

Remembering Beersheba: On All Hallows' Eve, 100 Years Ago Today, 800 Australian Lighthorsemen Charged Turkish and German Trenches and Liberated Beersheba from Ottoman Muslim Rule

And that victory was the beginning of the end of over a thousand years of ruinous Muslim imperial dominance over the Holy Land, Eretz Yisroel.

Here are several articles reflecting on that epic charge of lightly-armed horsemen that took place on the evening of 31st October 1917. There is a special memorial event happening in Israel on the anniversary this year, with a re-enactment of the ride of the horsemen, some of the riders being descendants or collateral kin of the original soldiers.

From the ABC's country program, "Landline".

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-22/battle-of-beersheba-the-living-legacy-of-the-light-horsemen/9069138>

"Battle of Beersheba: The Living Legacy of the Light Horsemen's Daring WWI Cavalry Charge."

'Peter Haydon has a treasured wartime relic he keeps in an antique tin. It is a bullet, a small copper projectile that is both a grisly reminder of the horrors of war and a poignant link to his great-uncle, Captain Guy Haydon.

*'The bullet was fired by a Turkish rifleman (a Turkish **Muslim***

rifleman – CM) at Beersheba late on the afternoon of October 31, when 800 Australian Light Horsemen, men of the 4th and 12th regiments, made an audacious charge upon the heavily-defended, strategically-important town.

'The attack on Beersheba was aimed at breaking the stalemate of the Middle East Campaign.

'To get within striking distance of the town, the Australian Light Horsemen had already endured an arduous ride across scorching desert sands. Their horses had not had water for 36 hours. "It was a do-or-die thing. They basically had to get those wells or they had no water", said Peter Haydon, who has pored over the diaries and letters left to him by his great-uncle.

'The charge was the last daring act of a day-long fight by British forces.

'The Light Horsemen, brandishing bayonets, galloped across an open plain into machinegun, rifle and artillery fire, surprising the enemy, who expected them to stop and lay siege to the town.

"The Turks just couldn't believe that these Australians would be mad enough to do it", Mr Haydon said.

Too used to bullying terrorised dhimmis such as the hopelessly-outnumbered and defenceless Armenians... and, therefore, totally 'thrown' when they encountered a force of fearless armed Infidels capable of fighting like tigers. – CM

'Famously, they charged so quickly that the Turkish gunners had no time to lower their rifle sights.

'The Australians swept into the town.

'In hand-to-hand fighting (and it was bloody ferocious fighting – Ion L Idriess's "Desert Column" contains some grimly vivid descriptions of what those fights were like, in

the course of the campaign that proceeded from Egypt across Sinai into the Muslim-held land of Israel were like, although he personally was not part of the Beersheba charge – CM) they routed the enemy and gained a stunning victory.

“No-one was expecting a charge over a couple of kilometres at absolute top speed”, said publisher and historian Tom Thompson. “So it was a win and it took the breath out of everybody“.

‘They never hesitated or faltered for a moment”, wrote Guy Haydon from a hospital in Cairo a few days later. “It was grand”.

‘Midnight’s sacrifice.

‘By then, Haydon’s war was over. Somehow, he had survived a bullet which had lodged in his back, narrowly missing his spine but leaving a hole large enough to put your fist in. He put the bullet in a tin and sent it back home to his mother in Australia as a memento. (!!! – CM).

‘But Guy’s horse, a celebrated black mare called Midnight, was dead. Midnight was killed by the same bullet.

‘As horse and rider had leapt a Turkish trench, a rifleman had fired up at his attackers. “The bullet gets shot from underneath”, said Mr Haydon, “so it goes through her stomach, through his saddle, through his bed-roll, and lodges in his back. Just missed his spine by an absolute fraction.”...

‘Midnight was mortally wounded, but in absorbing the impact of a high-powered bullet at close range she inadvertently saved her rider’s life. “The romantic side of all that is that she did save his life”, Mr Haydon said. “This horse that he’d grown up with, she took the bullet [and] that saved his life. She died, but he manages to live.”

‘A ‘blight on history’.

'Australia sent more than 135,000 horses to World War I, most of them as troop horses to the Middle East.

'Mr Haydon's family sent three of those horses. His great-uncles Guy and Barney Haydon took their own horses to war, as did their neighbour and close friend Max Wright, who was given a horse by the Haydon family.

'Barney Haydon and Max Wright rode those same horses until the end of the war; three years in the saddle, over many hundreds of kilometres of searing desert and rocky terrain. By then the already-unbreakable bond between horse and rider had grown even stronger. But at war's end, quarantine restrictions meant the horses could not be brought back to Australia.

Faced with them being sold to the local population (*which means, being sold to Muslims – and the Light Horsemen had seen how appallingly all animals were treated by those local Muslims – CM*), many Light Horsemen preferred to shoot their own horses. Though [it was] against military regulations, Barney Haydon and Max Wright chose that course. Thinking about the fate of those loyal horses still moves Mr Haydon to tears...

'Mr Haydon's great uncles documented every aspect of their war service in letters, diaries and maps, and the records provide a vivid picture of the Australian Light Horse and the little-known Middle East campaign.

'And there is also a living legacy. Long renowned for its fine horses, Mr Haydon's "Bloomfield" horse stud, near Murrurundi in the upper Hunter Valley of New South Wales, still retains the same bloodlines of those warhorses of a century ago...

'The charge at Beersheba is often called the world's last successful cavalry charge. As the centenary of the battle draws near, countless commemorations are planned across Australia in coming weeks (*this article was published on 22*

October – CM).

'The town of Beersheba will mark the anniversary with a major remembrance event.

The Israelis are well aware of the significance of this pivotal battle which was the beginning of the end of over a thousand years of ruinous Muslim imperial rule over eretz Yisroel. – CM

'Mr Haydon proudly remembers the deeds of his great-uncles and the words of his great-uncle. "And his account was, it was just complete gallantry," he said. "And how they were just so courageous. How these men just galloped into the face of these machine-guns, this fire, was just an amazing sight."

And another article, from 29 October 2017; Philip Williams reporting.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-29/following-the-footsteps-of-the-heroes-of-beersheba/9095646>

'Retracing the footsteps of our heroes at the Battle of Beersheba'.

'A century after Australian troops stormed out of the desert in what is now Israel, to overwhelm the Turkish post, we follow their descendants as they visit the battlefield.

'In a grassy paddock in the Capertee Valley, Lyn Richardson's thoughts are fixed on a machine-gun post in the desert sands of Israel.

'She is dressed in the Australian Light Horse uniform, much like her "Pop" wore when he stormed the Turkish position on horseback and wrote an immortal chapter in family lore.

'A hundred years on, Lyn is leaving her property in New South Wales for Israel, in the hope that she will soon stand on that patch of hallowed ground. "I believe it's the left-hand-side

machine-gun turret. I want to find that", says Lyn..

Lyn and her husband are among dozens of Australians travelling to Israel this week to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors who rode in the famous Beersheba cavalry charge.

'The commemorations will culminate in a re-enactment of the charge on October 31, 100 years to the day after this extraordinary event in Australian military history.

'An unlikely attack from the desert.

There is a lesson here. Do what the Mohammedans do not expect. Play offense, not defence. – CM

'In the year 1917, units of the Australian Light Horse had an audacious mission.

'The Turks (that is: the Turkish Muslims of the Ottoman Empire – CM) controlled Palestine (*which they did not call 'Palestine'; neither they nor the other Muslim occupiers, the Muslim Arabs, ever thought of it as 'Palestine' nor even treated it as a discrete territory or single administrative unit – CM*) and held a line from Beersheba to Gaza on the coast about 50 kilometres away.

'Thousands of Turkish troops supported by the Germans held well-fortified trenches defended with machine-guns, artillery, and even aircraft.

'Twice the British had been repelled, attempting to take Gaza.

'Beersheba was also protected by dry, barren deserts – surely no army would be foolish enough to attempt an attack on horseback from an inhospitable desert. But that is exactly what happened.

Because many of the Australian horses and their riders were used to withering heat, used to harsh terrain and little or poor-quality water; not a few had been born and bred in the

*arid rangelands of the Outback, the Australian interior. So they could survive and fight in Sinai and the Negev, in a way that perhaps men and horses from other more temperate infidel lands could not. Again, I recommend Ion L Idriess's **The Desert Column**, based on his own diaries kept day-by-day throughout the campaign all the way from Egypt to Jaffa, for it gives good insight into precisely that. General Chauvel, who was in charge of the Aussies, is famously claimed to have replied, when a British higher-up inquired of him "How do you find the land of the forty thieves?", "Forty thieves?? That's nothing. I've got forty thousand of them!" (the Aussies having gained something of a reputation for being good at 1/ evading enemy detection in the field 2/ scrounging, scavenging, and improvisation). – CM*

'On the morning of October 31, 1917, the battle for Beersheba began.

'Thousands of British troops attacked defensive lines from the south and the west of the town after an artillery barrage. The Turks fell back but still held the all-important wells.

The wells that have made this town significant since the time of Abraham; the wells that give it its name – "Beer-Sheba", "the Well of the Oath" (see Genesis 21: 25-33, and 26: 18-33). – CM

'If the allies couldn't take the town with its vital water supplies, then many of the already-thirsty horses could die, and with them all hope of success.

'A high honour for a boy.

'Like many boys from the bush, Lyn's grandfather Henry "Harry" Peard was a teenager who lied about his age so that he could join the Light Horse.

"My grandfather, he was in the 12th Light Horse which was the regiment which charged in Beersheba", she says.

'He was 15 years of age, went to Gallipoli, put his age up 10 years like so many crazy ones did for the excitement of war.

'What Lyn did not know was that her beloved Pop received a high honour, the distinguished conduct medal (DSM).

'He and another Australian charged at a Turkish machine-gun post, silencing the weapon and the Turks who had already killed men and horses.

'But like so many of his generation, Lyn's grandfather spoke little of his wartime experiences on his return to Australia.

'She mostly remembers him as a humble man who loved horses. "We had a fortunate time, Pop and I. He taught me to ride, and I didn't even know how much of a hero he was", she says..."I want to go to Beersheba for Pop".

'But it's not just about the men. **Lyn now breeds the same types of horses the Australian soldiers rode on that very charge – a breed renowned for their strength, resilience, and sheer courage. "The Turks totally honoured them; they were scared of the Australian Light Horse", she says.**

Ahah. "The strong horse" principle... The 'bully mind' of the Ummah will always buckle when confronted with superior force.

– CM

'The riders were incredibly brave, but they wouldn't have done it without Australian stock horses, as we call them now. But you know, the Walers, this breed, it's a really big part of our equine history."

'Machine guns cut down men and horses.

'At dusk the order came. The Australian Light Horse units formed up and charged the Turkish lines. Withering machine-gun and small-arms fire cut men and horses down, but the survivors galloped on.

'Some jumped the trenches and dismounted, attacking the Turkish soldiers in their own trenches in terrible hand-to-hand fighting.

As I said above: get, and read, Ion L Idriess's "The Desert Column". Idriess graphically describes what it was like, the grim battles in which he took part, hand-to-hand fighting with Turkish Muslims, both on foot at Gallipoli and on foot and on horseback in the Light Horse campaign from Egypt as far as Jaffa (where Idriess was wounded and invalided out of the war, so he was not present for the liberation of Jerusalem). – CM

'Another 150 men continued into the town, eventually securing the wells and grain.

'The battle was won.

'Thirty-one Australians died during that epic charge, and another 36 were wounded. Seventy horses were slaughtered on that barren battlefield.

'Several hundred Turkish soldiers were killed and many more taken prisoner.

'The courage and determination of both the men and their extraordinary horses helped change the course of history.

'With lines broken, the Turks' (that is: the Muslim – CM) domination of Palestine (that is: of the land of Israel, eretz Yisroel – CM) was doomed. Jerusalem was taken (sic: Jerusalem was liberated! – CM) and the prestige and power of the mighty Ottoman Empire (of the cruel and chaotic and infinitely-corrupt Ottoman Turkish Muslim empire – CM) would never be the same....

And it was on All Hallows' Eve. I have sometimes wondered: what prayers of hundreds of thousands of persecuted, exploited, raped and robbed and mass-murdered dhimmis, Jews and Christians and Samaritans, what cries for justice uttered

through the terrible centuries of Muslim invasion and Muslim imperial oppression and persecution, what angry ghosts, what avenging angels, rode on the shoulders of the Australians that day, or ran beside and before and behind their horses, guiding and protecting, invisibly on the battlefield on that All Hallows' Eve? "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...". – CM

And so to my final two items pertaining to this anniversary.

First, an article by one Mark Frank, Jewish Australian now resident in Israel, which was published in "Finger on the Pulse", the online newsletter of the Zionist Federation of Australia, on 13.3.2007.

'The Battle of Beersheba'.

'Australian soldiers played a decisive role in the conquest of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, most tellingly so, in the Battle of Beersheba. That victory at the end of October 1917 was the key to the campaign, and opened the gate to Jerusalem.

'Bir Shiba, or Beersheba, was the terminus of the railway north to Damascus, home to the headquarters of the Ottoman army in the Middle East. Beersheba sat at the eastern end of the Gaza defence line, some 30 miles inland from the coastal garrison.

'But Beersheba was not as strongly-fortified as Gaza, guarding the classic coastal route to the Fertile Crescent.

'The Turks expected that lack of water would limit British operations at Beersheba to mounted raids.

'The Ottoman logic was that the elements, in other words, the desert conditions, were a formidable enough foe for any prospective attackers, because enemy soldiers and their livestock, in particular, horses, would be in dire trouble without a good water source in the desert, and any resistance

keeping the wells of Beersheba out of enemy hands for longer than a day would have the enemy retreating quickly to find water elsewhere in the Sinai or Egypt.'

(And with that in mind it's not surprising that more than 90 percent of British casualties over the whole Middle Eastern campaign fell to disease and heat rather than in battle). The British understood this point well enough, so it was imperative to capture Beersheba and its wells by first nightfall.

And this is where the Australians proved the 'wild card'; for their horses and men, many of them raised in the arid rangelands of the Australian outback – indeed, in the desert – were as tough as nails, and used to hard commons, perishing heat and little water. – CM

'The British opened attack on 30th October 1917, with artillery fire and the taking of some outlying positions, which progressed quite satisfactorily. But the taking of the strategically-important and elevated Tel El Saba took much longer than expected. So, once that stage had been reached, it was well into the afternoon, time and daylight were running out. The mounted divisions who'd fought at the tel couldn't be in position in time to participate in the battle plan.

'General Henry Chauvel, the first Australian to receive command of an army corps (and if his name sounds familiar it's because his nephew Charles Chauvel directed that Chips Rafferty classic – Forty Thousand horsemen) had planned to make a dismounted attack on Beersheba, but now he was out of time.

The alternative was to make a cavalry charge.

'He had two brigades in reserve to the southwest of the town: the Australian 4th Light Horse Brigade, and the British 5th Mounted Brigade. The British brigade was a proper cavalry brigade, armed with swords; however, the light horse brigade

was closer to the town. With time running out, Chauvel chose the Australian 4th Light Horse.

'This charge is disputably considered the last successful cavalry charge in history,.

'But the Australian light horsemen weren't actually cavalry but rather infantry soldiers who primarily fought dismounted and used their Waler horses to carry their arms and supplies to the battle front, or to make a quick retreat.

'Not surprisingly, they were superb riders, and were quickly rounded up and organised to make a charge that would turn the tide of history in the Middle East.

'Two regiments commenced the charge at 4.30 pm, the 12th on the left and the 4th on the right. They moved off at the trot, gradually fanning out until there was five yards between each horseman.

'Trooper Elliot, acting as range-finder for artillery, had crept to a hillock within two miles of Beersheba. "It was the bravest, most awe-inspiring sight I've ever witnessed, and they were... yelling, swearing and shouting. There were more than 500 Aussie horsemen... As they thundered past my hair stood on end. The boys were wild-eyed and yelling their heads off."

'Speed and surprise were their main chance, and almost at once the pace was quickened to a gallop.

'Four miles ahead lay Turkish trenches, many cleverly-concealed even from aircraft reconnaissance, and surrounded on nearby hills by machine-gun and artillery positions. **The Turkish defenders opened fire with shrapnel from long range, but it was ineffective against the widely-spaced horsemen.**

'All this intensifying enemy fire only sped up the gallop. Years later, Trooper Vic Smith remembered: "Of course we were scared, wishing to hell we weren't there, but out of it. But

you couldn't drop out and leave your mates to it; you had to keep going on".

'When the line of horsemen got within range of the Turkish riflemen in the trenches, they started to take casualties; but **the speed of the light-horsemen's approach was so surprising that, once they were within half a mile of the trenches, the defenders failed to allow for their speed, so that the Turks' bullets started passing overhead as they forgot to adjust their sights.** Or maybe it was the dust thrown up by the thundering hooves?

'About half a mile from the town, the Brigade began to overrun fugitive troops and guns. Some surrendered, but others elected to fight, and Light Horsemen here and there dismounted to capture them by rifle and bayonet. Led by two ground scouts about 80 yards ahead, the charge swept on. **The light horsemen jumped the front trenches and engaged the Turks – who were in many cases so demoralised that they quickly surrendered.**

Yes: when the Infidels strike suddenly, fast and hard, the 'bully mind' of the Ummah will often quickly give way. – CM

'The later waves continued through the town, which the Turks were abandoning in a panic.

'Isolated resistance in the town continued for a little while, but by nightfall, the remainder of the garrison had been captured.

'So, eight hundred Aussie light horsemen had achieved what 50,000 British troops could not do; what even Napoleon could not do. They had opened the doorway to Jerusalem.

'That's how the Gaza defensive line was broken, on 31st October, 1917.

'By December 1917 the Australian Light Horsemen rode

triumphantly into Jerusalem, far from home, their emu feathers proudly fluttering in the breeze, to be greeted by cheering crowds of Jews and Christians.

'Centuries of Moslem rule was over...

And good riddance: even if the usual Useful Idiots, these days, moan and whine about how luvverly it was for everybody when Jews and Christians lived 'peacefully' under 'tolerant' Muslim overlords... i.e. when they eked out a precarious existence – humiliated, exploited, degraded and in constant physical peril – as grovelling Dhimmis under the iron boot of their Muslim invaders, occupiers and oppressors. – CM

'When the British launched their attack on Beersheba the Turks had been caught by surprise.

'A key feature to the British attack was to convince the Turks that, once again, Gaza was to be attacked, like the previous two attempts. This deception campaign was extremely thorough and convincing.

'But the victory did not end the campaign, because the Turks redeployed some forces and largely held their position.

'On the 6th of November the second garrison in the Ottoman defensive line at Tal Esh Sheria was taken, and the next day, Gaza, the Ottoman forces retreating for fear of being cut off. This meant that the Ottoman defence was now shattered.

'Allenby's forces went after the retreating Turks in hot pursuit, confronting defensive positions a few times, but by December 9th 1917 Jerusalem was captured".

*Better to say, "Jerusalem was **liberated**".*

The Australian War Memorial has a most interesting account of the battle here:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/the-charge-of-the-4th-lig>

[ht-horse-brigade-at-beersheba](#)

But I shall conclude this series of reflections on the Battle of Beersheba, 1917, with the eyewitness description given by Trooper Ion L Idriess, in his book "The Desert Column".

Idriess, though himself a lighthorseman, was not in the 4th Brigade which took the town; he was, however, close by, and saw the charge.

"... Then someone shouted, pointing through the sunset towards invisible headquarters. There, at the steady trot, was regiment after regiment, squadron after squadron, coming, coming, coming!

'It was just half-light, they were distinct yet indistinct. The Turkish guns blazed at those hazy horsemen, but they came steadily on.

'At two miles distant they emerged from clouds of dust, squadrons of men and horses taking shape.

'All the Turkish guns around Beersheba must have been directed at the menace then.

'Captured Turkish and German officers have told us that even then they never dreamed that mounted troops would be madmen enough to attempt rushing infantry redoubts protected by machine-guns and artillery.

'At a mile distant their thousand hooves were stuttering thunder

Strictly speaking, 800 horses times 4 hooves per horse = 3200 hooves.. but never mind. – CM

coming at a rate that frightened a man – they were an awe-inspiring sight, galloping through the red haze – knee to knee and horse to horse – the dying sun glinting on bayonet points.

'Machine-guns and rifle-fire just roared, but the 4th Brigade

galloped on.

'We heard shouts among the thundering hooves, saw balls of flame amongst those hooves – horse after horse crashed, but the massed squadrons thundered on.

'We laughed in delight when the shells began bursting behind them, telling that the gunners could not keep their range, then suddenly the men ceased to fall, and we knew instinctively that the Turkish infantry, wild with excitement and fear, had forgotten to lower their rifle sights, and the bullets were flying overhead.

'The Turks did the same to us at [the battle of] El Quatia.

'The last half-mile was a berserk gallop with the squadrons in magnificent line, a heart-throbbing sight as they plunged up the slope, the horses leaping the redoubt trenches – my glasses showed me the Turkish bayonets thrusting up for the bellies of the horses – one regiment flung themselves from the saddle – we heard the mad shouts as the men jumped down into the trenches, a following regiment thundered over another redoubt, and to a triumphant roar of voices and hooves was galloping down the half-mile slope right into the town.

'Then came a whirlwind of movement from all over the field, galloping batteries – dense dust from mounting regiments – a rush as troops poured for the opening in the gathering dark – mad, mad excitement – terrific explosions from down in the town.

'Beersheba had fallen.'