

# ARCHIE NEWTON

## 2ND COUNTY OF LONDON YEOMANRY.

Detail of Kit which would be carried on Mobilization  
 WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Articles.	Already in possession of men.	Provided Regimentally.	Provided by men.	On the march.
Short ride, with sling				2 00
Bottle, oil, filled, and pullthrough				0 00
Waist bandolier				0 00
Shoulder bandolier				1 00
Whistle with lanyard (a)				0 00
<b>Field classes (b)</b>				
Sanitary with saddle blanket and head rope				
1. Haversack with—				
(i) Unused portion of bread or biscuit ration (say 12 ozs.)				
2. (ii) Emergency ration (24 oz.)				
3. (iii) Fork and spoon (4 ozs.)				
3. (iv) Tooth brush, shaving brush, comb, and razor and case (6 ozs.)				
3. (v) Spare boot laces (4 ozs.)				
3. (vi) Housewife, fitted (8 ozs.)				
3. (vii) Towel and soap (11 1/2 ozs.)				
2. (viii) Pay book (2 ozs.)				
1. Water bottle, filled, with carrier				
1. Jacket				
2. Field dressing				
2. Identity disc				
1. Pantaloon				
3. Jersey or cardigan				
3. Braces				
3. Shirt				
2. Woollen belt				



*His service with the*  
 2ND COUNTY OF LONDON  
 (WESTMINSTER DRAGOONS)  
 YEOMANRY.  
*In*  
 EGYPT, PALESTINE  
 AND ON  
 THE WESTERN FRONT,  
 1914-1919.

SAM EEDLE, 1997



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*Version 3.1*

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01684 291012 / 296111

22nd May 1997

11/50 *Sam Eedle*

~ Introduction ~

*The seeds of this project were originally sown one Christmas morning thirty years ago, in the dining room of my grandparents' house in Golders Green. While the turkey roasted, my brothers and I sat and listened to grandfather, settled in his favourite dining chair, as he told us of the days long-ago in Egypt when he fought as a cavalryman for King and Country against the Turk; of the searing days in the desert, and the nights when the freezing cold crept into the soldiers' bones while the Scarab beetles crept into their blankets. He related enough to excite our curiosity, but not enough to satisfy it.*



*In time, his photographs, papers and medals were passed down to me, and I often wondered of the story behind them. It wasn't until 1990 that I finally got around to doing any serious research on the subject, and in 1995, a preliminary edition was produced. Since then, much new research has been carried out, and this expanded edition is the result.*

*A job like this is never finished. There are a few more irons in the fire, and if any new information arises from that, I will send you an update.*

*Sam Eedle. 22nd May 1997.*

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*Archie Newton*  
~ 1893-1969 ~

Archie Newton was born on the 23rd November 1893, and grew up the well-to-do area of Holloway, North London - the back garden of his home in 38 Mercers Road had a tennis court. He was the third child of F.T. Newton, "...a well-known and respected



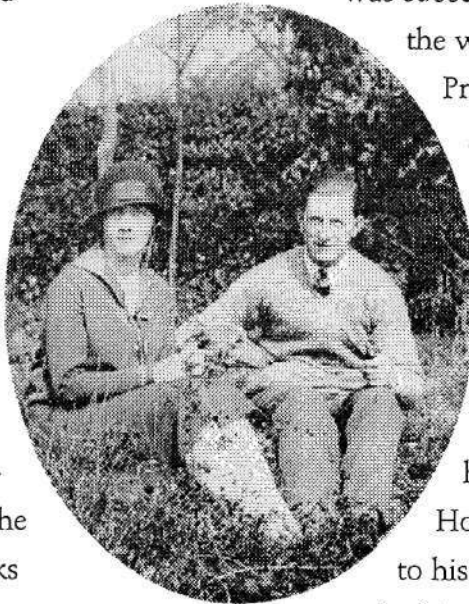
gentleman of the English Turf...", and Mrs Edith Suzette ('Marzie') Newton, the daughter of a professional cornet player from Melbourne, Australia. He went to school at King's College in the Strand, and then worked for his brother-in-law, Mr Frank Lambert. The war broke out a few weeks before his 21st birthday. As a trooper in the Westminster Dragoons, he was one of the first to enter Jerusalem during its capture from the Turks.

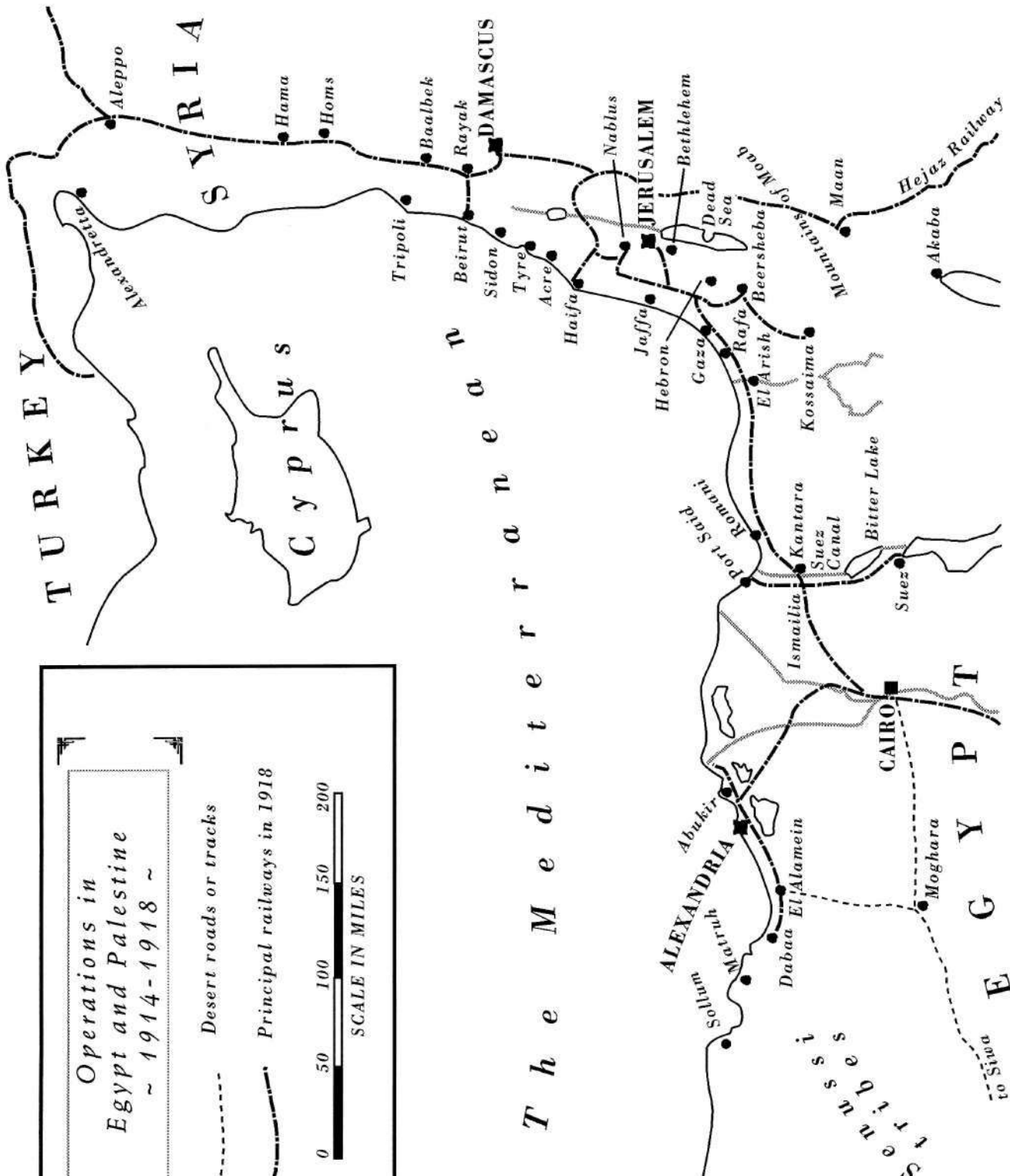
After demobilisation, he became a surveyor with a commercial estate agent. He set up a partnership -Newton & Reeves - in 1926, and then his own firm, A. Newton & Co. in about 1933. In 1927,

he married Miss Ellen Hart, a work colleague; their two daughters, Angela and Sylvia, were born in 1934 and 1937 respectively. Archie was an active tennis player in the 'Twenties and 'Thirties, at one time winning an open championship in Belsize Park. The adverse effect of the Second World War on commercial property resulted in Archie being advised to close his business down. The office was subsequently bombed. During

the war he worked for the Prudential with his brother Leslie, and also served as an Air Raid Warden in the district of Hendon. Afterwards, Archie worked for the West End commercial agents Knight Frank & Rutley, till he retired in 1957.

However, retirement was not to his liking, and he returned to work, this time at Jones Lang Wootton. Despite the fact that he was in his seventies, he was popular with the younger employees, and worked there until the onset of his final illness. He died on the 22nd March 1969.





~ *The Great War* ~  
 and the *Middle East*  
 ~ 1914-1918 ~

One of the biggest mysteries to the reader today is how Britain managed to end up fighting a debilitating war for four years, over three fronts, against Ottoman Turkey, one of her former allies.

Simply, the situation can be explained as follows. Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (the 'Central Powers'), because of the nature of the pre-1914 alliances in

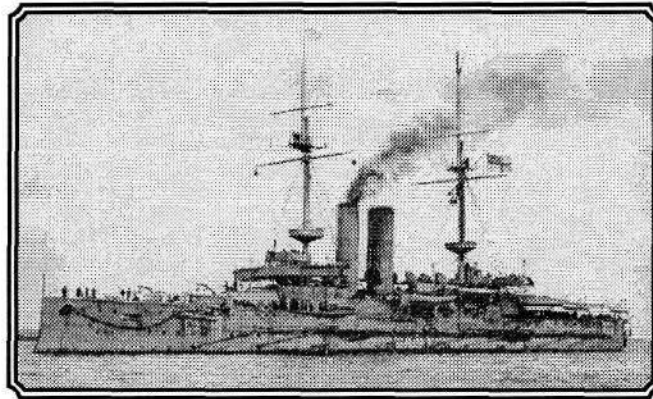
Europe, realised that they would be fighting as an 'island' surrounded by a sea of enemies: France, Russia, Serbia, Roumania, Britain and possibly Italy. In the guise of negotiating the

Berlin-Constantinople railway, Germany nurtured the Ottoman Turks as a means of protecting their flank. Turkish ire had been raised against Britain in the earliest days of the war when the delivery of a battleship that the Turks had paid for by public subscription, and which had been built in a British shipyard, was cancelled for security reasons. Turkey "had been alternately patronised or bullied by Russia and Great Britain for a century

past..." and, goaded by Germany, "...the temptation to strike against both at once was irresistible." \*

A Turkish attack on Russia through the Caucasus ended in disaster, and another one on British-controlled Egypt was repulsed. To the delight of the Central Powers, British Empire armies descended on Turkey on three fronts: in

1915, the Indian army campaigned up the Euphrates towards Baghdad and a Franco-British Empire force attacked the Dardanelles. In 1917, the 'Egyptian



*The Franco-British attack on the Dardanelles in February-March 1915 failed to clear the straits, and a debilitating land operation followed which tied up British and Anzac forces until January 1916.*

Expeditionary Force' (E.E.F.) was reassembled to attack Palestine. All three campaigns served to draw Allied troops away from the vital campaigns in France. The Turk was a hardy foe, and it was not until a month before the European Armistice in 1918 that the Ottoman armies in the east were finally broken down.

\* A.J.P. Taylor "The First World War" (1963) p. 77

*The Yeomanry*  
~ 1914-1918 ~

In 1914, The regular British Army was the most professional fighting force in the world. However - because of the fact that conscription was not yet implemented - it was the smallest of the contending armies in the European War, and by the end of 1914 it had been virtually wiped out. The British Navy had been considered sufficient to protect the country from attack, and, more importantly, protect the nation's trading links with an Empire that covered nearly a quarter of the globe.

Backing up the regulars were the Territorials - the famous 'Saturday Afternoon Soldiers' - who were raised for home defence. They were made up of infantry battalions and mounted 'Yeomanry' regiments. Officially, the individuals of these regiments were not required to serve abroad, but in 1914, almost to a man, they volunteered to do so. These troops were heavily relied upon during late 1914 and 1915, before the 'New Army' of men who volunteered in response to Kitchener's call in 1914 were trained. In London, those who wished to avoid the delays in getting to the 'Front' eagerly joined the Territorial units, and the famous 'Night of Messines' in Hallowe'en 1914, where the London Scottish distinguished itself as the first

Territorial infantry battalion to see action on the Western Front, acted as a spur to recruitment. It was at this time, in early November 1914, that Archie Newton enlisted.

The Average Yeomanry unit consisted of three squadrons of 145 men each, which, with the headquarters elements, made nearly 500 men (See Appendix 1, page 19). As cavalry were seen to be largely ineffective on the Western Front, they were nearly all sent to the East.

The 2nd County of London Yeomanry was formed in 1901 and the title 'Westminster Dragoons' adopted the following year. The main peacetime establishment sailed to Egypt in 1914, and elements were sent to Gallipoli in August 1915, where they served in the Suvla sector until November. Their main achievement in the war was being the first formed body of troops into Jerusalem in 1917. In 1920, the regiment was re-formed by Lord Howard De Walden (who had served with the unit in 1914-15) and converted to an armoured car regiment. In 1951, the Westminsters were merged with the Berkshire Yeomanry, and a squadron still exists today, based at the Duke of York's headquarters in Chelsea, London SW1.



*The Yeomanry: Tactics  
and survival in the Desert  
- 1915-1918 -*

The most common picture of the use of cavalry in the desert in the First World War is the so-called 'dashing cavalry charge'. This happened very rarely. There are only three major examples of this in the Middle East- the most notable example being during the Battle of Beersheba in October 1917 (see page 10-11). The other two were at Aqqaqia, February 1916, and the last recorded cavalry charge of the British Army at Huj, November 1917. It was in these instances that the old rule '...Just point your weapon and the speed of your horse will do the rest...' held true (not forgetting to dip one's arm after the sword had run home).

The reality of life in the desert was more mundane. Meagre rations - worse than for the troops in France - and the shortage of water meant that any foray far beyond a depot was a major undertaking. Men and horses often went short of water, and the threat of diseases like malaria, white cholera, dysentery and sunstroke was ever present. One of the reasons for Allenby's success in Palestine was the recognition of this and the construction of pipelines and railways.

The main work of the Westminster Dragoons was patrolling. This was important work because the cavalry were effectively the 'eyes and ears' of the

army, and the Turks themselves were good at conducting raids and setting up ambushes. The Regimental archives contain carbons of letters and reports by Major John Haig, Archie's squadron commander in early 1917, that give an insight into the need for vigilance in the desert. He writes to the wife of one missing trooper: "Your husband was [in] a dried river bed as a look out quite a short way away. He must have mistaken his [orders] for he went too far. I don't think he was wounded but this is difficult to state definitely... his troop officer went out after him at once. The Turks must have been very quick in getting him away, this fact tends to show that your husband could not have been hurt as they could not have got an injured man away so quickly...". Elsewhere, he reports after an ambush on one of his patrols at a site called Two Tree Farm - casualties had been sustained on two occasions by fire from snipers supported by Turkish infantry hiding in the Wadis beyond. Major Haig had to organise an artillery bombardment to support an attack by his men on these wadis, using 'Hotchkiss Rifles' (cavalry machine guns, used dismounted) to cover his approach. Yeomen often fought dismounted, using the horse as a means of rapid deployment.

~ Part One ~  
*Enlistment and Training*  
 ~ 1914-1915 ~

**4 August 1914.** Great Britain declared war on Germany.

**10 Sept. 1914.** Main body of peacetime establishment of Westminster Dragoons embarked at Southampton for Egypt. They arrived at Alexandria on the 25th.

**31 October 1914.** Ottoman Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany.

**3 November 1914.** Archie Newton enlisted with 2nd County of London Yeomanry. He wanted to join a cavalry regiment, but had never ridden a horse. He went to the side entrance of the unit's barracks at Elverton Street, London SW1, and asked one of the troopers there to show him how to ride a horse. He was shown how to mount, ride round the yard, and dismount. He then walked round to the main entrance and declared his intention to enlist. When asked whether he could ride, he was able to declare that he could, and demonstrate accordingly. He was accepted into the regiment. One rumour within the family suggests that he joined up to get away from his mother.

## 1915

**Feb. 1915.** Photograph of Archie's boyhood friend, Arthur Wheeler, as a private in the Seaforth Highlanders. He spent the duration of the war on the Western front, and was commissioned into the Machine Gun Corps in 1917 (*Appendix 4*).



**11 March 1915.** News cutting - saved by Archie - about a football match in Vincent Square, Westminster School's playing fields, just round the corner from the Elverton Street barracks. The report stated that "On Tuesday next (16 March) the

departure will take place of one of London's crack Yeomanry regiments ...on active service. They have been in training a full six months, and not a little of their work has been carried out at Vincent Square, Westminster. This playground of that most famous seat of learning, Westminster School, saw a picked eleven of the Dragoons appearing in what stood for a send-off match against the school's first eleven..." The match was a hard-fought 1-1 draw played in a high wind.



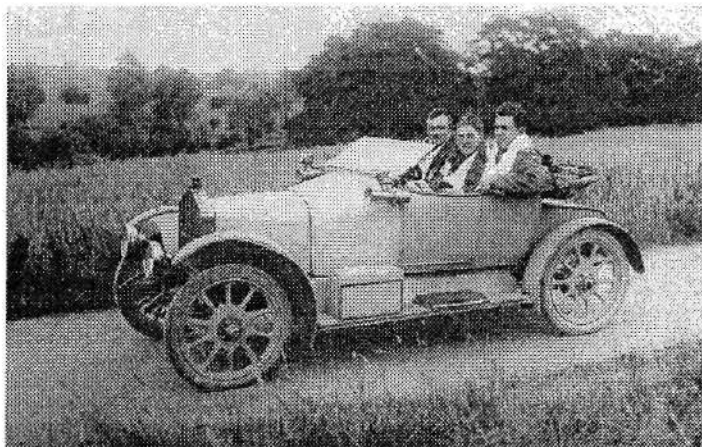
**22 April 1915.** Studio photograph taken in England. A.N. wearing cavalry uniform, and holding a Pith helmet. (not shown here)

**9 June 1915.** Postcard to his grandmother, Mrs Fanny ("Fisher") Wilkins. Picture on the card showed A.N. mounted, with sword drawn. It was probably taken at Feltham, near Hounslow, Middlesex. Much unit training would have taken place at the large Cavalry barracks in Hounslow, which handled over 153,000 men during the Great War. The Regimental history states that the unit was quartered at Butts Farm, Feltham, which was a fruit farm owned by William Whitely Limited.

Early Summer [Reg. history] "...the regiment trekked from Feltham to Harlow in Essex where

billets were found in and around the town. Many pleasant weeks were spent in this attractive town among the very hospitable residents whose reception from the start had been most cordial."

**9 August 1915.** Postcard to his 14-year-old brother, Leslie. Picture showed A.N. with two chums in a car,



parked in a country road.

"Dear Old Les, How goes everything with you? Hope you're keeping fit. I am. What do you think of the other side? We are just off for a swim. Don't however infer we do this sort of thing every day! Wish we could!!.. On Bank Holiday Monday [2nd August] my regiment took part in some military sports. We did quite well. I didn't run, as the time for training would have been too short for me to do justice to myself... Cheer'o, old man... Love from your affectionate brother, Archie."

~ Part Two ~  
The Wester Frontier Force  
~ 1915-1916 ~

**29 August 1915.** Archie Newton embarked at Devonport en-route for Egypt.

**13 September 1915.** A.N. joined the regiment at Abbasia, Egypt. He was one of a draft of three NCOs and 55 men sent to the regiment's headquarters in Egypt to replace casualties sustained by the bulk of the regiment which was fighting in Gallipoli. None of the new arrivals were sent to the Dardanelles. Of the new draft, the Regimental History states: "...Of much importance was a badly needed reinforcement who...(since arrival)... had become well acclimatised in the two months under Captain A.C. Jaffe. This excellent draft quickly merged in

## A letter from Egypt

Westminster Dragoons,  
Abbassiah Barracks,  
Cairo,  
Egypt. 11 Oct.

Dear Osborne,

I hope you received my first [letter] telling you that I had arrived quite safely. It is awfully hot out here & the flies are an absolute pest & nearly drive me mad in trying to keep them off you. So far I have been feeling very fit & quite like the change of life out here. We rise at 5am & ride out in the desert for about three or four hours before breakfast & it is far more enjoyable than the waking we used to do in England as the horses are of a much better class & there is more room for manoeuvres out here. There is one draw back & that is the dust which the horses kick up. [It] is so thick that you cannot see the horses in front of you, but have to go by sound. The officers of the first regiment are more efficient than those in the second, they keep us at it hard & my word we do move, galloping like the wind.

I went to see the Sphinx & Pyramids a few days ago with some of the boys & we had our photoes [sic] taken there, as you will see by the photo I have enclosed. I think it has turned out a real success don't you? Quite a respectable Camel Corps; eh what! We saw several very old tombs of great kings who lived in the biblical days. We also went right inside one of the pyramids to see a tomb of Queen --- (I can't remember her name) but I know we had to take our boots off before going in & that we were given a candle each & had to crawl up steep inclines on our hands & knees, every minute bumping our heads & it was like a veritable furnace inside. We were all jolly pleased to get out into the pure air again.

Cairo is quite a remarkable place; in one part you find things quite like London, then you come to the Greek, Italian, French, Egyptian & many other quarters, in fact it is the most cosmopolitan place one could possibly be in. The shops & places of amusement are really quite good but naturally very different to England.

Well old sport & how are you keeping? I expect you are still having a darn good time at Harlow. Will you remember me to the boys of B3.

Well old sport I will not bother you any more now, but if you can find a few moments to write should be glad to hear from you. Wishing you the best of luck.

Yours very sincerely,

Jack Williams.

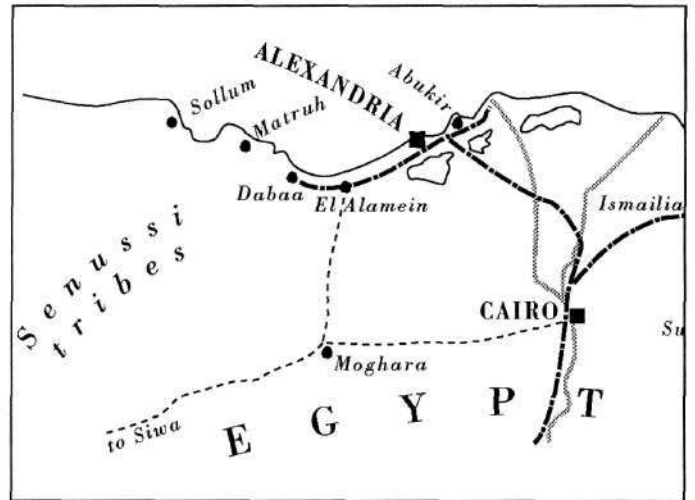
[Pte Williams was on the same draft to Egypt as Archie Newton in the autumn of 1915.]

## THE SENUSSI CAMPAIGN

Who were the 'Senussi', and what was their significance in Egypt in 1915? The Senussi were disaffected Bedouin tribes from Libya and the Western Desert of Egypt, who had been periodically causing trouble for the Italians in Libya for a couple of years. The invasion of November 1915 was engineered by Ottoman 'advisers' under the command of a certain Jafar Pasha with the aim of distracting the British from the Suez theatre.

Large numbers of British troops, mainly mounted, (and named The Western Frontier Force) were dispatched to quell this disturbance. The campaign culminated in a pitched cavalry battle at Aqqaqia on 23 February 1916 at which Jafar Pasha was wounded and captured. Sollum was taken in the following month.

Armoured cars were used and a 350 km long narrow gauge railway defended by rows of blockhouses was laid from the Nile to the Bahariya Oasis, all in order to capture a string of green dots in the desert garrisoned by a couple of thousand tribesmen. Pacifying western Egypt afterwards was a continued drain of resources, as bands of tribesmen



fought in the time-honoured Bedouin 'hit-and-run' fashion. The result of all this was the need to have cavalry units patrolling the Western desert for much of the rest of 1916.

Of the campaign as a whole, one historian states: "...By sending no more than 300 soldiers with a relatively small amount of munitions and gold they (the Turks) had tied down some 35,000 British and Imperial, about 15,000 French, and at times no less than 60,000 Italian troops in what was probably the most successful covert action of the Great War."

with the regiment [when the main body returned from the Dardanelles in November 1915] and they were no doubt well-pleased with the prospect of the early move to the Western Front [of Egypt]."

We are fortunate that a letter, written on the 11th October by one of Archie's fellow draftees to a friend in the regiment back in Harlow, now resides in the Regimental archives. As it aptly conveys the feelings of a newcomer to Egypt, it is quoted in full on the panel on page 2.

**29/30 October 1915.** Telegram from London :  
To Lce Trooper Newton. "C " Squadron, Westminster Dragoons, Abbasia, (near Cairo). Baby girl, both well, Lambert." Edith and Frank Lambert were A.N.'s sister and brother-in-law.

### 15 November 1915.

"Awarded 14 days Field Punishment No.2 and forfeits 14 days pay for wilful neglect of arms and equipment." A.N. later reminisced that he was once put in the glasshouse for not cleaning his saddle properly. Obviously, care of one's horse and equipment was a prime duty for a cavalryman - on

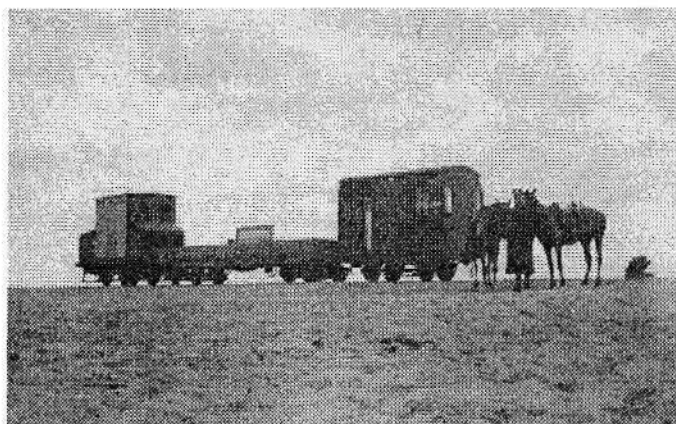
another occasion, while returning to camp after a patrol or similar, he discovered that his horse was saddlesore. He therefore had to walk the horse back, and carry the saddle. The horse always came first. A glance at the Regimental Personnel Ledger reveals that punishments were common.

**November 1915.** Senussi invasion of Egypt. ( See panel above.)

**11 December 1915.** The Westminster Dragoons arrived at Dabaa, where they formed part of the 'Western Frontier Force' organised to deal with the Senussi. They bivouacked at Gemeima Wells, a few miles west of Dabaa, as a forward position in defence of the Dabaa railhead of the Khedeival Railway which stretched east to Alexandria. However, when they







*"Port Said - Mohamadiza Railway. (Engine on left!)"*

were threatened by large numbers of Senussi, it was decided that the position was untenable and the regiment was ordered to pull back to Dabaa itself. This event, known to Regimental tradition as the "retreat from Gemeima", was completed on the 16th December, and defences at Dabaa were stiffened to the extent that when the Senussi approached and saw them, they retired without a fight.

## 1916

A new Regimental camp was built between the railway station and the coastguard station at Dabaa after the Senussi attack, but this had to be evacuated after a week-long deluge of rain in early January, 1916. The Regiment's War Diary gives us a day-by-day account:

*2nd Jan - (Sunday) "Rain commenced in evening, and continued throughout."*

*3rd Jan - "Steady rain continued, water lies on surface and gradually rises, depth varies 3" to 6". Tried to evacuate the camp."*

*4th Jan - "Camp under water, rain continued."*

*5th Jan - "Strong drying wind."*

*6th Jan - "Occasional rain."*

*7th Jan - "Drying wind."*

*8th Jan - "Camp practically free from water."*

*10th Jan.- "Removed to new camping ground. Site 100 yds E of Coastguard Station."*

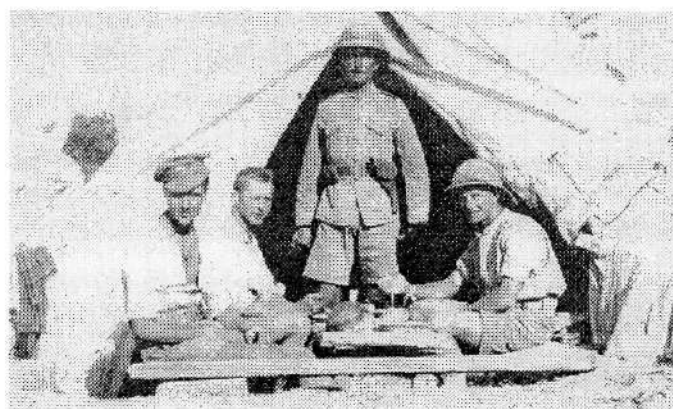
During the campaign, the regiment was employed protecting the railway and supply routes as The Western Frontier Force pushed on to Mersa Matruh and Sollum, and after the main part of the coastline was occupied the Westminster Dragoons continued their job of policing the area. For the regiment, this

meant that much of the rest of 1916 was taken up with patrols along the coastline or into the desert. The Regimental History states that 1916 was a frustrating year for the Dragoons, who felt that they were under-used, and the grouse about being "nobody's baby" was often heard. Rowe goes on to say that "...Probably the greatest relief in that desolate waste was the excellent bathing at pools along the coast with plenty of opportunity to indulge in it." Archie himself later reminisced about the bathing off the coast at Mersa Matruh.

Extracts from the Regimental War Diary continue to give a picture of camp routine at this time:

**11th Jan. 1916** - 4am. "2 Squadrons under Major E.W. Morrison Bell leave camp on Special Patrol. 9pm. Patrol returns to camp."

**15th Jan. 1916** - "Captain Hughes to Hospital - Pleurisy." (It is interesting to note that in January 1916, five officers are recorded as having been sent to or returned from hospital, or invalided home. This is 20% of the officer strength of the Regiment - and no mention is given of the other ranks. This shows us the effect of the privations of life in the desert even for a unit which had been stationed in the East for over a year.)



*Egypt. 1916. A.N. with the canned milk!*

**18th Jan. 1916** - "Occasional rain."

**25th Jan. 1916** - "Sandstorm, lasted about 18 hours."

**29th Jan 1916** - 8am. "Composite squadron (from 'A' and 'C' squadrons) left as escort to a convoy proceeding W to Matruh under the command of 2nd

Lt. H. N. Harding, 'A' Squad.  
Strength of Squadron: Officers 7,  
Other Ranks 110." (Remember  
that A.N. was in 'C' Squadron  
until January 1917.)

**February 1916.** According to  
his demob papers, it was at this  
time that Trooper Newton  
became a signaller.

The Regimental War Diary  
continues -

**16th March 1916** - 6am.  
"Two troops - 'C' Squad. under  
Major E.W. Morrison-Bell, leave  
camp to continue to search for the  
body for the late American  
consulate, Aden, commenced on  
the 14th March. Search unsuccess-  
ful and abandoned. Party  
returned to camp. Note. The search was instituted,  
on the watch and chain found on a body on the 5-2-  
16, by a patrol under the command of 2Lt  
Churchward. H.A., being identified as the property of  
the late American consul at Aden, who was known to

be a passenger on the  
P. and O. S.S. Persia\*."

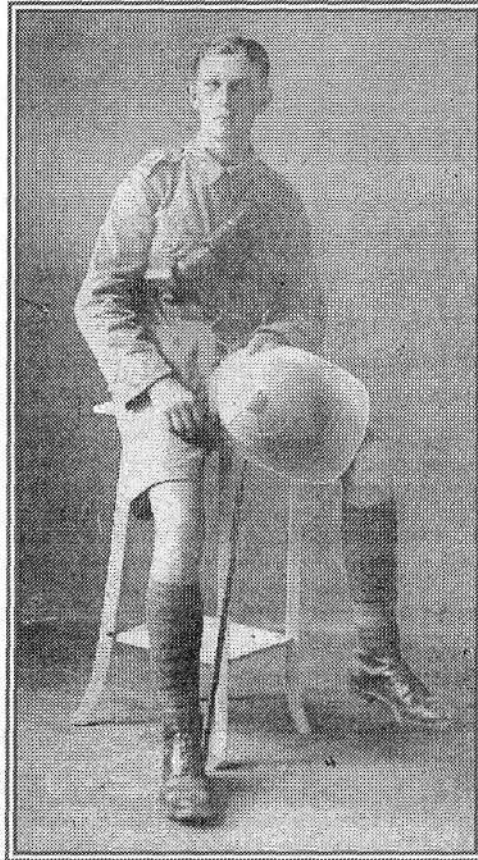
**16th March 1916** -  
(Still at El Dabaa.)  
"Early morning  
sandstorm. 5.30pm.  
Rain commenced. 9pm.  
Horse lines under  
water. 10pm. Heavy  
rain ceased. Occasional  
showers during night."

For most of 1916,



Trooper W.E. Andrews, August  
1916. He was part of the  
same cadre that arrived in  
Egypt with A.N. in 1915.

we only have the Regimental War Diary, with its  
predominantly terse entries, to give us the bare details  
of the Regiment's operations in the Western Desert.  
There were patrols and escorts, survey parties were  
sent to Matruh (further west along the coast - see  
map) - from the notes about the changing of ration  
details, these were away for some time. There were



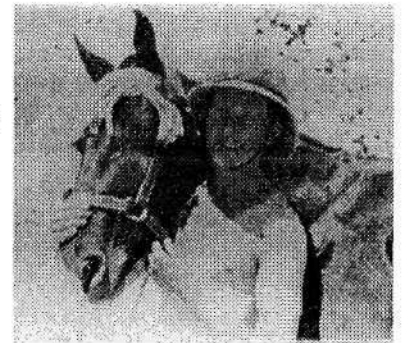
parades, inspections and inocula-  
tions for both men and horses, and  
more officers in hospital and on  
leave. For instance, the commanding  
officer, Major Morrison-Bell, was in  
leave in England for five weeks in  
July 1916. Over the course of eight  
sessions between 8th June and 10th  
July, the whole unit was inoculated  
with the "new triple anti-typhoid  
vaccine". Between the 25th and 27th  
June, the horses were treated with  
"Mallein". On 6th July, all "Troop  
leaders" (officers) were examined in  
Semaphore by the signalling officer  
(What part would A.N. have had in  
that?)

**29 July 1916.** A.N. "Forfeits 2  
days pay under Royal Warrant for  
being absent from 2300 29th July to  
1900 30th July." Another trooper,

W.E. Andrews, had the identical charge and  
punishment in his records. Furthermore, photographs  
of the two men were taken in Alexandria, and dated  
18 August 1916; the picture of Andrews was  
inscribed: "Just a gentle reminder of our tour in  
Alexandria." Presumably they overstayed a local  
leave and missed the train back to Dabaa.

**August 1916.**

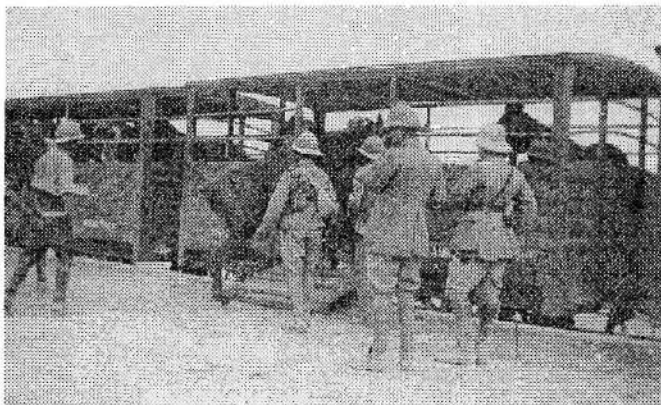
Photograph of A.N.  
with Mary - his  
horse: "A snap of the  
old mare just before  
taking her for a  
swim." Archie was,  
at one time,  
nicknamed "Mary"  
because of his horse.



**29 August 1916.** The regiment, less 'C' Squadron,  
returned to Cairo and was quartered at Zeitoun. 'C'  
Squadron (the one A.N. was in) remained in Dabaa  
under the command of Captain E. Rowe, on line of  
command duty until the 14th November.

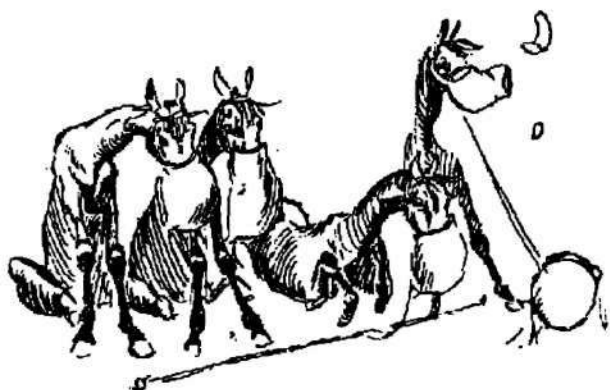
**December 1916.** In Zeitoun (Series of

\* S.S. Persia was sunk on 30th December 1915



*Entraining horses. December 1916. Probably shows the prelude to 'A' Squadron's move to Sinai in January 1917.*

photographs). The Imperial School of Instruction at Zeitoun, near Cairo, was a major Training / holding area for British troops in Egypt. One picture showed troops entraining horses, another showed A.N. "On Sentry-go (sleeping quarters behind guard room)" while a third depicted the sleeping quarters - the interior of a plank-built warehouse.



~ Part Three ~  
*Patrolling: Sinai & Gaza*  
 ~ 1917 ~

**9 January 1917.** From this date, A.N. was with 'A' Squadron, which was transferred from Corps Reserve to the 53rd Division. The squadron was under the command of Major John Haig, (a relative of Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British armies in France.)

The crossing of the Suez Canal and the start of operations in Sinai and Palestine are fortunately recorded for us by another trooper in the Regiment - Corporal C.C.M. Millis, who had been in Gallipoli in 1915, and in 1917 was transferred to the staff of 53rd

## Crossing the Suez

From the diary of Cpl C.C.M. Millis, B Squadron,  
 El Arish. August 1917. (IWM 87/13/1)

"Once again we have commenced 'active service' and our 'C' Squadron relieving us at Zeitoun we entrained for the desert .... Quite different in many respects is the country, although as regards conditions, weather etc, it is practically the same as up at Dabaa, with the exception of sandstorms. Kantara was our first halt & have we remained for 4 or 5 hours finally entraining again for El Arish, quite close to the sea & glorious bathing although quite dangerous. Camped here for four days & moved out on trek on daybreak - bound for goodness knows where! Splendid country, the sand & sun being tempered down by oasis date palms, figs and melon plantations. A thoroughly enjoyable trek of 40 miles, keeping close to the sea & therefore bathing daily. Rafa being reached we were able to see the enormous camps & camel lines, also crossed many of the fields where hot engagements were fought in the early days of the campaign.

Signs of cultivation on a large scale are evident by the recently ploughed fields, but these are now reduced to a perfect dust heap by the traffic of transport and divisions of men and guns. Palestine does not present the sight which one would think - very flat for the tents & camps, an absolute barren wilderness broken here & there by cactus plants and a patch or so [of] dried up wheat-barley low mud huts very much in ruins.

Abasan-el Kebir was our camp for some few days, until we received orders to proceed further up the line to the right flank. Our colonel returned to the regiment just before morning. Am feeling very fit but the hard work from 4.30 am till sometimes late at night makes one very tired. Have also caught the sun pretty badly on my arms. Packed up again & moved off pushing through Sheikh Nason, following the line as far as Sheloal where the air seems to be much better & healthier, also cleaner than lower down on the plains.

Plenty of wind up, but so far no orders, although we are now pretty near the Turkish line & cavalry patrols in fact after a couple of days we found out we were only a couple of miles from "no-man's land" patrolled by ourselves during the day & the Turks at night, have exchanged shots with them.

On the 24th August, there seemed to be a lot of "wind" in the air & very suddenly we had marching orders to go out on a reconnaissance of 72 hours...."





“Mohammad Ali Mosque, Cairo.” Note the munitions and stores stacked in the foreground. 1916 or 1917.

of ‘A’ Squadron at about the time that they crossed the Suez Canal:

(i) Depicts a column of cavalry actually crossing the canal on what looks like an early Bailey-bridge, and is inscribed, “I cannot point myself out!”

(ii) Naked bathers: “A dip in the Suez”

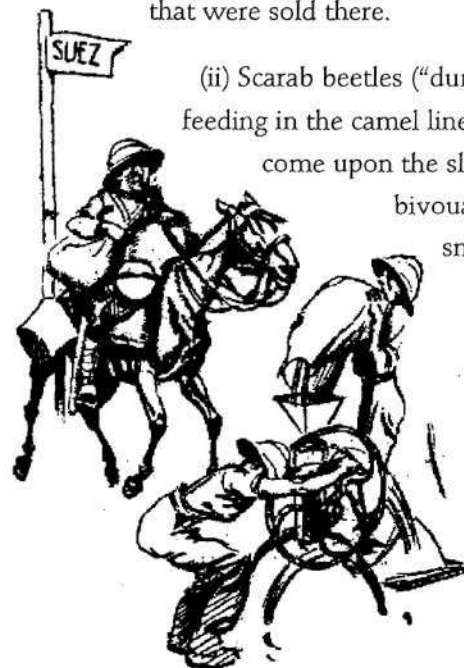
(iii) “On trek - feeding time” The horses have feed buckets hanging from their heads.

**1917-various anecdotes:**

Like most men who served in 1914-18, Archie was not one to relate much detail to his family, but a few anecdotes do survive, and are retold here:

(i) Archie Newton loved Nestle’s Cream Milk - there is even a photograph of him with a tin of it. (See page 4) On one occasion, he drank so much that he made himself quite sick! He also frequently visited

“Groppey’s” in Cairo because he loved the cream cakes that were sold there.



(ii) Scarab beetles (“dung beetles”): after feeding in the camel lines, these would come upon the sleeping troopers in bivouac and crawl - foul smelling - into their blankets and clothes. Other insect pests, apart from the ubiquitous lice, were the weevils that would infest the grain.

(iii) The severity of the eastern climate, with its roasting days and freezing

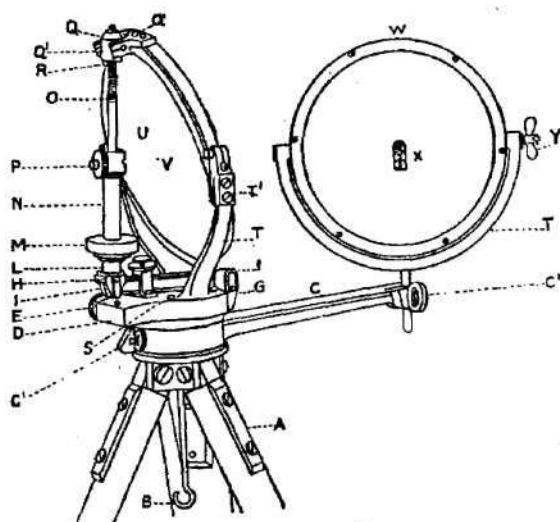
Division. he crossed the canal later on in August 1917, when the rest of the regiment followed up ‘A’ Squadron, and in the panel on page 6 we have a description of his impressions.

‘A’ Squadron was detached from the main part of the regiment during much of the early part of 1917, and carried out reconnaissance patrols in support of Sir Archibald Murray’s two abortive attempts to attack Gaza in the March and April of 1917. Major Haig evidently drove his men hard, but was not without a sense of humour: “Another idea of his, not universally appreciated, was to lead the squadron up the wind-swept sides of sandhills and slither down the steep lee sides on the horses’ haunches, one or two riders somersaulting into the soft sand and arriving ahead of their horses. When questioned, the reply was, “It’s good practice. We may need to do it.”” [Rowe. Reg. hist.]

In January 1917, a series of photographs were taken



# The Heliograph



HELIOGRAPH WITH DUPLEX MIRROR.

The Mark IV heliograph. The duplex mirror is attached when the sun and the 'distant' (receiving) station are in opposite directions from the signaller.

#### Parts of the Heliograph:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| A. Stand.                               | N. Vertical Socket.   |
| B. Anchoring Hook.                      | O. Vertical steel Rod.  |
| C. Sight arm with clamping screws (C'). | P. Clamping screw for ditto.                                  |
| D. Tangent box with lid below.          | Q. German silver ball attached to claw (Q').                  |
| E. Tangent screw head.                  | R. Adjusting screw for ditto.                                 |
| F. Key.                                 | S. Base plate.  |
| G. Key spring.                          | T. U arms, with detachable portion (T') and screws adjusting. |
| H. Key Bridge.                          | U. Signalling mirror in frame.                                |
| I. Key Bearings.                        | V. Unsilvered spot at centre of signalling mirror.            |
| J. Beat Regulating screw. (not visible) | W. Duplex mirror with frame in U arms (T).                    |
| K. Lock nut for ditto.                  | X. Sighting vane on ditto.                                    |
| L. Swivel joint.                        | Y. Butterfly and pivoting screw.                              |
| M. Collar.                              |   |

nights, had an adverse effect on his back in later life. This was compounded by the endless marching over Belgian "pave" during the Western Front campaigns in 1918.

(iv) Extract from a letter from Grandma... "...I wish I could remember any stories about Grandpa's war experiences, but don't forget I didn't know him until after it was over. I knew he was a signaller in Egypt, and on one occasion he was signalling with the sun on a mirror (it is called a heliograph) when he suddenly felt the urge to move away and the next moment the hill he had been standing on was shelled. He had scorpion down his trousers but no harm was done as his commanding officer ripped them off before he was bitten. That, and a deep ulcer on his hand (which he cured with Zambuk sent from home) was the extent of his war wounds!! By the way, he was "Trooper Newton" while in Egypt, not "Private"; at the end, or towards the end of the war, the mounted regiment Westminster Dragoons was broken up, and he spent the last year or so in France ... so I suppose he was a Private then..."

**July 1917.** "Signalling Station in the desert. Receiving message by heliograph." A.N. stands by a tripod with a mirror mounted on it (the heliograph) while someone else takes the message down on a notepad.

On the panel opposite is a drawing from the Signals Training Manual dated 1917, which Trooper Newton would have used as an aid to signalling. (It is referred to in his course notes taken during a signals course that he attended in the spring of the following year.) In the wide open spaces of the desert, signalling was a vital function, as troops would have operated in a much more dispersed fashion than on the Western Front in France and, of course, had no radios. Signallers would have used both semaphore and heliograph in the East, (the latter being useful because of its visual range). When the unit operated in France the following autumn, during the comparatively mobile campaigns of the final 'Hundred Days', much use was made of dispatch riders on motorcycles. We know that in the spring and summer of 1917, Archie Newton was attached to 'A' squadron HQ - there is an order sheet listing 'A' squadron signals personnel written by Major

# March Discipline

**Squadron Orders by Major J. Haig.  
Cdg. 74th Divisional Cav. T.21 C. 8. 7.  
Monday Aug. 13th 1917.**

[ ... ]

## 3. March Discipline.

In this theatre of operations it is essential that every officer & man is physically fit if we are to succeed. To ensure this, the strictest attention should be paid to march discipline. Slackness in this respect saps the energy & efficiency of both man & horse and it must be realised that unless a man is physically fit he is no use in a fight.

The general principles of March Discipline are laid down in F.S.R. PART I, Chap.III, Sec 24 to Sec. 33, both inclusive. These sections must be carefully studied not only by officers but by all warrant and non commissioned officers.

### Water Discipline.

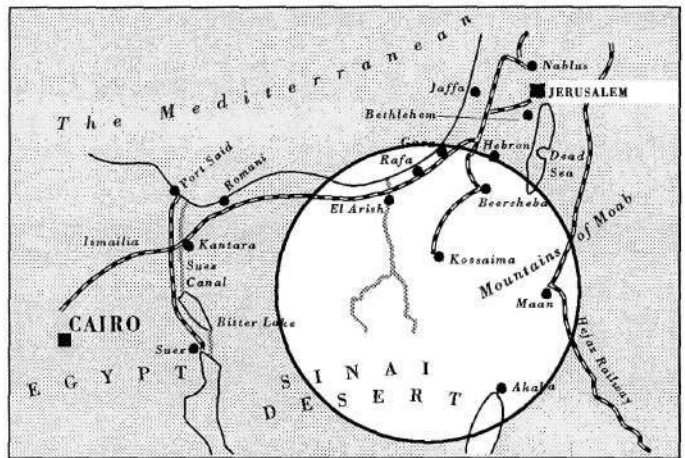
In this climate the men must learn that they are not to drink from their water-bottles without an order from the O/C or troop officer. The contents of the water-bottles are to be considered as much an emergency ration as the iron-ration. Water bottles must be inspected on every parade on which they are ordered to be carried filled and inspected again before the order is given to the men allowing them to drink. Immoderate drinking on the march is fatal to a man's power of endurance and with ordinary care & strict march discipline the troops will rapidly become accustomed to the required conditions.

When dust is bad and a following wind in the rear of the column causes discomfort to the troops, formations to obviate this should be adopted, when the ground & conditions permit.

The various precautions to be taken should hostile aircraft be observed during a march must be carefully practised & all ranks instructed in the signals for the immediate adoption of the required formation.

(Authy) 74th Div. (G.S.) Circ. Memo No. 11.  
d. 11/8/17 [ ... ]

(From Major Haig's order book.)



*Area of operations of 'A' Squadron while with the 53rd Division and as the 74th divisional Cavalry in the Sinai Desert, January to August 1917.*

Haig that survives in regimental archives, which has his name is on it.

**July, August 1917.** Major Haig was transferred to the 74th division, and given the command of the 74th Divisional Cavalry. 'A' Squadron, still detached from the rest of the regiment, moved with him. There were continuing patrols in the desert of northern Sinai, south of the Turkish defensive positions around Gaza. From the evidence of the Regimental archives, these were often tedious and uneventful, but the need for vigilance to be kept up was illuminated by reports of ambushes and encounters, and more than once, Yeomen were spirited away by the wily Turks.

There was a general tightening-up of fitness and march standards when General Allenby took over command of the E.E.F. in the summer of 1917, and this was reflected in various directives that came down from Army level. Major Haig's orders for Monday 13th August 1917, shown in the panel opposite, are an example of the standards of training and fitness required of each man in the E.E.F.



*Zam-Buk advert from a local paper, September 1917.*

~ Part Four ~  
 Overview of the East  
 ~ 1917 ~

Before we continue tracing Archie Newton's part in the great events of autumn 1917, we need an overview of situation in the east at that time.

It has often been stated that the most important event in the Mediterranean theatre during the Great War was the capture of Jerusalem in 1917. Why was that so?

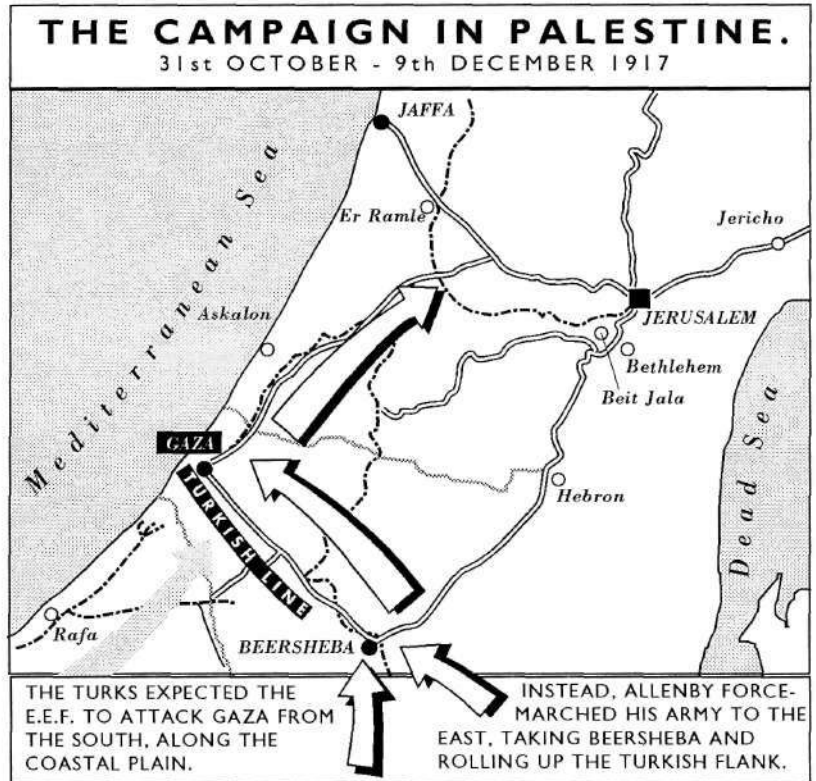
### Early reverses.

After the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war, the Turks had made an attack on the Suez Canal from Sinai in early 1915, which was repulsed by the British 'Egyptian Expeditionary Force.' (E.E.F) However, the British were not able to attack the Turkish domains in Palestine because of the concentration of effort in Gallipoli (1915) and the Western Desert (1916) and the disasters on the Tigris (1916). By 1917, the first two distractions had passed, and the situation in Mesopotamia had been stabilised. The E.E.F was reassembled to attack Palestine.

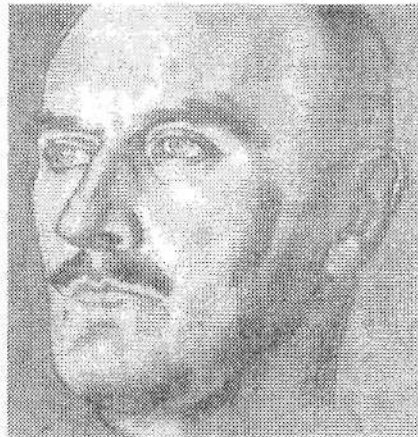
The route into Palestine that had been taken by armies since the days of the Pharaohs was the coastal plain via Gaza. This line of attack was used by General Sir Archibald Murray, commander of the E.E.F. Unfortunately, the Turks had anticipated this and, (assisted by German engineers and artillery) by the spring of 1917 they had constructed a massive belt of defences in front of Gaza. Twice, in March and April of that year, the E.E.F. were repulsed with heavy losses.

### A New Broom.

London took these reverses seriously enough to replace Murray with General Edmund Allenby, who



took over on June 28th 1917. Allenby immediately set about reorganising the E.E.F. and restoring its morale, and planned another attack in the late autumn.



General Allenby

One of Allenby's Corps commanders, General Sir Philip Chetwode, who had served under Murray and consequently knew the ground, suggested avoiding the Gaza defences and attacking Beersheba instead. Gaza could then be taken in the flank or rear. The added advantage of attacking Beersheba was that it was a water source - which made it a vital jumping-off

point for further attacks. Allenby adopted this plan, and - under a veil of secrecy - set about constructing railways, water pipelines and roads, and preparing his divisions for the attack.

### A Christmas Present to the Nation.

The attack took place on 31st October 1917. The

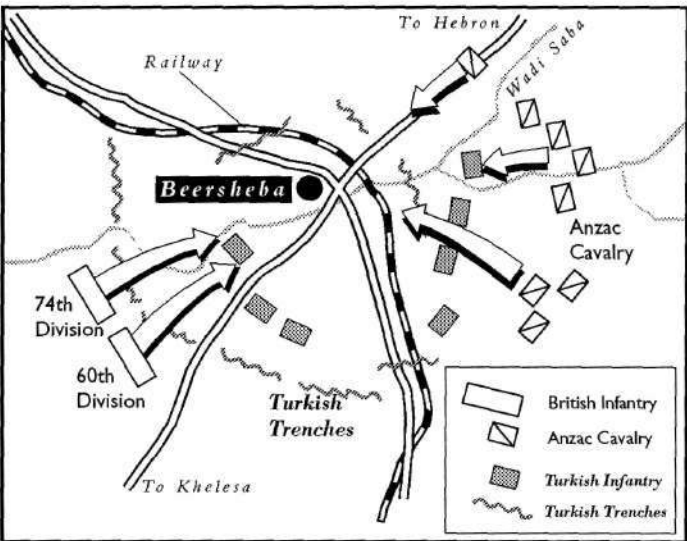


Turks were taken by surprise, and Beersheba was taken in one day. The Turks then expected Allenby to push on north to Jerusalem via Hebron, the most direct route. However, Allenby again outwitted them. He attacked Gaza from the east, and then pushed into the Judean Hills, outflanking Jerusalem on the west. The Turks were unable to concentrate their reserves, and - on the 8th December - they took the decision to abandon Jerusalem. Allenby had won his prize, in exactly the manner that he had planned - no blood was spilt in the Holy City itself.

The capture of Jerusalem was a solitary success in a bad year for the British: a year that had seen further costly stalemates on the Western front, privations at home caused by German submarine warfare, and the collapse of an ally - Russia. Fortunately, Allenby was able to give a "Christmas present to the nation."

~ Part Five ~  
Beersheba & Jerusalem  
~ 1917 ~

**31 October 1917.** The Battle of Beersheba, and the beginning of the campaign that led to the capture of Jerusalem. Beersheba was taken in only one day, but it was a hard fought action, which was renowned for the incident of the Australian Light Horse charging over three lines of trenches. The Westminster Dragoons were themselves engaged, and lost one dead and 17 wounded in the fray. Among them was



Map: The Battle of Beersheba, 31st October 1917

**Letter to Captain Harding  
from his servant, written after  
the Battle of Beersheba.**

Sir,

Just a few hurried lines to let you know that I am going on alright. Last Sunday I was X-Rayed [*sic*] and the bullet was located near the bone in my left thigh. I expect shortly to be operated [*sic*] on for the purpose of extricating it. I hope to be discharged [*sic*] from here [in] a few days. [*one line obscured.*] lists so early [*three lost words.*] not accounting for any of the enemy. Everybody here seems very pleased with the work we accomplished on the right, including the High Commissioner, who paid us a visit yesterday. I hope Sir you have not forgotten where I put your overcoat, it will be found with my own buttoned round it among the first troops [*another lost line.*] kit, and for old George [*three lost words.*] through the neck. I sincerely hope he is going on well. I have not seen or heard anything of Nunn since we stayed at the 45th S. Hospital El Arish the first night. I presume he followed by a latter [*sic*] train, and for all I know may be in this very hospital, for it is such a big place. I wish him a speedy recovery.

[*Unreadable word.*] Sorry could not write you before, as I had both my hands bandaged up to the fingertips and I have had to free one hand to write this letter. The boys were very pleased with your coolness and pluck. I feel as though I must mention this for one constantly heard remarks passed to that effect. Well Sir, this is all for the present, so will close by wishing you all the best of luck and every success.

H Garstang. [*Signature unclear*]

The original letter was written on a Red Cross notelet. As it had been subsequently glued to a piece of card by the recipient, it was difficult to read.

an officer, Captain N. Harding of 'B' Squadron, who won the M.C. for his part in the affair. Two other troopers were recommended for the Military medal. The letter in the panel above was written to Captain Harding by his servant, who had also been wounded during the charge.



## The capture of Jerusalem.

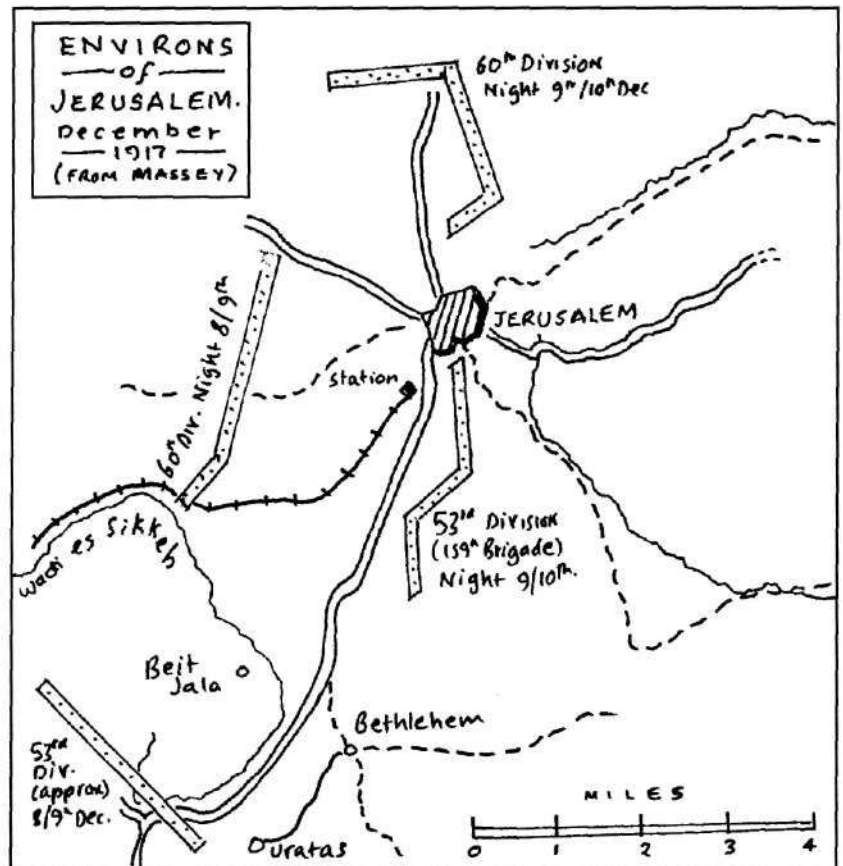
**9 December 1917.** Capture of Jerusalem from the Ottoman Turks. The Westminster Dragoons were the first formed unit of the British Army to enter the city. Family tradition has it that Archie was one of the first of the unit into the city. As there is a lot of coverage of this event in the sources, I will describe it in detail.

In early December, the E.E.F., having taken Gaza and fought their way up the coast, turned and pushed east towards Jerusalem through the Judean Hills. The Westminster Dragoons were with the 53rd (Welsh) Division, now on the southern flank of the army, as it pushed up from the south from Hebron. Lt. A.E. Banham of 'C' Squadron recalls these fateful days: "...The Westminster Dragoons were occupied with advance guards, liaisons and patrols. I was then a Second Lieutenant in 'C' squadron of the regiment and I recall that, having having been sent on to Hebron with my troop, we adopted the rather unusual proceeding of riding through the town with drawn swords as I did not like the look of some of the characters lurking thereabouts."

According to W.T. Massey, official correspondent of the London newspapers with the E.E.F. in 1917, the commander of the 53rd Division "... decided to attack on the high ground of Beit Jala (two miles north-west of Bethlehem) from the south, to send his divisional cavalry, the Westminster Dragoons, on the Infantry's left and threaten Beit Jala from the left and refuse Bethlehem." Dense fog, and Turkish guns deployed south of Bethlehem, held up the advance of the infantry, which eventually managed to reach the high ground west and south west of Beit Jala. Advance guards were sent into Bethlehem and Beit Jala during the night of the 8th/9th.

Lt. Banham continues the story ... "On the night of Dec. 8th 1917,

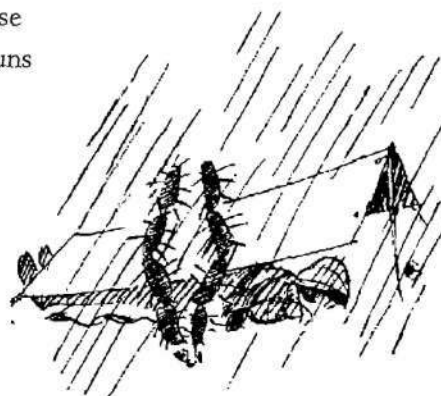
the Westminster Dragoons reached Beit Jala ... The country is wild and rugged; the weather was cold, with driving rain; and I and my troop had spent all the previous night, chilled and sodden, picketing the stony hills on our right flank towards the Dead Sea, where enemy movements had been observed. The order ... on 8th December, which awaited us at Beit



Jala, was in precise terms, viz., to 'push on boldly for Jerusalem', and I am not likely to forget being detailed for the advance guard on the 9th. The troop rode ahead from Beit Jala accordingly, keeping a sharp lookout; but at this stage the advance was unopposed.

When within about 2 miles of the City of Jerusalem, orders reached me from the rear to turn left and clear a village, Suffafa, where we captured a couple of Turks. Meanwhile 'A' Squadron [the Squadron that Archie Newton was in] of the W.D.'s had taken over the advance guard and rode into Jerusalem through the Jaffa Gate.

An infantry Brigadier (Brig. General Watson) hastily arrived to take over the



PALESTINE

surrender and received the keys from the mayor ... " (The regimental history states that they reached the gates of Jerusalem at 8.45 a.m.) "...The Turks did not defend the Holy City itself, having been largely outflanked in the west. Consequently, no fighting took place within the confines of the city - which was as General Allenby had planned. While, however, the formalities of handing over the city proceeded, the Westminster dragoons rode on without delay through the streets and out of the Damascus Gate. Here they came under fire from the Turkish rear-guard on the Mount of Olives ridge and suffered some casualties of men and horses before the enemy were driven off towards Jericho..." It was 'A' Squadron that kept the enemy busily engaged until relieved by the infantry of the 1st/5th Welsh at 5.30pm.

Captain Edward Rowe, who commanded the body of 'A' Squadron that was the first formed unit of British troops to enter the city, describes how they were met by a spontaneous demonstration of welcome as they rode through: "... olive branches waving and being thrown down to be ridden over:



Brigadier General Watson of the 60th (London) Division enters the city of Jerusalem on 9th December 1917. Two Westminster Dragoons can be seen on the left.

friends used Fray-Bentos labels as currency with the credulous locals.

It Banham concludes that: "... A day or two later the Westminster Dragoons were withdrawn to Bethlehem, where they were billeted in some large monastery buildings ..." The W.D.'s had to deal with a Turkish counter-attack just after Christmas, 1917, while patrols were a constant factor of life. Christmas itself was celebrated in Bethlehem, while the Regimental Diary records that it "... rained heavily, bitterly cold throughout the day ..."



Losses to the regiment in operations from Beersheba to Jerusalem were 5 killed, 23 wounded and 153 evacuated sick - the latter figure evidence of the harsh conditions of that winter.

1918

**18 January 1918.** Postcard - depicting the Orfanotrofio Cattolico Di Betlemme Gerusalemme: "Dear Mother, A view of our billet. The Silesian fathers who still live in the monastery are dear fellows (Italians) & one of them gives me an hour

men and women pressing forward to touch the riders and express their joy as they rode past, it was all an experience never to be forgotten."

While in Jerusalem, it is said that Archie and his

each day to teach me French! From the Balcony where you see the two or three standing we get a wonderful view of the surrounding country & the Dead Sea & valley of the Jordan about 9 miles away. My room is just at the back of the balcony. A."



**February 1918.** The regiment was ordered back to Beersheba for rest. Archie Newton was sent as part of a cadre to the Imperial School of Instruction, Zeitoun, on a signalling course. He was in squad No. 37, under the charge of Cpl. Brier. From A.N.'s regimental records, it seems that this course was completed before 15 April 1918.

**April 1918.** After the German offensive in France of March 1918, the subsequent British retreat, and the colossal losses there, many yeomanry units in the E.E.F. were given orders to prepare for transfer to the Western Front. Moreover, as cavalry were obsolete in the European theatre, these yeomanry units were also ordered to surrender their horses and convert to other arms of service. For the Westminster Dragoons, this meant the start of a new era - as machine gunners.

**7 April 1918.** (Extract from Rowe) ...

"..Here..(at Belah, in the Jordan valley)... was experienced the saddest of days, for this saw the heartbreak of handing over to Remounts of all horses, many of them brought out from England in September 1914 - a cruel end to those three and a half years together...Two bright but differing incidents helped to dispel the general gloom. General Allenby came down from Jerusalem specially to bid goodbye to the Yeomen he was so loth to lose, and the handshake was a great occasion. The other was an

inspired idea of the irrepressible Sergeant Campbell who organised a mock funeral procession to a grave decorated with saddlery, grooming-kit and head ropes. The surplice (shirt) and stole (puttee) of the corporal - chaplain who led a long procession of choristers round the camp to the graveside, the while

chanting from a book far removed from being a Bible, added to the general brightening-up of the troops."

There are three photographs showing this procession and the 'graveside' scene, one of which is shown above. They were inscribed with the two verses lamenting the loss of the regiment's horses.

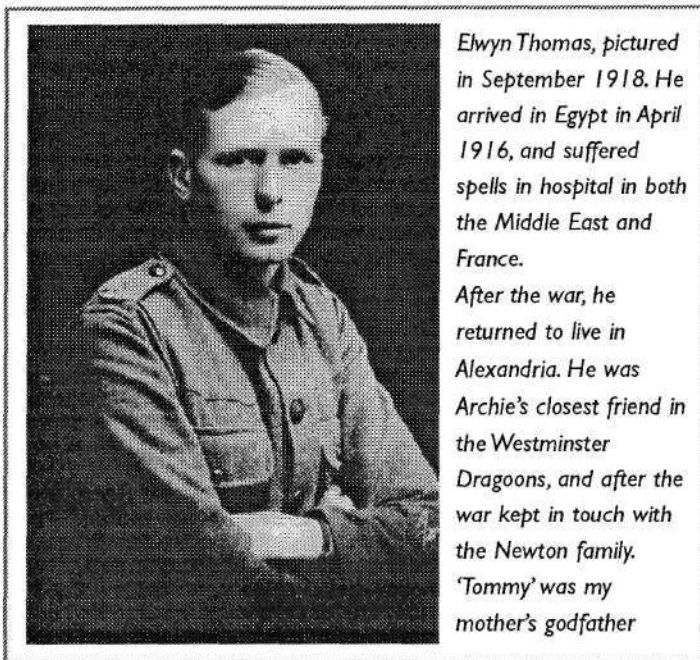
The verses are as follows:

*Here lies the soul  
of a mounted corps  
Who lost their steeds  
in this wide-World War  
Now crunches of Gravel  
and destined to be -  
Dismounted, Discomforted, M.G.C.*

*Egypt - alluring and so fair,  
Land of charm and fascination,  
At any rate, that's what we hear  
Retailled by Tourists - Cooks Excursion.  
In somewhat different strain, says Tommy!  
Sand - blinding, thirst - begotten hole,  
Hasten peace, I much prefer the cool  
green glades of dear old Blighty.*

**17 March 1918.** A.N. in Cairo (evidence of a business card.) presumably on local leave from Zeitoun.





*Elwyn Thomas, pictured in September 1918. He arrived in Egypt in April 1916, and suffered spells in hospital in both the Middle East and France. After the war, he returned to live in Alexandria. He was Archie's closest friend in the Westminster Dragoons, and after the war kept in touch with the Newton family. 'Tommy' was my mother's godfather*

**April 1918.** Photographs of some of A.N's friends taken at Sidi Bishe: "Kate" (another female nickname), "Bill", "Smiffy", "Browney" and "Young Buck".

"Browney" was in fact 2526 Acting Signal Cpl. Brown, who had arrived in Egypt in April 1916, and was with Archie in 'A' Squadron during the operations with the 53rd Division in early 1917. He had qualified at a signalling course at Zeitoun in July 1917, but had missed the latter stages of both the



"Young Buck"

Beersheba and the Jerusalem campaign, as he was hospitalised in Abbasia, Cairo, in November and December 1917, only rejoining the unit in January 1918. Another casualty of illness in the autumn of 1917 was

W.E.Andrews (who had been on the local leave with A.N. in Alexandria back in 1916) - he was incapacitated with diarrhoea for three weeks in October and November 1917, thus missing the Beersheba action. The regimental history makes the point that casualties from illness far exceeded those sustained in action



"Browney"

during the years in the Middle East.

Another photograph came from Cpl. C.C.P. Lawson, who had been nominated for the Military Medal after distinguishing himself during the Battle of Beersheba in the previous Autumn. He was in later life to be commissioned and rise to the rank of major, and also to be a writer and illustrator of books on army uniforms. A particular friend of Archie's during the War was fellow-signaller, 5497 Trooper Elwyn I.Thomas, who, like Brown, had arrived in Egypt in April 1916.

**23 May 1918.** The Westminster Dragoons embarked at Alexandria, leaving 'details' permanently with the E.E.F.

~ Part Six ~  
The Western Front  
~ 1918-19 ~

**1 June 1918.** Regiment disembarked from H.M.S. Canberra at Marseilles, after an uneventful voyage,

(but see the poem by Siegfried Sassoon in Appendix 3 - which voices the inner fears of those being transferred from the Middle east to the Western Front.) After a few days there, a move was made to Etaples, on the channel coast ( and the main 'holding area' for British troops on their way to the Western Front) There, the regiment came within the formation under the command of Sir Herbert Plumer, British Second Army, in the Ypres area of Belgium. It

was here that the regiment was transferred

compulsorily to the Machine Gun Corps, being called thereafter the 104th Battalion M.G.C. All personnel were given new numbers: Archie's was changed from 2330 to 115479 by early 1918.



C.C.P. Lawson, Palestine 1918



10 July 1918.

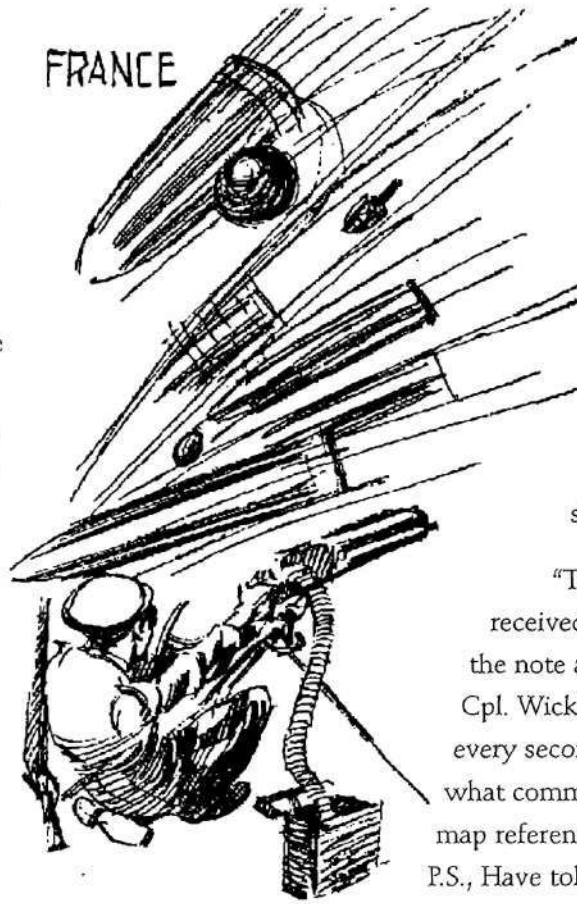
Four men sent to England on leave. One of the was A.N., whose leave lasted for two weeks. It was his first trip home for nearly three years.

**September 1918.** 104 Battalion. M.G.C is fed into the final offensives against the Germans in Belgium. As a rule, Machine Gun Corps battalions detached elements of company size to support infantry battalions wherever needed; these provided whatever fire support was necessary, and were then redeployed elsewhere. For this reason, it is difficult to track down the whereabouts of individual elements of the ex-dragoons until after the armistice.

**28 Sept. 1918.** Elements of 104 Btn. M.G.C received orders from the 9th.(Scottish) Division. Elsewhere in the Regimental archives is a congratulatory memo from 29th Division.

Another extract from Grandma's letter: "...he spent the last year or so in France on a motorcycle. He didn't like that, sleeping out all nights in the soaking rain..." From scraps of signals dating from the last weeks of the war, we can see that Archie Newton operated with, and at some time controlled, despatch riders on motorcycles. Compared with the reminiscences about Egypt, he said very little about the Western Front, which is not altogether surprising. The Regimental History itself tells of the pervasive fatalism of troops in that theatre, the soldiers' wish for a "Blighty One" - a wound serious enough to get one evacuated to England. It also tells of how the "Luck of the Westminster" -

FRANCE



which kept casualties down in those years in Egypt and Palestine - was not quite so apparent after the move to the European War.

**1 October 1918.** Elements of the unit operating at Potijze, in the notorious Ypres "Salient", during the final offensives against the Germans.

**25 October 1918.** Received signal memo:

"To Signlr. Newton. Your note duly received. Did you forget to give Major Reid the note about your taking charge in place of Cpl. Wickham? In future please let me know every second day by D.R. [Dispatch Rider] what communication you have and also your map reference. O.E.German, Lt.

P.S., Have told Sgt. Sturman to send you up some envelopes."

Lt. German was the battalion signalling officer, Sgt. Sturman, the S.Q.M.S.(Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant), and Cpl. Wickham, a signals corporal.

**1 Nov. 1918.** Elements of the unit operating with the 9th and 34th Divisions.

Notice. DRLS

(1) DRs will leave Advanced Batt HQRS at the following hours IF REQUIRED

Batt HQRS ADVANCED	Batt HQRS REAR	A, D Coys	C, B Coys
1030	1130	—	—
1630	1730	—	—
0830	—	0900	0945
1230	—	1300	1345
1600	—	1630	1715

(2) DRs at advanced BATT HQRS will deliver all despatches from Coys to Rear Batt HQRS.

(3) DRs at Rear Batt HQRS will deliver to MT B Coys.

Signal message, October 1918.



**11 November 1918.** The Armistice - end of the Great War. The message to the 104th Bn. M.G.C. of this event is now preserved in the regimental archives. It was pasted on a piece of card by Major Norman Harding, MC., and on it was written: "How the notification of the end of the war came to the troops over the field signal wires. We were at rest in Menin"

**Christmas 1918.** Spent in France.

1919

**6 January 1919.** In Paris. Hotel bill for 'Messieurs Alcock and Newton' - they spent 117:30 Francs on a meal. While in France, A.N. visited the Nouveau Theatre, Lille, to see a performance by an English Theatre company from Paris.

**11 January 1919.** Photograph of Archie in a town square in Courtrai, Belgium. He is part of what looks like a mixed-unit group, and includes two women - possibly VADs (see above). Regimental records confirm that 104 Bn was at that time located in Courtrai.

**February - March, 1919.** Unlike many British units in France, which were required to take part in the 'March to Germany' in the autumn and winter of 1918/19, the Westminsters returned to their headquarters at Elverton Street in London, where, according to the regimental history - "...at an almost

embarrassing speed which led to near chaos at headquarters, all ranks were demobilised." From his demobilisation documents, A.N.'s route back to civilian life can be traced as follows :

**14 February 1919.** Issued a slip, which declared that he was "Free of vermin and fit to travel". On the same day he was issued £39 4s 3d in back-pay.

**16 Feb. 1919.** Still at Courtrai.

<p>ARMY FORM C.121          "A" FORM          Messages &amp; Signals.          War News. 11/11/18          OFFICIAL          Hostilities ceased 1100 today          all troops will hold fast on lines          reached at that time. a a a.          No intercourse with enemy until          further instructions follow from          GHQ.</p>
---

*How the news of the end of hostilities was received by Major Harding.*

**17 Feb. 1919.** Receipt from a clothing shop.

**21 Feb. 1919.** (i) Protection Certificate (ii) Certificate of Identity (iii) Army Chaplain Paper, and (iv) Certificate of Identity for Soldiers Not Remaining with the Colours, all issued at the Dispersal Unit, Dover.

**24 Feb. 1919.** Ration Book issued.

**11 March 1919.** A.N. officially disembodied. He was still certified

A.1. At demobilisation, he was also issued a Certificate of Employment for the war period, which stated:

151580 Private Archie Newton,  
 104th ( Westminster Dragoons) Bn.  
 Unit: M.G.C. (Machine Gun Corps)  
 Trade or calling before enlistment : Clerk.

51/1263  
Army Form Z. 21.

**CERTIFICATE OF\*** Discharge  
Reserve  
Disembodiment  
Demobilization on Demobilization.

Regtl. No. 12 15 80 Rank Pte

Names in full Newton Archie

Unit and Regiment or Corps from which 10th Bn. (Warrant Officers) 10th

Enlisted on the 11th November 1914

For 2nd County of London Yeomanry

Also served in /

Medals and Decorations awarded during present engagement Authorized prior to 11th Nov. 1918

Place of Rejoining in case of emergency Crystal Palace Medical Category A.1

Specialist Military qualifications Year of birth 1893

He is Disembodied in consequence of Demobilization on 11th March 1919

Signature and Rank A. G. Burton

Officer in Charge H. C. Records (Place) 11 York St. W. E.

\*Strike out whichever is inapplicable. †The word "Army" to be inserted where necessary.

(3090) W. W. 241—P.P. 2326 1/19. D & R. (E 1256)

WARNING:—If this Certificate is sent a duplicate cannot be issued. You should therefore retain the original and if you lose it or find it by any means apply for its replacement.

**Certificate of Disembodiment**

No courses/instruction, etc., in the Army\*.

\* This is somewhat odd, as he had completed a two month signals course in the previous year

**18 March 1919.** "Out Of Work Donation Policy" document issued. It was not used, so presumably he found (or returned to) a job immediately.

**20 March 1919.** Memorandum to Mr. A Newton, Warwick Lodge, Golders Green, N.W.

"Dear Sir, In response to yours of the 5th inst., (Proficiency) Pay Class I has been credited and paid to you from July 1st. 1917. Yours faithfully, J.G.Burton., for Acting Paymaster, Regimental Paymaster' Machine Gun Corps."

**Monday 20 October 1919.** Westminster Dragoons Old Comrades Association Annual Dinner and Concert, at the Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, Kingsway. On Archie's menu are printed the cartoons in this document, and inscribed are about 80 signatures of his old comrades.

Kit list issued to every man in the Regiment - compare this with the 'Full Marching Order' in Appendix 2

**2ND COUNTY OF LONDON YEOMANRY.**  
Detail of Kit which would be carried on Mobilization.  
WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN.

Articles.	How carried			Remarks.	
	On the man.	On the horse.	In Reg'tal transport.		
1. Already in possession of men. 2. Provided Regimentally. 3. Provided by men.	lbs	ozs	lbs ozs		
1. Short rifle, with sling ...	8	3 1/2	...	(a) Warrant Officers, staff-sergeants & sergeants.	
1. Bottle, oil, filled, and pullthrough	0	8 1/2	...		
1. Waist bandolier ...	0	6 1/2	...		
1. Shoulder bandolier ...	1	8	...		
1. Whistle with lanyard (a) ...	0	3	...		
2. Field glasses (b)	2	4	...		
2. Saddlery with saddle blanket and head rope ...	...	29 4	...		(b) Warrant Officers, non-commissioned officers, and 25 per cent. of other ranks.
1. Haversack with— (i) Unused portion of bread or biscuit ration (say 12 ozs.) ...	...	...	...		
2. (ii) Emergency ration (9 1/2 ozs.) ...	...	...	...		
3. (iii) Fork and spoon (4 ozs.) ...	...	...	...		
3. (iv) Tooth brush, shaving brush, comb, and razor and case (6 ozs.) ...	4	2 1/2	...		
3. (v) Spare boot laces (1/2 oz.) ...	...	...	...		
3. (vi) Housewife, fitted (3 ozs.) ...	...	...	...		
3. (vii) Towel and soap (11 1/2 ozs.) ...	...	...	...		
2. (viii) Pay book (2 ozs.) ...	...	...	...		
1. Water bottle, filled, with carrier ...	3	13	...		
1. Jacket ...	2	8	...		
2. Field dressing ...	0	1 1/2	...		
2. Identity disc ...	0	0 1/2	...		
1. Pantaloon ...	3	1	...		
3. Jersey or cardigan ...	1	5 1/2	...		
3. Braces ...	0	4	...		
3. Shirt ...	1	1 1/2	...		
2. Woollen belt ...	0	4 1/2	...		
3. Socks ...	0	4 1/2	...		
1. Puttees or leggings ...	0	12 1/2	...		
1. Jack spurs ...	0	15 1/2	...		
3. Cotton Drawers ...	1	0 1/2	...		
2. Clasp knife, with marline spike, tin opener and lanyard ...	0	7 1/2	...		
2. Small-arm ammunition 100 rounds	0	9	...		
2. Shoe case with one fore and one hind shoe and nails ...	...	1 10	...		
2. Sureingle pad ...	...	0 10	...		
2. Picketing peg ...	...	1 4	...		
2. " rope ...	...	1 1	...		
2. Nose bag with 6 lbs. of corn	...	7 0	...		
2. Horse brush, rubber and sponge...	...	1 6	...		
2. Corn bag ...	...	0 6	...		
1. Mess tin and strap, with unused portion of meat ration (say 12 oz)	...	2 2	...		
2. Cloak, and socks in pocket	...	8 2 1/2	...		
1. Waterproof sheet ...	...	2 9	...		

NOTE.—When specially ordered, a blanket (4 lbs. 8 ozs.) is carried under the saddle in addition for each man.

NOTE.—The following additional articles are carried on the man or horse.

Articles.	Number per regiment.	Approx. weight of each.		By whom carried.	Remarks.
		lbs.	ozs.		
2. Wire cutter in frog	54(a)	1	8 1/2	As required Carried by sergeant-trumpeter and trumpeters.	(a) 18 men per squadron.
2. Telescopes for reconnaissance ...	5	3	2		
1. Bugles with strings	7	1	7		
1. Trumpets, with strings ...	7	1	6	Signallers.	
2. Message cases with forms and manuals	7	2	14		
2. Small blue flags	12	...	6 1/2		
2. Small white flags	12	...	6 1/2		
2. Heliographs, 5 in.	8	8	4		
2. Stands, lamp or heliograph ...	8	4	13		
2. Binoculars in cases	4	1	14		
5. Watches ...	4	...	7		
2. Prismatic compasses in case ...	4	...	8		
2. Telescopes with stands ...	8	3	15		
2. Hand axes ...	3	2	2	Farrier sergeant 1.	
2. Veterinary wallets	3	7	3 1/2		
2. Farriers' tool bags (fitted) ...	22	14	6 1/2	Farriers and shoeing smiths.	

Method of carrying articles on the horse:  
 Cloak: Rolled in front of saddle.  
 Headropes: Round Horse's neck, with a short coil (from four to six lines) under the throat, the end of the coil being six inches from the lower ring of the headstall.  
 Mess Tin: Rear of near hind arch.  
 Nose bag: When empty, on the shockcase fastened to the baggage strap. When oats are carried, the end of the nosebag must be fastened to the near hind arch of the saddle.  
 Head rope, when carried: On side, hind arch of saddle.  
 Picketing peg: As convenient.  
 Field glasses: On off side.  
 Shoe case: On near side.



~ Appendix 1 ~  
A Corps Mounted Regiment  
~ October 1917 ~

G.S. 730

A CORPS MOUNTED REGIMENT, WAR ESTABLISHMENT

Detail	PERSONNEL						HORSES			Remarks		
	Officers	W.O's	S/Sgts & Sgts	Artificers	Trumpeters	Rank and file	Total	Riding	Draught		Pack	Total
Headquarters (excluding attached)	5	2	5	2	-	27	41	32	20	-	52	(a) 1 NCO & 8 men per regiment are trained in sanitary duties
Headquarters (attached)	2	-	-	1	-	4	7	7	-	-	7	
3 Squadrons (Sqdn)	6	1	9	7	2	120	145	138	14	8	160	
3 Squadrons	18	3	27	21	6	360	435	414	42	24	480	
Total (excl. attached)	23	5	32	23	6	387	476	446	62	24	532	
Total (incl. attached)	25	5	32	24	6	391	483	453	62	24	539	

Source: 7503 - 21 - 11 AFG 1098 Corps Mounted Regiment, October 1917, National Army Museum.

~ Appendix 2 ~  
Full marching Order  
~ 1917 ~

3rd proof C sqdn

**ON HORSE.**

Head-Dress.  
Headrope or Rein.  
Building up rope round neck.  
Horse bandolier (90 Rounds) round neck.  
1 Horse blanket.  
1 Bed blanket.  
Saddle, with British Warm rolled in rear.  
Mackintosh above Waterproof sheets on top of Wallet.

**NEAR SIDE**

Wallet, change of washing.  
Sword, sureingle pad and peg strapped on.  
Shoes case, containing 1 fore and 1 hind shoe, with nails.  
Nose bag, containing unexpired portion of day's rations.

**OFF SIDE**

Wallet, Iron Ration, grooming kit fastened outside, bristles outwards. (Men who carry mallets will carry the mallet on the off wallet and grooming kit on the near wallet.)  
Rifle, rifle bucket, mess tin on rifle bucket with the water bucket closed over it.  
Nose bag, containing as much corn as the bag will hold so that that it can be tied securely. (About two-thirds full.)

**ON MAN**

bandolier with 90 rounds of ammunition.  
Bayonet and belt.  
Wire cutters on belt.  
Field dressing in pocket in right skirt of jacket.  
Pay book in pocket of jacket.  
Identity disc round neck.

**LEFT SIDE**

Haversack, containing washing kit and unexpired portion of day's rations.  
Waterbottle, full.

**RIGHT SIDE**

Anti-gas helmets in haversack.  
Field glasses.

*Siegfried Sassoon*  
*"Night on a Convoy"*  
*~ May 1918 ~*

(ALEXANDRIA - MARSEILLES)

Out in the blustering darkness, on the deck  
A gleam of stars looks down. Long blurs of black,  
The lean Destroyers, level with our track,  
Plunging and stealing, watch the perilous way  
Through backward racing seas and caverns of chill spray.  
One sentry by the davits, in the gloom  
Stands mute: the boat heaves onward through the night.  
Shrouded is every chink of cabined light:  
And sluiced by floundering waves that hiss and boom  
And crash like guns, the troop ship shudders . . . doom.

Now something at my feet stirs with a sigh;  
And slowly growing used to groping dark,  
I know that the hurricane-deck down all its length,  
Is heaped and spread with lads in sprawling strength-  
Blanketed soldiers sleeping. In the stark  
Danger of life at war, they lie so still,  
All prostrate and defenceless, head by head . . .  
And I remember Arras, and that hill  
Where dumb with pain I stumbled among the dead.

We are going home. The troop-ship, in a thrill  
Of fiery-chamber'd anguish, throbs and rolls.  
We are going home . . . victims . . . three thousand souls.

*Siegfried Sassoon, May 1918.*

Siegfried Sassoon, an officer serving with the 25th Royal Welch Fusiliers, was transferred from the 74th Division in Palestine to the Western Front in May 1918, about three weeks before the Westminster Dragoons. Sea travel in the Mediterranean was a perilous business, as convoys had to run the gauntlet of Turkish and German submarines. 'Home' for Sassoon was not England, but the trenches of France, where he had spent much of years 1915-17, and where he was to be wounded in the summer of 1918.



~ Appendix 4 ~  
*Lt. Arthur Wheeler, MGC.*  
 ~ 1914-1918 ~



Arthur Wheeler was Archie's boyhood friend. They spent holidays together with Arthur's parents - they would stay in a hotel in Oxford, where the above picture was taken, and go boating.



Arthur was Archie's guest at his sister Birdie's wedding to Frank Lambert in December 1912, while Arthur's sister Nellie was well-regarded by Archie's family.

In 1914, Arthur enlisted in a Scottish regiment - possibly the Seaforth Highlanders - and served in France and Flanders. He survived for long enough to win a commission in April 1917 (His name is in the 1918 'Army List') and subsequently served in the Machine Gun Corps.

We have a postcard from Arthur to 'Mrs.

Smith', (Archie's mother, then the wife of Percy Dearlove Smith.) dated 9th November 1917. The picture shows a group of officers posed outside a billet. "Dear Mrs. Smith, This group was taken at Grantham just after we received orders to proceed overseas. I have just written to Archie - had a long letter from him quite recently. I hope you are all well, we have had a bit of scrapping recently. Yours affecty, Arthur."

Grantham was the main training depot for the M.G.C. during the war. The 'scrapping' referred to was probably the 3rd Battle of Ypres.



Arthur Wheeler survived the war, and was the best man at Archie and Ellen Hart's wedding in 1927.

He died in the 1930's.



~ Appendix 1 ~  
Fifty Years On  
~ 1967 ~

**The Times, December 1967.**

SINAI BATTLES 50 YEARS AGO

The wonderfully interesting story "The Keys to Desert Victory" last Sunday began: "Many conquerors have trodden the wastes of Sinai from Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. to Napoleon late in the 18th century leading his Army to Acre."

I was disappointed to see no mention of a later conquering army, namely the British army which trod the wastes of Sinai to drive back and defeat the Turks. About January 1915, the Turks tried to invade Egypt, crossing the Suez canal in pontoons, some of which are still preserved. They were chased back by the London Yeomanry from Cairo (and I still have souvenirs consisting of coins and other articles dropped by the Turkish soldiers in the desert.)

Later, the British Army trod the sandy wastes of Sinai, culminating in General Allenby's successful campaign, Ismailia, Qantara, El Arish, Khan Yunis, Gaza, Beersheba - how familiar the names are to us who fought across Sinai into Palestine to defeat the occupying Turks. Hebron, Bethlehem and, in 1917, Jerusalem were entered in turn.

The great British Army in this campaign included Australian and New Zealand cavalry. Palestine ceased to be a Turkish province.

A.E. BANHAM,

(formerly Lieut. 2nd County of London Yeomanry, Westminster Dragoons) Poole, Dorset.

I wonder whether our younger generation are aware of the exploits of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force of 1916, and the reasons why these voluntary soldiers endured tribulation in desolate Sinai. They built the first main railway from Kantara to Rafa (200 km.) and also a main water supply. names, such as Ogratina Katia, Romani, Aghelia, will be remembered by the E.E.F. on the 50th anniversary.

President Nasser, who was not born when Allied and Commonwealth soldiers brought civilisation to Sinai, and Gaza, should be reminded of this fact.

ARTHUR McPHERSON, Wilmslow, Cheshire.

**The Daily Telegraph, December 1967.**

OFFICER, 83, AT ALLENBY CELEBRATION.

Daily Telegraph Reporter.

Col. F.C. French, 83, the last surviving staff officer of the 60th (London) Division which relieved Jerusalem 50 years ago, insisted on laying a wreath at a Cenotaph ceremony despite a cut head and bruises received after a fall on ice.

Col. French, who laid a wreath to commemorate the 2,515 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died during Gen. Allenby's advance on Jerusalem, was taken to Westminster Hospital after the ceremony. He was treated and told to rest at home.

Later, at his home he said "I shall speak at the anniversary speech tomorrow"

Representatives of more than 200 survivors of the campaign against the Turks were present at the Cenotaph to mark the 50th anniversary of the relief of the Holy City.

Message to Gen. Dayan

A telegram from Col. French to Gen. Moïse Dayan, the Israeli defence minister, to mark the anniversary, says: "Heartiest congratulations from the London Division... We took six weeks - you took six days."

Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer will be guest of honour at the lunch at the Duke of York's Headquarters, Chelsea, where most of the 220 guests will be over 70 years old.

Col. French was requested by the Duke Connaught to obtain water from the River Jordan during the advance. The water was later used at the Christening of Her Majesty, then Princess Elizabeth. This and other anecdotes will be told at the luncheon.

The reunion, the first to be held since 1917, was brought about through a letter to The Daily Telegraph by Col. French. He said last night: "The response was amazing. We never knew there were so many surviving members."

The Westminster dragoons (2CLY) on 9th December 1917, were the first troops to enter Jerusalem as advance guard of Allenby's XXth Corps, capturing the city after 700 years of Muslim rule. -

Major H. Austin T.D., Ilford.

*After reading Mr. Banham's letter above, Archie Newton looked up his address in Poole, but it is not certain whether he actually contacted him.*

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