, reeking with the "nauseating odour" of "putrefaction," had to be reopened for treatment.[55] During the assault on Jerusalem, one field ambulance orderly saw the rush of casualties, 600 at once, stack up at his small ambulance station; he was certain at least one man had died directly from the effects of the overcrowding.[56] Only the unexpected arrival of a motor ambulance convoy saved many of the wounded, clearing

Figure 5.2 One of at least three different types of camel cacolet. Other types used two upright chairs or two casket-shaped boxes, Australian War Memorial, H00716. (See AWM photo B02483 to see the other types.)

the way for 500 more the next day.[57] At one point in the bad weather of late December, almost 1500 men lay suffering and immobile in central Palestine clearing stations that were "full to the overflowing" with the wounded and seriously ill, a number of whom were dying of malaria.[58] Only a break in the storm in early January allowed them to move southward toward hospital care. The rapid advance had pulled the men far from rail lines and from their established infrastructure so quickly that the medical services simply were unable to keep up with the flood of casualties.

One of the most common and deadly types of interactions between British soldiers and their enemies in this offensive were artillery duels. Cover in rocky defiles became useless if enemy artillery dropped shells among the rocks, changing the landscape into hundreds of deadly missiles. For instance, one English soldier told his mother how a number of 5.9 inch howitzer bursts had hit the summit of a hill in front of his unit, "and huge pieces of rock came hurtling past our ears."[59] Artillery spotters angled for secret positions on hilltops, seeking out enemy columns and other artillery pieces, turning the process into a high-explosive and shrapnel game of hide and seek.[60]

The enemy

The stubbornness of Turkish resistance during the bloody advance began to harden feelings toward their enemies among the British soldiers, who had often referred to the Turks with sympathy and humor in earlier periods. Some men claimed that the high British body counts were responsible. After their huge losses, the infantry, Henry Bostock wrote, "kill all they can get their hands on & very seldom take prisoners."[61] The famous Australian pilot Ross Smith, the pilot who had written so flippantly about killing Turks in the Sinai, explained to his mother the shift in mentality, mentioning the death of his brother on the Western Front. "We are taught to believe that vengeance belongs to the Lord I know, but ever since Colin went I've felt like killing every Turk I see."[62] Though the Turks themselves had not even caused his pain, his explanation shows the connection between the personal loss and the darkening attitude. The rising anger, a direct outgrowth of the heightened intensity of the campaign, overwhelmed conscience, religious teachings, and even the traditional rules of war.

In some cases, the hatred caused by the heavy casualties even tested men's sanity. A Scottish soldier recalled his shock, in the aftermath of a particularly fierce battle, to see a British soldier vent his anger at a row of "shattered and lifeless" Turkish bodies. The man screamed "terrible oaths" into the dead faces. The Scot "began to think him demented" and wondered "what memories of fallen comrades" were driving his "mental suffering."[63]

British ire also rose about some of the "scorched earth" tactics of the Turks. Men accused the Turks of "deliberately" poisoning wells by throwing dead animals into them[64] and leaving behind booby traps that were said to have killed a number of unwary British soldiers.[65]

Stories of atrocities began to circulate much more broadly than in earlier periods, and these fueled British vitriol. A divisional history tells of a British officer killed in November 1917 by a Turk who had hidden in a hospital tent. Inside that same tent the British soldiers found a group of Turkish snipers. The summary to this story is terse but chilling: "there were no survivors!"[66] Patrick Hamilton was similarly outraged when an enemy plane dropped a bomb 30 yards from the Red Cross on his Australian field ambulance: "a deliberate shot."[67] New Zealander A. J. McKenzie told his sister about the desire of his comrades to kill "the enemy," especially the Germans (who represented only a small portion of the Turkish force), because of evil deeds "too awful to set out on paper."[68] "I can tell you," he added, "when a soldier considers anything

ghastly you can bet your life it is a little beyond the ordinary."[69] Whether or not the stories of atrocities were accurate, the soldiers took them seriously: anger ran high and mercy low.

One of the main grievances that began to fester was the looting of prisoners and the dead by the Turks, who were low on supplies themselves and virtually abandoned by their higher command. A few days after Christmas, British soldiers found the remains of one of their patrols dead and stripped and then, two days later, 50 Irishmen lying naked where they had fallen, "in many cases, their heads caved in."[70] An American nurse at the American Colony Hospital in Jerusalem, sorting wounded Turkish soldiers, was shocked to find a wounded man among them who spoke only English. He was an Englishman who had been classified as a Turk by mistake because his British uniform and boots had been looted and replaced by "Turkish rags."[71] British soldiers began even to show resentment toward the "proud and swaggering" Turkish officers they captured because of the officers" neglect of their own wounded and starving soldiers" needs.[72]

Australian Sergeant Thistlethwaite, who had fallen in the battle at Sheria, his leg torn by machine gun bullets, and had waited six days for medical treatment, told this sort of story. After being shot, hiding behind his dead horse, he quickly found himself alone, surrounded by Turks. An officer, apparently German, stopped the Turkish soldiers from killing him, so that he could be interrogated, but then allowed the Turks to loot him, which they did brutally. One man placed his boot on the wounded soldier's head and neck to rip off his bandolier. Later in the battle, he found a little money that the looters had missed and spoke in Arabic to a Turkish machine-gunner, offering him money for a drink of water; the Turk took all of the money that his comrades had missed and left the Australian alive but thirsty. Thistlethwaite, crawling and hobbling back to safety, brought with him the type of story that fanned the fires of resentment in his comrades' hearts. As an ironic twist to this story, though, Thistlethwaite admitted that his own last act as the first Turks had approached him was to dig a hole under his dead horse and hide Turkish badges and money that he himself had "souvenired" at the Battle of Beersheba.[73]

The stories of Turkish harshness were later echoed by repatriated prisoners. When, for instance, the Turks captured an Australian patrol in the mountains in December, they stripped them except for their hats, handing the prisoners their own thin and ragged Turkish clothes in return. Because of this treatment, at least one of these men spent the rest of the war partly debilitated from "illness and frost bitten feet."[74]

Another such soldier, captured in the mountains in November, insisted that the only reason the Turks did not kill him was the intervention of the Germans serving with them.[75]

Of course, British soldiers stole the clothing of Turkish prisoners, too, though for different reasons. An English machine-gun section that captured a Turkish machine-gun crew soon afterwards had "Turkish belts and other personal effects" which they offered for sale "at a big discount."[76]

While bitterness was rising among the British Empire soldiers, many still continued to express respect for Turkish courage, a constant throughout the war. Australian Ted McCarthy described to his parents how the Turks made many British soldiers "shiver" with their battle cry of "Allah! Allah! Allah!" He called it "the weirdest sound I have ever heard." He judged them both "fanatics" and "courageous men."[77] As one English machine-gunner wrote after a long, bitter battle, the piles of Turkish bodies spoke of their "gallantry." He added, "We didn't think the Turk had it in him."[78] For this man, the real culprits were the Germans who he believed were driving the Turks to fight. Upon finding the body of a "poor Johnnie who had bled terribly," the Englishman called him one of "The Kaiser's victims."[79] In his eyes, both Turkish and British actions were forced by the evil of the Germans, a belief which allowed him to express sympathy for his enemy and relieved his own conscience of the dead Turk's suffering. The theme that connects all of these depictions of Germans, both as saviors and villains, is the sense that the Germans controlled and manipulated others, especially the Turks. The British soldiers saw the Turks as inferior in both morality and ability, and thus spontaneous evil and atrocities are attributed to Turkish depravity, while more rational actions, for good or for evil, are seen as German calculation.

Physical conditions

Though the intensity and style of the fighting was novel and difficult for British soldiers, the rugged terrain and harsh weather of Palestine itself shaped much of the experience for the common soldier during this part of the campaign. Combined with the harshness of the fighting, the extremes of this environment made this the most demanding and painful period of the war for the men of the EEF.

The chief source of misery for the men chasing the Turks in the hills was the difficulty of transport. Moving from place to place was excruciatingly slow on mountain goat paths, clinging to the sides of narrow

gorges. Often units moved in painfully long single-file lines. Many mounted units gave up their horses and *walked* through the broken country, especially in the area around Jerusalem.[80] The stony ground made both walking and camp uncomfortable, and the constant trudging up and down hills was exhausting.

Supply trains of camels, driven by Egyptians, struggled vainly to catch up with units in the hillsides, but often the men went without many of their basic needs. The camels were slowed by weather, road conditions, and death, as some of the bulky beasts slipped off of the narrow mountain paths and scattered their burdens (and themselves) on the rocks below.[81]

Water remained a serious problem. From the desperately dry attack on Beersheba onward, many of the skirmishes of the following months centred around wells and streams.[82] "We were all suffering," recalled one officer of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, "damnably from thirst."[83] "We get 1 water bottle for 36 hours at times," an Australian wrote his family, explaining that they didn't have time to draw water from the deep wells that abounded in Southern Palestine.[84] One thirsty Englishman wrote in his diary that his daydreams of home were about the water tap and drinking freely from it.[85]

This thirst, combined with a blast of hot Khamsin wind in November, struck the men hard, especially those from the wet climates of Britain. In one blazing march of the Scots of the 52nd Division, 82 men fell out of the column as it advanced.[86] "Water very scarce," wrote Hubert John Earney, a signaller from Hampshire, "dust storms abominable. Food nearly always full of grit—especially stews." As they moved into the town of Beersheba, Earney and his comrades began to anticipate eagerly the wells of the town. "'Here's luck,' we thought, 'Now there will be a chance to have a wash.'" They moved so quickly through the town, though, that they did not have a chance to enjoy the water. "Rotten luck!" he wrote, "So we went through [Beersheba] and *saw* the water."[87]

Hunger, too, became a dominant feature of life for many men, as rations often remained far behind their lines. The way that English Private William Knott realized that he and his comrades had "started *war*" again in early November was by their rations: "biscuits & bully-beef taking the place of fresh meat & bread[,] also vegetables."[88] From the first attack, hunger became such a priority that in 1963 when a British sergeant recalled the attack on Beersheba, his fondest memory of the day was not the victory itself but the full Turkish cooking pot he captured.[89] Men spent long days of bitter fighting with no water or

rations.[90] "We were obliged," recalled Welshman John Evans, "to exist many days on three biscuits, a quarter tin of Bully and only half a bottle of water." For the first time in his long experience, including the dark days of Gallipoli, he and his comrades received an order to break out their last emergency "iron rations." In that desperate moment, though, their throats were too dry to swallow much of the food.[91]

Men scrounged the local vegetation for edible plants like "wild mint and sage" to boil with their bully beef for improved taste and nutrition.[92] The "land of milk and honey," they joked, was something of a misnomer as they were "twelve to a tin [of condensed milk] and no b---- honey."[93] Short of tobacco, men scavenged used tea leaves and smoked them in cigarettes or pipes. "I must admit," wrote John Evans, "it didn't have a very soothing effect but it was better than nothing."[94]

The fact that the men moved through a populated and relatively fertile region at least partly balanced the problems of transport, though British officials feared famine in a land that had suffered a series of bad harvests (including a 1915 attack by locusts) and been drained to support the Turkish war effort for the past few years.[95] Local people on the roadside and on the edges of towns sold food, especially fruit, to the passing soldiers, giving them some relief from their supply problems. Though many British soldiers considered the locals bearing oranges to be "sent by Providence," some found the prices outrageous and nursed resentment against the local population.[96] The prices, explained one soldier, went up by a factor of five when the soldiers arrived.[97] "The inhabitants," as another man put it, "seem to imagine that we have all pots of money."[98] Stanley Broome, with a keen sense of irony, contrasted the fatness of the supposedly starving locals with the leanness of the British soldiers.[99] Others considered the food well worth the price, and they gladly bought oranges, figs, radishes, and "unleavened maize bread" to "supplement [their] rations."[100]

Many men began to satisfy their needs by stealing food from the local population. One man admitted many years later that, though the men were forbidden to take oranges without paying for them, "we were into these orchards hand over fist."[101] A Welsh corporal wrote that he also stole extra food for his hungry horse from British ration dumps and that on one such raid he was fired upon by sentries. A company commander of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders noted that after a difficult and dry skirmish in an orange grove, his men began using oranges as an "excellent substitute" for water.[102] A clever old soldier stuffed his bomb sack with oranges, and "the subsequent route of the [company's] advance," the officer wrote, "was strewn with orange skins."[103] A group

of Welshmen found gardens near Bethlehem to be laden with dates and pomegranates; "we couldn't do justice to these fruits," one recalled, "as they were not ripe. If they had been I'm afraid the owner would'nt [*sic*] have had much chance of a profit that year."[104] A unit of Australians took a break in the midst of the fighting in November to slaughter and cook a large ox (presumably purchased or purloined from a local farmer), preparing a feast while the Turkish machine guns still played around them.[105] Similarly, the soldiers who first arrived at the Jewish wine cellars of Richon le Zion uncorked barrels of wine in an "orgy" of looting, allowing the vast majority to flow together and turn the cellar floor into a giant "cocktail mixer."[106] As in the Sinai, the soldiers occasionally expressed guilt at having stolen food, but those feelings did not prevent the theft.[107] (See Figure 5.3.)

Not surprisingly, tensions rose quickly between soldiers and many of the local populace. At roadside markets, if the locals "ask too much," one man recorded, "I'm afraid Tommy gives them a rough time usually taking the lot for nothing!"[108] Military police counterattacked, trying to bring the problem under control. They created a single officially-sanctioned market near Esdud, with price caps on popular goods and bans of sales of liquor to individual soldiers, fining merchants who violated the rules.[109] At some points, men were forbidden to buy bread

Figure 5.3 Australians preparing to feast on a captured sheep in the Judean Hills, Australian War Memorial, P01474.004

because of fear of starvation among the native population.[110] The Australian Provost Corps also placed a permanent guard on the Jewish colony's winepress to prevent further theft and "crimed" soldiers who were caught grazing their horses in orchards.[111]

This effort to stop theft and altercations with locals intensified the shortages that the British soldiers faced. "[W]e might as well be at the North Pole as here," one English soldier wrote, "as there are no shops nor canteens to buy anything."[112] The rapid movement of the army, along with the crackdown by military police, fostered a sense of isolation and remoteness that seems odd for men to feel in a populated region like central Palestine. It is reflective of their former isolation during the Sinai Desert Campaign, though in late 1917 and early 1918 the seclusion lasted only a few months, until the army's forward movement ceased and the men again took up stagnant trench positions.

Part of the sense of isolation sprang from the fact that the men who looked to parcels from home to fill their needs were often disappointed during this winter. Delivery of comforts like letters from home became low priorities and virtually stopped altogether for weeks or even months at a time.[113] "They most be a lot of mail for me Some where [*sic*]" wrote a lonely soldier in a Christmas card to his wife. "I will get them all in a heap. & then I can have some reading to do."[114] Parcels piled up in huge dumps with rotting Christmas cakes while their intended recipients went hungry in the mountains a few miles away.

The lack of personal comforts might not have been so difficult for the men except that in the initial advance from Gaza and Beersheba, they had been forced to leave behind all unnecessary personal items. An English rifleman, for example, was carrying his army issue items: gasmask; telescopic sight; bivvy sheet (a simple sheet for making a two-sided "bivouac" tent—a leaky one, as we will see), pole, and pegs; sandbags; change of shirt and tunic; cap comforter; cardigan; socks; emergency ration; and daily ration. Once his pack was full of these necessities, the only personal items he could carry, inside his gasmask satchel, were "looking glass and writing stuff and diary."[115] Australian Trooper Rupert Treganowan and his comrades were sent forward "with nothing but what we stand up in." He had "crammed" as many personal items into his pockets as he could, but still had very little besides the bare necessities.[116] English Private Les Moore had to "dump" a precious book that he had received "with tears of joy" only a month before.[117] H. J. Earney bemoaned the fact that, even when he and his comrades found "souvenirs galore" lying in abandoned supply dumps, they had no way to carry them off.[118] Despite the more verdant surroundings of

central Palestine, life for the British soldier during this advance became exceptionally Spartan.

Worse was yet to come. On top of transport difficulties, a natural part of moving an army quickly through rugged terrain, fell the discomfort of the monsoon rains of the Levantine winter. From November through December and much of January, unending torrents poured out on hills and plains alike.

Thirst was replaced by flood.[119] In the hills, narrow paths washed completely away, while on the plains below, the earth turned into an immense quagmire. Transport of all kinds stopped completely for days on end, overwhelmed in deep mud. "This country has no bottom," bewailed Australian William Borbidge; "horses & waggons go down to the bed."[120]

The rain soaked the men to the skin, showing the inadequacy of their desert uniforms and short trousers. The cold set in with a vengeance on men who had no defense against it until supplies of heavier clothing and overcoats began to arrive well into the winter. Londoner Private Moore received a serge tunic in late November and had not received a promised greatcoat by the middle of December.[121] One Scot, receiving a blanket for the first time in mid-November, asked sarcastically "what 'them things' were used for."[122]

H. J. Earney was in the middle of a 15-mile march when the first rains began to fall and soon his column had lost its way in the downpour. The men's "khaki drill [a tough linen fabric] was wet through" and "the water was making its way in little rivulets down [his] back" as they wandered about, following their confused officers over rocks, ridges, "stray cactus hedges, barbed wire, trenches, etc." When they finally found their camp, Earney slept in wet clothes "for the first time."[123]

Also for the first time, the Western Front scourge of trench-foot struck the soggy-footed soldiers in Palestine. This was a debilitating foot problem caused by moisture and cold that had not seemed to the EEF's medical officers to have been a possibility in the Middle East.[124] "We all," recorded one Londoner, "have trench feet more or less & can just about hobble."[125] Men rubbed whale oil into their feet to prevent this and frostbite. Those who did suffer from frostbite of the feet received punishments from their officers, recalled John Evans. "I appeal to your reason," he complained in 1920, "how can a man keep his feet warm in a wet trench where there was hardly sufficient room to turn round, and not forgetting the fact that while on duty in the trenches we had to stand in one place and keep a sharp look out over the parapet, while our mates (if they were lucky) enjoyed a few

hours well earned rest at our feet after being on the go, very often, 48 hours without a wink of sleep."[126]

Though real tents were widely issued for the first time during this period, they offered little useful protection against the harsh elements (see Figure 5.4). They were about the size, explained one Australian, of dog kennels but not as warm or dry.[127] A Sussex man jokingly referred to his tentmate as his "Palestine wife" because they huddled together for warmth at night.[128] Other men spent "frightfully cold" nights huddled with groups of men under the shelter of large rocks, not expecting to sleep but only to "shiver and pray for dawn."[129] Two Australians spent the night of 16 December sleeping on a pile of stones, propped upright against a wall to avoid the six inches of mud on the ground, with only a "wet overcoat and Turkish sheet" to block the cold wind. "My teeth

Figure 5.4 "New Bivvies." Once men were finally issued tents in winter 1917–18, they were too short for the average man and did little to protect men from the torrential rains. They were, as the editor of this trench journal quipped, "one foot short for two feet." (March 19, 1918, *Palestine Prattle*, 6.)

chattered so I fairly played a tune," wrote Henry Bostock, "but not home sweet home, and I lost the use of my legs and hands."[130] While Gerard rhapsodized about "the mountain mist / In Olive-clad Judea," listing the unforgettable beauties of Palestine, his own tune changed when he judged that the

> . . . nights of sleet
> Through which we've braved the wet
> Beneath the leaking bivvy sheet,
> We surely must forget.[131]

Many gave up on tents altogether and dug hillside "burrows" or hid in the numberless Palestinian caves to escape the weather and Turkish shells.[132] Six London infantrymen spent Christmas night on a "scrounged . . . strip of corrugated iron from the officers's loo."[133]

The cold and poor rations brought illness and death, as well. By mid-December, 40 Egyptian Labour Corps men had died of cold, and between 2000 and 5000 British soldiers were falling ill each week.[134]

The men also battled throughout the winter with the deep, sticky mud that defined this experience as the sand had defined the war in the Sinai. Mud was "everywhere – over clothes, equipment, blankets, food."[135] Men camped in fields that were knee-deep in mud.[136]

The mud and rain bogged down transport trucks even further, causing the meager supplies to run even shorter. By early January, Private Knott wrote that "rations for three weeks have only just been enough to exist on."[137] Sharing a single tin of bully beef between three men for one meal and a pound of jam between 12 men for another, Knott judged that the soldiers were "not living[,] only existing."[138]

Christmas 1917 was the worst moment of the war for many soldiers: "A hopeless dawn, if ever there was one."[139] Wet through, hungry, and with no word from home, they suffered through a dismal holiday. One man recorded the weather that day as a "[h]urricane" as his bivvy blew down and his camp was swamped.[140] An English soldier heard an officer say that "Christmas day in the workhouse would be preferable to this" and that because of the severity of the fighting he expected they would all spend the next Christmas "in the Kingdom of Heaven."[141]

Others had a less dismal holiday, especially those who received parcels and had a good meal for the first time in weeks or months. One fortunate gathering of English and Australian troops celebrated by holding an impromptu concert, aided by a half jar of rum, in the cave-tomb of a sheik, dancing unconcerned on the Arab's grave.[142]

In this situation, as in the heat and thirst of the Sinai, the suffering was not always shared equally between soldiers and officers. In one Australian unit, for example, on a frigid and wet night, the officers stayed in comfort in the beds of a monastery, while their men slept in tin sheds or out in the open. This might have caused only minor resentment except that the officers' horses were housed in the best of the sheds, while many men slept in the weather. "It was a shameless trick," one man wrote to his parents. "An officer doesn't know what roughing it is, or what it means."[143] Welshman John Evans agreed, at least as far as generals were concerned. In the midst of campaigning, he later wrote when discussing this part of the campaign, "I have seen them having their cooked dinners with plenty of wine and beer, while the Tommies have had to be satisfied with a biscuit." He did not seem annoyed by the unfairness, though, noting that there was "no disputing the fact their responsibility was greater than we very often realized" as they moved their men as though they were playing "a game of chess."[144]

Locals

Not everything about this difficult environment was negative for the men. For the first time since they stepped into the Sinai, they were moving through a relatively heavily populated area, with towns carrying at least the promise of diversions and comforts. The reality of the advance, however, as already noted in connection to food and theft, was that the rapid movement of the army and military restrictions perpetuated the isolated feelings of the previous periods of the campaign.

One comfort that the soldiers did enjoy was a physical infrastructure that gave them some relief from the elements. The very existence of local huts, churches, and manmade caves offered shelter that had been utterly unavailable in Southern Palestine or in the Sinai. This comfort was restricted, however, by regulations that forbade soldiers from entering towns and houses of local inhabitants. When a road unavoidably took the men through a town, they were forbidden to leave the roadway.[145]

Among the most dramatic changes for the men of the EEF was their reintroduction to women after many months of isolation. A passing group of English nurses, for example, caused a huge furor just after the fall of Jerusalem. Soldiers crowded around their cars "almost reverently." The English surgeon who described the scene explained that no one who had not spent a year or more in the desert could fully understand the fascinated stares of these "sex-starved" men.[146]

His comment takes on a more sinister light in relation to one of the most disturbing incidents of the invasion, when a British Empire soldier made a lewd advance toward an Arab woman, Nazha Bent Saleh Yousef, in the town of Beit Nuras on November 21. She and her husband were walking to the well, when a British West Indies private, short, clean-shaven, and wearing khaki shorts, approached them. The soldier spoke suggestively to the woman and then exposed himself. He grappled with the woman, and her husband calmly moved in and separated them while she ran a little way away. The soldier swung his rifle from his shoulder and shot the husband through the chest. The local man's uncle and others rushed out of their home, only steps away. They tried to carry the wounded husband to safety, but he died in their arms.

The dead man's family found a British major and reported the incident, and an investigation began the next morning. Twice, the British West Indies men were lined up before the widow, but she was too frightened to pick out her assailant. Shortly thereafter, one of the officers arrested Private J. A. Mitchell, who had come forward to make a full confession. In his court-martial three weeks later, he claimed to have no memory of the event or of the confession. He had, he said, been drunk since the night before. A number of his comrades testified to his inebriation, especially one group who had been playing cards between 3 and 4 a.m. near their tipsy friend, but no one could offer him an alibi. Private Mitchell was shot by firing squad three days before Christmas, one of only three EEF soldiers executed in Egypt and Palestine during the war.[147]

The general staff, aware of the mentality of the soldiers, placed Jerusalem, the most likely host of prostitution in Palestine, off limits to men without passes or officers as chaperones.[148] This tactic seems to have been successful in the short term. The rates of venereal hospital admissions dipped dramatically during this period, partly due to the closure of Jerusalem but mostly due to the quick movement of the army, constant fighting, and scarcity of leave (see Table A.4 in the appendix).

With increased interactions with the local population came both conflict and understanding between cultures. The British troops were automatically drawn favorably to the Jewish and Christian civilians far more than to the Arab locals. This reaction stemmed, at least partly, from the more familiar European styles of speech and dress that were common to the Jews, many of whom were recent immigrants from Europe, even from Britain.[149] One man, who was reminded unfavorably of the Jews of Whitechapel, still wrote that, at least, "one must give them the credit of being civilized," in contrast to their Arab neighbors.[150]

As this last comment suggests, even the compliments of some of the British Empire soldiers reveal their pre-existing anti-Semitism. Writing for an Anzac soldiers' magazine, another man similarly warned others not to confuse the local Jews with those "at home" who, in his words, "lend you fifteen shillings upon a five guinea watch." The Palestinian Jews, he insisted (other than what he considered the weak and unsanitary Jews of Jerusalem) were of "stern stock," "thrifty, industrious peasants," whose "villages were places of delight." His highest praise for those villages, of course, was reserved for the "pretty girls" from Rumania, Russia, Spain, and France.[151]

In many cases, the friendliness of the Jewish population won the soldiers over. When the troops entered Bethlehem, "[m]any of the Jewish women were throwing their arms round the men's necks and kissing them, so pleased were they to be free from the Turks," while the Arabs were much less demonstrative.[152] Lt Stanley Prince found that when he spoke to several of Bethlehem's Jewish women in Arabic, they were terribly amused and invited him home with them for tea (which he could not accept because the soldiers were forbidden to enter the town).[153] The Palestinian Jews thus seem often to have managed to overcome existing British prejudices through positive interactions with the soldiers. Significantly, a number of British Empire soldiers noticed that, among the locals, the Jews seemed happiest to see the invading army arrive and sorriest when they left.[154]

The Arab inhabitants, on the other hand, seemed very strange to most of the men of the EEF, and the soldiers had mixed experiences with them. H. Partens found the behavior and customs of the locals so interesting, he drew sketches of their daily activities, like one of a woman carrying water in buckets suspended from a board.[155] Trench journals are full of stories of the quaintness of Arab customs; in one, the marriage of a friendly local orange-seller to his second wife became a source of entertainment for a number of British Empire soldiers. In the story, the groom drew the soldiers into the celebration, and they took part in dancing and singing. The amusing ending of the story was the curious sight of the Arab's two wives following him a few days later, carrying oranges on their heads during his normal rounds.[156]

Often, the local people showered praise and gratitude on the British soldiers. Welsh Corporal Albert Kingston recalled the road at Bethlehem lined with natives, handing out fruit and welcoming the EEF.[157] Lt Prince wrote that the people of Bethlehem lined up on the roadside, smiling at the soldiers as they passed.[158] At Jerusalem, the men were even showered with flowers and perfume.[159] Australian Trooper Bostock

not only was cheered but had three different Arab women in various places run to him and kiss his hands upon entering their towns.[160] To maintain these friendly relations, the men were under strict orders to avoid damaging mosques or other sacred sites, even in some cases when they were being used as cover by the Turks.[161]

Sometimes the men made genuine connections with the Arab inhabitants, like the group of Imperial Camel Corps men who had run out of food and approached an Arab village to buy eggs. After a few minutes of fruitless attempts at communication, a sergeant squatted and clucked like a chicken, dropping a small rock as he pantomimed. The soldiers and the locals shared a bout of laughter, and their successful and pleasant transaction was remembered with fondness in later years.[162]

On the other hand, many EEF soldiers were repulsed by the local Arabs and always suspected that they were enemies.[163] One English private who had a rare pass to enter Jerusalem, wrote of his revulsion at the filthy locals. He despised their dirty, matted hair and suggested that a possible reason why they did not shave was that they were "too idle."[164] Others saw an even darker side of the relationship with the locals, especially with the nomadic Bedouins, seeing them all as enemies, as when an Australian patrol found 40 Turkish-armed Bedouins hiding in a cave. One soldier wrote home proudly of having "*dealt* with them."[165] This story, with its image of 40 evil Arabs in a cave, rings like a scene from the *1001 Nights*. It suggests that this soldier may have been seeing events through the lens of his youthful conceptions of Arabs and warfare in the Middle East.[166]

Even the Christians of the region seemed foreign and strange to the men. The strangeness of Orthodox Christianity caused the British soldiers to react to it as if it were as foreign as Islam. For instance, a British column marching into the Jordan Valley came across a hastily abandoned monastic settlement and set about looting the dwellings for "souvenirs" and useful items. The prize of the lot was "a priest's full dress rigout," an outfit the men passed around and tried on amid "much laughter."[167]

Changing politics

As painful as this advance had been for the individual soldiers, it was spectacularly successful compared to the stagnation on the Western Front. David Lloyd George and his Easterner allies seized the momentum in their arguments with the Westerners and called for an invasion of the northern half of Palestine. Chief of the Imperial General

Staff Sir William Robertson tried to stave it off. In December 1917, he suggested that such an effort to continue the campaign would require 90,000 new men in the theater (an amount equal to about 75 per cent of Allenby's active force), 57,000 of whom would be replacements for the high casualties that he predicted.[168] A further advance to Aleppo, mooted by the War Cabinet, would require eight to ten new divisions, Robertson reported, causing both a drain on manpower on the Western Front and "a largely increased strain" on shipping.[169] Robertson's days as CIGS, however, were numbered, as Lloyd George was at that moment maneuvering to rid himself of the troublesome "Wully," using the new Supreme War Council in Versailles and also the Easterner and permanent military representative to the Council General Sir Henry H. Wilson.[170]

Wilson and the other permanent military representatives on the Supreme War Council expressed their support for a change in war strategy on 21 January 1918, when they declared that a decisive victory in that year was unlikely on the Western Front, even with the help of the Americans. Rather than strip eastern forces for a tenuous opportunity in France, "the Allies should," they said, "undertake a decisive offensive against Turkey with a view to the annihilation of the Turkish armies and the collapse of Turkish resistance."[171]

After Wilson took Robertson's place as CIGS, the predictable outcome was that Allenby's orders in early March were to press his advance. Lloyd George wished to see this advance completed quickly. With his eye firmly on the postwar, the premier had judged that Syria would be invaluable in peace negotiations, and the capture of northern Palestine was, of course, the first step toward that goal.[172] Thus, for the men of the EEF, the violent turn of their fortunes seemed likely to continue, and the reward for success would be more and more intense fighting.

Conclusion

The mountain fighting, rapid advance, and brutal environment of winter 1917 were utterly unlike the war that the men of the EEF (or of any other force in the Great War) had yet known. The combination of a new style of fighting the Turks and a new set of environmental challenges created the most miserable and most dangerous conditions of the war for the fighting men in this theater.

In some ways, the war in the Judean Hills reflected the dune fighting of the Sinai, with its unpredictable skirmishes and physical hardships. The men now saw the opposite face of those same hardships. Damp

cold replaced dry heat, but in both, storms made transport languish. Death and conflict came suddenly, with stony hills offering no more chance to dig for cover than did knife-edged dunes. There was a major qualitative difference, however, between the sand and the stones: the fighting in the desert was infrequent and its casualties light, while on the Palestine crags destruction rained down almost without cease, meting out death with a larger measure.

The fighting man's experience in the Judean Hills was vastly different from what he had experienced in the trenches of the months before or what he would face in the months to come, as trench life would reassert itself. Only one more episode, the breakout from the trenches late in 1918, would once again resemble this moment in Palestine, with its quick movement in rough territory. By then, though, the Turkish Army would be broken and weary, unable to mount the same stubborn resistance.

Oswald Evans, the soldier who had planned that last September to bring his brother from the Western Front to the EEF, could not have known that Palestine would so soon turn so deadly. His request, however, remained unfulfilled in October 1917, when he died in the Third Battle of Gaza. His brother Joe wrote to their mother explaining that he would stay in France because "Now there is no reason for me to transfer as he is gone."[173] Joe Evans continued to serve on the Western Front and, unlike his brother in Palestine, survived the war.

6
"The Unholy Land": The Trenches of Samaria and Jordan

> To start with its [*sic*] unhealthy; Sol keeps the climate warm
> And Jacko aids the temperature by shells and lead—taubes swarm
> . . . Diseases like malaria, typhoid, jaundice, one oft sees;
> Bacilli grow to such a size they roost at night in trees.[1]
>
> J. T. S. Scrymgeour
> 2nd Australian Light Horse
> "The Jordan Valley's Inhabitants"

In early 1918, the men of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force [EEF] were still moving forward after taking Jerusalem, but their war was set to change utterly one last time. Though politicians in London began the year by pushing them to continue their advance, necessity on the Western Front overwhelmed the British Army and brought the entire theater to a halt. For the men of the EEF, the year that followed was one of bewildering complexity, one that juxtaposed comfort and hardship, defeat and victory, stagnation and rapid movement, Christian conquest and religious diversity.

Winter 1917–18 had been sublimely successful for the EEF, especially considering the agonies of British arms in France during the same period. As the mud of Passchendaele, the poet's "Flanders Field," was swallowing rank after rank of British soldiers in Europe, the men of the EEF had been moving steadily through the mountains and plains of Palestine. As the Battle of Cambrai in France turned from victory to disappointment, as Russia degenerated into civil war and deserted

the Allied cause, and as a disastrous explosion turned the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia, into a smoking ruin, the men of the EEF had been marching triumphantly into Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Jaffa. In early Spring, the Palestine front was well north of Jerusalem, and the entire southern half of the Palestine map was shaded British pink. In a dark moment of the war, Palestine had been a beacon of victory for British arms.

In London, as the previous chapter showed, politicians and generals who pushed for attacks in the East rather than on the Western Front had risen to the ascendancy. Their plans for an attack northward toward Turkey became the priority for the Allies in 1918, considering that movement on the Western Front seemed unlikely.

All of this planning came to nothing in a lightning flash. About two weeks after the War Office ordered the EEF to advance in March 1918, the Germans launched their ambitious Spring Offensives, attacking across a wide front in France, breaking through the trenches and sending the British and French armies flying into retreat. As the British army on the Western Front began to buckle and General Haig issued his famous order that admitted that his soldiers fought with their "backs to the wall," all other considerations became secondary, including the idea of movement in Palestine. Two realities became immediately obvious: any advance in Palestine had to be scrubbed and any excess force in the EEF was urgently needed in Europe.

The commander-in-chief of the EEF, General Sir Edmund Allenby, continued with a few of his immediate offensive plans even after the order to wait for autumn, simply calling his attacks "raids." The "raids" were two Transjordan expeditions, one in March and one in April, with the intent of capturing Amman and the Hedjaz Railway that ran south from Amman toward Mecca and north toward Damascus. They were utter disasters, with long lists of casualties and little to show for the efforts.[2] After these debacles, the EEF began training for the resumption of their offensive in the future.

Throughout most of the year, the British Army remained mostly stationary in trenchworks and redoubts. The front stretched from the ocean near Jaffa, across the plains and into the hills of Samaria (the old Biblical name for north-central Palestine) and down into the Jordan Valley to the banks of the river, including a few tiny footholds in the Transjordan.[3] Political and strategic decisions had caused the Palestine Front temporarily to take on the stagnant character that had previously marked the Western Front, and they had decreed that the men of the EEF would face another summer of trench warfare.

Politics and army movements

Far from advancing, the EEF had to give up some of its most seasoned units, including many men who had weathered the entire campaign since those first steps into the Sinai Desert. As more than 60,000 veterans boarded ships to the Western Front, troops from India and the Salonika Front disembarked and filled their places in Palestine. Most of the British divisions that remained were reformed, stripped of most of their "white troops," with Indian battalions taking the places of battalions from the home islands. The 10th (Irish) Division, for example, whose Irishmen had arrived in Palestine the summer before, still contained some Irish battalions but now also included battalions of Sikhs, Punjabis, and Kashmiris. Likewise, by the end of the year, the 53rd Division, which had consisted of Welshmen who had seen every part of the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, retained only one Welsh battalion to every three Indian battalions. Similarly, the 179th Brigade, one of the three brigades in the 60th (London) Division, had contained four London battalions, but now it held one London battalion, one battalion of Baluch Light Infantry, and two battalions of men from the Punjab. Some British units and the Australian and New Zealand formations remained intact but were often grouped with the newcomers.[4] The tiny French force that served with the EEF swelled with men from their own empire, as well, including Algerians and even a number of Armenians, some of whom were escapees from the massacres in the Caucasus, longing for vengeance against the Turks.[5] The British, Irish, Australian, and New Zealanders who were veteran soldiers of the EEF found it jarring to be rubbing shoulders with so many men from opposite ends of the world.

This change was one of the most profound of the war for the fighting men of the EEF. Thousands left the theater entirely, with those trained in the Middle Eastern conflict finishing their war experiences in some of the most horrific months that the Western Front offered. Many Imperial soldiers in Palestine in 1918 were new to the theater and knew little of the realities of life and war in the Holy Land. They had no memories of campaigning in the Sinai or even in Southern Palestine. Unaccustomed to Middle Eastern hardships, naïve about the local population, many were shocked by conditions that veterans took for granted. For instance, the men of a newly arrived South African unit were surprised by the artillery, the bombings, and the staunch Turkish defenders, a set of conditions so different from their East African war experiences.[6]

Inevitably, increased diversity stirred conflict between veterans and new arrivals. Some of these problems were based on prejudice and

racism and religious friction, but many of the serious problems that faced the integration of these new men rose from the mistakes of inexperienced troops and the suspicions of veterans about the fighting qualities of the replacements.

There had already been a number of Imperial units in the EEF, aside from the numerous Anzacs: both Indians and men from the British West Indies (including the Caribbean, the Bahamas, British Guiana, and British Honduras) garrisoned the Suez Canal Zone, for example. Some Indian units, like several cavalry and camel units, and, more recently, a battalion of Gurkhas had fought alongside the white British troops in many of the battles of the previous years. Though the black soldiers of the BWI contingent had been almost entirely relegated to demeaning service and labor functions, one of their machine gun sections had fought in the trenches in July 1917.[7]

A number of these units and their men had achieved remarkable acceptance by white comrades, and some had even reaped substantial praise. Allenby praised the machine gunners from the British West Indies for their "great gallantry" and "excellent conduct."[8] Likewise, the Gurkhas had created such a reputation that once when several Gurkhas were wounded and captured, Turkish hospital staff in Jerusalem discovered that no one had had the courage to disarm them. An American nurse finally summoned the courage to approach them and hold out her hand. The soldiers politely handed over their remaining bomb.[9]

A particularly high-profile Asian unit was the Hong Kong and Singapore Battery (nicknamed "the Bing Boys" after a well-known singing group), a small but popular artillery unit that through much of the war had accompanied the Imperial Camel Corps (a unique and multiethnic group in its own right). For their action on the battlefield and in camp alike, they were so well-thought-of among their white comrades that an unofficial Imperial Camel Corps trench journal had created for them a facetious coat of arms, emblazoned with wagon wheels and ammunition boxes (see Figure 6.1).[10] The Bikanir Camel Corps were also popular among their Camel Corps comrades, due to their skills and knowledge of their beasts.

The Sikhs, too, had a stellar reputation in the force. When one of them vanished in September 1918, officers never entertained the idea that he might have deserted to the enemy, in their words: "[h]e being a Sikh."[11] They were later surprised by Turkish prisoners who said that he had done exactly that. These highly trained Asian soldiers, whose martial qualities were beyond question, gained acceptance easily in

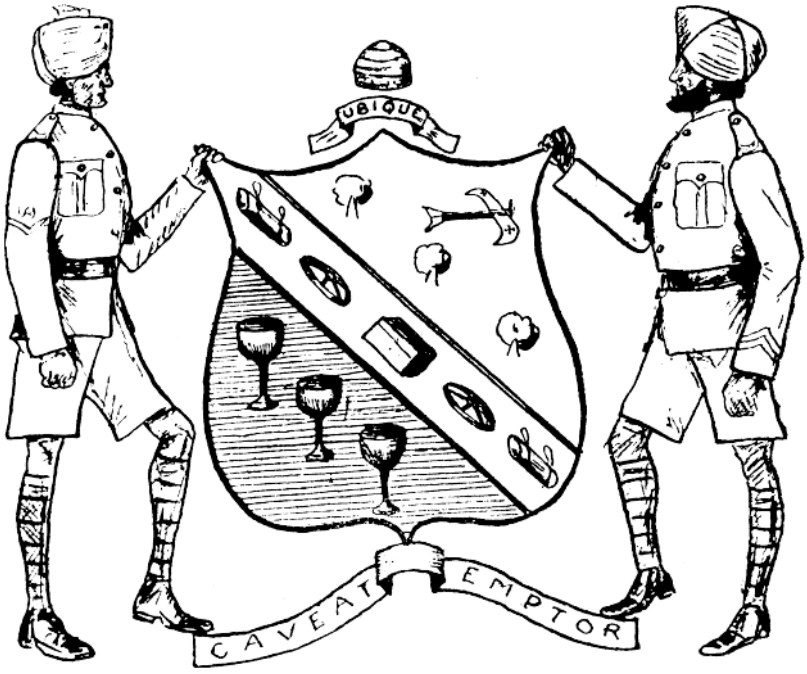


Figure 6.1 The "Bing Boys." A tribute from an ICC trench journal showing fondness for their favorite Asian Unit: The Hong Kong and Singapore Battery, R.G.A. The symbols applaud their antiaircraft work and their participation in sports and tease them about littering wheels and ammunition boxes. The motto "caveat emptor," we are told, means "mind the duds." "Arms of Notable Units" (1 November 1917, *Barrak*, supplement.)

earlier periods, but many of the Asians who arrived in 1918 did not fare so well with their new comrades.

As long as there had been just a few of these units, they had been almost a novelty to their white comrades,[12] but as they became a substantial percentage of the force, the interactions between European and Asian troops began to strain. Much of the resistance these newly arrived Indian troops faced had to do with their poor training and battlefield performance. For example, in April 1918 a Court of Inquiry found a company of poorly-trained Rajputs and Ahirs to be "a danger in the front line" after their first feeble showing in battle at Amman. The veteran Indian troops whom they had failed in battle were "very bitter" against the newcomers.[13] This result is hardly surprising, considering that some of the newly arrived Indian soldiers had never held the

standard British service rifle before and others had had no training in its use until they received their hasty training in Egypt.[14] Grim necessity in the West had forced these troops to move into the fighting too quickly and ultimately worked to heighten the conflict that the newcomers brought with them.

Some of the conflict was more clearly racist. An English stretcher-bearer attached to an Indian ambulance unit complained about the hard feelings and belligerence around him, caused by the "marked" "distinction" that some of his countrymen made "between 'black' and 'white.'" He did not complain, however, when he was instructed to leave all manual labor to his Indian comrades.[15]

Religious differences caused a major source of friction between the soldiers. In one sapper company, for example, a Sikh soldier refused to keep his beard tied up. A confrontation spiraled, and the man shot and killed a British major.[16] An investigation discovered that among the Sikhs in the killer's company was another man who was the guardian of a copy of the revered Sikh holy book *Granth Sahib*, stowed secretly in the guardian's pack. According to the investigators, the book's inspirational presence in the company caused an overflow of religious feeling, ending in bloodshed. The book and its guardian were shipped home to India. An officer in this company wrote, concerning these religious troubles, that when Sikhs arrived in his company, he made efforts to discover and remove any who expressed strong religious feelings.[17]

Subversive literature, aimed at the Indian soldiers, began to circulate throughout 1918, making arguments about why both Muslims and Hindus should rebel against their British oppressors. In May 1918, an Indian soldier bought pepper in a shop in Jerusalem and found it wrapped in a page that called on Muslim Indians to support a Turkish "Jahad" against Britain. It also appealed to Hindus and Sikhs to take the example of the "the Lion of Punjab" and fight against those who were enslaving them. The man quickly reported the incident, and the shop was raided in a fruitless search for the source of the seditious materials.[18]

For several quiet nights in the Samarian hills, British officers were unnerved by loud Muslim prayers projected across no-man's land, apparently by a "mullah who made night hideous by chantings." They worried that he was trying to convince the Muslims in the British ranks to desert. If this really was the Turks' intention, it failed, because the British troops nearby were Sikhs. They asked their officers if they were allowed to "'strafe' the holy man."[19] Before they received permission, the chanting stopped.

In the wake of these sorts of incidents, British authorities worked to track rumors that Indian troops were disaffected and tried to seek out "anti-British" activities, especially in mosques and among civilians from central Asia.[20] The EEF even began refusing to accept Indian conscripts from some regions, especially those along the borders of Afghanistan, due to the threat of religious and political unreliability.[21] Muslim Pathans were judged to be the most dangerous, accounting for 12 desertions between January and July, 1918.[22] A group of 97 Pathan soldiers and 3 officers, among whom most were admitted to have done "gallant service," were eventually sent to France to avoid potential problems.[23] The link between religious belief and loyalty thus became an extremely sensitive issue in the last year of the campaign.

Religious, cultural, and language differences divided the men of East and West even within the same camps. Caste rules forbade the sharing of food or water, a basic building-block of camaraderie. In one case, for example, the men of the Imperial Camel Corps, in extreme thirst at the end of a dry trek, begged water from a group of Sikhs, who gave it on the condition that the British would not allow their lips to touch the Sikh bottles.[24] British soldiers had to step cautiously through Indian camps to avoid contact with their food.[25]

In one of the most unfortunate cross-cultural incidents, a disagreement over water buckets arose between Indian soldiers and the members of an Egyptian Camel Transport Corps unit. In an ensuing scuffle, the Australian sergeant in charge of the Egyptians unintentionally killed an Indian sergeant (or Duffadar). A court-martial convicted the Australian of manslaughter, and though his prison sentence was later remitted, one wonders whether the whole fight could have been avoided had there been no language barriers involved.[26]

These cultural barriers and language difficulties seriously limited the amount of interaction possible between Indian and Western soldiers, but men still found ways to make friends across the divide. In fact, the kinship felt between Indian and Australian soldiers was to become widely noted in later years.[27]

Indian soldiers faced a variety of difficulties in their transition into a military structure that had been created for British soldiers. Some of the units had been so hastily thrown together that when they arrived in Egypt the men could not even communicate with their English officers. According to the British official historian, in one entire battalion, only two white officers spoke the language of their soldiers, and only one of the Indian officers spoke English.[28] Even camps and services were not adapted for them. Canteens, from which soldiers could buy extra food,

did not at first carry a number of the foods that Indian soldiers wanted, though some Indian spices and foods were already available. Their officers had to go through a process of asking the canteens to stock specific mixed spices (gŭom masála, for instance) and chutneys and special oils and combs for Sikh hairdressing.[29] The Y.M.C.A., which maintained more than 20 recreation centers and canteens near frontline brigades, had only expanded to serve Indian soldiers in 1917. By spring 1918, there was only one "Indian Secretary" running a center at the front lines, though he thought that at least a dozen more were needed. The Y.M.C.A. scrambled to find more workers for these centers, some of whom were Indian and some not, and to arrange entertainments, concerts, and plays for Indian soldiers. By the end of the war, only 5 of the 76 Y.M.C.A. secretaries in the region served Indian troops. The first frontline Indian secretary reported that among the Indian soldiers he considered "the done little and the undone vast."[30]

Several replacement units from still different ethnic and religious backgrounds arrived on the front, and some faced similar difficulties. In August 1918, two regiments of black troops from the British West Indies at last moved into the front lines and into combat, after most of them had languished in garrison and labor duties throughout the war.[31] This was a critical color barrier that their countrymen in France never broke. They would fight with distinction throughout the rest of the war, especially in the Battle of Megiddo. Richard White, a historian of Jamaica, has pointed out the irony of the British Army's deferring the martial dreams of these men until the crisis of 1918. Unlike virtually every other contingent in this war, the men from the British West Indies returned with a legacy of heroic victory rather than of mechanized slaughter and disillusionment. This legacy in turn fueled a nationalistic myth in Jamaica in the years after the war that allowed these veterans to demand a greater voice in their society—a huge step toward Jamaica's eventual independence.[32]

Up to this point, the British West Indies Regiment had not only been prevented from fighting, with the exception of one machine gun section, but they seem also to have absorbed the lion's share of the most severe discipline. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission reported that throughout the entire Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, only two non-Indian men were executed for any cause. Both died for murder, and both of them were from the British West Indies.[33]

For most of the campaign, the British West Indies men were paired with two special British battalions of Zionist Jews. These highly motivated men joined this force with the idea of aiding in the liberation

of Palestine from the Muslim Turks, a sensitive issue in the EEF, to say the least. They rallied with predictable fervor around the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the British agreement to favor the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Thousands of Jews had joined this force from such far-flung countries as Canada, Russia, Argentina, and the United States.[34] Others were recruited locally, from among the Jewish settlements in Palestine, to bear British arms against their Turkish overlords. Amazingly, even several hundred British Jews serving on the Western Front gained transfers and joined their coreligionists in Palestine.[35] Eventually, three battalions of this so-called Jewish Legion were formed and sent to the theater, two of which, under the official titles of the 38th and 39th Royal Fusiliers, served in the Palestine trenches.

Many of the American Jews signed up in New York City, but these men were also recruited throughout the country, from Detroit to Houston to Los Angeles.[36] Virtually an entire battalion (the 39th Royal Fusiliers), they were the largest American presence in the Middle East, though they served in British uniforms because the United States was not officially at war with the Ottoman Empire.

In its very nature, the Legion attracted a different kind of soldier than served in the rest of the force: true zealots for the Zionist cause. Their medical officer is said to have commented that the enthusiasm of one new group of recruits, in the last year of the war, reminded him of the enthusiasm of the first days of the war in 1914 in England.[37] They wore the insignia of a menorah, and, as if foreshadowing the future, they sometimes flew the blue and white Star of David flag that would later become the standard of the state of Israel.[38]

The Legion's roster reads like a role call of the future leadership of the Israeli state, including future Israeli prime ministers—Private David Ben-Gurion and Private Izhak Ben-Zvi—and even the father of future Prime Minister Izhak Rabin. They saw themselves, in Ben-Zvi's words, as "only the vanguard of the great movement which will soon make itself evident."[39] The Legion would have a profound effect on the organization of the interwar Zionist movement.

The Jewish men of the Royal Fusiliers faced a good deal of resistance from the other white troops of the EEF, who showed what one New Zealander called "a tendency to belittle them."[40] Their comrades offered epithets for them that ranged from the degrading "Yids" to the more tongue-in-cheek "Jordan Highlanders" and "Royal *Jews*iliers."[41] Other soldiers used references to the stereotypes of dishonest Jews and of Jewish money-lenders, joking that their "battle-cry" was "No advance without security."[42] Their gentile colonel trumpeted a list of inequities

and injustices offered to these men during and after the war. He accused the EEF's staff of providing inferior clothing to the Jewish soldiers and even of plotting to have a Jewish soldier executed for a minor offense or an entire battalion killed needlessly in battle.[43]

For their part, the Jewish soldiers caused conflict because they were so driven by their movement's goals. Ben-Zvi, a member of the one battalion of the Jewish Legion that never reached the front lines before the end of the war, pulled every string and made every contact possible to raise the profile of the Jewish Legion and to see that it was in the thick of the combat in the conquest of Northern Palestine, so that the Zionists could claim a share of the victory.[44]

In some ways the men in this part of the force remained the most disconnected of all of the EEF's diverse soldiers. Most were not British Empire subjects at all, and their interests were only coincidentally aligned with those of the United Kingdom. A perfect example of the limits of their loyalty to the British army came in the months after the war. During an uprising of civilians in Egypt, portions of the Jewish Legion were ordered by the British to assist in suppressing it. The men mutinied, saying the action against the Egyptians was outside their goals.[45] They refused to damage the Zionist cause for the sake of British imperialism.

Anti-Semitism and conflict between British Empire soldiers and Jews had been common in the EEF ever since their entry into Palestine, but before 1918 the Jews had mostly been local civilians. Now, the inclusion of Jewish soldiers in the British ranks in large numbers brought the conflict into the camp and added yet another dimension to the racial and religious conflict in the region.

Politics and its impact on the EEF

Once the painful diversification of the EEF had been accomplished, the crisis in France passed. The German offensive stalled and by Summer 1918 turned into a steady retreat. American soldiers poured into France and took ever more and more of the burden of the Western Front. Britain was once again free to move in the "sideshow" fronts, especially Palestine, as the Easterners saw an upsurge of popularity.[46] Stalled plans for the "Big Push" into northern Palestine came back into motion for early autumn.

Even before the crisis in France was totally over, the EEF had seen a continued increase in its resources, spurred by its powerful friends in British politics. For example, in 1917, 137 heavy 3-ton lorries had

labored to move army supplies in the advance; by September 1918, 747 of these invaluable trucks worked along the front, an increase of about 550 per cent. Similarly, the number of motor cars nearly tripled in that period, from 81 to 228.[47] Airplanes, camels, antiaircraft guns, food, and uniforms all arrived in abundance, making the lives and combat of the individual soldiers ever easier.[48]

Physical conditions: Samarian plains and hills

The long months of waiting for the "Big Push" meant another spring and summer of stagnant trench warfare for the men of the EEF. As trenchlines wound their way across Palestine, the men began to learn that there were two distinctly different experiences of trench life in this theater in 1918. They were determined by the environment in different parts of the line: the plains and hills of Samaria (including the coastal Plain of Sharon) and the Jordan Valley. The deep rift valley on the eastern end of their line, they found, was as miserable and barren as the plains nearer the Mediterranean were pleasant and bountiful.

The men who lived in the trenches on the Samarian plains and hills had by far the better end of life in this period of the war. The new urban base of Jerusalem, which now became the headquarters of the EEF, added a wealth of conveniences to the army that they had not known since entering the Sinai in 1916. Water was abundant in deep local wells that already had mechanical pumps. Though many of these wells had previously barely filled the needs of the local farmers, the Royal Engineers managed to increase the yield of others to supply the EEF on the plains with fresh water most of the time.[49] Water was so abundant that British sanitary units filled in 28 extraneous wells to reduce the breeding of mosquitoes.[50] The constant agony of thirst that previously dominated life in this theater virtually evaporated. Supply lines were short, as the port of Jaffa offered easy transport, and food and supplies arrived much more reliably than in previous periods.

Men also found the diversions of the "Holy Land" far superior to any they had seen since leaving Egypt. They became tourists, fascinated by the Islamic, Jewish, and Christian historical and cultural sites. Some reflected a particular interest in Islamic architecture and culture, as historian James Kitchen has shown.[51] Many took walking tours (often led by chaplains) of the host of Christian holy sites. Even as they first advanced through the area in the previous year, Welshman John Evans had slipped away from his officer to get a glimpse of John the Baptist's house, near Bethlehem.[52] Many of those in the EEF who had

been raised in Christian churches found the area disappointing when compared to their mental images of the Holy Land, seeing the squalor of the actual sites. Many soldiers had the same reaction as New Zealand Nursing Sister Edith Lewis, who left her hospital in the Sinai for a tour of Jerusalem in November 1918: "To see all the places that have been so familiar in name from one's childhood was most impressive, although it rather upsets the pictures and ideas one has always had in mind."[53] Cyril Shaw expressed the idea more harshly. He had expected a "golden city" of Jerusalem, but he wrote that "golden" should be changed to "filthy and muddy"; it was, he insisted, the "most miserable place I have ever set eyes on."[54]

Leisure activities abounded, with sports and concerts and other pursuits filling many of the quieter days of spring and summer. There were even concerts for men in the front lines.[55] Out of the lines the opportunities were legion. One New Zealander's diary records that in a three week period in July and August (when his unit from Wellington was in training behind the lines) he attended two concerts, three lectures (on Palestine, on the "Eastern Question," and on America's reasons for entering the war), and one brigade sports day.[56] Sports days could be simple contests of football and footraces or incredibly elaborate affairs, complete with printed programs and cash prizes. For instance, on March 9, 1918, the Australian Mounted Division held a gigantic event that included both a horse show and a sports competition. Among the many sports represented were mounted tug of war, wrestling (on horseback!), various races, swordsmanship, and machine gun firing. Winners took away prizes ranging from 2 Egyptian pounds (enough to buy a solid quality watch in Cairo) for individual sports to 17 pounds for group activities like machine gunning or relays or troop horsemanship competitions. The competitors even had the accompaniment of two different Australian military bands.[57]

At least one of these pleasant events turned ugly, however, when the beer ran out at an Australian sports day in March 1918. Disgruntled and thirsty Australians spotted an untapped keg that had been held back for the waiters. The sergeant in charge of selling the beer at the canteen tried to reason with the growing crowd that reached about 200 men, but in moments the crowd engulfed him and a general fight began. Six military policemen dove into the fray, and the wrath of the fighters was turned immediately on them. Beating the unwelcome policemen with anything they could reach, including "bottles, bandoliers, stirrup irons and other weapons" (according to the police report), the mob seriously injured at least one of the policemen. Because of the confusion, no one

could be sure exactly whom to blame, and despite three courts-martial, no one was convicted of any crime. The incident was closed with one police corporal being decorated for his performance in the fight.[58]

"Concert parties," or variety shows, usually put on by theatrically talented soldiers, were performed often in Jerusalem and were thus easily accessible to men stationed in the Samarian hills. Among the favorite performers were the wildly popular "Barnstormers," who put on a show that included music, comedy, and convincing female impersonators.[59]

The plains through which the trenches ran featured rolling farmland and orchards, with shade for the weary and seasonal fruits for the hungry. The availability of local foods, especially fruit, delighted the soldiers. "I could have lived there," declared one pleased soldier, "Everything grows so well."[60] Men added such delicacies as wild quail to their menus; one man who served as cook for his section said he had shot and served hundreds of the local birds.[61]

The presence of local foods, however, often grieved officers and locals, as the temptation among soldiers to steal it was strong.[62] Even though fruit had become a regular part of their official diet, issued to them as rations, men still helped themselves to the local produce. Australian Bert Penna, for example, wrote proudly to his mother that he and his comrades had had a "large feast" of two nosebags full of grapes taken from a nearby garden.[63] In his memoir, another man who admitted helping himself to illicit oranges was very pleased that he had been one of the guards subsequently placed in the orange groves. He never did, he said meaningfully, "catch the thieves."[64] As in previous periods, soldiers expressed a realization that what they were doing was theft but remained more than willing to continue stealing food, though in this period it seemed less driven by need and was treated almost like a sport or pastime.

The weather in the plains was temperate, though rain and mud were still a problem in the spring. Trenches of soft earth became a morass in the rain and a crumbling mess in dryer times.[65] Still, many men equated the climate and conditions to those of England and felt comfortable and at ease in this environment.[66]

Men who rotated in and out of the trenches in the plains during this period found diversions near and plentiful. For the first time, it was possible for many men to spend the free hours after their military duties among the locals. They met people in towns and villages, and some even made local friends. Artilleryman R. S. Smith, for instance, spent the morning of 15 April 1918 on duty and the evening in the company of "fine girls" in a French-Jewish settlement, where he had gone in

search of a bath. It says much about the friendliness of the locals that they spent a pleasant evening in Smith's company, though he never had taken his bath.[67] A New Zealander found that an American colony welcomed him "like a long lost brother," playing tennis with him and taking him on tours of Biblical sites.[68] The soldiers were especially drawn to the verdant and friendly Jewish kibbutz settlements, where many spent Passover in 1918, partaking in family Seders.[69] Even in their trenches, members of the Jewish Legion received food shipments of "figs, grapes, cakes, and puddings" from the Richon le Zion settlement.[70] Some men had relationships with local women, who brought soldiers oranges and who, according to one man, sometimes traded "a bit of love" for a tin of beef (see Figure 6.2).[71] This sort of interaction with the local people was nonexistent in previous periods of the war in

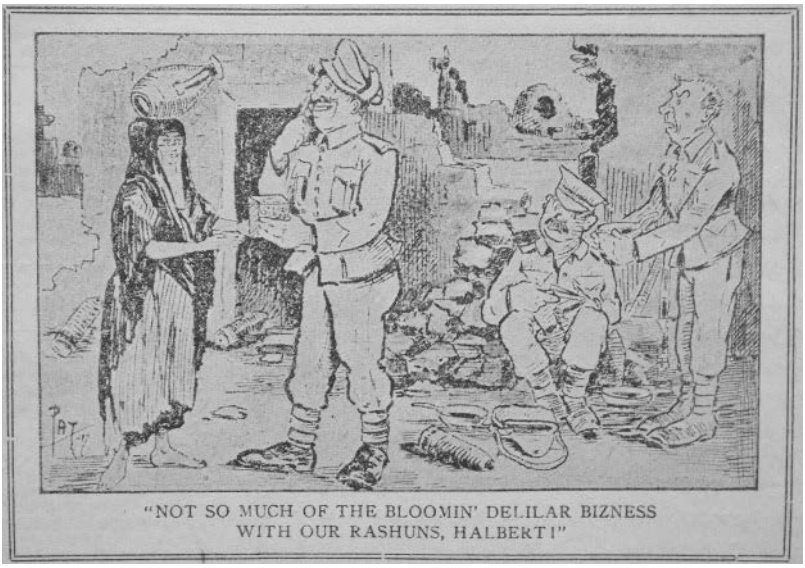


Figure 6.2 The Palestinian version of a ubiquitous feature of civil/military relations. Albert, the soldier on the left, is offering rations to a local woman, with a gesture that suggests that he expects something in return. His comrades voice their disapproval, not on moral grounds but because they do not want to lose the food. The reference is to the ancient Biblical hero Sampson's relationship with the deceptive Philistine temptress Delilah (who lived, incidentally, some 15 miles south of the 1918 trenches). The type of interaction depicted was virtually unknown to EEF soldiers before 1918. (15 May 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, US Library of Congress.)

the Sinai and Palestine, as the army had always been either stationary in an area with few local people or moving too quickly to make lasting acquaintances.

Of course, many soldiers formed more professional relationships with local women, as the center of prostitution for the EEF shifted from Cairo to Jerusalem. The admissions to at least one of the venereal wards skyrocketed during this period, as the war became more stationary and men began frequenting local towns (see Table A.4 in the Appendix).[72] Despite the prophylactic treatment centers set up in Jerusalem, like those already operating in Egypt, easy access to both prostitution and disease in the Holy City spelled higher numbers of venereal disease cases among the men of the EEF.[73]

Tensions ran high between British Empire soldiers and many of the local inhabitants, especially with some of the Arabs. Soldiers generally found their villages and homes dirty and "repulsive."[74] Accusations of theft and treachery by the Arabs flew at a rapid rate, and virtually all were viewed as potential enemies. Even the Arab allies who rode with Lawrence were highly suspect and considered dangerous. As an Australian doctor put it while describing their "murderous" weapons and violent natures, "Thank God they are hostile to the Turks."[75]

English Trooper Leo Holman demonstrates the British attitude in a letter home in summer 1918. He tells a humorous story circulating in the camp about the forced relocation of a village of Arabs. The British soldiers loaded women and children onto lorries and wired an inventory, listing the people in the caravan. When they arrived, the officer checking the inventory wired an amendment to the number of people in the caravan, adding 2, "one lady having given birth to twins in a motor lorry." Holman had a "hearty laugh" over the story, but the part that seems especially to have amused him was the way the officer had referred to the new mother. After quoting the telegram, he wrote only one word of gloss: "Lady!!!"[76] To Holman, the respectful word seemed strange and humorous when applied to an Arab woman who had given birth in a lorry.

One New Zealander's experience exemplifies the complexity of the men's dealings with local civilians. George Ranstead told his parents that on one of the bitter retreats from Amman a group of villagers had sold the hungry soldiers bread at a great cost. After the men had left the town, however, the villagers "turned dog on" the soldiers and peppered them with bullets.[77] He later wrote that near Amman he discovered that the Arabs looted and stole from everyone, British, Turks, or even their own comrades. "One of a group near the Auckland regt. was killed by a direct

hit from a shell. Almost before he had landed the other Bedouins had grabbed his rifle, bandoliers & greatcoat & were running for their lives." "They haven't got," he insisted, "any idea of humanity."[78]

The British soldiers returned evil treatment liberally and often avenged themselves violently. William Knott, the devout English stretcher bearer, deplored the "brutish" way that his countrymen treated native people under their care, striking and neglecting one dying man, beating and gagging another who had been driven mad.[79] An Australian recalled seeing a picket, who had caught a woman stealing horse feed, dispense his own justice with a combination of pain and humiliation. With a foot in her back, the picket raised her dress and beat her "bare behind" with a board and "with plenty of vigor."[80] An EEF analysis of soldiers' letters by late in 1918 noted that this violence was not an aberration but a "general trend" of resentment toward locals and a desire to take "matters into their own hands" when grievances went unheeded.[81] Though these records necessarily show only one side of the conflict, leaving the Arabs voiceless, it is not difficult to imagine the seeds of resentment toward the British that these encounters sowed, seeds that would bear bitter fruit during the period of the British Mandate after the war.

Physical conditions: Jordan Valley

Men in the Jordan Valley saw a different face of Palestine. It was rugged and rocky and steep, with jagged fissures that reminded one man of a cake that had been dropped.[82] After the war, veterans judged that this valley was "the worst and deepest hole in the whole world front."[83] As an Australian said, the southern valley was "about the most desolate and God-forsaken country I have ever seen."[84] "The desert," said Douglas Calcutt, "was a cosy place by comparison."[85]

The weather in the Jordan Valley was oppressive. By one official count, the average high temperature throughout the summer was above 102 degrees Fahrenheit, with a full week at almost 108 degrees in July.[86] One man delicately described Jericho to his mother as "the place one gets told to go in peace time."[87] Jordan became, to them, a hellish watchword for suffering.

The dust in the Jordan Valley quickly gained legendary status, overwhelming everything in choking clouds, rising occasionally in storms that blotted out the sun.[88] "My eyes are almost cut out of my head by the dust," complained one soldier.[89] A colonel, riding a charger at the head of his marching troops through the Jordan Valley, noticed that their faces were so caked with dust that only their eyes were visible.

Though the dust-free officer said that he had never seen anything so funny, he noted that for some reason, apparently inexplicable to him, his men did not see the humor in the situation.[90] Once again, the sufferings of the environment were not, as one might expect, equally shared by all ranks, and in this case not even simple understanding of the suffering of enlisted men relieved the inequity.

The Jordan Valley also rivaled the Sinai Desert in the profusion of flies and other pests it hosted (see Figure 6.3). "Flies and heat are a terror by day," one man wrote, keeping men from sleeping despite their wearying nightly outposts and patrols.[91] "[E]very square inch" of his bivouac, another man recalled, "was black with them."[92] A Jewish Legion officer wrote in letters home about the "millions" of mosquitoes as "the enemy" and described how the insects launched a "monster counterattack" to any effort to control them.[93]

Men exposed to these conditions fell ill in droves, and malaria, especially, was rife in the low areas near the riverside. Malaria had been a growing problem throughout the EEF since the beginning of the Gaza advance, but Jordan Valley conditions gave it a more serious weight. A New Zealand trooper who fell ill near Jericho lay waiting for care and transport, among "a terrible lot of the boys . . . Tommies,

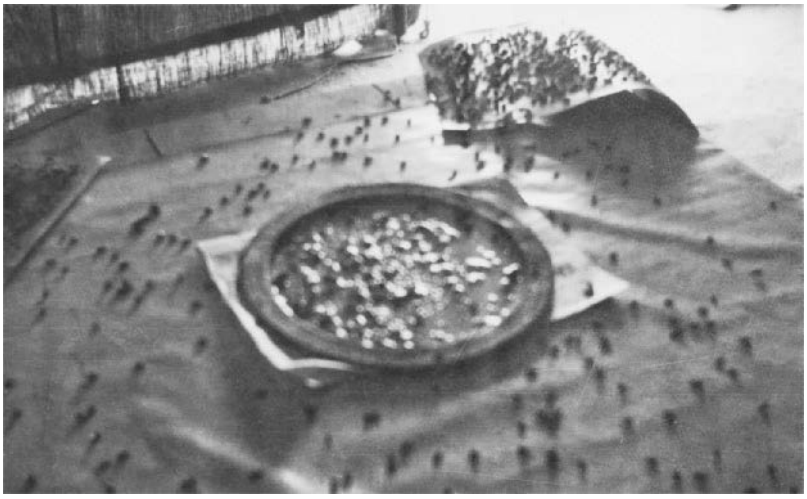


Figure 6.3 Flies caught with a sticky solution spread on the table and dish: "a half days catch," AWM, H00863

Aussies, B[ritish] W[est] Indians & all by the dozens."[94] In spring 1918, the average number of malaria cases was alarming: 340 per week. In the summer, however, the weekly numbers rose even higher, reaching 538 in June and 864 in July.[95]

Men struck by illness in this area found that treatment was limited in the rift valley. Australians, for instance, faced a long trip back to their hospital in Moascar, Egypt, which one medical officer thought was unreasonable. It forced men to leave the heat of the valley, endure the cool of the mountains, and then be plunged back into the heat of the Sinai.[96] Matron M. A. Early of the Aotea New Zealand Convelescent Home in Egypt, who received her countrymen after their hospitalization, said that "[t]he poor boys used to come to us looking utterly broken and old—tremulous and shaky. It was indeed hard to see the woeful change in our sturdy, healthy-looking men."[97]

The EEF fought malaria as a sort of second enemy, attacking mosquito habitats in the Jordan Valley and in the plains. They poured oil on wells, filled in ditches and holes with sand, and drained standing water. In rear areas, the rates of malaria plunged. There was no way to control the mosquitoes in no-man's land, though, or on the Turkish side of the front. Because of this fact, men in the trenches fell ill at a much higher rate than those in rear areas, and those who went on night patrols in no-man's land were especially vulnerable.[98] Mobile laboratories and special procedures for the quick evacuation of malarial soldiers improved the situation by summer 1918, and the rate of malaria only reached 7.6 per cent of the EEF, which a modern physician/historian in the region has praised as "a success."[99]

Most units served for a time in both sections of the line, though some, like the Anzacs, the Jewish Legion, and the British West Indians, spent more time than others in the difficult conditions. A host of men, however, had both the Samaria and the Jordan experiences during the year and carried away mixed memories of an eclectic front, part promised-land and part wasteland.

Combat and the enemy

Contact with the enemy also changed in this part of the war. The Turkish Army was on its last legs, and its men were starved and dressed in rags. As the previous chapter showed, Turks who captured British soldiers stripped them of clothing and food. Still, Turkish resolve did not totally crumble until late in 1918, and for most of this period, the enemy soldiers that the EEF soldiers faced were determined and unbroken.

Through much of the year, this entire theater took on some characteristics of a "quiet" section of the war, especially compared to 1918's crescendo of violence in France.[100] The constant harassment of the machine guns and artillery that had characterized the trenches of Southern Palestine began to fade near the end of the year. "But for aerial activity and the distant sound of guns," one man wrote, "there might be no war on."[101] There were informal truces to collect wounded men from no-man's land, which had not been a major feature of the Middle Eastern war since Gallipoli.[102]

There were even moments when Turkish and British soldiers stood together as comrades against a shared enemy. During a battle in the summer of 1918, a large group of Arab civilians gathered on a distant ridge to watch the "free show" of the trench fighting where a group of New Zealanders were enduring an artillery barrage from Turkish guns. To everyone's astonishment, the Turkish and Austrian gunners shifted their fire off of the New Zealand trenches and began shelling the civilian onlookers. The Anzacs watched "with some satisfaction" as the panicked Arabs scattered. To the New Zealanders it had, as one recalled, an "element of grim humour."[103] Similarly, when a party of foolhardy Scottish officers chased a jackal, foxhunt style, into no-man's land, the Turks did not open fire, though they had registered the entire sector for their guns and thus could have destroyed the Scots with ease and great accuracy.[104] The Scots speculated about why the Turks had not killed them: perhaps out of mutual hatred for jackals. What *was* clear was that tensions were slackening somewhat across the front lines; the Jaffa-Jerusalem front had become less dangerous than many other fronts in the war or even than the front in Southern Palestine had been in the previous year.

The air war illustrates the change in intensity of the front, at least for British Empire soldiers. Early in the year, men in the trenches still faced attack from enemy planes. At one point in April, for instance, an English soldier counted 11 enemy planes dropping bombs on his position; in July, another man counted seven during a Turkish attack.[105] Walter Hewitt could still recall 77 years later how the enemy planes dropped steel darts on his trench in the Jordan Valley.[106]

The aerial nightmare faded as the year progressed. One man wrote home as early as April that "taubes" [enemy planes] came into view of the British lines twice daily, but antiaircraft fire always turned them back.[107] The British ascendancy in the sky became, by the end of the year, nearly absolute, unquestioned dominance, and little fear remained of enemy bombings or strafings. According to Allenby's

official dispatch, in June, the Turkish and German planes had flown over British lines at least 100 times in a week, but in September, that number had sunk to four.[108]

Trench routines, however, remained dangerous. Small battles ("savage little affairs") and raids filled the summer.[109] The lines were too long and too lightly held to support an unbroken set of trenches across the entire country, so some of the trench fighting occurred among the barbed wire entanglements that stretched between disconnected redoubts.[110] Men spent a great deal of time in listening posts in no-man's land and went on patrols between the lines in daylight and at night to lay wires and scout enemy positions. An Australian recalled one typical patrol where a small group of men, under a sergeant, went almost half a mile forward of their trenches to set up flags for artillery spotting, in an attempt to silence Turkish guns.[111] One series of such raids employed more than three brigades at once, capturing hundreds of prisoners and suffering scores of casualties.[112]

Figure 6.4 Royal Welsh Regiment soldiers enjoying a relaxed moment in camp at the front in the Samarian hills north of Jerusalem, 1918, with their "bivvies" embedded in a distinctly Palestinian topography, British Official Photograph (Crown Copyright), AWM, H105551

These patrols were fraught with dangers, from Turkish patrols and snipers[113] and also from friendly forces, the inappropriately named "friendly fire" that is so common in modern warfare. One British West Indies patrol discovered how unfriendly it could be when a New Zealand machine gun opened fire on them in no-man's land.[114] A Welshman, shot near the Turkish lines, was puzzled to see the stretcher-bearer approach him with a lighted lamp. To the wounded man's shock, his rescuer underestimated the danger on the quiet front and brought "whizzbang" artillery shells down on them both.[115]

Artillery exchanges also kept the Palestine trenches from being a completely quiet front. In fact, even the relatively calm summer witnessed some of the most punishing bombardments seen in the theater. The barrage that the British lines suffered preceding a Turkish attack in July was judged by the official history as one of the worst seen in the entire campaign.[116] Some of the largest Turkish guns were so deadly and persistent, they became notorious among the British troops, like "Jericho Jane" that menaced the men in the Jordan Valley.[117] One military post office soldier recalled many years later his new post at Jericho being "shelled out" on his first night at the front.[118] A New Zealander estimated that during another deadly exchange there were two shells per second during the course of an hour, the British guns emitting "[a]lmost one continuous roar."[119] "Bombs, Machine Guns, Rifles and Artillery quite close to our Lines," noted a new conscript on one of his first days in the trenches, "I thought my last hour must be approaching."[120] Certainly from the point of view of the men, the label of Palestine as a "quiet" front was entirely relative.

Two of the most intense periods of conflict were initiated by the British, in their attacks on Amman in the spring and their breakthrough at Megiddo in autumn. They found the Turkish soldiers still formidable, despite the breakdown of their army, and many British soldiers experienced this period as one of loss and grief, which mixed freely with remorse and pity.

The two Transjordan raids in March and April brought the pain of this conflict to the forefront, as their attempts to break the Turkish line and capture Amman ended in disaster. "For a hard time," one veteran judged, "there has been nothing to equal it since the [Gallipoli] peninsula!"[121] A Scottish member of the camel corps complained to his mother that the mountain trails that the men traversed in their hopeless venture were "hardly fit for a goat let alone a camel."[122] The difficult conditions, however, were compounded by the two humiliating defeats that sent the men scrambling in retreat, back over those same paths,

"jammed together and everyone trying to save himself."[123] The London Scottish marched through the Transjordan town of Es Salt to the sound of bagpipes but returned with less pomp and more speed.[124] They left so many dead behind them that other soldiers, moving through the battlefield later, remarked at the size of the London Scottish mass grave.[125]

Life, death, and the enemy during the Big Push

The final assault or "Big Push," which had been postponed by crisis in France, came in September at the Battle of Megiddo, and the EEF swept the Turks before them. The climactic Battle of Megiddo saw the British break the enemy lines and kill or capture tens of thousands of Turks, Germans, and Austrians. This breakthrough began a hurtling drive northward that would end a little more than a month later in Aleppo, at the southern edge of Anatolia itself. At the end of October, the Turks, cut off from their allies by the fall of Bulgaria, requested an armistice, almost two weeks before the fighting ended in France.[126]

The final breakdown of trench warfare during the Battle of Megiddo meant that the soldiers of the EEF spent the last month of their war in motion, pushing the Turks backwards as fast as they could move. This change meant that, though the eclectic nature of the force and the crumbling of the Turks remained the same as in the rest of this period, the rapid movement caused their experience to reflect the war of movement of the previous year. It can be seen either as a continuation of this period of diversity or even as a sixth type of experience for the soldiers.

As one man wrote immediately afterward, on what would have been the most interesting journey of the war, he and his comrades saw little because of the frenetic pace of the advance. They "were so knocked up," they spent every leisure moment "resting and sleeping."[127] In fact, they were so exhausted that the officers of a British artillery unit allowed their men to camp between several brothels near Tripoli and did not see the usual rash of venereal disease, as the men were too "dead" to notice the women's advances.[128]

Apart from the trying pace of the advance, the attack was less dangerous and difficult for the British soldiers than the one in the previous year. British aerial bombs and artillery in vast quantities—more than 1000 shells per minute in the hour preceding the initial attack—smoothed the British road and emptied Turkish trenches.[129] The sky, one man wrote that morning, "is aglow with sheets of flame."[130] Minutes later, he passed over trenches that were empty except for Turkish corpses.

Though the Turkish line broke quickly and irreparably, and tens of thousands of Turks surrendered en masse, the last weeks of the war forced the EEF into a number of small and vicious fights against desperate and hopeless defenders. The Australians, for instance, grappled with the German and Turkish defenders of the village of Semakh, going from house to house in "severe hand to hand fighting."[131] After an accusation of Germans violating a flag of truce, the Australians "killed nearly every German in the place, the platform at the railway station was running with blood."[132] The attackers were shocked at the ferocity of the German and Turkish defenders, whose position seemed so obviously hopeless. "There is not a man in the regiment," a survivor said, "who will ever forget that place, not if he lives to be a thousand."[133] In the Jordan Valley, Turkish soldiers set fire to the undergrowth as they retreated, stifling their pursuers, who choked in the smoke and struggled to march with rags around their faces.[134]

The final battles brought again the problems of quick movement, with water and supplies running short and the evacuation of wounded problematic and slow. Marching northward, caked with sweat and dust, one typical gunner's thoughts of his London home were dominated by fond memories of the cold water tap, and his meals for 18 days in a row consisted entirely of the minimal "iron rations" of bully beef and biscuits.[135] A pair of New Zealanders was so thirsty at one point in the advance that when they found a cistern with a dead sheep floating in it, they "broke through" the slime on the surface, drew some water, and boiled their tea.[136]

Offsetting this supply difficulty somewhat was the vast store of loot that the men acquired on their northward push. After initial privations, the men occasionally enjoyed the local products of the fertile lands of Lebanon and Syria. After several weeks of bully beef, the Australian light horsemen reveled in the local "french beans, pumpkins, carrots and turnips, eggs and tomatoes," not to mention the sheep that was provided by the army for each group of 60 men. A week later, though, all of this extra food had run out.[137] Men took in the unofficial spoils of war, too, as they brought in thousands of prisoners and passed thousands of dead men. One man proudly wrote home about his collection of souvenirs, including Turkish and German belt buckles and medals including an Iron Cross, and a "nice watch and chain from a Turkish officer."[138] Military police set up guards on especially vulnerable towns to try to stop the looting, but they could do little to interfere with the harvest of victory.[139]

The most devastating part of the advance for the EEF was a new onslaught of disease. Malaria, cholera, and the Spanish Influenza that

would soon kill tens of millions worldwide struck the British army more savagely than the enemy did. Surrounded by flu-infected prisoners and far from the antimalarial efforts of the Jordan Valley, thousands of men poured into hospitals; over 4300 in the first weeks of October entered hospitals in the Damascus area. In one 13,000-man EEF unit, Chaytor's Force, 8352 fell out with malaria and flu.[140] In the months of October and November, more than four times as many EEF soldiers (479 total) died of these diseases than were killed in the advance against the Turks.[141]

As the enemy collapsed, the order and predictability of the trench war collapsed, too. Renegade bands of Turkish deserters and opportunistic Arabs became independent forces in the region, threatening every combatant on both sides.[142] Trooper Holman reported that roving bands of former soldiers were looting villages and that, even after areas were solidly in British hands, intermittent shooting went on all night around them. The EEF soldiers even felt intimidated by their Sherifan Arab allies, who they believed were becoming possessive and unpredictable in the newly conquered areas.[143] Details escorting Turkish prisoners had to be reinforced to protect the helpless Turks from the Turks's erstwhile allies and subjects.[144]

In some extreme cases, Turkish prisoners were allowed to keep their weapons to defend against the marauders. An Australian general described a series of night skirmishes between his armed Turkish prisoners and attacking Arabs. In the midst of the fighting, his Australians cheered the Turks: "Go on Jacko! . . . Give it to the Blighters!"[145]

The rout of the Turks and Germans had a profound effect on some men, waking their consciences and filling them with remorse and pity for their adversaries.[146] The rows of dead men that lined the path of Turkish retreat evoked sympathy from many.[147] The Turkish corpses, said one man, were "a nightmare to look upon."[148] A soldier in the Jewish Legion, one of the newer arrivals on the front, retold the story of how a Jewish unit came upon the body of a Turk. It was perched on a rock in the Jordan River, and vultures were eating it. A Jewish sergeant, in a sign of respect for his enemy's remains, shot one of the birds and scared the others away from their grisly feast.[149] Even amid the bloodthirsty hand-to-hand fighting at Semakh, there were scenes of pity. A wounded German prisoner (actually an American of German extraction) told his Australian captor that his life had been spared by an attacker who said, "Let the poor bugger be. He got one already."[150]

Even the devil-may-care flyers were deeply affected by the amount of destruction they meted out to the retreating Turks. In his account,

Australian airman L. W. Sutherland's mood clearly mutates as the battle progresses. He describes bombing unprotected columns of fleeing Turks in a nine-mile-long canyon. As the entrance and exit of the canyon became blocked with wreckage and bodies, those in the center of the column floundered, utterly trapped. Australian airmen rained terror on the helpless men for three days, bombing and strafing with impunity. Sutherland's mood visibly shifts in the account of these days from flippant joy, with comments like "This was bombing *de luxe*. No opposition upstairs," to growing unease and finally to sickened pity.[151] The more bold he became in approaching his victims, the less insulation he felt from their plight, and, by the end of the narrative, his victory celebrations are far more muted than in the first hours after the breakthrough. After emptying his guns on each of several trips to the canyon, he recalls only

> a gloomy night in the mess. Gone our excitement of a few days previously. Gone the elation of having Jacko just where we wanted him. . . . We were weary of slaughter. . . .
> . . . We were not going to fall down on our job. But oh, those killings! . . . Thank God for a bath. That helped—it seemed to wash invisible blood off our hands. Only the lucky ones slept that night.[152]

Even Ross Smith, the Australian pilot who had written in March 1918 that he wanted to kill every Turk he saw, had felt the weight of those deaths on his conscience by the end of the war. He and his comrades were "not at all sorry" when the Battle of Megiddo wound down, "because we were all tired of the killing."[153] Much of the Australian's thirst for blood in response to the deaths of the previous year seemed to have been slaked by the end of 1918.

Others empathized with the hungry and weak men they captured, while having little but scorn for the Germans who seemed to them to be so well-fed and dressed.[154] The inequities between allies seemed evil to the British soldiers and inspired hatred for the Germans and Austrians. This hatred was, in essence, British soldiers siding with the Turks against the Turks' own allies.

Armistice

Some soldiers began to express their feelings of mourning or grief more openly as the war wound to a close. One man wrote home of the burial of several comrades near the Sea of Galilee in the last days of the war, calling it the "saddest ceremony [he] had ever attended."[155] Another, in

a hospital in Tripoli on the last full day of the war in Palestine, thought the sight of those who died each night was "pathetic," as he imagined the "broken heart" that each would cause far away.[156] Ironically, it may have been the growing hope of survival that made losses seem more poignant. "It is tragic luck," wrote one man of malaria deaths late in 1918, for these men to die "now that the end seems in sight, after coming through so much."[157] The emotional armor of jaded sensibilities that had held through much of the war seemed to be crumbling into sentiment and grief at the end.

The official announcements of the end of the war, too, brought a similar mixture of feelings in the men of the EEF. The fall of the Turkish Empire brought surprisingly little joy. "[S]o used are we now to great events that the news made strangely little impression on us," explained English machine gunner J. Wilson.[158] Many worried about transfer to the Western Front.[159] An English camelier, for instance, thought that the wintry weather would be too much of a shock to his system, and he noted the extraordinary and universal glee caused by the news of the cracking of German lines in France.[160] Only the final armistice on 11 November evoked serious rejoicing,[161] but even this was a mixed celebration. While some men went completely wild, like the Welsh soldiers who made a bonfire of their beds and danced naked, covered with soot,[162] many men took the news quietly and introspectively. "Us chaps were pretty excited but we cannot realize it yet," said a typical soldier; "when we are on the way Home is when we shall feel excited."[163] "Everybody was all in a trance," recalled an Australian.[164] It was, according to a veteran, "a quiet affair" in which only "[s]ome enthusiasts let off a few fireworks and Verey lights [flares]."[165] Sergeant George Laslett recalled that his unit was issued a free beer each, in honor of the celebration. He later said sarcastically "it must have been the dearest drink ever given."[166]

The British soldiers' interactions with the enemy in this last period were more poignant than at any other time during the war. These interactions were far more personal, as desertions, prisoners, and battles brought them into face-to-face contact with their enemies. The emotions of a dying war became confused and contradictory, as the British soldier faced a quiet trenchline that still carried the sting of death but not to the same degree as before. In the final battlefields where the enemy had to choose either to surrender or fight, the men of the EEF found that they themselves chose between rancor and pity. Yet a final irony is that at the end of the war, when emotions seem to have taken on a new level of intensity, the celebrations of victory failed to rally

those awakened feelings in an overflow of joy. Pity, remorse, sorrow, and anger dominated and squeezed out the thrill of conquest for the men of the EEF.

Conclusion

The victory of the Easterner politicians and generals brought a push that broke the Turkish Army in the region, but only after the German Spring Offensive had delayed it enough to create a new version of trench warfare in Palestine. This situation caused a phase of the war in which the common soldier's experience was dominated by conflict and dichotomy.

Nearly every aspect of the soldier's life now had, like the ancient god Janus, two faces. The Christian monolith of the white British Army, which had constituted the vast majority of the EEF in the Sinai and Southern Palestine, evolved rapidly into a complicated racial and religious mixture with the inclusion of Indian and Jewish troops, indeed of new men from every continent on earth. Sympathy and anger for the enemy cohabited in the hearts of the EEF's soldiers. Men living through the same front faced two completely different environments, one a stony and uninhabited Hell and the other a lush and friendly paradise. Then all of them saw a change in the last days of the war that, despite strong continuities with the rest of the period, might even possibly be seen as a sixth (though brief) set of experiences for the soldiers. The pattern to the soldiers' experience in this final segment of the war in Palestine represented a move from uniformity to disharmony.

7
Epilogue: The Long Journey Home

The end of the war brought an end to some of the suffering of the fighting, but grief and violence and disillusionment followed the men into an unsettled peace. For many men, a long and agonizing wait for the return home turned their victory into disappointment. Many men felt driven by unresolved grievances to take matters into their own hands, often with bloody and tragic results. Ultimately, though, the joy of returning home overwhelmed all other emotions.

The soldiers of the EEF, released from the supreme effort of the northward invasion, began to be redistributed into other duties, especially guarding prisoners and garrisoning newly conquered areas. Large numbers boarded trains for the Sinai and the Suez Canal zone to wait in huge demobilization camps for their ships home. Welshman John Evans, who had enlisted in 1914, wrote in 1920 that he and his comrades had expected to be home within a month, perhaps resuming his old job as a railway signalman. Within a month he was certainly working on a railway, but he was still in uniform and still in the Middle East.[1]

A study by the EEF's staff of the soldiers' letters home (read as they had passed through censorship) in the last quarter of 1918 showed that the end of the war brought unrest and a decline in morale, as men chafed to leave for home. English soldiers, especially, were anxious to get home quickly. They knew that war factories would soon be closing or retooling, and they feared that the men who were released from war work would swiftly take all of the available jobs in England.[2] Their minds were already on peacetime problems—labour disputes, the British general election (which they resented having called while they were away, calling it a "deliberate plot . . . to squeeze out the fighting forces" because many had not received ballots in time), and the "universally condemned" Bolshevism.[3]

Australian military policeman Albert Toone found that the end of the war did not mean rest for him and his comrades, even as their normal priority work of rounding up Turkish prisoners wound down. The police had terrible trouble in keeping order at and after the end of the war, as clashes between soldiers and locals continued. Toone's unit had to chase down black market sales of alcohol and place guards on a railway station to keep soldiers from stripping off the wooden walls for their fires. They continued to respond to reports of soldiers robbing civilians and to catch men allowing their horses to graze in farmers' fields. They found it difficult to prevent violence, because the local people were constantly firing weapons into the air, presumably in celebration; false alarms became a major drain on their attention.[4]

Though the Turks had been driven out of the Holy Land, the tensions that the war had raised between races and nationalities swelled in its wake. The best, or perhaps the worst, example of the bad blood that spilled over into peacetime was an incident at the small Palestinian village of Surafend on 10 December 1918.

Conflict with the locals and theft by locals of soldiers' property sharply increased at the end of the war, and British camps near Arab towns were constantly infiltrated by thieves in the more lax atmosphere of peace. At 1:30 a.m., in the darkness of a New Zealand camp near Surafend, Trooper L. T. Lowry awoke to discover a thief in the act of stealing a haversack. Lowry shouted 'drop that Wallad' and chased the robber out of the camp. As he left the ring of the camp, a shot rang out, and the Anzac soldier fell with an army Colt .45 bullet in his chest. His startled comrades followed the sounds of moaning and brought him back to camp just in time to watch him die. At dawn, Lowry's lieutenant and others found the scene of the murder and the thief's tracks in the sand. Bare footprints led from the murder site straight into the town of Surafend, where townsfolk were beginning to slip away in multiple directions.[5] The New Zealanders surrounded the town, reinforced by Australians and Scots, and waited all the next day for the local authorities to give up the culprit or for their own superiors to act.[6] In the meantime, a hastily convened court of inquiry collected evidence and reached the rather anticlimactic conclusion that it was a case of death by "a gun shot wound inflicted by an unknown person."[7]

Frustrated at the lack of concrete and swift action from either side, the men were fired by what Australian Trooper J. I. Doran recalled as a "fever heat" of anger.[8] Illustrating the mood in the ranks, New Zealand signaler George Ranstead wrote that day and told his parents the story of the murder. "Our fellows are feeling very sore about it & want to

go & clean the village up. These things have been going on for a long time & as the culprits are very rarely caught it seems to us that the only way is to make an example of a lot of them."[9]

Some of the aggrieved soldiers acted on these frustrations. They burst into the town, firing houses and beating the men of the town with sticks. As the houses burned, hidden ammunition began to explode, and the entire scene became a nightmare of the most spectacular kind. Doran, who himself tended to many of the wounded, said that he saw at the nearby casualty clearing station "loads of dead Arabs that had been brought in through the night" and women and children straggling in with burns and bullet wounds. He noted that all of the men were wearing pilfered military clothing.[10]

This event was seen by some of the men as a pinnacle in a long chain of unresolved grievances against the local Arabs and a capstone to the racial tensions of the war. It also had a serious souring effect for the Anzac soldiers toward their British commanders, especially the Commander-in-Chief Allenby. Shortly after the massacre, Allenby called their entire division together and unleashed a "tirade of abuse," saying, in Doran's memory, "I was proud of you once. I am proud of you no longer. You are a lot of cold-blooded murderers."[11]

No courts-martial followed, but whether the entire division suffered unofficial punishments, like the loss of medals or leave, was a question that raised anger decades later, and contention also arose over shares of the reparations payments from New Zealand, Australia, and Britain.[12] Many antipodean accounts, however, agree in their vitriol toward Allenby and the British staff. Henry Gullett, in the Australian official history, bristles, saying that the general "used terms which became his high position as little as the business at Surafend had been worthy of the great soldiers before him," taking the stunning step of placing his words on the same level as the massacre itself.[13] The much later New Zealand historian Terry Kinloch, though steadfastly refusing to excuse the murders themselves, takes Allenby to task for his rough handling of the entire division for the crimes of a group within it.[14] Historian Patsy Adam-Smith notes that in her discussions with Australian Trooper Rex Hall, he was angry at Allenby in 1978 and still remained angry at his death.[15]

"Walzing Matilda" poet A. B. "Banjo" Paterson, training remount horses in Egypt, disagreed that Allenby left a permanent pall over the close of the war for these men, who he said took the scolding philosophically. He noted that they cheered him loudly in Cairo afterwards. The storyteller also glibly told of an Australian mule-driver whose team had refused to obey him; the driver "got off his wagon, lit a cigarette

and said: 'I was proud to command you. But now I'm done with you. You are cowards and murderers.'"[16] A great many soldiers maintained a high opinion of the general. New Zealander Edwin McKay thought Allenby had been exactly right in what he had said. McKay believed that Arab pilfering "(a two way affair)" and spying did not justify the massacre, and that the culprits represented only the "very very small percentage" of his countrymen who were "toughs."[17]

For many of the mounted soldiers, another disappointment awaited. The EEF's horses were not to be returned to their home countries, but were to be left for the occupying army or sold locally. Many of the horses had been exposed to exotic diseases and parasites that the army wanted to keep from spreading. The transportation also would cost more than the animals were worth. More importantly, there simply were not enough ships to move them all, at a time when thousands of men were waiting for their own berths home.

To the horsemen, the abrupt order seemed like an order to abandon their comrades. Many had expected their beloved horses to travel with them back to their homes; some had even hoped that they could buy their steeds from the army, with dreams of riding them triumphantly through their home towns.[18] "A horse that has come through," he insisted, "has quite earned his discharge," wrote George Ranstead.[19] Others were terribly worried about how their horses would be treated by their new owners. Ranstead could not imagine his war horse pulling a plow. The nightmare for Australian Henry Gullett was that they would be sold for the bull rings of Spain.[20] Assurances that the army would take great care to sell them to people who would treat them well, as one local newspaper in New Zealand pointed out, in a deft understatement, did "not altogether satisfy returned men."[21]

Stories began to circulate about men illegally killing their own horses rather than surrender them to an uncertain fate, though Historian Jean Bou has demonstrated the lack of hard contemporary evidence that this actually happened in the Australian forces.[22] The idea certainly was in circulation, though. "It is no secret," reported the same local New Zealand newspaper, "that many of the mounted men, when ordered homeward, killed their horses rather than leave the faithful animals to the chances of the future."[23] The army itself did destroy a number of the horses, those judged unfit to use or sell, following a complicated and carefully-managed rating scheme to decide their fates.[24] J. I. Doran and his comrades received the painful order to shoot all horses over nine years old; "What a day of anguish!" he still recalled emotionally at the age of 93. After shots rang out across the desert, the men who returned

hung their heads, and no one wanted to eat that night.[25] Historian Terry Kinloch has determined that, in the case of the New Zealanders, only one horse from the EEF ever arrived back in their island home.[26]

* * *

As they waited for their boats, most solders either sat in huge demobilization camps or took up garrison duty. A number were called up to fight in an uprising of Egyptians. The painful irony of this duty, a seldom acknowledged war after a war, is evident in the example of Australian Corporal Alex Anderson, a man who had enlisted in 1915 and served through Gallipoli, the Sinai, and Palestine. He was one of the men waiting for his ship home in 1919, with his demobilization papers signed and submitted. He wrote to his sister in January 1919, speculating about whether he would arrive home by his birthday in July; he asked his sister not to let his friends arrange a huge party for his return.[27]

Anderson did not arrive by his birthday; he was killed in April 1919 while guarding a train during the Egyptian uprising. His family received only a few medals, a photograph of his grave in Alexandria, and his personal effects, the accumulated treasures of the Gallipoli, Sinai, and Palestine Campaigns, including

> 1 tobacco pouch. 1 metal ring. 1 cigarette holder. 1 pencil & pencilcase. 1 silk flag. 1 pocket knife. 1 [handkerchief containing] sundry badges & piece of aluminum. 1 Belt with badges. 1 empty purse. 1 wristlet watch. 2 Fountain pens. 1 belt with 2 buckles. 2 Pine Cones, 1 tin [containing] 2 mehidies. 1 Rupee. 1 Franc. 1 Five Piastre Piece. 71 coins of small value. 1 ring.[28]

The coins from so many different countries, an illustration of the diversity of his experiences and of the incredible variety people he met, must have puzzled his family. The pine cones, too, may have perplexed them; one may imagine that they were carried from the forests of Lebanon or perhaps even collected from the famous Lone Pine of Gallipoli and carried across the Sinai Desert and through the mountains of Palestine. The writing utensils would have been clear to them; those were the only connection they had had with their loved one through those years.

Australian Sergeant Henry Bostock, who had arrived in the theater in 1915, boarded a ship for home in July 1919.[29] The long delay that some men faced in returning home pushed some men into open rebellion. At Ismailia, along the Suez Canal, on 9 July 1919, impatient

New Zealanders planned a "Mass Meeting" to protest against their long wait for boats. Lt Col E. J. Hulbert had to send a desperate circular to his men, asking them to send their grievances through military channels to him. His arguments show his own frustration and anger at the situation and at his men's impatience.

"Surely you men must realize," he wrote, "that we are competing against the whole world for boats."[30] He then went on to blame Austrian submarines, food shortages in Europe, and influenza for the lack of shipping. He argued that many English soldiers, some of whom had been in the force since 1914, had not yet left either.

"Honestly I do not consider you men have much to complain about," he continued. "I and all my brother officers are with you in wanting to get out of this country as soon as possible."[31]

His warnings may have stopped the mass meeting, but within a week much of the frustration boiled over. On Bastille Day, in celebration of the signing of the Versailles Treaty, bar hours were extended in Ismailia until 11:30 p.m. The military police decided to wait until the last moment to tell the bar owners about the new rules, and most establishments closed as normal by 8:00 or earlier, except for the local French Club, where officers continued to drink late into the evening. When soldiers saw this inequity, anger swept through the ranks, and a number of men charged through the town, breaking into bars and looting from shops, carrying away cameras, jewelry, and clothing.[32]

The next day, the violence rose to a crescendo, as men waiting for ships joined the riots. A mix of some 700–1000 Australians, New Zealanders, and British burst into the French Club and other bars, smashing windows and filling their arms with bottles and other loot. As officers and military police rushed in to try to control the riot, Australian Major A. Chisholm heard a single intelligible voice rising above the fray, shouting "Give us boats."

The investigation afterwards was heated; officers argued mostly about which nationality was to blame for the riots. The British insisted that their men had not been actively involved, while one Australian captain claimed that British soldiers were wearing slouch hats to impersonate Australians and a New Zealand officer claimed that he had cleared British soldiers out of looted shops on the second night. Both Australians and New Zealanders laid most of the blame on the other colonials. The investigation laid the blame at the door of the colonials, saying that the riots were Australian-planned, and the rioters were 40 per cent Australian, 40 per cent New Zealander, and 20 per cent British. A number of men were court-martialed for looting or for having

stolen property in their possession,[33] but the three governments paid the thousands of pounds of claims by shopkeepers.

The relief and joy that was lacking in the armistice burst forth for many men on the final return home. As Londoner Jack Beer correctly guessed after the armistice, "when we are on the way Home is when we shall feel excited."[34] William Borbidge's excitement is apparent in his terse diary entries for August 1919, as his boat neared the Australian coast. "Victoria in sight," he wrote; "The day is near at hand." After his landing and a "Good Welcome," his diary ends with his arrival home and in large letters the exultant words "Peace Perfect Peace–."[35]

When Les Matthews stepped off the train in Somerset, England, and met his family, he had been gone for five years, having served in Gallipoli and then in the EEF. "[W]hat a welcome that was." They sat up and talked most of the night. "It took me some time," he recalled, "to really settle back into civilian life again, but considering the effect that wartime experiences could have upon men . . . I consider myself fortunate indeed."[36]

As machine gunner Wilson returned to Grantham, England, in February 1919, after more than a year in the Middle East, his enthusiasm reached a nearly religious ecstasy. His last diary entry reads like an inversion of all of the experiences of Palestine: the hunger, the slow and difficult traveling, the strangeness of the locals, the tedium, and the separation from family.

> The rest of this great day has been like a dream. Our going ashore, and seeing at the same pier the little old 'Lydia', which took me away when I began my travels; the issuing of lordly rations; the luxury of a swift English train; Wimbledon, and small boys strange knowledge of the English tongue; the Dispersal Camp, a great dinner, a long wait, and then the bewildering speed of the routine of release, and the final exit precisely at six o-clock; the marvelous luck in the catching of trains; the stepping out into the dark and finding friendly hands there; the smiling of faces which I had loved long since.

It is no wonder that Wilson's last comment is a wish that heaven could be as good as that moment of return: "May it be like this when I go Home at last."[37]

Conclusion

At the end of the Great War, an Australian medical officer, Lt Col Rupert M. Downes, took on the task of recording the medical lessons learned by the EEF throughout the conflict. He found it impossible, however, to make sweeping statements about a war that "altered materially" several times. Ultimately, he had to break his analysis into three periods, each with unique sets of conditions and challenges.[1] He saw the Sinai Desert as totally unlike the Gaza-Beersheba trenches, which were, in turn, not comparable to the stuttering northward drive that began in October 1917 and ended with the armistice in 1918.

Lt Col Downes realized what many soldiers in the EEF knew throughout the war: that the experience of the campaign, and thus of the common soldier, changed distinctly several times during the conflict. Other men addressed this issue in less obvious terms, as did another Australian, Trooper James Gallagher, writing from Palestine in early 1918 (possibly to his former sergeant, a veteran of the early war), as he divided the war into two parts. "It is some change," Gallagher wrote, "being here to what we were used to in the desert."[2] Gallagher's letter resounds with this theme, emphasizing again and again how much more frightening and dangerous his war had become.

What these men knew through experience was that, as Tony Ashworth has argued, there can be no single, all-encompassing description of the soldier's experience in the Great War.[3] In fact, no such monolithic explanation can even apply to the relatively small and secluded Sinai and Palestine Campaigns. Changes over time negated the similarities in the campaign to such an extent that a man who joined the war in its last year would have had little understanding or even awareness of the conditions and dangers that the veterans had faced two years earlier.

These changes through the course of the war led Lt Col Downes and now lead us to find order and commonality on a smaller scale, within short, discrete periods during which conditions were relatively constant and common to most men in the theater. Within each period, common hardships and common dangers united men into a discernible and explicable experience that the vast majority of the men involved would have recognized.

The men who served in the Sinai Desert in 1916, for example, lived in an environment that had no correlation to any other theater or period of the war at all. The sharp-edged dunes and wide empty spaces, mostly devoid of towns and even vegetation, created conditions that offered the EEF's soldiers more of a kinship to the army of Alexander the Great than to their own countrymen in France and Belgium. The Turkish enemy was an ethereal creature in this landscape, more imagined in the shadows and seen in the distance than experienced at close quarters. Never once, in the entire year during which the EEF crossed the desert, did soldiers of the opposing armies establish and occupy stable trenchlines within firing range of each other.

Most men would have agreed that the real enemy in the Sinai was the desert. The sand, the flies, the storms, the heat, and thirst dogged them relentlessly. Though the elements were less daunting and somewhat less dangerous than bullets, they amplified the difficulty of the campaign and kept the campaign from being what many soldiers from other parts of the war took it to be: a glorified training "fatigue."

On few levels can one combine this desert experience with the realities of the war in Southern Palestine. Where there had been only sand, there was now also hard, stony ground. In place of a hastily retreating and lightly entrenched enemy in the desert, the men of the EEF faced a stubbornly determined foe in Palestine. Constant victory turned suddenly to serial defeat, and the light dangers of combat in the desert gave way to the high body counts of the First and Second Battles of Gaza that seem so much more characteristic of the Great War.

After this initial baptism of fire, the war became much more like the typical picture of the Western Front. The summer months of 1917, particularly, seem in many ways a drier version of the war in France and Belgium. Men lived short distances from their enemies and engaged in daily sniping, raids, and patrols. Trenchworks became elaborate and wore creative and nostalgic names, as they did on the other stable fronts of the war.

This reflection of the wider war in Palestine vanished as quickly as it had appeared, when the army moved northward into the Judean hills

to Jerusalem. This period of the war bore virtually no resemblance to the Sinai at all, and only a passing similarity to the trench war of the months before. The idea that the men of the EEF would be freezing and bogged in mud in the winter of 1917 would have seemed a cruel and outlandish joke to those braving the sun of the Sinai just over a year before. The men of the Sinai would also have reeled at the casualty lists of the 1917 offensive. Though both efforts pushed hard against the same Turkish enemy and both succeeded in every respect, the man who fought in the Palestine advance faced death and terror to a degree that made the Sinai seem like an episode from a completely different war.

The final months of war seem so diverse as to be a summary in miniature of all of the previous experiences of the war. The war in the Jordan Valley, though unique in many of its challenges, like its rugged impassability, reflected the Sinai in many ways. The heat and flies of the sandy desert recurred in abundance, and flying sand was replaced by flying dust. In the same way, the trenches across the Samarian plains and hills had characteristics of the trenches in front of Gaza during the previous year, with trench routines and artillery duels to remind veterans of their earlier experiences. Even the rapid advance in the last stages of the war, with its stunning breakthrough, its supply shortages, and its fierce actions against a retreating enemy, must have brought to mind the events of the previous year's advance through the hills of Judea. In that sense, the experience of the final period of the war, with men experiencing all three of these realities, provided to newcomers a broad lesson in the varied experience of the soldier in this theater.

In many other ways, however, this last year retained its own character and quality, far different from any other period of the war on this front. The proximity to local cities and towns transformed the social reality of war service in this area. In no period in the war had the men of the EEF known unfettered and continual access to local people before the establishment of stable lines in Central Palestine. In the Sinai and Southern Palestine, the few tiny oasis villages and hamlets were deserted before the army's arrival or were emptied by the army itself. In the advance toward Jerusalem the men had moved too fast to develop relationships or have meaningful interactions (except brief and often negative ones) with indigenous people. Only in 1918 did the British soldiers enjoy both stability and proximity to native populations at the same time. As a result of this change and of the recreation of the EEF into a diverse imperial force, that final year, including the period immediately after the war, provides the richest examples of intercultural exchanges, whether they resulted in friendship or racial violence.

This period more than any other calls for further scholarly scrutiny of its ethnic interactions. The Palestinians' first impressions of the British, their new overlords, who would control Palestine by a League of Nations mandate for 30 years, came from the soldiers of the EEF. The Jewish leadership in Palestine in the next generation served, trained, fought, and learned as members of the EEF. The thefts, the friendships, the violence, the resentments: all would make up one of the earliest chapters in the painful story of conflict in that broken land. All of it began when these British Empire soldiers marched into the villages, hills, and plains of Palestine.

This final segment of the war remains distinct, too, in the character of its fighting, with the surges of emotion, both compassion and bitterness, that emerged among British Empire soldiers. Economist Niall Ferguson has argued that men on the Western Front continued to fight to the end of the war at least partly because they enjoyed the war and the killing.[4] Among the men in this present study, though an element of this bloodthirstiness clearly exists, other attitudes seem to counterbalance it. Here, the changing nature of the battlefield and of interactions with the enemy seems to have created different emotional atmospheres in different periods of the conflict. As Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson have suggested in a commonsense criticism of Ferguson's work, the conditions of the war (specifically the belief in a man's mind that his army would prevail) must have had a tremendous influence on his attitude toward the fight.[5] This suggestion certainly applies to the Sinai and Palestine: as fighting intensified and casualties mounted, emotions ran hotter and men felt far more motivation to kill than at quiet, stationary periods. As we have seen, once victory was assured, many British Empire soldiers felt a flood of emotions that had often remained unexpressed before, ranging from increased pathos and anger at every comrade's death, to regret for killing enemy soldiers, to increased sympathy for fallen and suffering foes, and even to feelings of comradeship with the enemy.

Ross Smith, the Australian Flying Corps pilot, still widely and fondly remembered in his hometown of Adelaide, was the perfect example of this phenomenon. In some periods, his example would have been perfect for inclusion in Ferguson's study, relating killing to fun, to sport, and to revenge, but some of Smith's recorded emotions argue against those motivations just as strongly. The key to understanding Smith is to note the circumstances that surrounded his bloodthirstiness and to see that it was not at all constant throughout the war. In late 1916, for example, when Smith wrote of the "fun" of shooting Turks and how the sight of their flight made him laugh; his playful, detached attitude

toward killing reflected the atmosphere of the Sinai Campaign.[6] In early 1918, as we have seen, in the wake of the most intense fighting and loss of the war, Smith's "very bloodthirsty" reasons for killing had shifted to vengeance after his brother's death.[7] In late 1918 he began the Battle of Megiddo describing his bombings again as "fun" and resented every moment that he was grounded.[8] His heart softened, however, with the breaking of the Turkish lines and spirits. He was glad to see the war wind down as he had grown sick of the killing.[9] His attitude shifted with the changing circumstances of the war, adapting both to the intensity level of combat and to his own feelings of personal loss. His bloodthirstiness, like that of many others, seems to have ridden highest during intense periods of combat and loss. Impending victory altered his perspective, as it did for so many of his comrades.

Smith's shifting emotions regarding killing demonstrate that Ferguson's arguments, though they certainly contain a strong element of truth that translates to the Middle Eastern war, are too simplistic and monolithic for the Sinai and Palestine. They need to take into account the periods of the war because men's attitudes toward the war ebbed and flowed with their circumstances. This is why the war in this theater is best seen in its distinct periods.

It is an enticing but dangerous business to base generalizations about the soldier's experience only on one period because it can lead to a failure to capture the reality of the entire war. The attitude of British Empire soldiers toward their Turkish enemies is an excellent example of this problem, as some scholars write of the mutual respect and good feelings between Turkish and British soldiers without enough reference to the period or circumstances of the war.[10] Those who dig deeper talk accurately about a *qualified* respect, one that was based on specific aspects of their fighting qualities, especially their toughness and courage in defending their trenches.[11] As we have seen, both of these views are quite correct as generalizations and they are echoed by many participants, but British feelings toward the Turks were anything but constant. In the Sinai the Turks remained almost a curiosity to the British soldiers, who seemed to hold no animosity toward them. In the march through central Palestine, however, anger and hatred flared and respect and compassion toward the enemy were difficult to detect in the letters and diaries of the British.

The temptation is to see men's emotional reactions as simply reflections of battle conditions: the intensity of the fighting, the severity of friendly losses, and the frequency of the violations of fair play (firing under flags of truce, hiding weapons and arming men in hospitals, and

so on). These catalysts clearly did hold powerful sway over the minds and hearts of the men, but they do not fully account for the strange mixture of emotions in the final offensive of the war in late 1918. This seemingly contradictory flood of emotion, evident in many men's period writings, suggest that the fact that the war was ending and the way in which it was ending had, as Prior and Wilson have hinted, an even stronger influence over these men than the circumstances of the campaign itself. Seen outside of the context of the five distinct periods that we have identified, these seemingly contradictory attitudes and actions would look as if they had no coherence or commonality at all, but within the individual circumstances of each period there is a discernible structure in the apparent chaos.

Many caveats are in order, though, as we discuss the differences between these five periods, as many elements bind the entire war in this theater together. Chief among these permanent elements is the ever-present power of politics pulling the strings of the men on the front lines. Though the soldiers showed little awareness of the movements of political figures, they found their world transformed again and again by the twists and turns of politics.[12]

This study has shown an indirect but potent link between political decisions and the daily life of the soldier. Scholars like David Woodward and Matthew Hughes have already presented compelling cases for the more direct connection between political decisions and the overall progress of military campaigns, and Woodward has made a healthy move toward tying the politics, the military campaigns, and the soldiers together. As this present work has shown, the link can be drawn even tighter; the influence of political decisions thundered into the trenches, becoming one of the most potent forces in the soldier's daily life.

Many aspects of the soldier's life on the Sinai and Palestine Fronts bear the mark of the politician's choices, from the food supply to the level of danger that the soldiers faced. Politicians affected the troops most profoundly with two types of decisions: the charting of grand strategy and the control of resources. Military authorities, both in London and locally, had great power in each of these arenas, but as we have seen, the politicians, and most especially David Lloyd George, had the most potent influence in the creation of general priorities and policies.

A grand strategic decision, made by politicians and generals in London, created the EEF and plunged it into the desert war in the Sinai. Strategic concerns about the safety of the Suez Canal and communications with the Antipodes and India drove the men into the desert to push for a solid defense line far to the west of the waterway. When the

British army reached the far side of the desert, the Easterner faction among the politicians, armed with Lloyd George's new premiership, pressed them forward into Southern Palestine.

In each case, men who would either have taken quiet garrison positions or sailed away to another front (likely the Western Front) pressed forward into battle with the Turks. Under pressure to move forward to defensible positions, they outpaced their supplies and left every comfort of stability behind them. Every hardship that the open terrain offered and every wound or fright that the enemy inflicted sprang indirectly from these political decisions.

Similarly, the stagnant trench war of Southern Palestine in mid-1917 and the drive toward Jerusalem in late 1917, two abrupt and fundamental re-creations of the lifestyle and experience of the common soldier, each resulted from the shifting vision of the campaign in the minds of leading politicians and generals. During the former period, Lloyd George's faction and ideas had reached a nadir with losses in the premier's schemes in both France and Palestine, and the EEF received a new commander and a long wait in the trenches. The latter, on the other hand, rose from a concession that General Robertson made to Lloyd George after the Easterner agreed to forfeit some of his cherished plans in Salonika. The agreements that ended these squabbles sent the men of the EEF first into trench warfare and then into the most intense fighting and extreme weather conditions of the entire war.

In the last year of the war, the fortunes of the EEF rose and fell according to the necessities on the Western Front. Although the Easterners had attained ascendancy and Robertson himself had fallen from power, the German Spring Offensive overruled the political debate and stalled the planned invasion for half a year. The final movement, though delayed, was the last victory of the Easterner cause, though it was virtually lost among the other colossal events of those final months of the war. It was not lost, however, upon the common soldier of the EEF. He lived that year in virtual quarantine, waiting for that violent punctuation of the war that taxed him to his utmost in that last handful of feverish days.

Politics also governed the distribution of supplies and the very makeup of the EEF itself and thus became the fount from which many of the hardships and comforts of the front flowed. During 1916 and the first part of 1917, for example, when the opening salvos of the political battle over the future of Palestine were being fired in London, the records of men in the EEF redound with complaints of shortage. Food and water were in short supply and the lack of artillery and airplanes made daily

life dangerous and attacks suicidal. From summer 1917 onward, however, when Lloyd George guaranteed the supply of the front, the only shortages were temporary, caused by fast movement or bad weather. The balance of artillery and air power shifted, and the helplessness of the common soldiers faded gradually until the end of the war.

Other elements, apart from the ever-present power of politics, also cut across the entire Great War experience in this theater. In every part of the war, for example, the enemy remained essentially the same, even though the two sides faced each other in extremely different ways in different periods. Turks and Arabs filled the vast majority of the enemy ranks (though always with a German and Austrian minority) and thus the enemy was generally Muslim, speaking languages unintelligible to virtually all common soldiers of the EEF. This Oriental enemy was so exotic that the types of informal interactions and unspoken understandings that Tony Ashworth has noted on the Western Front were rare on this front.[13] Most of the exceptions to this rule came in the strange and multifaceted final months of the war or in communications between the British and the few Germans and Austrians in the Turkish ranks. The most dramatic examples of these informal interactions and understandings—the exception that proves the rule, in a way—had to do with the flyers, who flew over each others' aerodromes to drop letters and personal effects from pilots who had been captured and killed behind their lines. In one such venture by a German pilot, some British officers reacted badly and sent up a British plane to chase him off, squelching this type of activity. An outspoken Australian pilot, recalling the incident after having been an air marshal, considered this enforcement of military discipline "such a silly bloody thing to do."[14]

Another part of the experience of the common soldier that remained fairly constant throughout the war was a sharp awareness of the distinctions between officers and men. The difficult physical conditions of the war in the Sinai and Palestine constantly returned this issue to the fore. Though junior officers and even many senior officers bore up under sun, sand, heat, rain, and cold like their men, they always lived at a slightly higher level of comfort than the privates. This is apparent in the Sinai, when officers often had free access to the water that was denied to the men. It is also obvious in the different accommodations available to them on leave and in the different levels of comfort on trains. As we have seen, in the cold of the Judean Hills, officers took the only shelter, and in the dust of the Jordan, infantrymen choked on the dust from their officers' horses. The experience for officers was padded by relative luxury, and at least some soldiers (especially those from

Australia and New Zealand) were distinctly aware of the distinctions and met them with cynicism and disdain.[15]

Of course, a number of other elements of the experience of this theater of the Great War tied the men of the EEF together, no matter which segment of the war they encountered. Physical hardship was theirs in every period and location, to a degree that gave them the right to boast in the faces of any Great War soldiers from any front. Isolation from their home countries, with only tenuous connections to relatives and familiar scenes, plagued virtually all of the EEF's soldiers in every period of the war.[16] These common threads provided some broader sense of unity for the entire campaign, and many even distinguished life in this theater from that on the Western Front.

The ultimate answer to the question of whether there was a single Great War experience depends, of course, on how closely one looks. In one sense, every person who has seen the face of war or even the scourge of misfortune is bound by unseen cords to others who have suffered similarly. In another sense, however, there can be no completely accurate generalization about a large group like an army, as no two people ever experience any event in exactly the same way. They bring with them differences in perspective, in cultural expectations, and in religious and moral belief. Their perceptions of any event are shaped independently. Examined at that level, each man who fought in the war had a unique set of experiences. Both of these levels of interpretation, however, though clearly bearing kernels of truth, beg the question rather than answer it.

It is part of the historian's task to recover structure from chaos, to simplify and generalize where possible, and to find threads of commonality that tie people together and also to highlight distinctions that allow classification. In this case, common threads do exist in the experience of the British soldiers in the Sinai and Palestine, but they are heavily qualified by the differences that divided the experience into distinct periods.

Thus, when one speaks of the soldiers' experience in this part of the Great War, the immediate question that should follow is "Which ones?" The experiences can be likened in some ways to the long rail journey that so many of the British soldiers endured across the desert toward Cairo. The first-class train cars of the EEF officers and the third-class boxcars of the private soldiers followed the same tracks. In many significant ways, they were identical; but, to the passengers, each car, like each period of the war, was individual and distinct. Each had its comforts, its dangers, and its defects. Each passenger would have offered a different description of the journey, and each one would have been absolutely right.

Appendix

Table A.1 British and Dominion Casualties in France and in Egypt and Palestine (Figures drawn from War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920*. London: War Office, 1922; reprint London Stamp Exchange Ltd, 1992, 238–40)

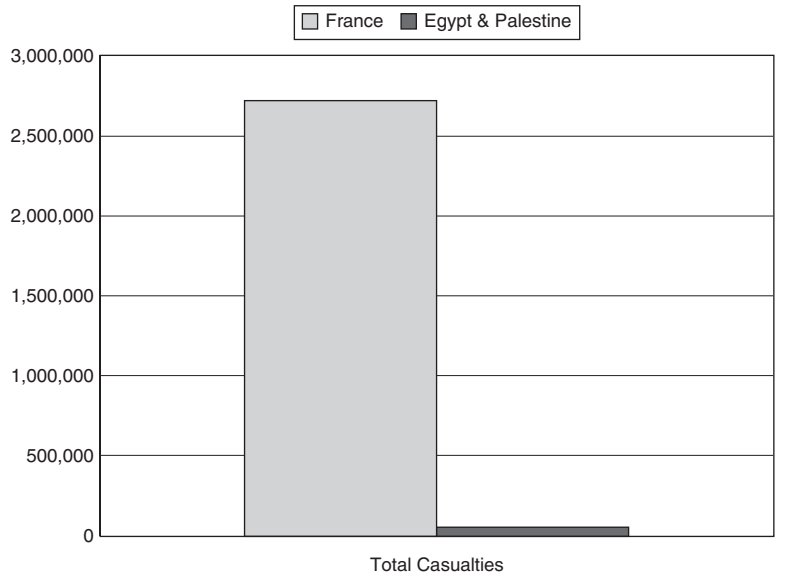


Table A.2 Total British Empire Combatants (Figures drawn from War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*)

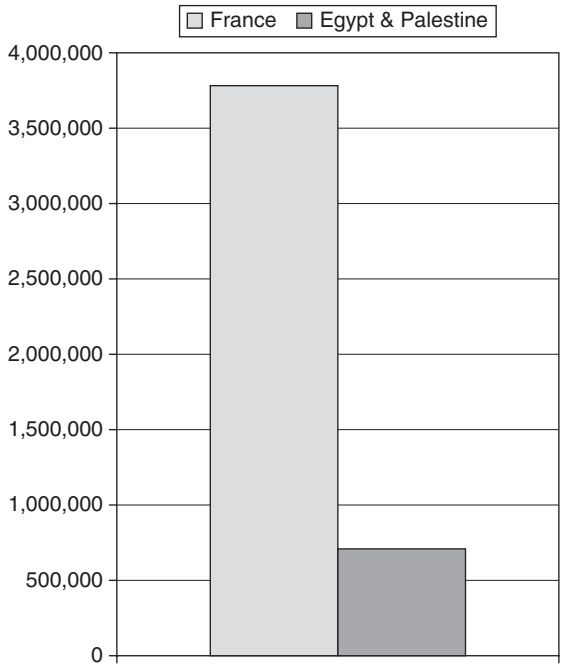


Table A.3 Deaths Reported in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (Figures drawn from War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort*, 272–83)

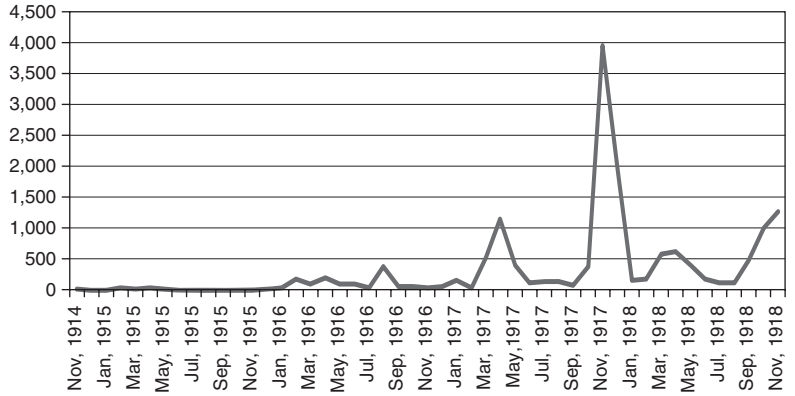
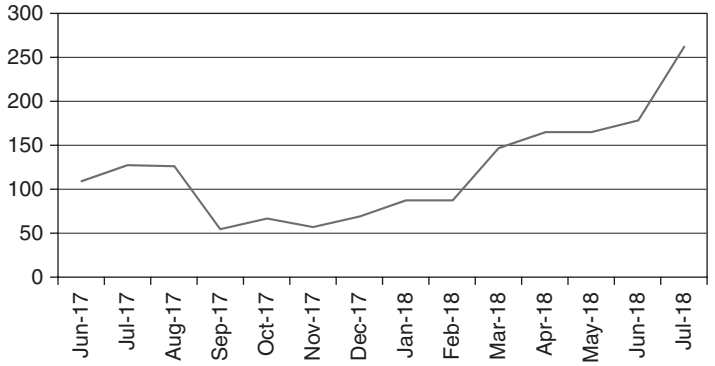


Table A.4 Anzac Venereal Section Admissions: June 1917–July 1918 (attached to #14 Australian General Hospital, then #2 Australian Stationary Hospital); (Figures drawn from "Report of Venereal Section," AWM 25 {267/52}, AWM)



Notes

Introduction

1. Two foundational examples of these would be Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Allen Lane, 1978) and Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914–1918: The Live and Let Live System* (London: Macmillan, 1980).
2. Tony Ashworth has suggested that such truces were common on every entrenched front except Gallipoli, but he does not venture an opinion about the Sinai or Palestine. In fact, he does not include Palestine in his list of trench warfare fronts. *Trench Warfare*, 210–13.
3. For instance, see the encyclopedic Official History: George MacMunn and Cyril Bentham Falls, *Military Operations Egypt & Palestine from the Outbreak of War with Germany to June 1917* (London: HMSO, 1928) and Cyril Falls, *Military Operations Egypt & Palestine from June 1917 to the End of the War* (London: HMSO, 1930). Also among the more venerable studies are Cyril Falls, *Armageddon 1918* (Philidelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1964) and Archibald Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns* (London: Constable and Co., 1928). Later works include Matthew Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East, 1917–1919* (London: Frank Cass, 1999). Yigal Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign, 1914–1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Anthony Bruce, *The Last Crusade: The Palestine Campaign in the First World War* (London: John Murray, 2002); and Roger Ford's more general *Eden to Armageddon: World War I in the Middle East* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2010).
4. Examples include Archibald Wavell, *Allenby: A Study in Greatness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941); Brian Gardner, *Allenby of Arabia: Lawrence's General* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1966); and Alec Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.* (Carlton, Vic, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1978).
5. See, particularly, Jeremy Wilson's *Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorized Biography of T. E. Lawrence* (New York: Atheneum, 1990).
6. David Woodward's excellent survey of the campaign, published several years after the completion of the dissertation on which this present book is based, is one of the best examples; it includes a good deal of analysis of the lives of the soldiers from the British home islands in support of his military and political narratives. David R. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006). Terry Kinloch, likewise, has created a similarly well-told story concentrating on the New Zealand Mounted Rifles and their role in the campaign, supported throughout by many firsthand accounts. This vibrant narrative deserves a far greater international circulation than it has seen thus far. Terry Kinloch, *Devils on Horses: In the Words of the Anzacs in the Middle East 1916–19* (Auckland: Exisle Publications, 2007). John Grainger's *The Battle for Palestine, 1917* (Boydell Press, 2006), also includes a number of references to soldiers' accounts from several countries in his lively and informative narrative.

Michael J. Mortlock's narrative of the campaign is illustrated by many long quotations from members of the 54th (East Anglian) Division, notably those of his own father; Mortlock, *The Egyptian Expeditionary Force in World War I: A History of the British-Led Campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Syria* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011). Several works that include very sound analysis of the campaign in relation to Australian soldiers are Jean Bou, *Light Horse: A History of Australia's Mounted Arm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Suzanne Brugger, *Australians and Egypt 1914–1919* (Carlton, Vic, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 1980), and one chapter of Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).

1 Prologue

1. 15 March 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee: The Magazine for the Anzacs in the Middle East*, facsimile reprint (Cornstalk Publishing, 1981).
2. Hector Dinning, *Nile to Aleppo: With the Light-Horse in the Middle East* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920), 8.
3. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, Kippenberger Military Archive, Queen Elizabeth II National Army Memorial Museum, Waiouru, New Zealand [KMA], 105.
4. Arnold Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 18 February 1917, 1DLR/497, Australian War Memorial [AWM].
5. The Turk.
6. The Turk.
7. "Trooper Bluegum," "Lucky Tim," 15 March 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*.
8. W. T. Massey, *The Desert Campaigns* (London: Constable and Company, 1918).
9. Charles Ponsonby, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry and 10th (Yeomanry) Batt: The Buffs, 1914–1919* (London: Andrew Melrose Ltd., 1920), vi.
10. Calculations derived from *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War: 1914–1920* (London: War Office, 1922).
11. Ibid. See Tables A.1 and A.2 in the Appendix.
12. See Suzanne Brugger's account of the Battle of the Wassa in the appendix to *Australians and Egypt*, 145–7. A full scholarly investigation of this infamous incident remains to be done.
13. David Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983), 30, 40–2.
14. Ibid., 28–9.
15. Dinning, *Nile to Aleppo*, 8. The soldier's epithet for the enemy was omitted in the original.

2 The Rotten Wilderness: The Sinai

1. The poem that includes this extract circulated among several trench journals, attributed to various pseudonymous authors: "Trooper Bluegum" [Oliver Hogue], "The Pilgrimage," 10 June 1916, *The Mirage*, 2; "Essex," "Consolation," 1 February 1917, *Alpha*, 4.

2. O. Teichman, *The Diary of a Yeomanry MO: Egypt, Gallipoli, Palestine and Italy* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Ltd., 1921), 51–6.
3. Teichman, *Diary*, 56.
4. David French, *British Strategy and War Aims 1914–1916* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 48–9.
5. Otto Viktor Karl Kress von Kressenstein, "The Campaign in Palestine from the Enemy's Side," *Journal of the Royal United Studies Institution* 67 (1922): 503–4.
6. Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman—1913–1919* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 156.
7. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 48–9.
8. Wavell, *Palestine Campaigns*, 40.
9. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 77–8, 89.
10. See the private letter he wrote to Robertson on 28 November 1915, in which he solicits Robertson's help in countering Lloyd George's Easterner arguments, Robertson Papers, 1/15/6, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London [LHCMA]. As David Woodward points out, however, Murray was often fairly weak-willed in the defense of his Westerner point of view, *Lloyd George*, 78–9.
11. Murray to Robertson, 23 October 1915, Robertson Papers, 1/15/2, LHCMA.
12. General Sir Douglas Haig, a Westerner and the commander of the British Expeditionary Force in France, outlined the idea. Douglas Haig, "Canal Defense Scheme," 3 December 1915, attached to Kitchener to Maxwell, 3 December 1915, Sir A. J. Murray's Papers, WO 79/64, National Archives of the United Kingdom [NAUK].
13. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 87–90; For more detail about the politics involved, see Edward Woodfin, "All Flies and Dust and Tears," Ph.D. dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2003, or David Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land*, 19–21; John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 95.
14. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 99n.
15. Robertson to Murray, 15 March 1916, Correspondence of General Sir Archibald Murray [CAM], Manuscripts Collections, 52461, British Library [BL]; Murray to Robertson, 7 Feb 1916, CAM, 52461, BL; Murray to Robertson, 15 April 1916, CAM, 52461, BL; Murray to Robertson, 14 May 1916, CAM, 52461, BL.
16. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 98.
17. Murray, "First Despatch," *Sir Archibald Murray's Despatches* (London: J. M. Dent, 1920), 15.
18. M. G. E. Bowman-Manifold, "An Outline of the Egyptian and Palestine Campaigns, 1914–1918," *The Royal Engineers Journal* 36 (July 1922): 9–10.
19. C. Leonard Woolley and T. E. Lawrence, *The Wilderness of Zin* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1915; new edition, London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), 36.
20. Murray, "First Dispatch," 10–13.
21. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 97–8. The full-strength size of these Territorial Divisions was about 20,000 men each, though after their experience at Gallipoli they were generally short of this ideal number.
22. Sims, memoir, 29 July 1916, Papers of R H Sims, 7118 77/130/1, Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum [IWM].

23. Jean Bou, "Cavalry, Firepower, and Swords: The Australian Light Horse and the Tactical Lessons of Cavalry Operations in Palestine, 1916–1918," *The Journal of Military History* 71(1) (January 2007): 104.
24. The New Zealanders went under the title "Mounted Rifles" but served beside and performed most of the same functions as the Light Horse. For a very clear and brief explanation of the role of the mounted rifleman and of the transition of the Australian Mounted Division to swords, see Jean Bou, *Australia's Palestine Campaign*, Australian Army Campaign Series (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2010), 19, 106–8; also Bou, *Light Horse*, x–xi, 190–2; and for a focused, detailed analysis of the transition, see Bou, "Cavalry, Firepower, and Swords," 99–125, particularly 100n and 103–4. For information on the recruiting and background of the Australian Light Horse, see H. S. Gullett, *The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine 1914–1918* (Sidney: Angus & Robertson, 1944; reprint, St. Lucia, Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1984), 29–39. For comments on the functioning of Light Horse units and a suggestion of the differences among them, see Peter Stanley, "'Our Big World': The Social History of the Light Horse Regiment, 1916–18," *Sabretache* 39 (March 1998): 3–13.
25. Murray, "First Despatch," 6–7.
26. John Bourne, "The British Working Man in Arms," in Peter Liddle, *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Cooper, 1996): 341.
27. Calculations derived from *Statistics of the Military Effort*, Table ii.
28. With the exception of some areas in the Southern Sinai; Murray to Robertson, 6 June 1916, CAM, 52461, BL.
29. Wavell, *Palestine Campaigns*, 43–5.
30. Murray, "First Despatch," 25, 26. Murray actually reported this action as a qualified success, but Robertson was quick to point out dryly that the enemy was also likely to have considered the battles a success. Robertson to Murray, 3 May 1916, CAM, 52461, BL.
31. Wavell, *Palestine Campaigns*, 44–9.
32. Ibid., 63–7.
33. Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 17 April 1916, 20 October 1916, (both in back of book, out of sequence) MS10865, MSB328, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria [SLV].
34. Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 18 September 1916, 30 November 1916, MS10865, MSB328, SLV.
35. See the article in the *Poverty Bay Herald*, 2 February 1917, Volume XLIV, Issue 14213, Papers Past database (http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast), National Library of New Zealand Te Whare Tohu Tuhituhinga O Aotearoa [NLNZ].
36. Beethoven Algar, interview by Jane Tolerton and Nicholas Boyack, 8 August 1989, for the World War I Oral History Archive, held in the Oral History Centre, Alexander Turnbull Library OHInt-0006/01, OHAB 443/1, Alexander Turnbull Library [Turnbull Library], NLNZ, transcript pp. 27–8.
37. Graves Registration War Diary, 21 July 1918, WO 95/4391.
38. Ross Smith, diary, 10 January 1917, PRG 18, State Library of South Australia [SLSA]. In fairness, he also notes on 17 February, Australian looting after entering the abandoned village of Nekhl.
39. A. B. Sackett, memoir under 15 August 1916, Papers of Lt A B Sackett, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM.

40. Neville Arthur Gull Johnson, memoir, PR 00877, AWM, 25.
41. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 100.
42. Harold Judge, diary, 16 May 1916, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
43. Ion Idriess, diary, 25 April 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
44. Murray, "Appendix D," *Despatches*, 188–92.
45. Claude Dawson, IWM interview, 1985, 8867/3, reel 2, IWM-S.
46. Kent Hughes, *Modern Crusaders: An Account of the Campaign in Sinai and Palestine up to the Capture of Jerusalem* (Melbourne: Melville & Mullen PTY. LTD., 1918), 13.
47. R. J. Dunk, memoir, MS 11105, Box 356/8, SLV, 3.
48. Ion Idriess, diary, [17] May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
49. Harold Judge, diary, 2 May 1916, 3 May 1916, diary, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
50. Charles Lockton Malone, diary, 29 December 1916, 1990.1623, 1990.1620, KMA.
51. Major General L. W. Bols to War Office, 24 January 1919, "Report on Water Supply to the Army in Egypt and Palestine 1914–1918," WO 161/65, NAUK.
52. Ibid.; see, for example, S. F. Hatton, *The Yarn of a Yeoman* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1930), 94–5.
53. Ion Idriess, diary, 31 March 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
54. See, for example, Hatton, *Yarn of a Yeoman*, 94–5.
55. Medical Officer's Report, Appendix to March 1916, 14th Infantry Brigade War Diary, 4/23/14, AWM.
56. A. Burnett, IWM interview, 1984, 8342/7, IWM-S, R7.
57. Idriess, diary, [17] May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
58. A. Burnett, IWM interview, 1984, 8342/7, IWM-S, R7.
59. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 92.
60. A. Burnett, IWM interview, 1984, 8342/7, IWM-S, R7.
61. See, for instance, Captain Eric Townsend complaining about his single bottle of water in his letter, 11 August 1916, Papers of Captain E T Townsend, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
62. Idriess, diary, [17] May 1916, AWM 1DRL/0373.
63. P. E. Kyne, memoir, "We Worked as a Team," Christchurch City Library, New Zealand, Archive 533, 115–16.
64. Eric T. Townsend, 28 August 1916, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
65. Harold Judge, diary, 16 May 1916, MS Papers 4312-2, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
66. Ion Idriess, diary, 16 May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
67. Ion Idriess, diary, 15 May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
68. Col C. J. Martin, "The Situation regarding Cholera in Palestine 1916," AWM 25 (267/27), AWM.
69. 10 August–17 September 1916, Director of Medical Services War Diary, WO 95/4386, NAUK.
70. Sydney Blagg to Eva, 13 August 1916, Papers of 2nd Lt S Blagg, 10793 PP/MCR/220 (DH 11 5 81), IWM; Sydney Blagg to Eva, 30 August 1916, ibid.
71. "Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Disease," AWM 27 (152/2), AWM, B.2.
72. Ralph Fielding Bourne, memoir, MSS1206, AWM, 4–5.
73. Eric T. Townsend to Dad, 11 July 1916, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
74. F. S. Hook, diary, 26 August 1916, 16 May 1916, Papers of F S Hook, 4684 80/1/1, IWM.

75. Robert S. Farnes, PR 83/106, AWM.
76. Wilfrid S. Kent Hughes to Mum, 28 May 1916, MS 4856, National Library of Australia [NLA].
77. R. H. Sims, letter, 23 March 1916, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
78. "Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Disease," AWM 27 (152/2), AWM, B.3.
79. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 103.
80. General Routine Order 1816, 13 October 1916, WO 123/282 52983, NAUK.
81. John Ernest Fowler, *Looking Backward* (Canberra: Roebuck Society, 1972), 13.
82. Leo E. Holman, diary, 27 January 1917, Papers of L E Holman, con shelf, IWM.
83. See, for example, Idriess, diary, 16 May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
84. Leo E. Holman, diary, 27 January 1917, con shelf, IWM.
85. Herbert Best, letter, 17 June 1916, Papers of Lt O H Best, 1699 87/56/1, IWM.
86. See, for example, Walter Hewitt, interview with Joanne Croft, 24 April 1995, OH293/7, SLSA, Tape 1A.
87. See A. S. Benbow, memoir, Papers of A S Benbow, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 27.
88. 31 May 1916, *The Desert Dust Bin*, 13.
89. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 108.
90. Oliver Clarke to Nickie, 9 August 1916, PR00054, AWM.
91. See, for example, Stanley Thomas Parkes, diary, 18 January 1917, PR 1077, AWM. James W. Barrett, *The War Work of the Y.M.C.A. in Egypt* (London: H. K. Lewis & Co., Ltd., 1919), 202–3.
92. See W. H. Penna, diary, 12 August 1917, PR00028, AWM.
93. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 14 August 1918, PR83/110, AWM.
94. W. Owens, quoted in William Jessop, "Report on Y.M.C.A. Work with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. 1916–1917," AWM 25 [1039/1], AWM, 2.
95. William Jessop, Ibid., AWM 25 [1039/1], AWM, 2.
96. Stanley Thomas Parkes, diary, 19–24 August 1916, PR 1077, AWM.
97. Ion Idriess, diary, 4 June 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
98. Ion Idriess, diary, 14 June 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
99. O. H. Best, letter, 3 July 1916, 1699 87/56/1, IWM.
100. Wilfrid Kent Hughes to Mon [his brother], 9 September 1916, 4856, NLA. See also Bostock, diary, 7 September 1916, PR83/110, AWM.
101. Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry Metcalfe, 2 January 1917, 1DRL/497, AWM.
102. "Lady Dot," "Sassiety Spice," Issue 613, 17 March 1917, *NZ Truth*, Papers Past Database, NLNZ, 2.
103. *The Fifth Battalion Highland Light Infantry in the War 1914–1918* (Glasgow: MacLehose, Jackson and Co., 1921), 126.
104. R. H. Sims, 26 Sept 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM; a similar incident in 1917 seems to have prompted Sims's memory (and diary entry) of this event, which happened, in his words, "on the way across the Desert."
105. A. B. Sackett, diary/memoir, 2 March 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM; Kent Hughes, *Modern Crusaders*, 12–13.
106. Murray to Robertson, 14 June 1916, CAM, 52461, BL.
107. Vivian Gilbert, *The Romance of the Last Crusade: With Allenby to Jerusalem* (New York: D. Appleton, 1923), 76.
108. See A. S. Benbow, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 3; Gilbert, *Last Crusade*, 76.

109. Clement Ranford, *A Short Description from the Firing Line in Egypt and Palestine* (Howard College Ltd Printing Works, March 1917), shelfmark 9083.g.45, BL, 1.
110. Wilfrid Kent Hughes to Gwenda, 5 July 1916, 4856, NLA.
111. Teichman, *Diary*, 47.
112. Edwin Blackwell and Edwin Axe, *Romford to Beirut* (Clacton-on-Sea, UK: R. W. Humphris, 1926), 49.
113. H. G. Barrow, taped IWM interview, 1984, 8327/7, IWM-S.
114. Kent Hughes, *Modern Crusaders*, 19.
115. Eric T. Townsend to father, 13 April 1916, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
116. W. S. Kent Hughes, *Modern Crusaders*, 19.
117. S. T. Parkes, 17 May 1916, PR 01077, AWM.
118. R. H. Sims, 19 April 1916, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
119. W. S. Kent Hughes to Granny, 19 May 1916, ANL MS 4856/1/3.
120. R. H. Sims, 25 January 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
121. R. H. Sims, 5 June 1916; Sims, 12 June 1916, 15 June 1916, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
122. A. B. Sackett, memoir under 15 August 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM.
123. Some of these sores may have been related to the skin disease impetigo that afflicted "scores" of men in R. H. Sims's Scottish battalion. R. H. Sims, letters, 26 August, 29 August, 9 September 1916, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
124. O.H. Best, letter, 21 July 1916, 1699 87/56/1, IWM.
125. A. S. Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 4.
126. E. J. Bowyer, BBC radio interview, 1963, 4034/C/A, IWM-S.
127. R. H. Sims, 8 April 1916, 15 April 1916, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
128. Harvey Sutton, "History of Sanitation in the Sinai Campaign 1916 and 1917," in AWM 27 (377/41), AWM, 20.
129. Robert S. Farnes, diary, 8 May 1916, PR83/106, AWM.
130. See, for example, the efforts of a Scottish sanitary section, February 1917, 18 Sanitary Section War Diary, WO 95/4605, NAUK.
131. See also Harvey Sutton, "History of Sanitation in the Sinai Campaign 1916 and 1917," in AWM 27 (377/41), AWM, 20.
132. P. E. Kyne, memoir, "We Worked as a Team," Archive 533, CCL, 116.
133. O.H. Best, letter, 27 March 1916, 1699 87/56/1, IWM.
134. "Sanitation," AWM 27 (377/41), AWM, 45.
135. Eric T. Townsend, letter, 1 March 1916–10 April 1916, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
136. WO 95/4386, NAUK. The EEF GHQ Director of Medical Services gave credit for this invention to a "Colonel Hunter"; an official advertisement for machine operators, Headquarters referred to the machine as "Manlove & Alliot's" disinfector, presumably a company name, but perhaps related to the inventor, 12 May 1916, WO 123/282 52983, NAUK.
137. "Sanitation," AWM 27 (337/41), AWM.
138. "Sanitation," AWM 27 (377/41), AWM, 39; Galloway, J. M., Papers of Lt Col J M Galloway, 3 July 1917, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
139. P. E. Kyne, memoir, "We Worked as a Team" Archive 533, CCL, 114. Orders seem routinely to have required the men to wear their overcoats during the process, as in AWM 25 (9999/1), AWM, but this does not, according to firsthand accounts, seem to have been the actual practice, perhaps because of the heat.

140. J. M. Galloway, 3 July 1917, Book 1, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
141. Ibid., book 2.
142. C. R. Morley, 14 December 1916, 2DRL/81, AWM; Townsend to Mother, 10 April 1916, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
143. C. R. Morley, 14 December 1916, 2DRL/81, AWM; of course, Sgt Morley, who wrote this diary entry, had a rather quirky sense of humor in general. He had considered Gallipoli "the funniest place in the world," which he wrote immediately after telling his mother about the entertaining scene of bathers on the beach running for their clothes when Turkish artillery began dropping shells on them, 29 May 1915, Ibid.
144. "Sanitation," AWM 27 (377/41), AWM.
145. "With the Australian Light Horse in Sinai and Palestine," F42, AWM. For more direct information about homosexual conduct in the ranks in this theater of the war, see Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Miller's Point, NSW, Australia: Pier 9, 2010), 143.
146. Kent Hughes, *Modern Crusaders*, 17–18.
147. Billings, MSS 1022, AWM, 66.
148. Murray to Robertson, 14 May 1916, 52461, BL.
149. R. H. Sims, 29 July 1916, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
150. A. B. Sackett, diary/memoir, 15 May 1916–16 May 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM.
151. Ibid.
152. A. B. Sackett, diary/memoir, 18 May 1916–22 May 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM.
153. F. S. Hook, diary, 26 August 1916, 4684 80/1/1, IWM.
154. See Jean Bou's analysis of the country or city origin of the Australian Light Horsemen and of the myths that surround their supposed native abilities at soldiering, Bou, *Light Horse*, 204–10.
155. Murray to Robertson, 5 September 1916, 52461, BL.
156. H. S. Gullett, *The AIF in Sinai and Palestine*, 57, 66–7.
157. Alan Campbell, oral history interview, TRC 252, NLA.
158. Ralph Fielding Bourne, memoir, MSS1206, AWM, 4.
159. Leslie Horder, 30 May 1916, 3DRL/6595, AWM.
160. Horder, 22–23 June 1916, 3DRL/6595, AWM. "Knocked up," which has many meanings, seems, in this case, to be used in the sense of "at the limit of endurance."
161. Anonymous Sapper (in records of J. D. Hobbs), 23 June 1916, PR85/289, AWM.
162. Horder, 23 June 1916, 3DRL/6595, AWM.
163. 1st ALHR War Diary, 21 June 1916, AWM 4 (10/6), AWM.
164. Lt Col J. B. Merideth, "Report on Reconnaissance – June 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 1916." 24 June 1916, AWM 4 (10/1), AWM.
165. Townsend, letter, 28 August 1916, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
166. Gilbert, *Last Crusade*, 80. An interesting study of the effects of this campaign would be an analysis of the veterans' health in later years. One could speculate that such a study would very likely show elevated levels of kidney stones and other ailments due to the poor supply of water for such an extended period, not to mention high levels of skin cancer.

167. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 92.
168. "Cholera," AWM 25 (267/27), AWM.
169. Ion Idriess, 12 July, 17 June, 8 May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
170. Kinloch, *Devils*, 117.
171. Pelham Jackson to mother, 10 March 1916, 1DRL/380, AWM.
172. See, for example, F. S. Hook, diary, 9 July 1916, 4684 80/1/1, IWM.
173. Donovan Winter, "The Sinai Desert," manuscript poem, MSS 1302, AWM, 26.
174. W. Herbert Penna to father and mother and all, 20 June 1916, PR00028, AWM.
175. W. Herbert Penna to father and all, 27 June 1916, PR00028, AWM.
176. Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 18 February 1917, 1DLR/497, AWM.
177. Beethoven Algar, interview, 8 August 1989, OHInt-0006/01, OHAB 443/1, NLNZ
178. See Idriess's version on 12 July 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
179. Alfred Douglas Dibley, interview by Jane Tolerton and Nicholas Boyack, 18 May 1988, for the World War I Oral History Archive, held in the Oral History Centre, Alexander Turnbull Library, OH AB 464, NLNZ.
180. Ross Smith to mother, 19 August 1916, PRG18/17, SLSA.
181. Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, 127.
182. James Brown, *Turkish Days and Ways* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1940), 30–4.
183. See, for example, W. F. Stewart, 28 November 1916, PR 91/7, AWM.
184. Ion Idriess, diary, 1 May 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
185. C. L. Malone, diary, 22 January 1917, 1990.1620, KMA.
186. A good example is H. E. Sullivan, PR 1058, AWM.
187. Brown, *Turkish Days*, 27.
188. "Do You Know?" April–June 1916, *The Desert Dust Bin*, 10.
189. "The Poet's Corner," April–June 1916, *The Desert Dust Bin*, 11.
190. Ross Smith to mother, 15 August 1916, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
191. P. M. Hamilton, diary, 23 December 1916, 3DLR 7521, AWM.
192. Albert William Cornish, videotaped interview, F10228, AWM.
193. C. L. Malone, diary, 22 January 1917, 1990.1620, KMA.
194. Alexander Schmierer to William Conrad Schmierer, 20 November 1916, PR 83/311, AWM. The term "dinkum oil" is antipodean slang that had and has a variety of meanings, mostly having to do with the authenticity of an item. In this case, Schmierer seems to be saying that the fighting that he will give the Turks in exchange for their sniping will be genuine and unqualified.
195. See, for example, Bostock, 17 September 1916, PR83/110, AWM.
196. 6th Australian Light Horse War Diary, 29 July 1916, AWM 4 (10/11), AWM.
197. Henry Bostock, *The Great Ride: The Diary of a Light Horse Brigade Scout in World War I* (Perth: Artlook Books, 1982), 49. Another man, a stretcher bearer, summed up his day on the bullet-swept battlefield at Magdhaba as "Excit[ing]"; P. M. Hamilton, diary, 23 December 1916, 3DRL 7521, AWM.
198. Mervyn Bourne Higgins, letters from various soldiers to his father, 3DRL/421, AWM. Justice Higgins, Mervyn's father, had a terrible time accepting the story that his son's death was instant and painless, knowing that that was a common lie told to grieving parents. He amassed a huge number of eyewitness accounts of this dreadful moment before apparently accepting the truth of this account.

199. A. B. Sackett to Grandfather Sackett, 26 February 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM. It is a bit surprising that his comments are unusual.
200. E. J. McCarthy to father, no date [late 1916 or early 1917], PR 83/161, AWM.
201. Harold Judge, diary, 9 June 1916, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ. He noted his surprise 9 months later when the Turks blew up many wells as they retreated; diary, 11 March 1917.
202. Smith to mother, 19 August 1916, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
203. Smith to mother, 23 December 1916, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
204. W. F. Stewart, diary, 26 November 1916, PR 91/7, AWM.
205. Sydney Blagg to Eva, 17 October 1916, 10793 PP/MCR/220 (DH 11 5 81), IWM.
206. W. F. Stewart, diary, 25 November 1916, PR 91/7, AWM.
207. 6th Australian Light Horse Regiment War Diary, 16–17 May 1916, AWM 4 (10/11), AWM.
208. Extracts from war diary of Br Gen H.C. Frith, 125 Infantry Brigade, 42nd Division, AWM 45 (11/21), AWM.
209. A. B. Sackett, diary/memoir, 4 August 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM.
210. A. B. Sackett, diary/memoir, 4 August 1916, 11364 PP/MCR/247, IWM.
211. Albert William Cornish, interview, F10228, AWM.

3 Crossing the Line

1. W. M. MacDonald, "The Battle of Raffa [*sic*]," *Soldier Songs from Palestine* (Melbourne: Edward A. Vidler, 1918), 38.
2. Ibid., 39.
3. In fact, in November 1916, General Sir Archibald Murray's letters show that he was making preparations to set up a permanent defense at El Arish, or if he failed to take that town, to retreat to the nearest defensible line of oases and build his defenses there. Murray thought that his advance was almost over. Murray to Robertson, 2 November 1916, CAM, 52461, BL.
4. David Lloyd George, *The War Memoirs of David Lloyd George* (Odhams Edition. London: Odhams Press, 1938), 1074.
5. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 1081.
6. Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 135–6; Robertson, in Murray, "Fourth Despatch," 130.
7. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 249–51, 258–60.
8. Ibid., 260.
9. William Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen 1914–1918* (London: Cassell and Company, 1926), 164.
10. Robertson to Haig, 24 December, 1917, in Sir William Robertson, *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, December 1915–February 1918*, ed. David R. Woodward (London: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1989), 131–2.
11. Robertson to Haig, 12 December, 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*, 129; Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 136.
12. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 260–1. Murray, "Fourth Despatch," 131.
13. See Lloyd George's explanation of the struggle to direct the future of the EEF in Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 1082.

14. Archibald Murray, "Fourth Despatch," 129.
15. Robertson to Murray, 10 January 1917, CAM, 52461, BL; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 1083. The critical point of discussion had been the fate of Salonika, a campaign that Robertson hated more than any of the Middle Eastern ventures. See Robertson to General Sir C. C. Monroe, 31 January 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*, 145–6.
16. The fact that Murray had moved forward into Palestine without the clear and unequivocal direction of Whitehall should have been no surprise to Robertson. Murray's ambitious enthusiasm for his advance had been clear in his letters, which had lamented the fact that the Turks had left Sinai towns like El Arish and Masaid before he could catch them with cavalry encirclements. Murray to Robertson, 22 December, 26 December 1916, CAM, 52461, BL. "I cannot help," he had written, "feeling what possibilities there are in this theatre if we had even two more Divisions." Murray to Robertson, 26 December 1916, CAM, 52461, BL. David Woodward has also pointed out that Murray may have been trying to overcome a perception among his superiors that he was weak, over-cautious, and unfit for command. In short, "he felt he had something to prove." Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land*, 58.
17. Murray to Robertson, 11 March 1917, CAM, 52461, BL.
18. Even Robertson seemed to agree with this course of action, encouraging Murray to strike a blow against the Turks that month. Robertson to Murray, 14 March 1917, CAM, 52461, BL.
19. Murray to Robertson, 11 March 1917, CAM, 52461, BL.
20. Robertson to Murray, 14 March 1917, CAM, 52461, BL.
21. Archibald Murray, diary, 27 March 1917, IWM, Box 2, Box 3.
22. Murray to CIGS, 1 April 1917, Murray Papers, Papers of Sir Archibald Murray, 7180 79/48/4, IWM, Box 2, Box 3.
23. Murray, *Despatches*, 132–3.
24. Murray to Robertson 3 April 1917, CAM, 52461, BL; Robertson to Murray, 2 April 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*.
25. "Fight for the Holy Land," *Times*, 30 March 1917, 7; "King and the Victory at Gaza," *Times*, 31 March 1917, 6; 29 March 1917, *Parliamentary Debates* (Hansard), 92: 604; J. Dillon, 9 May 1917, Ibid., 92: 1182.
26. CIGS to Murray, 1 April 1917, 7180 79/48/4, IWM, Box 3; Robertson to Murray, 6 April 1917, Ibid.
27. Murray, *Despatches*, 131; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 1083.
28. Murray to Robertson, 3 April 1917, CAM, 52461, BL.
29. Hughes, *Allenby*, 21.
30. Clement Ranford, *A Short Description*, 3.
31. A. E. T. Rhodes, draft of official diary written for General Chaytor's report, 9 January 1917, 76–123, NZNL.
32. Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 6 March 1917, 1DRL/497, AWM.
33. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 305–17.
34. Sheffy, *Military Intelligence*, 209–14.
35. A. W. Fletcher, memoir, Private Papers of A W Fletcher, 6745 78/9/1, IWM, 28–9.
36. John Evans, memoir, PR 85/381, AWM, 39–40.
37. Bostock to mother and father, 31 March 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
38. H. S. Gullett, *Australia in Palestine* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1919), 14.

39. Bostock to mother and father, 31 March 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
40. Beethoven Algar, interview, 8 August 1989, OHInt-0006/01, OHAB 443/1, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
41. Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 19 April 1917, MS10865, MSB328, SLV.
42. Harold Clive Newman, interview with Ian Hamilton, 30 November 1981, ORAL TRC 1118, NLA.
43. Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 19 April 1917, MS10865, MSB328, SLV.
44. Calculations based on monthly returns listed in *Statistics of the Military Effort.*
45. R.H. Sims, letter, 3 April 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
46. Ion Idriess, *The Desert Column: Leaves from the Diary of an Australian Trooper in Gallipoli, Sinai, and Palestine* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Limited, 1937), 249–50.
47. For example, see Martin Eccles, diary, 14 April, MS-Group-0761, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
48. Idriess, *Desert Column*, 267.
49. George Ranstead to mother and father, 22 April 1917, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ; his comparison was not an idle one, as his father had served beside him in Gallipoli before a wound sent him home.
50. Eric Townsend to mother, 21 April 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
51. Murray to CIGS, 4 April 1917, Murray Papers, 7180 79/48/4, IWM, Box 3; "Royal Air Force," in [H. Pirie-Gordon, ed.], *A Brief Account of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force Under the Command of General Sir Edmund H. H. Allenby, July 1917 to October 1918* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919), 112; F. M. Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War, 1914–1918*, Vol. 3, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1923; reprint, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1984), 61, 63.
52. "The Anti-aircraft Sections," in [H. Pirie-Gordon, ed.], *Advance of the EEF*, 82.
53. Oliver Clarke to Nickie, undated letter [early 1917], PR00054, AWM.
54. Robert Henry Wilson, *Palestine 1917*, Helen D. Millgate, ed. (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Costello, 1987), 75.
55. C. H. Livingstone, memoir, PR 88130, AWM, 11.
56. Charles Guy Powles, *The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine*, Vol. 3, *Official History of New Zealand's Effort in the Great War* (Aukland: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., 1922), 87.
57. Idriess, *Desert Column*, 260–1, 269–71.
58. Richard Williams, interviewed by Fred Morton in the Australian aviators in World War I oral history project, 1976, ORAL TRC 425, NLA.
59. Beethoven Algar, interview, 8 August 1989, OHInt-0006/01, OHAB 443/1, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
60. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 341; H. S. Gullett, *The AIF*, 301, 305.
61. P. M. Hamilton, diary, 11 April 1917, 3 DRL 7521, AWM.
62. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 28 April 1917, Papers of D H Calcutt, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM; in fairness, Calcutt's own attitude was already and routinely sour, perhaps partly due to his recent trip to Egypt on the *HMT Inverna*, which was torpedoed with great loss of life.
63. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 37.
64. Clement Ranford, *A Short Description*, 2.

65. See, for instance, Walter John Hewitt, interview with Joanne Croft, 24 April 1995, OH 293/7, SLSA.
66. James McMillan, memoir, "Forty Thousand Horsemen," MSX-5251, Turnbull Library, NLNZ, 126; W. S. Kent Hughes, letter typescript, 16 January 1917, MS 4856/6/2, NLA.
67. Harold Judge, diary, 25 March 1917, MS Papers 4314, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
68. R. J. Dunk, memoir, "Rafa," MS 11105, Box 356/8, SLV, 2.
69. Idriess, *Desert Column*, 230.
70. R. H. Sims to mum, 12 April 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
71. D. H. Calcutt, 28 August 1917, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM.
72. B. T. Buckley to Official Historian, 13 April 1928, CAB 45/78B, NAUK; Trench Map, Gaza-Shellal, G7501.S65.G2, AWM.
73. H. S. Gullett, *The AIF*, 276.
74. C. L. Somerville, diary, 15 January 1917, 1997.255, KMA.
75. Oliver Clarke to Nickie, undated letter [early 1917], PR00054, AWM.
76. Clement Ranford, *A Short Description*, 6; a Welsh farrier corporal also hated the change in terrain because it meant that he had to shoe all of the horses that he had unshod in the desert sand. Albert John Kingston, memoir, Papers of A. J. Kingston, 996 88/27/1, IWM, 18–19.
77. R. J. Dunk, memoir, "Rafa," MS 11105, Box 356/8, SLV, 10.
78. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA.
79. Thomas Brookes Minshall, "Notes on Palestine," [Summer 1917], Papers of Lt T B Minshall, 2792 86/51/1, IWM, 2.
80. Harold Judge, diary, 11 February 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
81. Eitan Bar-Yosef, "The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917–1918," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36 (Spring 2001): 105, 109; and Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture 1799–1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 254–7, 271–2.
82. He has pointed out the presence of both of these groups in the ranks. The non-Christian element would grow dramatically as more Indians joined the force in the following year. James E. Kitchen, "Khaki Crusaders: Crusading Rhetoric and the British Imperial Soldier during the Egypt and Palestine Campaigns, 1916–18," *First World War Studies* 1(2) (October 2010): 143, 149–52.
83. Of course, as previously noted, this is only generally true, as many areas of sand still existed along the front and certainly in the rear areas far behind the front lines, as can be witnessed by the fact that Welsh and English soldiers seemed very glad to receive sand shoes (somewhat belatedly) in February 1917; John M. Thomas, diary, 9 February 1917, Papers of J M Thomas, 881 88/56/1, IWM; R. H. Sims, diary, 7 February 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
84. C. L. Somerville, diary, 16 January 1917, 1997.255, KMA; see also P. M. Hamilton, 1 January 1917, 3DRL/7521, AWM, for a description of a sandstorm in stormy, wet weather.
85. Murray to Robertson, 5 January 1917, CAM, 52461, BL.
86. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 8 April 1917, PR893/110, AWM.
87. Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 2 January 1917, 1DRL/497, AWM.

88. Leslie Horder, diary, 30 January 1917, 3 DRL 6595, AWM.
89. Fog, though, was not new to the men; it had troubled them in some places in northern Sinai. See Harold Judge's description of the odd image of a New Zealand unit lost in fog amid the dunes, diary, 9 June 1916, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
90. Eric Townsend to mother, 24 April 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
91. Herbert Best, letter, 9 January 1917; Best to Elsie, 7 February 1917.
92. Harold Judge, diary, 9 April 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
93. A. W. Fletcher, memoir, 6745 78/9/1, IWM, 26.
94. Harold Judge, diary, 25 March 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
95. Thomas Brookes Minshall, "Notes on Palestine," [Summer 1917], 2792 86/51/1, IWM, 9.
96. P. M. Hamilton, diary, 10 April 1917, 3 DRL 7521, AWM.
97. The former happened to City of London Yeomanry Trooper Leo Holman (Holman to parents, 27 January 1917, con shelf, IWM) and the latter to English field ambulance driver F. S. Hook (diary, 11 April 1917, 4684 80/1/1, IWM).
98. P. M. Hamilton, diary, 10–14 April 1917, 3 DRL 7521, AWM.
99. Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 18 February 1917, 1DRL/497, AWM.
100. Harold Judge, diary, 25 March 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
101. See, for example, Walter Angus MacFarlane, diary 10 February–16 March 1917, MS Papers 3871, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
102. C. L. Somerville, diary, 21 March 1917, 1997.255, KMA; Teichman, *Diary*, 116.
103. Eric T. Townsend to mother, 11 March 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
104. Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 25 March 1917, 1DRL/497, AWM.
105. O. H. Best, Diary, 17 March 1917, 1699 87/56/1, IWM.
106. Frank Reid, "Souvenir Hunters," March 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile edition, 14; George Ranstead to mother and father, 15 March 1917, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
107. W. H. C., "Mosaic Discovered," 15 May 1918, *Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile edition, 13.
108. Leo Holman, diary, 30 November 1916, con shelf, IWM.
109. R. H. Sims to mum, 3 April 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
110. J. M. McGlade to Jack, 11 May 1917, MS 11221, MSB 639, SLV.
111. C. L. Somerville, 26 March-4 April 1917, 1997.255, KMA.
112. J. M. McGlade to Sheila, 27 April 1917, MS 11221, MSB 639, SLV.
113. Harold Clive Newman, interview by Ian Hamilton, 1981, ORAL TRC 1118, NLA.
114. Alice Elizabeth Williams, memoir, "Echoes of war nursing service in 1914–1918 War, Europe, Palestine & Egypt," MS 6130, Box 214/1, SLV, 29.

4 The Gaza Trenches

1. 15 March 1918, *Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsímile edition, 5.
2. Matthew Hughes, *Allenby*, 14, 15, 22.
3. For discussions of Murray's reputation, see Jonathan Q. C. Newell, "Learning the Hard Way: Allenby in Egypt and Palestine, 1917–19," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 14 (September 1991): 363–87, and Matthew Hughes, *Allenby*, 13–22.
4. "Minutes of the War Cabinet," 25 April 1917, CAB 23/2, NAUK.

5. J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), 150–1; Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 155.
6. Douglas Haig, *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig 1914–1919*, ed. Robert Blake (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1952), 228; Robertson to Murray, 10 January 1917, CAM, 52461, BL. See also Robertson to Lord Stamfordham, 7 May 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*, 182–3.
7. Quoted in Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 166–7.
8. W. R. Robertson, "Operations in Palestine," 23 April 1917, Robertson Papers, I/16/5.a, LHC, 2.
9. See Robertson's secret report for the War Cabinet, "Palestine," 19 July 1917, Robertson Papers, I/16/6.a, LHCMA.
10. Cabinet Minutes, 5 June 1917, CAB 23/3, NAUK.
11. See Brian Gardner, *Allenby of Arabia*, 98–109, 113. Gardner explains that Allenby, like so many soldiers of lesser rank, was "desolate" at his transfer to the sideshow of the Palestine Theater.
12. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 1090.
13. Cabinet Minutes, 14 May 1917, CAB 23/2, NAUK.
14. Several of the ships sunk were empty, but others, like *HT Arcadian*, *HT Don Diego*, and *HT Transylvania*, had been stocked with replacement troops or munitions to Egypt. Many of the men eventually arrived, traumatized but safe, but the supplies and weaponry were lost, intensifying the EEF's shortages. "EEF GHQ Deputy Quartermaster General," WO 95/4379, NAUK.
15. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 13, 16.
16. *Statistics of the Military Effort*, table ii.
17. Powles, *New Zealanders*, 122.
18. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 127–8.
19. "Mechanical Transport," and "Anti-Aircraft," in *Advance of the EEF*, 95, 82.
20. "Royal Engineers," in ibid., pp. 90–2.
21. Allenby to Robertson, 28 July 1917, Robertson Papers, 1/32/64a, LHCMA. This intensification of the conflict and increase in supply had major long-range consequences. For a discussion of how the Egyptian and Indian governments struggled, and indeed changed, due to the pressures of supplying this war, see Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, *The Logistics and Politics of the British Campaigns in the Middle East, 1914–22* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 76–7, 146–52, 200–1.
22. Murray to High Commissioner of Egypt (Reginald Wingate), 10 April 1917, WO 158/643, NAUK.
23. Lt Col A. C. Dawnay to General Officer Commanding, Middle East Brigade, 7 July 1917, WO 158/643, NAUK.
24. Historians have debated whether Allenby was involved in a conspiracy with Robertson to undermine Lloyd George and the Easterners. There is certainly insufficient evidence to convict the generals conclusively of bad faith, but enough incongruity and ambiguity exist to leave room for suspicion. See, for example, Matthew Hughes, *Allenby*, 35–40, and "Command, Strategy, and the Battle for Palestine, 1917," in Ian F. W. Beckett, *1917: Beyond the Western Front* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 123–7, who challenges David Woodward's explanation that Allenby's requests were part of the larger battle between Easterners and Westerners in London; *Lloyd George*, 206; David R. Woodward, *Field Marshal Sir William Robertson: Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the Great War* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998), 161–3. See also

Sheffy, *Military Intelligence*, 289–92, who puts Allenby's unusually large request down to "bona fide" intelligence mistakes concerning the strength of the enemy.

25. Cyril Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 19.
26. E. T. Townsend to Mother, 24 April 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
27. Alec McNeur to Greta, 13 September 1917, MS Papers 4108, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
28. MacMunn and Falls, *Military Operations*, 351–2.
29. R. W. Macey, diary, 11 June 1917, Papers of R W Macey, 7758 74/161/1, IWM.
30. Graves Registration War Diary, 19 April 1918, WO 95/4391, NAUK.
31. See photograph H13774, AWM.
32. R. H. Sims to Mum, 5 June 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
33. An example survives in the Imperial War Museum.
34. Trench Map, Gaza-Shellal, G7501.S65.G2, AWM.
35. Ibid.
36. For the two extremes, see Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 6 July 1917, MS10865, MSB328, SLV, and T. B. Minshall, "Notes on Palestine" [Summer 1917?], 2792 86/51/1, IWM, 10.
37. E. T. Townsend to Dad, 29 April 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
38. Harold Judge, diary, 17 August 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
39. Ernest Aubrey Pickering to Harry Pickering, 12 June 1917, PR87/212, AWM.
40. L. E. Holman to mother, 11 August 1917, con shelf, IWM. The address line of Holman's letter showed his general reaction to life on this front, as he claimed to be writing from "The Unholy Land."
41. Rupert Treganowan to mother, father, and little sisters, 22 September 1917, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
42. Rupert Treganowan to mother, father, and little sisters, 1 October 1917, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
43. "GHQ EEF Principal Chaplain," 5 May 1917, WO 95/4391, NAUK. In fairness to these chaplains, they seem to have come from one Scottish and one English division which were overstaffed with Catholic priests and thus they may have believed themselves to be facing danger needlessly.
44. E. T. Townsend to mother, 8 May 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
45. Harold Judge, diary, 4–8 July 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
46. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 19 May 1917, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM.
47. L. G. Moore to everybody, 19 September 1917, Papers of L G Moore, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
48. J. O. Evans to mother, 4 September 1917, Papers of J O Evans, 3997 96/7/1, IWM.
49. For many accounts of this type of truce behavior on the Western Front, see Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*.
50. Australian Provost Corps War Diary, August 1917, appendix 3, WO 154/129, NAUK.
51. See, for instance, Henry Bostock, diary, 17 June 1917, PR83/110, AWM. For a description of British spy activities in summer 1917 and a sense of the culture of suspicion that permeated both sides in that period, see Sheffy, *Military Intelligence*, 269–74.
52. See, for instance, a New Zealand major's mention of losses from snipers in C. L. Somerville, 16 August 1917, 1997.255, KMA. Also see descriptions

of sniping in Henry Bostock, diary, 20–21 April 1917, PR83/110, AWM, in which the Australian scout claimed to have hit a Turk at 2000 yards.
53. R. H. Sims, letter, 15 May 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
54. "General Routine Orders," 5 July 1917, WO 123/282 52983, NAUK.
55. For vivid descriptions of several such night patrols, see T. B. Minshall, "Notes on Palestine," [Summer 1917?], 2792 86/51/1, IWM, 10–12.
56. Harold Judge, diary, 12–14 September 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
57. Colin C. M. Millis, diary/memoir, August 1917, Papers of C C M Millis, 1292 87/13/1, IWM.
58. Grainger, *Palestine 1917*, 79–80.
59. James McMillan, memoir, "Forty Thousand Horsemen," 1997.503, KMA 159.
60. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 18 June 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
61. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 19 June 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
62. Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 4 July 1917, MS10865, MSB328, SLV.
63. Neville Arthur Gull Johnson, memoir, PR00877, AWM, 26. Also, hear Albert Gigney's description of New Zealand patrols covering survey teams and avoiding contact with the Turks; oral interview [1985?], ATB/13/129-603i, SLSA.
64. See, for example, Auburn Douglas Callow, diary, 22 July 1917, MS10865, MSB328, SLV.
65. Hughes, *Allenby*, 45.
66. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 65.
67. James McMillan, memoir, 1997.503, KMA, 165.
68. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 26 August 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
69. James McMillan, memoir, 1997.503, KMA, 166.
70. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 1 September 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
71. See, for one of the earliest examples, R. H. Sims, letter, 23 July 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
72. Allenby attributed these victories and the change in the direction of the air war entirely to the new supply of planes. See Allenby to Robertson, 17 October 1917, 1/32/72, LHCMA.
73. Richard Williams, interviewed by Fred Morton in the Australian aviators in World War I oral history project, 1976, ORAL TRC 425, NLA.
74. See, for instance, J. M. Thomas, diary, 15 October 1917, 881 88/56/1, IWM; Powles, *New Zealanders*, 122; "Royal Air Force," in [H. Pirie-Gordon, ed.], 112.
75. Alec McNeur to Greta [late October 1917], MS Papers 4108, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
76. "Royal Air Force," in [H. Pirie-Gordon, ed.], *Advance of the EEF*, 112.
77. W. S. Kent Hughes, "Circular Memorandum No. 1. Water," AWM 25 (1021/62), AWM.
78. For an example, see J. O. Evans, letter [October? 1917], 3997 96/7/1, IWM.
79. Harold Judge, diary, 19 May 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
80. J. O. Evans to mother, 9 August 1917, 3997 96/7/1, IWM.
81. A. J. McKenzie to Bell, 20 September 1917, 1994.3597, KMA.
82. Henry Bostock to George, 9 July 1917, Henry Bostock to mother and father, 23 September 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
83. Townsend to Dad, 29 April 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
84. L. G. Moore to everybody, 19 September 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
85. James McMillan, memoir, 1997.503, KMA, 169–70.

86. "Sanitation," AWM 27 (377/41), AWM, 14.
87. R. H. Sims, letter, 1 June 1917, 7118 77/130/1, IWM; see also James McMillan, memoir, 1997.503, KMA, 110–11.
88. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 131.
89. A. B. Paterson, *Happy Dispatches: Journalistic Pieces from Banjo Paterson's Days as a War Correspondent* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934; reprint, Sydney: Lansdown Press, 1980) 77–82.
90. Harold Judge, diary, 4 July 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ. *Backsheesh* is an Arabic word related to tipping for services but was used more broadly by British Empire soldiers to mean something like "unnecessary" or "unwarranted" or sometimes even to suggest corruption and impure motives.
91. Hear, for instance, C. L. Aubrey Abbott's description of the effect of these visits and of Allenby's presence in the theater in his interview by Mel Pratt, 22 April 1971; ORAL TRC 121/15, NLA. Tape 1, Side 2. See also John Grainger's assessment of the effect of his "theatrical" visits, in *Palestine 1917*, 86–9.
92. Falls, *Military Operations*, 20–1.
93. Anthony Bluett, *With Our Army in Palestine (London: A. Melrose, 1919)*, 182.
94. J. G. Taylor to mother, 29 October 1917, Papers of Lt J G Taylor, 4754 80/19/1, IWM.
95. Wilson, *Palestine 1917*, 76, 84.
96. John N. More, *With Allenby's Crusaders* (London: Heath, Cranton, Limited, 1923), 57.
97. E. T. Townsend, letter, 14 [May] 1917, 3389 86/66/1, IWM.
98. Rupert Treganowan to mother, father, and little sisters, 13 October 1917, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
99. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 21 September 1917, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM. The lack of alcohol earlier in the advance had led to the creation of a black market for liquor, for which three EEF sergeants were convicted in May; Australian Provost Corps War Diary, May 1917, appendix 2, WO 154/129, NAUK.
100. For examples of leave to England, see Jack McGlade, 10 July 1917, MS11221, MSB 639, SLV, whose well-connected sister pulled strings to have him sent on leave that he had not even requested, or see A. J. McKenzie to Bell, 9 September 1917, 1994.3597, KMA. A rare instance of home leave in Australia was Captain Wilfrid Kent Hughes, who apparently returned due to a family emergency, MS 4856/1/4, NLA.
101. Alec McNeur to Greta [summer or autumn 1917], MS Papers 4108, NZNL.
102. J. O. Evans to mother, 6 August 1917, 3997 96/7/1, IWM.
103. J. B. Beer to father, 4 November 1917, Papers of J B and W G Beer, 2295 86/19/1, IWM.
104. Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 184.
105. Australian Provost Corps War Diary, August 1917, appendix 3, WO 154/129, NAUK.
106. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 21 September 1917, 19 October 1917, 6903 78/56/1, IWM.
107. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 20 September 1917, 6903 78/56/1, IWM.
108. William Knott, diary, 14 October 1917, Papers of W Knott, 7987 P 305, IWM.
109. Harold Judge, diary, 11–14 July 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.

110. J. B. Beer to father, 22 September 1917, 2295 86/19/1, IWM.
111. William Jessop, "Report on Y.M.C.A. Work . . .," AWM 25 (1039/1), AWM, 9.
112. J. Wilson, diary, 25 October 1917, Papers of J Wilson, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
113. Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 182.
114. Guy Thornton, *With the Anzacs in Cairo* (London: H.R. Allenson, Limited, 1915), 11.
115. Australian Provost Corps War Diary, 17 September 1916, WO 154/129, NAUK; see also 11 January 1917, Ibid.
116. "N. Sh.," untitled and undated clipping, Archibald J. Murray, 7180 79/48/4, IWM, Box 3, section I. This was one issue on which the local bourgeoisie and the British community saw eye to eye. The military, explains Mario M. Ruiz, saw such controls as a chance to solidify necessary British masculine values into the men, especially Indians and Anzacs. "Manly Spectacles and Imperial Soldiers in Wartime Egypt, 1914–19," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45:3 (May 2009), 359–60, 367.
117. Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 86, 106–7. Dr Stanley points out that the number of Australian military policemen needed in Egypt was far greater (250) than the number in France (150), a shocking statistic, considering that only a relatively small fraction of the Australian Army was serving in the Middle East. This was explained by the fact that local police forces in France were able (or perhaps willing) to provide much more of the necessary policing. Ibid., 181.
118. "Venereal Cases," WA 1/3 xfe 712, National Archives of New Zealand [NANZ].
119. "Venereal Cases," WA 1/3 xfe 712, NANZ.
120. Ibid.
121. William Knott, 24 September 1917, 7987 P305, IWM.
122. William Jessop, "Report on Y.M.C.A. Work . . .," AWM 25 (1039/1), AWM, 4.
123. G. S. Laslett, letter, 22 September 1969, 3 DRL 6590, AWM, 7.
124. Kinloch, *Devils*, 115–6.
125. Jennifer Horsfield, *Rainbow: The Story of Rania MacPhillamy* (Canberra: Ginninderra Press, 2007), 78–87, 91, 130.
126. Australian Provost Corps War Diary, 11 June 1917, WO 154/129, NAUK.
127. Neville Arthur Gull Johnson, memoir, PR00877, AWM, 23.
128. Ion Idriess, diary, 3 April 1916, 1DRL/0373, AWM.
129. Ibid.
130. Robert S. Farnes, diary, 1–3 April 1916, PR83/106, AWM.
131. William Knott, diary, 18 October 1918, 7987 P305, IWM.

5 Mountains of Mourning

1. J. O. Evans to Mother, 4 September 1917, 3997 96/7/1, IWM.
2. J. B. Evans to Mother, 9 December 1917, Papers of J B Evans, 3280 con shelf, IWM.
3. Hughes, *Allenby*, 29–32; Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 210.
4. See his 19 October report to them; Robertson Papers I/16/7/1–2, LHCMA.
5. Woodward, *Robertson*, 161–2.
6. Allenby to Robertson, 19 July 1917, Robertson Papers, 1/32/63, LHCMA; Allenby to Robertson, Robertson Papers, 1/32/62, LHCMA. The rush in

this earlier letter was specifically about doubling the railway to support the imminent attack rather than about the attack itself, but it reflects Allenby's general mentality regarding the advance.

7. See, for period descriptions of the geography, Allenby's favorite reference, George Adam Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land especially in Relation to the History of Israel and of the Early Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), 147, 261.
8. Wavell, *Palestine Campaigns*, 115–24. For a sober and thoughtful assessment of the importance of the Australian Light Horse charge in the context of the larger attack, see Bou, *Australian Light Horse*, 175–6.
9. Robertson, "Occupation of Jaffa-Jerusalem Line," 1 October 1917, Robertson Papers, I/16/7/2, LHCMA.
10. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 107.
11. See Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 157–8, and Woodward, *Robertson*, 162.
12. Robertson to Allenby, 23 November 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*, 257.
13. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 185–6.
14. Hughes, *Allenby*, 55–9.
15. E. H. H. Allenby to Mabel Allenby, 1 December 1917, Allenby Papers, 1/8/31, LHCMA.
16. Lloyd George to Robertson, 11 December 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*, 267.
17. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, 1093.
18. Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 232.
19. This was the costly capture of Hureira Redoubt. R. J. Vance, diary, 7 November 1917, Papers of R. J. Vance, 4363 82/11/1, IWM; Falls, *Military Operations*, 109–11.
20. John More, *With Allenby's Crusaders*, 107.
21. "Gerardy" [Edwin Field Gerard], "Retrospect of Palestine," *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile edition, 15 December 1918, 9.
22. See Alex J. Anderson to Maggie, 24 November 1917, 2DRL/0065, AWM, or Roy J. Dunk, memoir, PR 00469, AWM, 23. Maygar had won his VC in the Boer War, and seldom throughout the campaign had any soldier written of him without mentioning the decoration.
23. Allenby to Robertson, 4 January 1918, WO 105/729, NAUK.
24. As an example of the frequency of these battles, Wavell points out that, in one ten-day period, the Lowland Scots of the 52nd Division fought nine actions and marched 70 miles. Wavell, *Allenby*, 224.
25. Bernard Blaser, *Kilts Across the Jordan: Being Experiences and Impressions with the Second Battalion "London Scottish" in Palestine* (London: H. F. & G. Witherby, 1926), 90–2.
26. Charles Barlow, "Account of Operations," 10 November 1917, M.1915.6.6, National War Museum of Scotland [NWMS].
27. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 11 February 1918, PR83/110, AWM.
28. Idriess, *Desert Column*, 374–5.
29. See the lively retelling of this battle and the evocation of its impact on the minds and memories of Australians, Middle Easterners, and others in Paul Daley, *Beersheba: A Journey through Australia's Forgotten War* (Melbourne: Melbourne

University Press, 2009). See, also, Jean Bou's discussion of the myths of the battle in Bou, *Australia's Palestine Campaign*, 54–5.
30. Thomas Henry Brooks, memoir, MS 3168, NLA, 9.
31. Alex J. Anderson to mother, 4 November 1917, 2DRL/0065, AWM.
32. See Jeffrey Grey's comments on this subject in *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 114.
33. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 120–3, sketch 7.
34. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 46.
35. Gordon Thistlethwaite, memoir, 3DRL/3673, AWM.
36. Robertson to Allenby, 1 August 1917, in Robertson, *Correspondence*, 209.
37. Hughes, *Allenby*, 55.
38. Walter John Hewitt, interview with Joanne Croft, 24 April 1995, OH 293/7, SLSA.
39. Claude Dawson, IWM interview, 1985, 8867/3, reel 2, IWM-S.
40. Roy J. Dunk, memoir, PR 00469, AWM, 5.
41. E. J. McCarthy to Dad & Mum, 14 January 1918, PR83/161, AWM.
42. T. J. Cahill, 6 January 1919, "P.O.W. Statements Palestine," 30 (B2.8), AWM.
43. They had been so close, he noted, that the bullets went "clean thro' the Turks' steel helmets going in one side & coming out the other." E. J. McCarthy to Dad & Mum, 14 January 1918, PR83/161, AWM.
44. For an excellent description of "the game of hitting each other from tops of adjoining hills," see A. S. Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 11.
45. J. L. I., "Palestine's Ridges," 16 May 1918, *Palestine News*, 5.
46. L. G. Moore to mother, 14 December 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
47. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 17 December 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
48. William Conrad Schmierer to Winnie, 27 November 1917, PR83/311, AWM.
49. William Conrad Schmierer to Winnie, 27 November 1917, PR83/311, AWM.
50. See J. B. Beer for a description of his use of all of these methods of transport after being wounded in the arm at Beersheba. It took him four days to reach the hospital. J. B. Beer to father and mother, 4 November 1917, 2295 86/19/1, IWM.
51. "Medical Services," AWM 27 (152/2), AWM, 7.
52. See the description by a member of the Imperial Camel Corps, A. S. Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 16.
53. Director of Medical Services, EEF, GHQ, War Diary, 2 December 1917, WO 95/4386, NAUK.
54. Director of Medical Services, EEF, GHQ, War Diary, 12 November 1917, WO 95/4386, NAUK; Eran Dolev, *Allenby's Military Medicine: Life and Death in World War I Palestine* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), 79. See Dolev's detailed description of and high praise for the Royal Army Medical Corps' responses to each new transportation difficulty, 84–105.
55. Gordon Thistlethwaite, memoir, 3DRL/3673, AWM.
56. William Knott, diary, 23–25 November 1917, 7987 P305, IWM. Knott insisted that only the railway stood between the EEF and "another Mesopotamian medical scandal."
57. William Knott, diary, 23–25 November 1917, 7987 P305, IWM.

58. Director of Medical Services, EEF, GHQ, War Diary, 30 December 1917, WO 95/4386, NAUK.
59. L. G. Moore to mother, 14 December 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
60. For several examples of this sort of dueling, see J. Wilson, diary, 12 December 1917, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
61. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 11 February 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
62. Ross Smith to mother, 12 March 1918, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
63. Blaser, *Kilts across Jordan*, 88.
64. Colin C. M. Millis, diary/memoir, December 1917, 1292 87/13/1, IWM.
65. See, for example, John More, *With Allenby's Crusaders*, 94.
66. Philip Hugh Dalbiac, *History of the 60th Division* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1927), 130.
67. Patrick Hamilton, *Riders of Destiny: The 4th Light Horse Field Ambulance in the Palestine Campaign 1917–1918* (Surrey Hills, Vic, Australia: N. Sharp, c. 1985), 69. See also Rex Hall's description of the Turkish shooting of stretcher-bearers and wounded men in *The Desert Hath Pearls* (Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1975), 95.
68. A. J. McKenzie to Bell, 26 October [mislabeled, probably December] 1917, 1994.3597, KMA.
69. Ibid.
70. J. M. Galloway, diary, 27–29 December 1917, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
71. Bertha Spafford Vester, *Our Jerusalem: An American Family in the Holy City, 1881–1949* (Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday & Co., 1950), 243.
72. Colin C. M. Millis, diary/memoir, December 1917, 1292 87/13/1, IWM.
73. Gordon Thistlethwaite, memoir, 3DRL/3673, AWM.
74. T. J. Cahill, 6 January 1919, "P.O.W. Statements Palestine," AWM 30 (B2.8), AWM; W. Kelly, 24 November 1918, Ibid.
75. [Henry Edward] Thorneycroft, "P.O.W. Statements," AWM 30 (B2.9), AWM.
76. J. Wilson, diary, 12 December 1918, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
77. E. J. McCarthy to Dad & Mum, 14 January 1918, PR 83/161, AWM.
78. J. Wilson, diary, 28 December 1917, 4070 84/52/1, IWM. See also E. J. MCCarthy to Dad & Mum, 14 January 1918, PR83/161, AWM, where an Australian soldier reflects the same attitudes, respecting the courage of the Turks who attacked them but dislike of a German officer who was captured, who showed the poor grace of spitting on the ground at the mention of Australian soldiers.
79. J. Wilson, diary, 12 December 1917, 4070 84/52/1, IWM. See, too, an Australian corporal's statement that he hoped that this advance would show "Abdul" "what a dupe for Germany he's been all through." Selwyn Metcalfe to Harry, 19 December 1917, 1DRL/497, AWM.
80. This was extremely hard on the mounted men, as they did not have the pack equipment of infantrymen and, as one Australian recalled, resembled "swagmen" with their groundsheets around their necks and "tucker bags" hanging from the ends of their rifles. John McGlade to Sheila, 26 December 1917, MS 11221, MSB 639, SLV.
81. This was a problem, too, for horses, like the one Corporal C. H. Livingstone lost to a steep cliff when the animal was spooked by a camel. C. H. Livingstone, memoir, PR88/30, AWM, 12.
82. See, for example, the bitterness of the fight around the wells at Tel el Khuweilfeh in Rex Hall, *The Desert Hath Pearls*, 95.

83. John More, *With Allenby's Crusaders*, 95–6.
84. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 16 November 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
85. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 11 November 1917, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM.
86. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 1:144; Dolev, *Allenby's Military Medicine*, 82.
87. H. J. Earney, diary, 27 December 1917, Papers of H J Earney, 4603 81/23/1, IWM.
88. William Knott, diary, 2 November 1917, 7987 P305, IWM. See also J.H.B. to Dorothy Williams, 23 November 1917, Papers of Miss D Williams, 3502 85/4/1, IWM.
89. E. J. Bowyer, BBC radio interview, 1963, 4034/C/A, IWM-S.
90. See, for example, R. W. Macey, diary, 1 December 1917, 7758 74/161/1, IWM.
91. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 44.
92. L. G. Moore to Mother and Ada, 2 December 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
93. William Hine to Hilda Gosling, 3 November 1917, in Gosling Papers, con shelf, IWM.
94. John Evans, memoir, PS85/381, AWM, 81.
95. Ulrichsen, *Logistics and Politics*, 151. See Abigail Jacobson's description of Ottoman and foreign relief efforts, which changed the fabric of society in several important ways but did little to ease the suffering of the people of Jerusalem, "A City Living through Crisis: Jerusalem during World War I," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36(1) (April 2009): 77–8, 90–2.
96. J. Wilson, diary, 22 November 1917, 4070 84/52/1, IWM. See both attitudes at once in Lindsay Baly's quotations from his father Jack Baly's letters in *Horseman, Pass By: The Australian Light Horse in World War I* (East Roseville, NSW: Kangaroo Press, 2003), 150.
97. Cyril T. Shaw, description of Jerusalem, 9 December 1917, Papers of C T Shaw, 12752 81/23/1, IWM.
98. L. E. Holman to mother, 9 January 1918, con shelf, IWM.
99. Stanley Broome to mother, 12 January 1918, PR91/053, AWM.
100. L. G. Moore to Mother and Ada, 2 December 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM. On this subject, see also Stanley Broome to mother, 12 January 1918, PR91/053, AWM.
101. Beethoven Algar, interview, 8 August 1989, OHInt-0006/01, OHAB 443/1, Turnbull Library, NLNZ. A Welsh corporal wrote that he also stole extra food for his hungry horse from British ration dumps and that on one such raid he was fired upon by sentries. C. C. M. Millis, diary, 1 November 1917, 1292 87/13/1, IWM.
102. Finlay Morrison, "Account of Operations," M.1915.6.6, NWMS.
103. Ibid.
104. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 54.
105. John More, *With Allenby's Crusaders*, 95.
106. James McMillan, memoir, 1997.503, KMA, 185. See also Trooper "Tap" O'Neill's description of living for more than a week off of a huge complex of wine cellars and a large number of pigs, narrated and quoted in Terry Kinloch, *Devils*, 229.
107. See, for instance, A. S. Benbow's guilt at having stolen sultanas from a storehouse, in Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 11.

108. William Knott, 5 March 1918, 7987 P305, IWM.
109. Anzac Mounted Division War Diary, Appendix 3 to January 1917, Appendix 4 to February 1917, and Appendix 2 to March 1917, Australian Provost Corps, Egyptian Section, War Diary, WO 154/129, NAUK.
110. J. M. Galloway, diary, 22 December 1917, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
111. Anzac Mounted Division War Diary, Appendix 3 to January 1917 and Appendix 2 to March 1918, Australian Provost Corps, Egyptian Section, War Diary, WO 154/129, NAUK.
112. J.H.B. to Dorothy Williams, 23 November 1917, in Papers of Miss D Williams, 3502 85/4/1, IWM.
113. A rumor during the heavy rains of December said that 30 bags of mail had been washed down a wadi, which seemed a reasonable explanation to the men. See L. E. Holman, letter, 29 December 1917, con shelf, IWM.
114. William Conrad Schmierer to Winnie, 27 November 1917, PR83/311, AWM.
115. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 20 October 1917, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM.
116. Rupert Treganowan to mother, father, and little sisters, MS 12552, Box 3404/6, SLV.
117. L. G. Moore to folk, 14 October 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM; L. G. Moore to Mother and Ada, 25 October 1917, Ibid.
118. H. J. Earney, 27 December 1917, 4603 81/23/1, IWM.
119. Curiously, sometimes they ran concurrently, as a unit of highlanders discovered, facing thunderstorms and hail but having empty canteens. Finlay Morrison, "Account of Operations," M.1915.6.6, NWMS.
120. William Borbidge, diary, 24 December 1917, MS11858, Box 2245, SLV.
121. L. G. Moore to everyone, 25 November 1917, Moore to Mother, 14 December 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
122. Robert Kerr, "Account of Operations," M.1915.6.6, NWMS.
123. H. J. Earney, diary, 27 December 1917, 4603 81/23/1, IWM.
124. Dolev, *Allenby's Military Medicine*, 91.
125. J. M. Galloway, diary, 26 December 1917, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
126. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 79–80.
127. K. M. Thomson to Edna MacKenzie, 14 December 1917, Papers of K M Thomson, 4857 80/45/1, IWM.
128. J.H.B. to Dorothy Williams, 23 November 1917, in Papers of Miss D Williams, 3502 85/4/1, IWM. He was quick to add that "we are both Jacks so there is nothing doing," so that Miss Williams would not draw the wrong conclusions.
129. L. G. Moore to mother, 14 December 1917, 12814 con shelf, IWM.
130. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 17 December 1917, 83/110, AWM.
131. "Gerardy" [Edwin Field Gerard], "Retrospect of Palestine," *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, 15 December 1918, facsimile edition, p. 9.
132. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 25 December 1917, 83/110, AWM.
133. J. M Galloway, diary, 25 December 1917, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
134. Director of Medical Services, EEF, GHQ, War Diary, WO 95/4386, NAUK.
135. J. Wilson, diary, 8 February 1917, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
136. Finlay Morrison, "Account of operations," M.1915.6.6, NWMS.
137. William Knott, diary, 12 January 1917, 7987 P305, IWM.
138. William Knott, diary, 12 January 1917, 7987 P305, IWM.

139. J. M. Galloway, diary, 25 December 1917, 1630 87/45/1, IWM.
140. R.W. Macey, diary, 25 December 1917, 7758 74/161/1, IWM.
141. J. Wilson, diary, 25 December 1917, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
142. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 25 December 1917, 83/110, AWM.
143. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 17 December 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
144. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AWM, 46–7.
145. General Sir Edmund Allenby, General Routine Orders, 19 November 1917, WO 123/282 52983, NAUK.
146. J. Johnston Abraham, *A Surgeon's Journey: The autobiography of J. Johnston Abraham* (London: Heinemann, 1957), 207.
147. Court Martial, J. Mitchell, WO 71/629, NA.
148. Anzac Mounted Division War Diary, Appendix 4 to February 1917, Australian Provost Corps, Egyptian Section, War Diary, WO 154/129, NAUK. For examples of the disappointment caused by this order, see L. E. Holman to mother, 9 January 1918, and L. E. Holman to mother, 7 February 1918, con shelf, IWM.
149. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 17 December 1917, PR83/110, AWM. See also Harold Judge's admiration for the "very good looking women" among the French and Russian Jews, diary, 6 January 1917, MS Papers 4312, Turnbull Library, NLNZ, folder 2.
150. L. E. Holman to mother, 20 November 1917, con shelf, IWM.
151. "Camp Follower," "Our Allies. The Jews.," 15 August 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile reprint, 15.
152. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, AMW, 60–1.
153. Stanley P. L. Prince to mother, 18 February 1918, 3DRL/756, AWM.
154. J. C. F. Hankinson, memoir, Papers of J C F Hankinson, 3081 95/1/1, IWM, 2. Also see C. H. Livingstone, memoir, PR88/30, AWM, 12, in which he mentions the sadness of the local girls at his unit's departure from the vicinity of a Jewish settlement.
155. Partens, notebook, Papers of H Partens, 3546 85/11/1, IWM.
156. "Medoc," "The Luck of Achmed," 15 August 1918, *The Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile edition.
157. A. J. Kingston, memoir, 996 88/27/1, IWM, 18.
158. Stanley P. L. Prince to mother, 18 February 1918, 3DRL/756, AWM.
159. Thomas Henry Brooks, memoir, MS 3168, NLA, 9.
160. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 1 December 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
161. See Edmund H. H. Allenby, "Proclamation of Martial Law in Jerusalem," Special Misc. R, IWM, and A. J. Kingston, memoir, 996 88/27/1, IWM, 20. This policy was not always followed, as in Gaza, some of the mosques (fortunately for the British, containing ammunition and stores) were heavily damaged. See, for a description, J. E. Scott, memoir, Papers of J. E. Scott, 5743 79/1/1, IWM, 19.
162. Thomas Henry Brooks, memoir, 3168, NLA, 9.
163. Suzanne Brugger makes an excellent, though brief, case for the presence of racism and personal bitterness between Bedouins and Australians. She suggests that in the Sinai and Palestine the "E. E. F. when they arrived did not, on the whole . . . find themselves welcomed as liberators." Brugger, *Australians and Egypt*, 80–1. This idea needs at least a bit of additional nuance to allow for these examples of at least initial enthusiasm on the

part of many of the natives in welcoming British and Dominion troops in Palestine. In the case of the Sinai Bedouins, her point is resoundingly true, as we have seen, but it seems to be less so a bit further north and later. A further study is needed to make this distinction more clearly and to help to explain further the nuances of the racism and friendships that bloomed between Arabs and British Empire soldiers in these two regions in the same way that Brugger's work so effectively illuminates relations between Australians and Egyptians.

164. Cyril T. Shaw, description of Jerusalem, 9 December 1917, 12752 81/23/1, IWM.
165. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 17 December 1917, PR83/110, AWM.
166. Valuable study could still be done on the question of how much these popular images of Arabs, packed with the romanticism and prejudice that Edward Said has called "Orientalism," affected how these Europeans saw the local people in Palestine. I am indebted to Professor Doris Bergen for her insights on this section.
167. J. Wilson, diary, 29 March 1918, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
168. Roberston, "Future Operations in Palestine," 26 December 1917, I/16/9a, LHCMA; WO 106/729, NAUK.
169. Ibid.
170. Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 242–5. Robertson's awareness of his precarious position is obvious in his report to the War Cabinet on 14 January, pressing for an immediate decision on Palestine, WO 105/729, NAUK.
171. "Joint Note to the Supreme War Council by its Military Representatives," Joint Note #12, 21 January 1918, WO 105/729, NAUK.
172. Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 283. See also the wide array of other reasons that gave Lloyd George his support in this decision in Hughes, *Allenby*, 89–94.
173. J. B. Evans to Mother, 9 December 1917, con shelf, IWM.

6 "The Unholy Land": The Trenches of Samaria and Jordan

1. J. T. S. Scrymgeour, "The Jordan Valley's Inhabitants," *Echoes of the Australian Light Horse in Egypt and Palestine 1917–1918* (Warwick, Queensland, Australia: Warwick Daily News, no date), 48.
2. See Matthew Hughes' analysis of Allenby's reasons for these attacks and of the causes of the rout by Turkish and German forces. Hughes, *Allenby*, 71–88.
3. Intelligence Division Daily Situation Map, 18 Sept. 1918, in [H. Pirie-Gordon, ed.], *Advance of the EEF*, plate 41.
4. Cyril Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 420–1, 668–9.
5. See, on the French troops, Simone Bureau, "Autour de Naplouse, Septembre 1918: Combats de cavalerie du détachement Francais de Palestine-Syrie," *Revue historique de l'armée* 22 (November 1966): 135–40; Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 419; Falls and MacMunn, *Military Operations*, 86.
6. F. H. Cooper, *Khaki Crusaders: With the South African Artillery in Egypt and Palestine* (Cape Town: Central News Agency Ltd., 1919), 12.

7. Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 85–90.
8. Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers*, 90.
9. Vester, *Our Jerusalem*, 245.
10. "Arms of Notable Units" (1 November 1917, *Barrak*, supplement).
11. DJAG, HQ, Indian Army, war diary, WO 154/125, NAUK.
12. See, for example, Norman Rothon's fascination with the different hair styles of men from different parts of India; diary, 20 April 1918, Papers of N F Rothon, 4336 82/3/1, IWM.
13. AAG GHQ, 1st Echelon, War Diary, 13 April 1918, WO 154/121, NAUK.
14. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 418–19.
15. William Knott, diary, 16–17 September 1918, 7987 P305, IWM. Much work remains to be done on race relations in this conflict. The question, for example, of Indian interactions with the Turks bears examination, as some possible incidents point to a special hatred. In one such incident, an unconfirmed second-hand story, dead Indian soldiers were mutilated in a style that white veterans of the campaign had only seen Bedouins perform, having had "their private parts cut off and stuffed in their mouths." The Indian unit involved reportedly meted out vengeance in later engagements. See Hatton, *Yeoman*, 252.
16. Assistant Adjutant General (Indian Troops) War Diary, 2 August 1918, WO 95/4384, NAUK.
17. CRE, 60th Division, to GHQ, 14 August 1918, WO 154/124, NAUK.
18. Assistant Adjutant General (Indian Troops) War Diary, 1 May 1918, appendix XVIIIA, WO 95/4384, NAUK.
19. *47th Sikhs War Record The Great War 1914–1918* (Chippenham, England: Picton Publishing Limited, 1992), 242.
20. Assistant Adjutant General (Indian Troops) War Diary, May 1918, appendix XXXIX, WO 95/4384, NAUK.
21. Assistant Adjutant General (Indian Troops) War Diary, 2 July 1918, WO 95/4384, NAUK.
22. Minute by H.V. Cox, India Office, 17 July 1918, Ior/l/mil/7/18848, India Office Records, BL.
23. GHQ Egypt to War Office, 2 August 1918, Ior/l/mil/7/18848, India Office Records, BL.
24. A. S. Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 7.
25. S. F. Hatton, *Yarn of a Yeoman*, 247.
26. Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters*, 135.
27. See, for instance, the official Australian historian's description of this bond of friendship in Gullett, *The AIF*, 595–6. It should be noted, however, that this friendship, though it may have existed, is not well documented in period documents like diaries.
28. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 418–19.
29. "Canteens for Indian Troops," Appendix XIII, Assistant Adjutant General (Indian Army) War Diary, WO 154/123, NAUK.
30. James W. Barrett, *Y.M.C.A. in Egypt*, 126–31, 203–8.
31. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 424.
32. Richard White, *Jamaican Volunteers*, 91.

33. See the list of executed given to the War Graves Commission, WO 93/49, NAUK, p.122. A third EEF soldier, a South African, was executed in Alexandria in early 1916, but his unit had been assigned to the fighting in the Western Desert of Egypt rather than the Sinai. Also note that this number does not include executed Indian soldiers, whom the Commonwealth War Graves Commission did not track.
34. For firsthand descriptions of the origins and actions of these soldiers, see Vladimir Jabotinsky, *The Story of the Jewish Legion*, translated by Samuel Katz (New York: Bernard Ackerman, 1945) and John Henry Patterson, *With the Judaeans in the Palestine Campaign* (London: Hutchinson & Co., c. 1922). For studies of the Legion, see Martin Watts, *The Jewish Legion and the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and Elias Gilner, *War and Hope: A History of the Jewish Legion* (New York: Herzl Press, 1969). Notice Gilner's story of the Argentine volunteers, 205–6.
35. Jabotinsky, *Jewish Legion*, 101.
36. Watts, *Jewish Legion*, 159.
37. Redcliffe Salaman, letter quoted in Roman Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea: Stories and Vignettes of the Jewish Legion* (New York: Herzl Press, 1964), 75.
38. Rodney Gouttman, *An Anzac Zionist Hero: The Life of Lieutenant-Colonel Eliazar Margolin* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), photo 3; Gilner, 189.
39. Izhak Ben-Zvi to Rahel Yanait, 29 September 1918, in Izhak Ben-Zvi, *The Hebrew Battalions: Letters* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1969), 83.
40. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 157.
41. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 157; "Experiences of an RMO," AWM 25 (481/30), AWM, 20; Gilbert, *Last Crusade*, 181.
42. Gilbert, *Last Crusade*, 182.
43. Col Patterson's harsh accusations of Anti-Semitism in Allenby's staff and especially in the staff of the 60th Division mostly revolve around subtle comparisons of the treatment of Jewish troops to that of other units. A typical statement is "We felt the hostility to all things Jewish." This sort of evidence is not, in itself, terribly convincing, but it suggests that the exploration of Patterson's claims will leave room for a good bit of additional study. Patterson, *With the Judaeans*, 81, 86, 101, 187. See, on the issue of the "Zionophobia" of Allenby and the EEF's staff, Gouttman, 84, 101–5.
44. Ben-Zvi to Rahel Yanait, 24 September 1918, in Ben-Zvi, *Letters*, 80.
45. Izhak Ben-Zvi, *Letters*, 33.
46. Woodward, *Lloyd George*, 315–18.
47. G. E. Badcock, *A History of the Transport Services of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force 1916–1917–1918* (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1925), 209.
48. For a fuller description of the increase in supplies and their effect on the outcome of the campaign, see Edward Woodfin, "The Tools of Genius: Politics, Supplies and Success in the British Invasion of Palestine, 1916–1918," unpublished MA thesis, Texas A&M University, 1996.
49. "Report on Water Supply to the Army in Egypt and Palestine, 1914–1918," 24 January 1919, WO 161/65, NAUK, 58–62.
50. Sanitary Sections, July 1918, WO 95/4756, NAUK.
51. Kitchen argues that this interest helps to reveal that the predominant attitude was that of working-class men receiving the unusual opportunity to see exotic and foreign places. This attitude, along with the way they expressed

themselves, says Kitchen, dispels the idea that they acted or wrote as the "crusaders" that some of the rhetoric at the time and later would try to make of them; Kitchen, "Crusading Rhetoric," 152–7. For more on the discussion of crusading rhetoric, see Bar-Yosef, *Holy Land and English Culture*, 247–93, and "The Last Crusade?," 87–109.

52. John Evans, memoir, PR85/381, 53.
53. Letter quoted in "News from Our Nurses Abroad," *Kai Tiaki – The Journal of the Nurses of New Zealand*, Volume XII, Issue 1, January 1919, 4.
54. Cyril Shaw, description of Jerusalem, 9 December 1918, 12752 81/23/1, IWM.
55. N. F. Rothon, diary, 25 June 1918, 4336 82/3/1, IWM.
56. Trooper Mclean, diary, 27 July–14 August 1918, 1986.2732, KMA.
57. "Sports Programs, WW 1914–18, Mounted Units, Light Horse," Souvenirs, 19/3/8, AWM.
58. Australian Provost Corps War Diary, 16 March 1918, WO 154/129, NAUK.
59. See reviews in 14 March 1918 and 16 May 1918, *Palestine News* and note on arrival in Jerusalem in 25 April 1918, Ibid.
60. Thomas Henry Brooks, memoir, MS 3168, NLA, 9.
61. A. S. Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM.
62. See a humorous poetic description of men "pinching" oranges from a kibbutz orchard in J. T. S. Scrymgeour, "A Riershon Stunt," *Echoes*, 16–17.
63. W. H. Penna to Mother, 15 October 1918, PR 00028, AWM.
64. L. J. Matthews, memoir, 85/32/1, IWM, 46.
65. See a partial description in Esmond Shirley Joske to family, 18 April 1918, MS 10020, MSB 129A, SLV.
66. Leo Holman, in complaints about the Jordan Valley, wrote that either England or the Samarian plains would be an acceptable change. Holman to mother, 4 June 1918, con shelf, IWM.
67. R. S. Smith, diary, 15 April 1918, 82/21/1, IWM.
68. Harold Victor Bateman to Mother and family, 26 August 1918, MS 98/4, Auckland War Memorial Museum, New Zealand.
69. "Appendix 2," Australian Provost Marshal, war diary, March 1918, WO 154/129, NAUK. Englishman Frank Wilson left almost nothing from his experiences in the war except several letters of thanks and a Jewish schoolgirl's published account of the British soldiers entering the Jewish settlement of Richon-le-Zion. Presumably, the approbation and friendship of the Jewish community was among this man's most treasured memories of the campaign. Frank Wilson, Papers of F Wilson, 2881 94/28/1, IWM.
70. Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea*, 69.
71. Alexander Burnett, IWM interview, 1984, 8342/7, IWM-S.
72. See also the similar evidence from General Hospital 17 in Director of Medical Services, EEF, War Diary, 23 July 1918, WO95/4386, NAUK.
73. "Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Disease," AWM 27 (152/2), AWM, 39.
74. J. G. Taylor to mother, 21 July 1918, 4754 80/19/1, IWM.
75. Esmond Shirley Joske to Mum & Doc, 5 April 1918, MS 10020, MSB 129A, SLV.
76. L. E. Holman to mother, 8 August 1918, con shelf, IWM.
77. George Ranstead to mother & father, 10 April 1918, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ. See, for confirmation, Walter Dawbin, diary, 1 April 1918, Micro MS 4, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.

78. George Ranstead to mother & father, 10 December 1918, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
79. William Knott, diary, 2 April 1918, 7987 P305, IWM.
80. J. I. Doran, interview by Patsy Adam-Smith, MS 11404 TMS 527, SLV.
81. "Report on Moral [*sic*]," AWM 25 (245/82), AWM, 5.
82. Albert Whitmore, oral history interview with Jo Croft, 1995, OH 293/11, SLSA.
83. Jabotinsky, *Jewish Legion*, 131.
84. S. Broome to mother, 10 May 1918, PR 91/053, AWM.
85. D. H. Calcutt, diary, 8 April 1918, 6903 78/56/1&2, IWM.
86. Former calculation drawn from "Jordan Valley Average Maximum and Mean (Dry Bulb) Shade Temperature," AWM 27 (113/18), AWM; second figure, Ibid. An Australian medical officer who believed that complaints about the heat were overblown explained that the "true shade temperature" never exceeded 115° and even in July did not reach 100° every day. "Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Disease," AWM 27 (152/2), AWM, 11.
87. R. H. Sims to Mum, 29 April 1918, 7118 77/130/1, IWM.
88. Leo Holman to mother, 4 June 1918, con shelf, IWM.
89. Rupert Treganowan to Mother, Father, and little sisters, 22 August 1918, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
90. J. H. Patterson, *With the Judaeans*, 101.
91. Walter Dawbin, diary, 2 May 1918, MS Micro 4, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
92. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 148–9.
93. Jabotinsky, *Jewish Legion*, 127.
94. Mclean, diary, 10 October 1918, 1986.2732, KMA. Mclean died of malaria several weeks thereafter.
95. Director of Medical Services, EEF, War Diary, 1 August 1918, WO 95/4386., NAUK.
96. "Experiences of an RMO," AWM 25 (481/30), AWM, 20.
97. M. A. Early to Miss Maclean, 3 March 1919, printed in "News from Our Nurses Abroad," *Kai Tiaki: The Journal of the Nurses of New Zealand*, Volume XII, Issue 2, April 1919, 60.
98. Dolev, *Allenby's Military Medicine*, 135–9.
99. Ibid., 139.
100. See, for example, Alan MacDonald's summary of his "very quiet" spell in the trenches. One might think that MacDonald was attempting to calm his mother's fears by this assertion, except for his previous description of his "hot time" in the Transjordan raids. MacDonald to Mother, 20 June 1918, PR 88/113, AWM.
101. J. Wilson, diary, 27 June 1918, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
102. N. F. Rothon, 11 April 1918, 4336 82/3/1, IWM. See the description in Terry Kinloch's *Devils on Horses* of an hour-long truce in which both sides drew water from a stream, 289–90.
103. A. Briscoe Moore, *From Forest to Farm* (London: Pelham Books, 1969), 28.
104. J. M. Findlay, *With the Scottish Rifles 1914–1919* (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1926), 147–8.
105. R. H. Sims to Mum, 21 April 1918, 7118 77/130/1, IWM; Trooper Mclean, diary, 14 July 1918, 1986.2732, KMA.

106. Walter J. Hewitt, interview with Joanne Croft, 24 April 1995, OH 293/7, SLSA.
107. David Heppingstone to mother and father, 10 April 1918, ACC 3559A/11, J S Battye Library of West Australian History, State Library of Western Australia [SLWA].
108. Edmund H. H. Allenby, dispatch, 31 Oct. 1918, in [Pirie-Gordon, ed.], *Advance of the EEF*, 27.
109. Edward Thompson, *Crusader's Coast* (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1929), 21.
110. For example, refer to Albert Whitmore's description in his 1995 oral history interview with Jo Croft, OH 293/11, SLSA.
111. Walter Hewitt, interview with Joanne Croft, 24 April 1995, OH 293/7, SLSA.
112. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 426–9.
113. See General Staff, GHQ EEF, War Diary, 8 August 1918, WO 95/4370, NAUK.
114. Trooper Mclean, diary, 14 August 1918, 1986.2732, KMA. For a suspenseful account of the dangers of a patrol into enemy territory, see A. B. Moore's description in a troopship essay of an 100–strong raid on a position near Amman; Moore, 80-057, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
115. E. I. Cumpstone, memoir, Papers of E I Cumpstone, 980 88/11/1, IWM.
116. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 426.
117. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 148.
118. R. Derry, memoir, Papers of R Derry, 4474 80/19/1, IWM.
119. Walter Dawbin, diary, 1 May 1918, MS Micro 4, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
120. N. F. Rothon, diary, 11 April 1918, 82/3/1, IWM.
121. George Ranstead to mother & father, 10 April 1918, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
122. D. M. Wilson to mother, March–April 1918, m.1982.101.1.17, NWMS.
123. Alec McNeur to Greta, 3 April 1918, MS Papers 4108-3, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
124. J. C. F. Hankinson, memoir, 3081 95/1/1, IWM.
125. Hatton, *Yarn of a Yeoman*, 256.
126. See Matthew Hughes's questioning of the value of the EEF's advance in bringing about Ottoman surrender, "Command," 121–3.
127. Robert V. Fell, PR90/118, AWM, 1.
128. N. F. Rothon, diary, 20–21 October 1918, 4336 82/3/1, IWM.
129. Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 472.
130. J. R. Lowe, diary, 18 September 1918, ML MSS 2873, State Library of New South Wales [SLNSW].
131. W. H. Penna to Mother, 15 October 1918, PR 00028, AWM. See also Falls, *Military Operations . . . from June 1917 to the End of the War*, 542–5.
132. Rupert Treganowan to Mother, Father, and little sisters, 6 October 1918, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
133. W. H. Penna to Mother, 15 October 1918, PR 00028, AWM.
134. Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea*, 97.
135. N. F. Rothon, diary, 29 September–7 October 1918, 4336 82/3/1, IWM.
136. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 160. McKay's last word on this subject was that "we lived to tell the tale."

137. Rupert Treganowan to Mother and Father, 13 October 1918, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV; Treganowan to Mother and Father, 20 October 1918, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
138. Rupert Treganowan to Mother and Father, 13 October 1918, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
139. Albert Toone, diary, 23–27 September 1918, PR 82/168, AWM. Sgt Toone's diary reflects that in his patrol area, the French soldiers were looting civilian houses and were the biggest concern of the police.
140. Dolev, *Allenby's Military Medicine*, 157, 167–70.
141. Dolev, *Allenby's Military Medicine*, 168.
142. See, for illustrations of this problem, Allenby to wife, 9 November 1918, Allenby Papers, 1/9/19, LHCMA.
143. Leo Holman to mother, 9 November 1918, con shelf, IWM.
144. New Zealand Trooper Mclean is an example of one assigned to this duty; Mclean, diary, 29 September 1918, 1986.2732, KMA.
145. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land*, 202.
146. Joanna Bourke has correctly suggested, in general terms, the psychological and moral importance of individual guilt in warfare. She does not, however, deeply examine the circumstances and timing of this guilt within any specific war, leaving a rich field for future study. Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (Basic Books, 1999), 203–29.
147. For a description of the horror and stench of this battlefield, see John Richards Harris, diary, 6 October 1918, MS 11604, Box 1827/4, SLV, folder d.
148. N. F. Rothon, diary, 19/23 September 1918, 4336 82/3/1, IWM.
149. Freulich, *Soldiers in Judea*, 98.
150. Albert Gigney, oral history interview by Beth Robertson, 1986?, OH 1/25, SLSA.
151. L. W. Sutherland, with Norman Ellison, *Aces and Kings* (London: John Hamilton, 1936), 247, 243–52. See the description of the ruined machinery as it looked from the ground in English artilleryman J. W. Smith's "Account of the 9th B.M.A.B.," 86/86/1, IWM.
152. Ibid., 252.
153. Ross Smith to Paw, 24 September 1918, PRG 18, SLSA.
154. See, for example, Bluett, *With Our Army*, 256.
155. W. H. Penna to Mother and all, 15 October 1918 PR 00028, AWM.
156. N. F. Rothon, diary, 30 October 1918, 4336 82/3/1, IWM.
157. J. Wilson, diary, 14 October 1918, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
158. J. Wilson, diary, 31 October 1918, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
159. See, for instance, Oliver West, diary, 2 November 1918, Papers of Lt O West, 6376 97/4/1, IWM.
160. A. S. Benbow, memoir, 9966 PP/MCR/146, IWM, 34.
161. See the description of the celebrations in J. Wilson, diary, 11 November 1918, 4070 84/52/1, IWM.
162. John Evans, memoir, PR 85/381, AWM, 115–16.
163. J. B. Beer to father, 22 November 1918, 2295 86/19/1, IWM.
164. Walter Henry Shiers, oral history interview by Hazel de Berg in the Hazel de Berg collection, 1966, ORAL Deb 182–4, NLA.

165. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, memoir, 1998.31, KMA, 162. See virtually the same description from Rupert Treganowan; Treganowan to mother, father, and little sisters [November?] 1918, MS 12552, Box 3406/4, SLV.
166. G. S. Laslett, memoir, PR 83/247, AWM, 9.

7 Epilogue: The Long Journey Home

1. John Evans, memoir, PR 85/381, AWM.
2. "Report on Morale as gathered from correspondence of troops in Egyptian Expeditionary Force for quarter ending December 31st, 1918," AWM 25 [245/82], 1–4.
3. Ibid., 4–5.
4. Albert F. Toone, diary, 24 October–29 November 1918, PR 82/168, AWM.
5. "Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry," 10 December 1918, WA 1/3 xfe 1069, NANZ.
6. See the description in Gullett, *The AIF*, 787–92.
7. "Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry," 10 December 1918, WA 1/3 xfe 1069, NANZ.
8. J. I. Doran, interview, MS 11404 TMS 527, SLV.
9. George Ranstead to mother and father, 10 December 1918, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
10. J. I. Doran, interview, MS 11404 TMS 527, SLV. Adam-Smith deserves commendation for her handling of this interview, in which the veteran took serious issue with her published presentation of these events. She allowed him to air his grievances fully and then unflinchingly left a recording of his less-than-flattering set of comments for posterity in the State Library of Victoria.
11. J. I. Doran, interview, MS 11404 TMS 527, SLV.
12. See Paul Daley's examination of the resonance of this issue in Australia through the years after the massacre, including a discussion of the ramifications, reparations payments (301–2), and ultimate blame, Daley, *Beersheba*, 260–304.
13. Gullett, *The AIF*, 790.
14. Kinloch, *Devils*, 332.
15. See Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs* (Ringwood, Vic, Australia: Penguin Books, 1991, and her interview of J. I. Doran, MS 11404 TMS 527, SLV.
16. A. B. Paterson, "Lord Allenby," *Happy Dispatches*, 89.
17. Edwin Colin Murdock McKay, "The Years Unfold," unpublished memoir, 1998.31, Turnbull Library, NLNZ, 167.
18. See H. S. G., "The Horses Stay Behind," 15 November 1918, *Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile edition, 10.
19. George Ranstead, to mother and father, 29 November 1918, MS Papers 4139, Turnbull Library, NLNZ.
20. H. S. G., "The Horses Stay Behind," 15 November 1918, *Kia Ora Coo-ee*, facsimile edition, 10.
21. "Left Behind: Equine Heroes of Sinai and Palestine," 26 February 1919, *Poverty Bay Herald*, Vol. XLVI, Issue 14847, 26. As Terry Kinloch has pointed out, this worry was not unfounded, because, although at first the vast majority of these horses stayed with the British Army, as the British force in the

region shrank, more and more of these horses were sold to Egyptians and to uncertain or even terrible fates. See his footnote on later charitable efforts to recover these horses. Kinloch, *Devils*, 339, footnote no. 399.
22. Bou, "Sold or Shot? The Fate of the Light Horse's Mounts–1919," *Sabretache* 50:3 (September 2009): 5–9; Bou, *Australian Light Horse*, 200–1; Bou, "They Shot the Horses–Didn't They?" *Wartime* 44 (2008): 54–7, www.awm.gov/wartime/44/pages 54_bou/.
23. "Left Behind: Equine Heroes of Sinai and Palestine," 26 February 1919, *Poverty Bay Herald*, Vol. XLVI, Issue 14847, 26.
24. See Kinloch, *Devils*, 339, and Bou, "Sold or Shot?" 6–7.
25. J. I. Doran, interview, MS 11404 TMS 527, SLV.
26. See his full description of the rating and disposal of the horses: Kinloch, *Devils*, 336–9.
27. A. J. Anderson to Maggie, 25 January 1919, 2 DLR/0065, AWM.
28. Personnel Dossier, Alexander Anderson, B2455/1, 1973985, National Archives of Australia [NAA].
29. Henry Bostock to mother and father, 20 June 1919, PR 83/110.
30. "Circular 34," New Zealand Training Units & Depots, 9 July 1919, WA 1/3 xfe 1024, NANZ.
31. Ibid.
32. Court of Inquiry, Ismailia, WA 1/3 xfe 1024, NANZ.
33. See, for instance, the courts-martial of seven New Zealanders, who earned sentences of between 18 months hard labor and 3 months detention. The worst offenders also ironically lost their places on the boats to New Zealand. Court Martial, WA 1/3 xfe 787, NANZ.
34. J. B. Beer to father, 22 November 1918, 2295 86/19/1, IWM.
35. William Borbidge, diary, 17 August–21 August 1919, MS11858, Box 2245, SLV.
36. L. J. Matthews, memoir, Papers of L J Matthews, 3685 85/32/1, IWM, 51–2.
37. J. Wilson, diary, 25 February 1919, 4070 84/52/1, IWM. Literary scholar Eitan Bar-Yosef was also struck by this quotation, judging Wilson's diary to be "one of the most eloquent wartime documents." (I appreciate Bar-Yosef's sharing with me his view on this diary while we were both working on these records in the Imperial War Museum.) He points out that Wilson's diary is charged throughout with the sort of religious terminology (and, significantly, not crusading terminology) he uses at the end of this quote, a typical example of the way many Christian soldiers expressed their experiences abroad and returning home to their own "Jerusalem in England." Bar-Yosef, *Holy Land and English Culture*, 291–2.

Conclusion

1. "Medical Services," AWM 27 (152/2), AWM, 1–2.
2. James Daniel Gallagher to [Samuel?] Fallick, February 1918, MS 12082, MS 12499, Box 2564/6, SLV.
3. Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 22.
4. Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 357–66.
5. Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, "Review Article: The First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35(2) (April 2000): 327.

6. Ross Smith to mother, 23 December 1916, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
7. Ross Smith to mother, 12 March 1918, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
8. Ross Smith to mother, 20 September 1918, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
9. Ross Smith to Paw, 28 September 1918, PRG 18/17, SLSA.
10. See, for example, Bruce, *The Last Crusade*, 47, in which Bruce, quite reasonably as we have seen, sets the notion of the British "favourable view" of the Turks in the Sinai and then leaves the matter unqualified as to later periods.
11. See the excellent summary by David Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land*, 3–4.
12. A noteworthy exception was the issue of conscription, of which many men wrote forceful opinions, especially the Australian soldiers who, in 1917, voted in the national plebiscite on the issue. See Grey, *Military History of Australia*, 111–12.
13. Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, passim.
14. Richard Williams, interviewed by Fred Morton in the Australian aviators in World War I oral history project, 1976, ORAL TRC 425, NLA. See, also, Desmond Seward's evocation of his Royal Flying Corps pilot father's (Eric Seward's) memories, in which he offers examples of this sort of chivalrous behavior and of the British official reaction to it. Desmond Seward, *Wings over the Desert: In Action with an RFC Pilot in Palestine 1916–18* (Sparkford: Haynes Publishing, England, 2009), 14–16, 128–30.
15. The best and most famous example of a man who rebelled against the class-based army structure is the future Australian novelist Ion Idriess. See his manuscript diary and letters at 1DRL/0373, AWM, and his edited and published version with later commentary: *The Desert Column*.
16. Some rare exceptions were the few members of the Jewish Legion who had homes and relatives in Palestine.

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Derry, R.
Earney, Hubert John
Evans, Joseph B.
Evans, J. Oswald
Fletcher, A. W.
Fitzroy, Harold L.
Galloway, Lt Col James Melville
Grubb H. J.
Hammond, Col F. S.
Hankinson, J. C. F.
Holman, L. E.
Hook, F. S.
Jennings, H. S. L.
Kingston, Albert John
Knott, William
Macey, R. W.
Matthews, L. J.
Millis, Colin C. M.
Minshall, Lt Thomas Brookes
Moore, Leslie George
Murray, General Sir Archibald James
Partens, H.
Rothon, Norman Francis
Sackett, A. B.

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Shaw, Cyril T.
Sims, R. H.
Smith, J. W.
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Taylor, Lt J. Gilbert
Thomas, John M.
Thomson, Kenneth M.
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Broome, Stan
Bryant, Claude Richard Henry
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Clarke, Oliver
Cleaver, Edward
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Crozier, Richard W.
Davis, Percy William
Dunk, Roy J.
Evans, John
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Farnes, Robert S.
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Fraser, Alexander Lynne
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Gallagher, James Daniel (listed under "Fallick")
Hamilton, Patrick M.
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Horder, Leslie S.
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