



**INTO THE SADDLES
AGAIN...**

*The diaries and
notebooks of
Henry (Harry) James
Turner*

*8th Australian Light
Horse Regiment AIF
1915-1918*

Transcribed by Jan Hunter

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book is available from the
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Cover photo: Harry Turner, centre, and two mates 8th
Light Horse (Turner collection)

Into the Saddles Again...

**The diaries and notebooks of
Henry (Harry) James Turner,
8th Australian Light Horse
Regiment AIF, 1915-1918**

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Left Thursday 22 Sept 1915
 very rough till landed
 at Albany 30th for repairs

14th Nuffar over board
 & crossed Equator

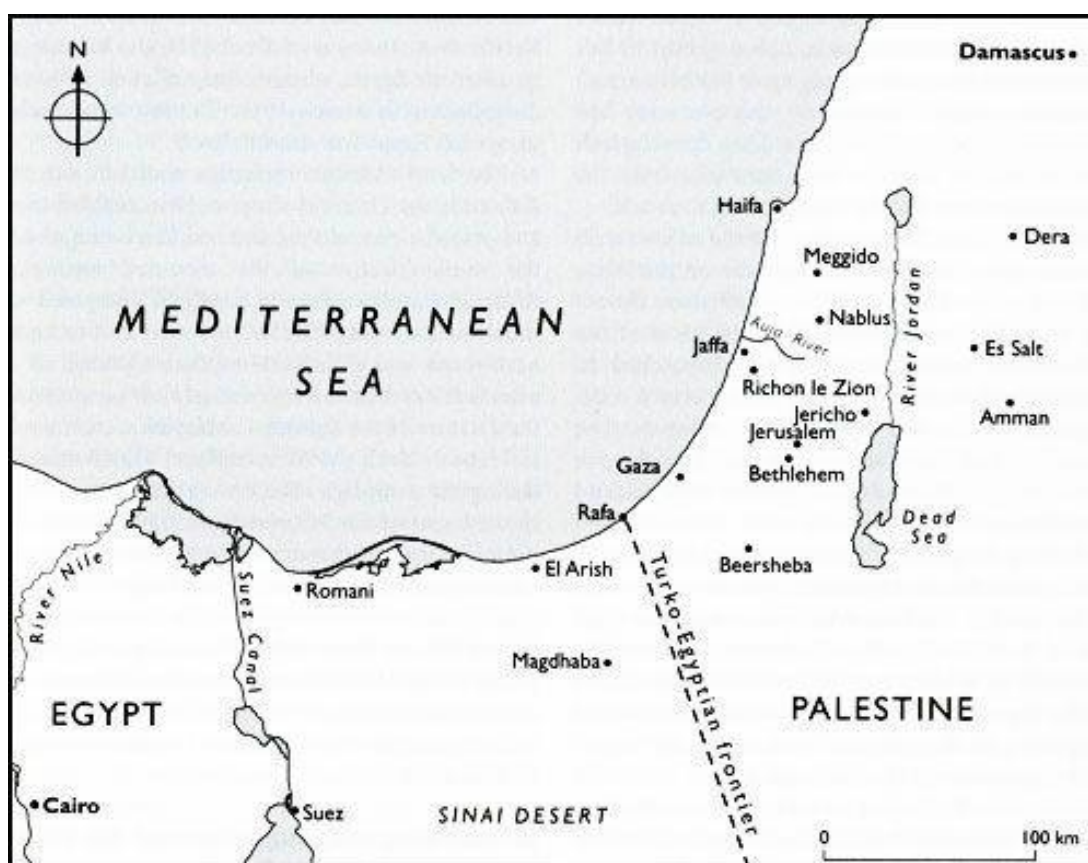
21 passed Cape Guardafui
 11 pm

23 passed Gates of Tians
 into red sea, very hot



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Map of the area where Australian Light Horse operated during the 1916-1918 Middle Eastern campaign, WWI.



**Trooper Harry Turner, centre, with two mates in the 8th Light Horse Regiment
Turner Collection**



**“Queenie and self” Harry Turner with his horse both carrying full kit.
[Best effort to enhance a very faded photograph.]
Turner collection**

INTRODUCTION

Regimental No 1072 Henry (Harry) James Turner enlisted in World War 1 in January 1915, aged 30 and was invalided home and discharged in September 1918. He sailed with the 4th Reinforcements to the 13th Light Horse on the HMAT A57 Malakuta to Egypt in September 1915 where he was transferred to A Squadron 8th Light Horse Regiment. Following the Battle of Romani in August 1916 Turner was detached to Headquarters 3rd Light Horse Brigade where he served as scout. Working in this hazardous role he took part in 'all the stunts' including the various assaults at Gaza and Beersheba.

In common with many soldiers he was hospitalised for short periods, not because of injury but illness and debilitation. His next of kin was his father with whom he corresponded frequently along with 4 or 5 friends. He received and sent newspapers and was the recipient of billies filled with food and comforts and parcels from the Red Cross, and the Oaklands Soldiers' Fund.

Harry Turner had an eye for nature – some of the notebooks have pressed flowers and grass between the pages – and a poetic turn of phrase. When he wrote up the battles at a later date his descriptions were vivid and poignant. He showed compassion for the dead and wounded from both sides and mourned the death of horses which were so much part of his daily life.

The diaries and notebooks were donated to the 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles Regimental Collection by grandchildren of Harry, Ross Young, Des Aldridge and Ruth Miller (nee Turner) who had previously transcribed and scanned the diaries for the family. They provided some photos.

The aim of this transcription is to make available to the general public an account of a Lighthorseman's experiences in the Middle East. Therefore, the diaries and notebooks have been lightly edited, adding some punctuation for ease of reading. Where words are missing, or an explanation thought helpful, square brackets [...] have been used. Question marks have been used when words could not be deciphered, often because of the condition of the paper. The names of some places will be incorrect because of illegibility or because a correct spelling could not be

found on the internet. Consulting The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, Vol VII Sinai and Palestine by H.S. Gullett and the History of the 8th Light Horse compiled by Captain W McGrath and held on Victorian Collections, were of help.

Transcribing some parts of these diaries was emotionally difficult because of the descriptions of the harsh conditions and the carnage but it is always a privilege to make the thoughts and experiences of ordinary soldiers of so long ago more widely available to the public.

These transcribed diaries and notebooks of 1072 Henry (Harry) James Turner, 8th Australian Light Horse, add to the primary sources from World War One held in the 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles Collection.

Jan Hunter, Albury. January 2022

**1072 Henry (Harry) James Turner C Troop. A. Squadron.
8th Australian Light Horse.**

Notebook [140mmx95mmx10mm], 28.9.1915 – 29.8.1916, stapled, black outside cover, brown inside cover, pages ruled with red verticals lines. Cover nearly detached, corners missing from front cover, pages stained throughout and dogeared. This notebook written in pencil and is interspersed with pressed flowers and grasses. Inside the front cover is a list of months of the year with number of days. e.g. January 31 day

Left **Thursday 28th Sept 1915.** [HMAT A57Malakuta] Very rough till landed at Albany 30th for repairs.

14 October Niggar(sic) overboard & crossed equator.

21; Passed Cape Guardfair(?) 11 pm.

23; Passed Gates of Tears into Red Sea, very hot.

Oct 24; Cape Mecea
[Mecca?], old wreck.

28; Landed Suez,
boarded train 6pm
wiskey(sic) croak, 2 fell
out of train.

29; Got off train Zruituns?
Marched to Arodromer &
got 24 hours leave.

November 11; Went to
Ohasa butts for 3 days.

Nov 21; Lieut[enant] Watt,
Bloomfield & Trainer? left
with composite
reg[ement] for Western
Front. [This was to quell a
Senussi uprising in
Western Egypt. Senussi
were a religious/tribal
group supported by Turkey.]

23; Heliopolis Red Caps arrested me. Mistaken identity.

Nov 24; Order to watch rockets of Citadel & started cooking.

December 25; Got billies. [sent from Australia filled with food & items].

Dec 26; Sergeant & private & horses shot at racecourse camp.

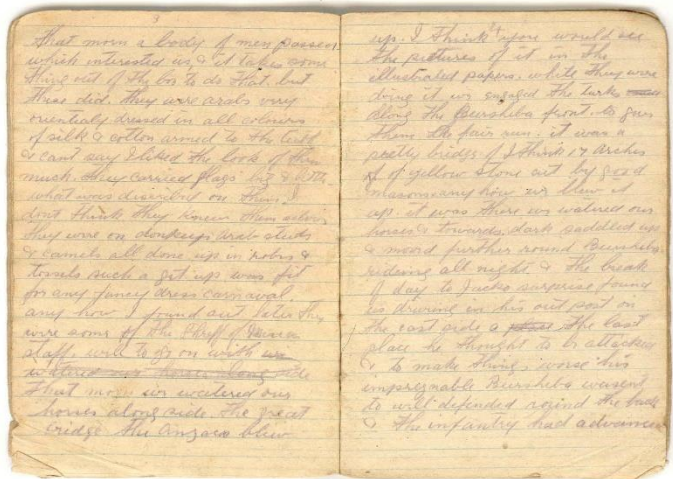
January 25 1916; Arabs broke out round Cairo.

February 18; Fetched Turk prisoners from station.

Feb 19; Went Barrage came back next day.

25; 8th Regiment into action pumping station.

27; Trucked for Serapuim(sic).



**Open pages of notebook covering the period 28
September 1915 to 28 August 1916.**

11/3/1916; First Patrol.
 12; Camel escort.
 14; Qrt [Quarter] Guard.
 16; Shifted across Canal.
 17; Patrol met Indian Patrol. Artillery joined us.
 18; Patrol lost in sandstorm.
 19; Stable picquet [guard].
 22; Went out to find wells.
 23; Lake Timous patrol.
 24; Guard Guard [repeated].
 25; Major [General] Birdwood & P[rince] of Wales.
 27; Patrol.
 28; Patrol.
 29; Supply Guard.
April 1; Camel guard.
 4; Shifted to Ferrys Post R E.
 6; Shifted to Duntruss Palace? Night patrol.
 April 8; Ammunition & water guard.
 8,9,10; Attacked enemy at Jiff Yaffa [Jiff Jaffa?] wells. Killed 6, wounded 6,
 34 prisoners & 1 Corp [Corporal] killed on our side.
 11; Night patrol.
 12; Sandstorm, wrote to Dad, Ethel & Mick.
 13; Range patrol.
 14; Night patrol.
 16; Range patrol.
 17; Night patrol.
 18; Letter to Ethel.

**German Taube aircraft. These primitive looking planes with
 machine guns and bombs were a constant danger to men and
 horses of the Light Horse.**

19/4/1916; Day
 patrol, letter from
 Ethel.
 20; Night patrol sent letter to Malk, Dad, Ethel.
 21; Letter from Polly.
 22; Range patrol.
 23; Stable picquet to B. Woster [Worcestershire] Yeomanry cut up. Taube
 [German plane] over us.

24; Left 4am 30 miles across desert, our horses fall for want of water.
27; Came into Ferrys Post (unclear word). Letter from Ethel, enemy active on our left near Katia [unclear, stain on page].

5 May; (Sent letter to Ethel, Polly, Father, [unclear] Mick, 12th to Father, Ethel, Mrs Ford.)

May 10; Still standing to arms.

11; Camel escort.

14; Patrol east of Ferrys Post.

15; In shade, still standing to arms, rifle buckets [Leather 'bucket' attached to saddle to hold rifle] taken away.

15; Heat still 125 in shade.

16; Barrels of Carlton beer arrive.

16; Inoculation. Heat still bad, men dropping fast, stand to arms finished.

19; Market patrol.

20; Sick.

21; Letter to Polly.

23; Escort.

24; Papers from Ethel.

26; Patrol.

27; Letters to Ethel, Mick, P. Ford & Father.

30; Took Tommy [English] staff round front line, evacuation of Australians.



June 1; Letter from Father & Ethel. 3 issues of helmets & plumes.

1/6/1916; Letter from Mrs P L Kilsly Glenburnie Mt Gambier SA & Ethel, Dad, Mick & Polly.

8; Letter from Dad & Ethel & to Mick, Ford, Marcus, Donavon(?), Young F.S.

9,10; Went out to wells 8 of ours.

12; Guard canteen.

16; Cut (unclear word) all night.

June 18; Letters from Ethel, Dad.

20; Escort Brighton.

Alexandria.

July 3; Out again left flank.

4 letters from J Kennedy, Ethel. Night patrol.

Letters Mick, Dad, Ethel, Ken.

July 7; Mount Bould patrol.

9; Night patrol.

10; Letter to K York, J Cross, Polly.

12; Turks still busy on our left.

13; Stable picquet.

25; Cooks fatigue paraded by doctor (unclear word) being check[ed].

July 16; 7 cards to Ethel, Dad, J, Ken. Night patrol.

18; Received letters from Father, Ethel.

19; Day patrol, extra patrol called out at midnight reported attack on left towards Katia.

20; Extra patrols Turks busy on left.

21; Sent letter to Dad & Ethel.

22; Night patrol. Yeomanry captures Bedouins on left flank.

23; Night patrol. Gundagai expecting shift to Kantara moment's notice.

24; Day stableman.

25/7/1916; Squadron left Dunstrum for Ferrys Post railhead. I'm left behind to put Yeomanry on their day and night posts & follow on later.

July 26; Followed regiment into Ferrys Post

27; Packed up for move out.

28; On the move passed through Elfonda 4Bn [Battalion] arrived at Balah Bunnion [Bunio?] 7th, 9 & 11 Regiments there before us.

29; Left camp 2am on stunt [term for military action/raid/attack etc] to oasis. Lovely date palms and plenty of brackish water. 10th Regt. arrived.

30; Shifted into stables.

July 31; A Squad went to wells, I was left behind to escort camels, left camp 4pm with camels loaded with rations & timber for wells, had nasty time across desert in the dark trying to find track but got up to the Squad at 10.30pm, had a drink of brackish tea & laid down under a palm.

August 1; Up at 3am, made the Indians load up and proceed to next oasis, had breakfast & started to give a hand to sink wells, under palms at 7pm. A? Squad came & relieved us & we left for Balah Bunion, got lost & got home about 1 or 2 next morning.

August 3; Getting ready to go back to wells. Packed up kit bag & left & aeroplanes fired upon us & turned out to be one of our own on duty all night. 4th left wells to join brigade out at Durdah, stopped ¼ hour, saddled up again and rode outside of trenches, duty all night.

5; Got into oasis? early & was put out on Obsavatton [Observation] post, getting hungry but am promised something to eat at dinner time, it never came. From top of hill I can see the shells bursting about 5 mile off. At 10 to 12 I got order to come in as the regiment was moving into action.

5; Caught up with regt which alted(sic) [halted] behind a hill. To our sorrow we were held in reserve & the 2[nd] 10 had gone into it at a gallop the 9[th] they had the Turks out in the open and went through them in a way that was good to see & came out with 450 prisoners & 3 machine guns, 1 German officer, 2 Turk Officers, 1 Iron Cross Corp[oral], our casualties were slight. This was at

Bir-el-Hamish[Harnish?]. I had a good feed of some stuff I found in a Turk's haversack that night.

6; In pursuit of Turks crossed yesterday's battlefield. That was my first sight dead Turks everywhere some sitting, some on knees but only a few rifles stuck with the bayonets in the ground indication one of our chaps was laying there waiting to be put under the sand.

7/8/1916; Our day, the scouts brought in news Turks entrenched. Before daylight we were in the saddle, & walked a few miles, then the order came to extend, trot, gallop & away we ploughed through the sand for a gully. There the snipers started & a few bullets started to sing round our ears but we got to the gully. Myself was told off[f?] for my section of 4 men to hold horses, being a good horseman the lives of 3 men depended on him. If they find the horses they shell them & they take handling, any rate the boys jumped out of the saddle & up the hill. They went to meet a hail of machine gun & shrapnel, they were soon straggling back down the hill, some with their hands holding their faces, the order for [us] to retire came, it was to[o] warm a lot were wounded & Lieut Urquart was killed, then a whiz, a bang & a shower of shrapnel right over the horses. I knew it was my turn to keep cool, they had got the horses right overhead, the shells were bursting, but my mates had not come up so I had to wait. Down the hill came poor Wright, I saw him in the saddle all right & told him to go, & thought he had but found to my sorrow he had not, next came Kirkbride I saw he was in the saddle. I had one horse, it was getting warm, at last I saw Julian coming, knocked right up, could hardly walk so I galloped up to meet him as soon as he was right in the saddle I galloped out the gully [next page titled Hod el-Sagia] but there was poor Wright waiting. To my surprise when he saw us right he was driving the spurs into his horse a couple of yds in front of me, then I saw him roll in the saddle, I knew he was hit & hit hard. I had a good horse & caught him before [he] fell out, it was too dangerous a place to let him fall out there, so I got his reins in one hand & grabbed him by the other & told him to lay across his overcoat strapped in the front, he was game, I could see he was done, the blood started to come out of his mouth. I galloped across a rise, the lead was still flying around us, when I got to the other side of the rise I lifted him off his horse & laid him out, the doctor came up, we got 2 rifles & made a stretcher & laid him on it. He asked me to send his photo home. I never said goodbye I did not like to, I knew he was done. As I led his horse back to the front line, after hard fighting we were relieved by 9th.

August 8; Turks evacuated again through night, 10th following, 8th having a spell.

9th; Again fighting from early till late at night, some terrible experiences, water scarce. I'm detailed off[f?] for connecting file [despatch rider] from squad to staff. The Turks' guns are playing into the gully I've got to run through, to connect up to the head staff, they think our battery is in that gully. My little mare was fairly trembling at times with the bursting of the shells and I often seen a bullet kick up the sand between her legs but we were both lucky. With me, or at least 300-500 yds apart, was Julian (unclear name beginning with B) & Moon, Wright been [being] dead, Moon took his place. After dinner some time, the Brigadier sent an order along for us to join our [unclear, possibly regiment] as the signallers were going to (unclear)[page stained] our work. We had a couple of tins of salt bully but our water was nearly cut out but we were hungry so ate it to our sorrow, then we were about to mount & Kirkbride's horse got hit in the neck so he could not come on, Julian, Moon & myself started to reach the regiment, but going through a gap some snipers got on to us. As we could not see them we had to fall back again & go further round. By this time we lost the 8th so seeing a firing line a mile off we galloped up to it, it turned out to be the 9th our own Captain Bennett [8th Lighthorse] was there so we asked him if we could pick up the 8th, he said we had no chance, to take up a position with the 9th. We were among the led horses at the time. Just then a rider came to shift the horses back as they were mounting some machine guns there, it was a sad mistake, we had to lead them over a rise, the Turk gunners seen it, that was the end of it.

August 1916 [pages stained, obscuring words on edge of pages] They turned a battery on to us. We jammed our horses, about 20, together and ducked our heads down between them, it was murderous but it soon came to an end, they put one right in the centre of us. I went down dazed and silly & thought my legs were torn off but it was only concussion. I was brought to my bearings? by a corporal named Lamb crying out (unclear word) to hold one up. It was awful, I looked over myself and found nothing wrong with me, I looked back at poor Lamb he was laying back against two dead horses, my own mare was trembling all over and horses were galloping everywhere. In that basin lay a dead man, about 3 wounded, about half doz dead horses (several words unclear) Not knowing what to do I raced after some of the riderless horses and caught two but could not find owners. It was just on dark and the firing was ceasing so I rode back to the (unclear) cross that was camped at the Hassaman(?) and handed over the two horses to some



**Inspecting equipment left behind by Turks near Tel El Saba
November 1917.**

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

chaps that got their horses killed. The oasis was filled with wounded and some died and the rest of the poor beggars were put on camels that night to Romani, an awful journey. I found out our regiment had gone to a place called Hassaniya?, a few miles back so I picked up a few chaps and got back there the best we could. The lads were all over the desert and the Crossing? was going all night, we got back to the group of palms & I climbed a tree & got some dates for my little mare and got her a drink out of a well and tied her to a tree, she was worth her weight in gold, then I wrapped myself up in my overcoat and lay down, near tired out, I was soon asleep. The sun was well up & I saddled up and went to look for the regt and found [them] only a quarter mile away, & what luck the camel convoy had come up to us so the little mare & I had a good feed. I shan't forget how some of the lads murmured 'if only we had water', it was terrible hot. In A Squad there were 26 casualties and the Inverness battery of Tommies [English Horse Artillery] was attached to us and they did some great work for us. It was hard travelling for them instead of a horse & a gun? they had to put 18 & change every ½ hour.

Aug 10; 8th Regt resting 9th and 10th holding position not much doing as Turks going as fast as they can get out.

Aug 12; Today I was surprised to find I was attached to Headquarters Brigade Scouts [a detachment formed to conduct reconnaissance] and felt pleased there were 15 of us under Lieut Wearne [8th Lighthorse] and also that Brigadier



Cross erected over grave of Sergeant Walter Bloomfield 8th Light Horse who was killed during the fighting on 9 August 1916 (see page 3).

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

Antell [Antill] (better known as the Bull Ant) was to leave for France and Brig. Rolston [Royston] of Royston house S.Africa was in command of the brigade so this morning we have to leave early, take ammunition on camels as near to the front as possible but we found the Turks had gone. The battery came up to us & the 8th Regt, they just came to a standstill when a Taube swooped down and dropped 3 bombs at the lads but she missed by a hundred yards, then she went straight up into the sky we could not make it out but we soon knew to our sorrow one of our planes was coming and did not see the Taube till she was over her. It was a pretty bit of work. The Taube took a turn overhead and fired about 20 rounds into our plane and our plane wobbled to the ground like a wounded bird the pilot got a bullet through the jaw, 2 in the arm and 2 in the lid? And the observer also hit but the pilot was game and fetched his plane down all right and the Taube flew away very proud, the pilot died some [time] after

August 14 1916; Scouts ordered to put Turks off Hamassa, they were using it for

an observation post. The 15 of us thought we were going to have a little fight on our own but we got there in time to see them going about 8 miles away NE, our artillery is away in the distance putting a few shells into the rear of the Turks. At last we have a chance of a wash. You never saw such a dirty, disrespectable mob of men in your life, beards 2 inches, shirts torn, some with none, some with sandbag hats, German helmets and Turks' caps, eyes blood shot and dirty, but the same Kiwi(sic) Regt [Perhaps a reference to Kiwi shoe polish used to shine boots and bandoliers] that used to walk up Collins and Bourke Street [Melbourne].

Sat 12; Taube trying to bomb us but doing no good, anti-aircraft [gun] is keeping her well up. We are camped in a lovely grove of date palms & we have a great feed of them at times they are not quite ripe but we stew them and also make a stew of bully beef, dates and dog biscuits to thicken it. The camels get up to us regular now with rations. Sometimes the Taubes play up with the camels, the niggers run away and leave them. The Turks have taken all the Bedouins and their families and cattle away with them.

13; Out scouting across Bir el Abid, the place smells awful, dead horses everywhere, a few Turks still not buried, been missed, we stopped to bury one of our own, pass through Hod El Mara but can't pick anything up.

14; Lieut Wearne left us, made Capt. B Squadron of 8th.

15; Out scouting got sight of Turks 20 miles away, water bad picked up board on well, with compliments to British Red Cross from Turkish Red Cross saying they (unclear word) [were contaminated?] wells through cholera.

17; Went to Hod El Pada to meet brigadier & escort him Hassarrifa. Every[where] is dead horses & camels & graves, Taubes still bombing our camp but doing little damage & our losses are estimated 900 against 7,000. I crossed the gully below the Turks redoubt, it is covered with our dead horses where the 8th made a charge, the vultures are having a great feed.

18/8/1916; Letter cards to Ethel, Dad, F Ford, Jim Kennedy, Mick Fahey, & P Ford, cholera has broke out here so I got inoculated today, we are feeling fit again on our little spell.

Aug 19; Took Brig to Hod El Amarg, some of the lads took 64 prisoners.

20; Cholera breaking out bad, some of the lads died, & we are all quarantined.

21; Only aircraft action, our guns keeping them well off.

22; Rumoured attack on one of our camel corps towards Jif Jaffa by Turkish cavalry.

23; Not feeling well.

Harry Turner, far right, in hospital.

Photo: Turner Collection

24; We are going to move out at half past 4pm for a 20 miles stunt so us scouts are going 7 hours in front of brigade who move out at 11pm. Port Said Hospital, I went down to Army medical camp to get some rag? round my hands as I had barque rot [barcoo rot; sores from deficient diet, etc] bad, we all had, I got off my horse, tied it up to a palm & fell down in a faint they picked me up and got me round & 5 mins I was over again, they picked me up, put me to bed, took my temp, 104½ they poured [unclear word because of stain on lower page] stiff brandy into me, I got up & was going to get my horse to go back to camp but they pulled me back and shoved me into (end of page, no word). I told the doctor I had to go back as I had to go out on a 20 mile stunt but he only laughed & told me I was on a 50 mile stunt to Port Said next day. That was the end of it, next morning they carried me to a camel, put me on its back, I could not walk.

25; Feel bad, 102½ temp, started 9 am on camel, 9 miles to Oghratina, got



there between 12pm-1am the army med was good to us there, there was some more chaps, one a nigger, a camel bit his arm off, another with a bullet from a Taube. We left there about 3pm all the way we were going over the fighting ground. Right to Romani were trenches & graves, got to Romani at dark, stopped with New Zealanders, they are good chaps, the train came in there & got put in a stretcher & hung on the wall of a carriage & away to Kantara.

Sat 26; Temp down a bit, feel a bit better.

Sun 27; Boarded steamer on canal for Port Said Hospital, the nurses are very good to me I think they lean a bit to the Australians as I happened to be mixed up in a ward with a lot of Tommies whom to me seem to be always crying over any little complaint, even the English nurses told them they would sooner look after a doz Australians than one of her own. She said we were beggars to swear but were always happy. I spent a fortnight there in great [word missing] still the nurses would often slip a pass under the lap to me to go for a trip in the motor boat to look round the great battle ships & over to the Amenian Camp, the French (unclear) from the Turks. The doctor told the

nurses to look after me as I was run right down & give me stout, chicken, jellies, beef tea, custards and god knows what. On 29 wrote to Ethel, Dad, Polly, Jim.

Blank pages to the end of the notebook. On the last page, badly stained are various names and addresses.

K York Officers' Quarters Kent? Vic

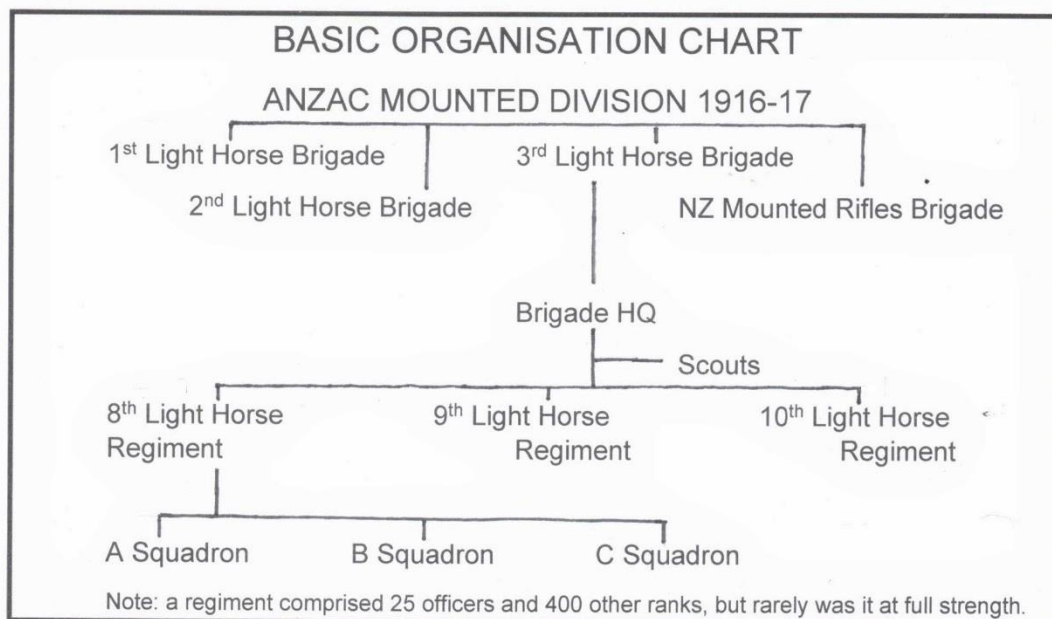
Horatio Charters St George Grenada?

P Donavan Roseleigh Street Eagle Junction Bris

E Holland Bunyip Gippsland Vic

M Fahey Yarrawonga

22 Albert St Brunswick C Turner.



Harry Turner served with 'A' Squadron 8th Light Horse Regiment until August 1916 when he was detached to serve as a scout with Headquarters 3rd Light Horse Brigade.



Harry Turner's name appears on the Honour Board of Oaklands & District.

Turner Collection

**1072 Henry (Harry) James Turner C Troop. A. Squadron.
8th Australian Light Horse.**

Letts's Oblong Diary (140mmx70mmx10mm) 1917 Brown mock leather hard covers. Elasticised loop to hold diary together. Opens lengthwise and one of two diaries in two pocket black 'leather' wallet. Sticker on inside front cover 'Librairie Papeterie M.J. Barrier Delbource & Co Le Caire [Cairo] Various scribbles on inside front. 'Harry James Turner 8th A.L.H. 1072 B.H.Q Scout' written in pencil on frontispiece. Various pages of almanac information.

[Personal Reminders page

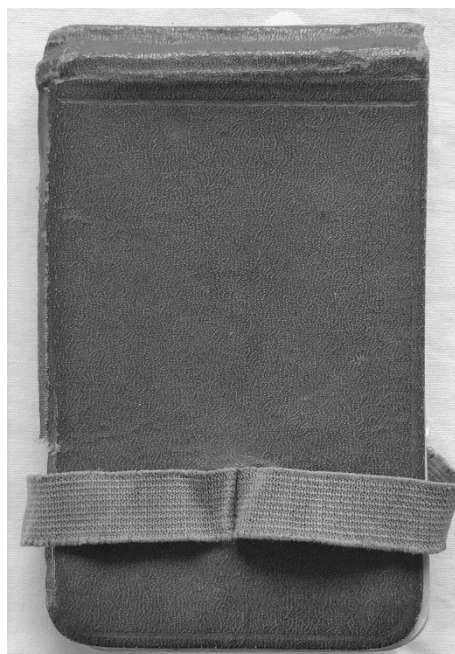
Meat no ticket 1072/1915, 1916, 1917. No of Horse 16 264 Size in boots 8, No of rifle - pay book 2442736, address 220 Albert St Brunswick Victoria Australia.

Memoranda of References etc. page

An address at top. Hand drawn nine flags in coloured pencil with designations such as supply, ordnance, drinking water, brigade etc.

Memoranda of Things Lent etc page

List of names and amounts, e.g. J. McGibbon 5/-; next page another three flags, Post Office, Army HD.Qrs, Veterinary.]



January 1917

1 Monday; [In ink] Moved out of Mas'aid and went to Kilo 139. Jim Sproats' 3 horses killed by bomb and 2 men. Sergt Smith went to Division.

2 Tuesday; Spent cold wet day at Kilo 139 [in pencil] Papers from Father.

3 Wednesday; In camp Kilo 139. [in pencil] Still raining.

4 Thursday; Came home from 139 to Mas'aid.

5 Friday; Fine windy day. Drying clothes. Wrote 2 letters.

Notebook with elastic security band.

6 Saturday; Fine warm day wrote 3 letters. Taubes [type of German plane] flew over [in pencil] killed 35 Arabs & 50 wounded.

7 Sunday; Church Parade. Fine & warm.

8 Monday; Left Elarish [El Arish] for Rafa 4.45 am.

9 Tuesday; Rafa fight took place on Mungranton [El Mungruntein].

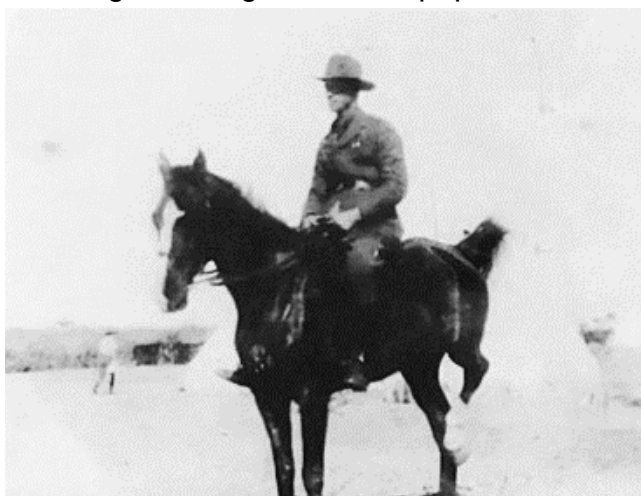
10 Wednesday; Gen Chauvel speaks to us and congratulates us on our victory at Maghaba. Truckloads of prisoners embarking here for Canal and wounded on the hospital train.

13/1/1917 Saturday; Received letters Fahey, Donovan, Turner, York, Holland. Gifts from war chest and VRC [Victorian Red Cross?].

14 Sunday; Letters to Fahey, Don Lur? York, Hall.

15 Monday; Scouts went to Massami.
 16 Tuesday; Went to Marza.
 17 Wednesday; Scouting up Wadi El Arish to Lah Fahn.
 20 Saturday; [In ink and crossed out] Corp [corporal] of stable picquet [guard duty].
 22 Monday; Very windy cold day. Scouts out putting up palms.
 23 Tuesday; letter to Hutchion Scotland.
 24 Wednesday; Letters to York, Fahey, Holl.
 26 Friday; Corporal of Picquet [crossed out].
 28 Sunday; Church Parade. Left 158 at 11.22 for Cairo.
 29 Monday; Got to Cairo 2pm stayed night Anzac Hostel. Had dinner with Hayters. Got McGrath's sword. [These words in ink crossed out in pencil] Learning Lewis gun. Sent papers of Magdhaba fight home & papers of Rafa fight.

30 Tuesday; Sent Cable to Leslie "Yes". shopping in Cairo. Went to Kit Store & got a few things. Wrote C & Henry Fruin? [These lines in ink crossed out in pencil] Left Cairo 6pm. Got Kantara 10.30 supper Soldiers' Home. Saw Major Bruesner? Left for EIA [El Arish] 1am.



Captain William McGrath served with 8th Light Horse throughout the war. He joined as a trooper, rose through the ranks to Captain (refer 29.1.17).

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

31 Wednesday; Trains broke down cold journey Stayed all day on train. Had good rest of top of truck of corn sacks. Game of bridge in evening in guard's van. Made two billies and good tea. Bought food canteen. Stayed night [These lines crossed out].

February 1917

1 Thursday; Got back to camp 2pm. Took over McGrath's sword to him. [Sentence crossed out] No excitement only Taubes. Received shirt from Mr Sutherland. Sent letter to Mr Sutherland, Dad, Holl.

2 Friday; Scouts & HQ went to El Arisa [El Arish?] to be dipped. Cold windy day. Fumigated. General Rogiston [Royston] came home.

3 Saturday; Went out exercising.

4/2/1917 Sunday; Church Parade. Went HQ. General inspect by G.O.C.

5 Monday; Got some Condy's [Condy's Crystals] tablets from A.M.C. to clean water bottles out with. Harry H? took stable picquet for me.

6 Tuesday; General inspection of lines by HG Chauvel attached to Imperial Mounted Division.

7 Wednesday; Scouts went out sham fight against Brigade. I was Squadron Leader. Bob Leader of H Squad. Ruim? has C Squad. CCD was OC. Not much of a success. Brigade started out wrong.

8 Thursday; Not much doing. Went to lecture at Y.M.C.A. in evening on El Arish by Father Goodman. Very good. El Arish evidently a very old city, over 3000 yrs old. Zagazig? was Bubaustes? of ancient fame.

9 Friday; Order came from "Obsolete Chauvel"(sic) to move our lines and tents a few yards; away. This quite unnecessary and evidently given to annoy men & give them more to do upsetting their comfort. Characteristic order of an obsolete & inefficient...

10 Saturday; In camp all day. Gifts from V.R.C [Victorian Red Cross?] socks from A, Elaine, Willi, Amoton. Sent papers home.

11 Sunday; Church Parade. Went to HQ. Heavy thunderstorm at night.

12 Monday; Went out putting up nos [numbers] on hills. Placed 4 with signboards. Stormy day. Got pretty wet coming home. Got colours for the 8th man in scouts.

13 Tuesday; Field day for Brigade. Scouts went out and pretended they were the enemy. Fine clear day.

14 Wednesday: In camp all day. B.M.[Brigade Major] and General went to Moaska [Moascar] in evening.

15 Thursday; Went out in aft [afternoon] with Bob and Tom Rickerby to make sure of right situation of Hills 110 & 120.

16 Friday; Went out to 345 with H. Runn, C Hewetson & N Tait to get some sketches of country round Maghaba and Bin Lafan. Saw Camel Corps going on a stunt to Kossaima. On picquet at night.

17 Saturday; Showery morning. Washed some clothes. Took Simon's revolver to Bill Scarf in evening. [All crossed out] P. [Port] Said.

18 Sunday; Compulsory Church Parade 2 Brig attended. [word unclear] Gen Ryrie.

19/2/1917 Monday; Had talk with Capt Wearne. Built a new 'Biooy'[Bivvy?] much larger one. Bob corporal of picquet.

20 Tuesday; General parade to hear Gen Chauvel say goodbye to us.

21 Wednesday; Played football for scouts against Signallers & the latter won. Fiscaline hurt his arm. A Kealy went to Cairo, John? Ferrier act[ing] up R.M.

22 Thursday; Field Day went out about 3 miles. 8th were the enemy. On picquet.

3 Friday; Feeling stiff from football.

24 Saturday; Went out exercising. Inspection of lines. Letters to K York and photos.

25 Sunday; Church Parade. Tait took photos of (unclear) Went H.Q.

26 Monday; Went out to Abu Leheimen to take drawing of Madghaba with Tait. Major Daupar [likely Dangar] came home. Letters to Holl, Dad and Fahey.

27 Tuesday; Letters from Dad, York, Holl, Kelly. On picquet.

28. Wednesday; Had lecture on Hotchkiss Rifle by Major Williams 10th Hussars & also another lecture by the same man on 'Scouting'.

March 1917

1 Thursday; out on sham fight – scouts were the enemy. I was OC of C Squadron – [several words unclear] Coy's M.G. Letters to A Elsum Hamilton. Taubes dropped pamphlets from anti? prisoners.

2 Friday; Bob went down to regiment. I made a plum duff. Sergt Gordon came up to see me. Windy day. Went down to regiment in evening. Pay day. Went to El Arish with General?

3 Saturday; Fine day went down into regiment. Got new nose bag. General Hodson came down. Went out exercising.

4 Sunday; Church Parade. Went out exercising

5 Monday; Went down to regt to get Roderick. Went out exercising. Lecture in afternoon. On picquet at night.



Dried flower pressed in one of
Turner's notebooks.

6 Tuesday; Edgar R on picquet. Inspection by General of Division(?) of Ule? Horses & men out on the beach.

7/3/17 Wednesday; Field day with 8th Regt. I took out 8 men and all but 2 captured. Got pay book back.

8 Thursday; Ginger to have his shoes removed. Regiment all getting ready to move out. Did some washing. Issued with H.V (sic). rifles.

9 Friday; Moved out of Mas'aid & went to Maraida near El Burj – got to camp about 5pm. I went out with Major Dangar to DHQ in evening. Very windy night. About 10 miles E of El Arish.

10 Saturday; Very windy day. Saw over everything, our railway nearly into Rafa.

11 Sunday; Church Parade in early morning. Very cold windy day. On picquet.

12. Monday: Very windy all day. Scouts went out 7 miles & (unclear) country S & SE of camp. Country covered with poppies,

dandelions and flowers. Rained some. Was inoculated left arm. Heard news fall of Baghdad. Preparing to move again.

13 Tuesday; Moved up the beach about 7 miles and camped the night. Very cold. Was riding with General. Still along coast.

14 Wednesday; Moved out again 5 miles and camped. Another cold night worst place ever for firewood. Went for ride to Turkish redoubt at Magruntein? with Turner.

15 Thursday; Went to Khan Yunis [This spelling taken from The Official History...Vol V11]. round about with B.M. Very green, slower for riding on. Got

oranges in Khan Yunis. Saw Turkish trenches etc. got some pay. Most enjoyable day. Ginger very ill with gripes.

16 Friday; Went out to Khan Yunis with General & went out 2 miles beyond KY & had a good view of Gaza. Rode old 'wonk eye' out of B.H.Q lines – good horse. Had a lovely day (9th were duty regiment).

17 Saturday; In camp. Had a bath & did some washing. General inspected our lines. Sat on boundary pillar of Egypt & Syria. Letters from Don, Ken, Dad, York. Letters to cousins, Don, Dad, York, Hol.

18 Sunday; Church parade. Went over Rafa battlefield with Rickerby & Jim Cottle.

19 Monday; Left camp at 2 am for Sheikh Shabasi (104) I took 8th men with Col[onel] Maygar had a look at Wadi el Ghuzze & some positions of Turks. Saw a Turkish patrol. MG fired at them. Got home through Khan Yunis. Got home about 4pm. Christian lady at Khan Yunis.

20/3/1917 Tuesday; In camp preparing to move out. Bob left for Cairo at 2 and I took him to Rafa Station.

21 Wednesday; Moved out at 9.30 am and got to another camp on coast by a Tommy sergeant's grave. This man was drowned & buried by our signallers. Jackals crying all night.

22 Thursday; Doing nothing in camp. Had bath and washed some clothes. Explained compass work to several scouts. Preparing to go out early in the morning.

23 Friday March 1917; Left camp at 5am & went along beach about 2 miles turned off to Belah, halted & then scouts under we went forward to cross the wadi. Found crossing then drew fire of enemy cavalry patrol. Reconnoitering all day. Went home at night round Gaza.

24 Saturday; Went in to Rafa to meet Bob Herkes Came home through Khan Yunis brought Mr Banks 2nd Lieut back to RHQ. Good sleep at night.

25 Sunday; No church parade. Moved camp to Belah after 3.30. Camp the night & moved early in morning.

27 Monday; On picquet. 5th & 6th Imp Mounted Brigade & 3rd Brigade & Anzac Mtd Brigade and 2 Divs of Infantry attacked Gaza. Fighting going on all day whole column returned early next morning. Inf. badly cut up. 3rd Brg [brigade] went into action late in aft.7[th] held Turks on East of Gaza until nightfall. Scouts held ridge left flank until C Sqad of 8th came up.

28 Tuesday; Whole column retired. All returned dusty, dirty, thirsty & tired but cheerful. Had two rests, made some tea each time. George May (Bullocky) not returned presumed captured. Shifted camp to One Tree Hill went out in evening [to] look for road across wadi.

28 Wednesday; Went round wadi again looking for road. Moved camp to Hill 320 camped night & then moved round looking for water.

29 Thursday; Moved again & wandered about look for water. Found very good water. Brigade went in for a much needed swim & left beach & camped near Belah again. Good wadi close too. Heard news of fall of Mons & Lille. Other great capture of prisoners.

30 Friday; Stayed in camp all day. – close to sea and very good water. On picquet at night. Tate went with Adams of Y.M.C.A. to 2nd F. Amb [Field Ambulance] to get cigarettes. Details sent for. No bombardment everything quiet. Ginger has sore leg and not well.

31/3/1917 Saturday; Alec Kealy came back and brought our spare things – I had a shave. G.O.C. inspected the lines. Went out with Gen. Ray and Lieut Roff to watch 60 pounders fire into Gaza.

1917

[Several undated pages]

Gaza Stunt

Early in the morning of Mon 26th the desert column went out to attack GAZA. 5th & 6th Imp. Mtd Brigade [Imperial Mounted Brigade], 3rd Bde, Anzac Mtd Brigade went to position about 5 or 6 miles S.W. of S of Gaza in the morning. Infantry attacked from the west & fighting continued for all day & night & part of next day. 26th The Third Brigade went out to attack strong force of Turks east of city about 4pm & the scouts took up a position on the extreme left & engaged the enemy until help arrived from C Squadron of 8th. Scouts first took up a position about 900 or 1000 yds from enemy but were forced to retire to a good position 100 yds further back. Good exchange of rifle fire here until dark when all firing ceased. Posts placed all along this east front during night. B.H.Q. had a position about 110 from Gaza & left about 4 next morning when the whole brigade retired in perfect order. Enemy during night had come up with reinforcements & threatened our left flank with guns, m.g.[machine guns] & rifles. Heavy firing armoured cars went out to attack & keep enemy back. Column shelled all the way to the wadi. Aeroplane of ours came down and was burned before being left. Ambulance got astray? and was put right by Sergt Rickerby of scouts, Martin, Ferrier & self led the way in. Very few casualties. One scout missing, two who were missing came in later after breaking through enemy lines. Brigade came in & watered at Belah & rested & made tea, drew rations and moved again to a camp at One Tree Hill. Rickerby, Martin, self made a reconnaissance to find way out across wadi in case of necessity. Moved next day to Hill 320 & camped. Found many fleas in the barn where we went for wood.

The whole operation of this big stunt seemed a decided failure. The withdrawal of 3rd Brigade with so few casualties & in face of an ugly situation under shell & rifle fire, in my opinion, was a fine feat of arms – perfect order prevailed, which was our(sic) to be expected being led by Gen. J. R. Royston. It seemed to me that our failure lay in tardy way in which the attack was delivered. The 3rd went in just an hour before dark. The Div of infantry that went in along beach got completely cut up, very few got back all the wounded left behind their cries all night were awful. It is believed the Turks murdered the lot.

[Next page has an address for Kerngere Esq.92 Lansdowne Rd West Didsbury Manchester.]

April 1917

1 Sunday; Church Parade. Went HQ Left camp 12.30. In Seirat to do our post work.

2 Monday; Foggy morning. Left camp in orchard 4.30 went round our posts camped in Garden till 12.45 then moved out being relieved by N.Z. Brigade & went back again to camp near fig trees.

3/4/1917 Tuesday; Much gun firing going on, evidently bombarding Gaza. Enemy returned fire. In camp all day. Had bath. On picquet. Some of our men went over to inspect tanks.

4 Wednesday; Had bath in morning. Went out in aft with brigade & 5th Scouts captured 2 Turks fully armed. Got home around 6.30. Rum issue.

5 Thursday; In camp all day.

6 Good Friday; Went out early with B.M. & 20 Scouts went south of Tel-el-Jemmeh (?) & chased party of 9 Mounted Turks. They got away. Brig went out in aft & had a brush with Turks he had 9 scouts. Went over to see friends in Gloucester Yeomanry.

7 Saturday; Shifted camp. Scouts going out tonight. Scouts moved out 6.30 & took up positions near farmhouse & spent cold night with fleas. Brig came out at 4.30 & relieved us.

8 Easter Day; Came to old camp again. Jim Lacy gives me this book

9 Easter Monday; Letters from York & parcel & gifts from W.C. Hut, our anti guns are very busy with Taubes stray prisoners keep coming in.

10 Easter Tuesday; 8th Scouts went to Abbasan Khirba [Abasan el Kebir] to mark track for guns & Brigade to move out, then on to Fara.

11 Wednesday; Letter from Don.

12 Thursday; Letters from Hol, Don. An empty shell case came down and buried 8 feet in ground and I fell over a billy of water (hot) with fright.

13 Friday; Letter from Dad and Mr & Mrs Marcus(?), Holl & 2 proofs, Gas helmet drill. Letter to Holl, Marcus.

14 Saturday; More empty shell cases fall out past front line with officers observing. Give drink of cocoa to Turkish prisoners. Tanks move out, 4 killed & 5 wounded in hospital from Turk's shell.

15 Sunday; Church parade.

16 Monday; letters from Dad, Ken and York. Turks bombarding us heavy yesterday.

16 Tuesday; [17 is crossed out and 16 inserted] Saddled up 2.30pm patrolling all night round Quandur (Mendur?).

17/4/1917 Wednesday; [18 crossed out and 17 inserted] Daybreak our infantry advanced on Gaza, we are on their right flank guarding Beersheba road X. (18) 2nd day of Gaza fight we move out from Tel?-em-Jemma at 2am as a support for 6 Brigade.

19 Thursday; Camped mile E of J Jimmie & move out 9pm last night travelling all night till day break & attack Turkish positions S.W. of Gaza, the navy, tanks & several div of infantry are attacking Gaza and a tremendous bombardment is going on on a ten mile front pushed back to Munkleh, guide convoy El Jammy camped at Munkleh & digging in, we scouts are out all day shooting at Turks' advance posts hundred of Bedouins who are robbing and looting our dead. We are all dead beat, dirty and sore, heavy fighting going on still in Gaza.

21 Saturday; Out last night on listening post, we have had no sleep for days, our Brigade is badly cut up but are ordered to hold this line at all costs.

5am are relieved by 6th Brig & retire back on Mendour got a night's sleep.

22 Sunday; Only artillery firing on our front still fighting on our left at Gaza shift back to Abasan-el-Kebir.

23 Monday; Infantry taken our place on front line entrenched, been badly cut up, we have fallen back to Abasan el Kebir to spell ourselves and horses. Norman Tate gone back to Belah for my razor.

24 Tuesday; Out to Sheik Quaran with Cpt Hughes, his horse fell in cavalry pit, 10th out digging trenches.

25 Wednesday; 8 Out digging trenches, letters to Hol, Don, Dad. 7th caught 17 Cavalry Patrol.

26 Thursday; Shifted into old camp on beach water getting scarce. Handed in pay books, letters from Dad and York.

27 Friday; Got Queenie shod. Sergeant Rickerby got commission over? scouts

28 Saturday; Letter to York. Celebrated Sergeant Rickerby commission on Whis [whisky?].

29 Sunday; Church parade on beach. Ordered out to Fara with General.

30 Monday; A few words from the General on our last fight & he tells us we move out tonight to meet supposed Turks at -. Back tomorrow under Mackerson.

May 1917

1 Tuesday; Moved to arms 1.30am moved to Abasan el Kebir then on to Fara with General, our front line along Ghuzzi past El Fara.

2/5/1917 Wednesday; Moved from beach behind Khan Yunis south of Abasan Kebir heavy bombardment at Gaza. Lots of warships standing off Gaza.

3 Thursday; Still bombarding Gaza.

4 Friday; Letters to York, Holl, Don, Dad. Turks bomb hospital killed 3, wounded 3 at Belah railhead. Letter to Marcus.

6 Sunday; Church parade. move out at 2am to attack Turks at El Buggus? 20 miles SE of Abasan Kebir.



Turner and others inspecting goods stored under a stone archway.

Turner Collection

7 Monday; Taubes bombed hospital last night killed 11, wounded 33 at Belah. 2 Div Mounted men? Round El Buggur at daybreak, us scouts go in first but Turks have gone all but 500 cavalry who tried to trap us scouts after a sharp fight we got out and returned home got back 2pm very tired.

8 Tuesday; camped mile east of Absan(sic) [Abasan] Kebir. Gas drill. Still bombarding Gaza.

9 Wednesday; Letter to Hutchison & Fahey. Bombed hospital last night.

10 Thursday; Went to Belah Dump to get a few things for scouts. Got case of whis. Had good night.

11 Friday: letter from York, Dad & papers, Taubes knock one of our planes down & makes the others fly low.

12 Saturday; ? & 9 [number crossed out] went into trenches, sent letters to Marcus, Dad, Hol, Don & York, still bombarding Gaza.

13 Sunday; Went to Khan Yunis bought eggs off Bedouins 2.1/4d each.

14 Monday; a rotten order to us to polish our spurs and stirrup irons (while the Turks dig in).

15 Tuesday; heavy bombarding this morn. Our train is running on branch line towards Beersheba via Fara. Gas helmet drill. went through din-kum [dinkum?] gas.

16 Wednesday; Inspected by Gen Chauvel & staff. Dust storm.

17 Thursday; Med. inspection I've got to go and get my hands dressed. septic? [means infection?] is bad in the Brigade & comes in from trenches. Dust storm.

18 Friday; Dust is awful.

19/5/1917; Saturday: Still blowing.

20 Sunday; Last night awful, horses and men blinded. We shift to back again.

21 Monday; Letters to York & Don. Saddled up at 7.30 about 10.000 mounted men & batteries are to engage enemy along Beersheba front while engineers blow up their railway bridge & line. French infantry arriving Khan Yunis.

22 Tuesday; 23 Wednesday; 24 Thursday; We travelled all night us 8th Scouts go out in advance of 8th to give them a lead up, we engage Turk outposts along their front but don't attack just keep them in doubt? while our men got in and blew up bridge then we fought a rear guard and got back to El Gamli about 11am. Last night very tired. Thousands of mounted troops crossing at this point and batteries, etc. Left El Gamli daybreak for coast & a good swim, drink of tea and a sleep.

25 Friday; letter from Dad.

26 Saturday; Pay £2 letter to Dad.

27 Sunday; Church Parade.

28 Monday; Camped Fara. Packed up and moved for front line 1 mile from Fara along Wadi Guzzi. Taubes drop bombs and wounds Colonel Scott. We dig well in.

29 Tuesday; Shift camp quarter mile so we won't draw fire on watering troughs.

30 Wednesday; Orders to move out on stunt 7.30 am. Scouts detailed to lead 8th LH to El Jemmi and enter Wadi Guzzah [Ghuzzah] & travel to Munkheiler,

us scouts gallop out and surround old ruin but nothing in it we all camp for night.

31 Thursday; Off at daybreak [unknown two words] leaving 8th near Munkheiler, they got heavily shelled we got heavily fired on near El Magarn and retired across wadi & got Captain Wearne's horse shot we got back to Fara about 9am. The Taubes are giving us a rough time & we have to dig well in.

June 1917

1 Friday; We just passed through a yeomany camp in the wadi when a Taube flew down and bombed them killing 1 man, wounded 13 & killed 18 horses (yesterday). Gas Parade.

2 Saturday; General inspection. Letters to Don, Hol.

3/6/1917 Sunday; photo Kennedys, Marc Letter to Ken. Standing to arms 3.30pm for work.

4 Monday; Camped Fara unearthed a beautiful temple floor 1 mile of Fara in Wadi Guzzi. Bombardment still heavy on our right, railway passes Fara.

5 Tuesday; Lieut Koff gone for. 1? trucks been? with Beard, standing to arms 3am went with Gen with desert column.

6 Wednesday; Gen Royston Decorator(sic)[Decorated?], letters from Dad and York.

7 Thursday; Left camp 1am for Kharm on stunt, arrived back at 10pm one casualty.

8 Friday; Left camp again at 2am back to Kharm with Brig back home again at 7am a failure, loaded with cucumbers. Blew up wells and large ruins and enemy written on walls telling us how silly we are.

9 Saturday; Letter to Dad and York. Rickerby got stars [promotion].

10 Sunday; Church Parade. [end of page is damaged] Sent to ?? Port Said B????

11 Monday; [small folded newspaper map of Beersheba/Jerusalem etc with ink markings of route inserted here.] [at top of page and unclear] Standing to arms 2am for drink?, Acting QM [Quarter Master]. Camped at Fara.

Start patrolling front line for work several big bombardments along Gaza front. Infantry gaining ground 2 trucks of beer & stores arrived. Letter to Marcus.

12 Tuesday; Acting QM. A terrific bombardment at Gaza our infantry good work, last night, papers from Dad, York.

13 Wednesday; GP. Acting QM. Patrol front line 3.30am do round with Colonel Maygar, Watts, our patrol gets into holts and scus? won't work and they get away. Papers from York and Hol.

14 Thursday; Letter to Hol. Pay.

15 Friday; Letter from Dad and York. Sent film to Cairo with farrier.

16 Saturday; Scouts go out to Turkish redoubts pass Kharm wait for Turks' patrol it is very hot and we are very thirsty.

17 Sunday; Came back from Turks' trenches tired and thirsty about 11am.

18/6/1917 Monday; The day 24 of us scouts put to flight about 500(unclear) mounted Turks killing several and galloped them about 8 miles into their own lines.

19 Tuesday; Gift stuff arrives.

20 Wednesday; Go out to [Hill] 280 to take up some old trenches and wait all night to capture Turks.

21 Thursday; Watched all night 280, E Ridgeway shot, we captured one Turk 57 more held up white flags but we weren't having any. Letter to York, Dad, Hol, Don.

22 Friday; Lieut Rickerby & Herkes out all night Meleih. [word repeated]

23 Saturday; Scout out all night to 280, Lousing Parade. Letter to Marcus.

24 Sunday; Scouts out all night 280 doing their patrols.

25 Monday; Feeling crook out all night saw Taubes fetch another of our planes down & we should be going back for a spell but have to stop out another fortnight.

26 Tuesday; Still crook out again all night. Drove Turks and harvesters [farm labourers] back.

27 Wednesday; Sick. Reported the loss of 12 aeroplanes on this front this couple of days.

28 Thursday; In hospital Belah.

29 Friday; Hospital.

30 Saturday. Hospital. Letters from Hol, Dad, Mick.

[Undated pages of diary.]

March 26. The First Attack on Gaza.

Rumours of our losses are a division of infantry cut to pieces. Those who got into Gaza fell into pits, women pelted bombs out of windows, it was awful, our transport columns were cut off and it is said we lost over a 1000 camels with a whole division of supplies the whole divisional HQm corps [these few words unclear] 43 machine guns, hundreds of thousands rounds of ammunitions & battery of guns. We got a battery and blew up 2.5 inch Howitzer, we lost 3 thousand rifles and a Turkish officer writing on Kharm put our losses down to 15000 which the Tommies admitted was right for 12 hours of fighting.

[Next entries are in July]

2 Monday **July 1917**; letter to Mick. [General] Allenby taken over this front.

3 Tuesday; letter to Dad & Hol & Don.

4 Wednesday; Hosp. We lost 11 planes last week and two today.

5,6,7. Saturday; Hospital.

9 Monday; In rest camp.

10 Tuesday July 1917; Great feeds of watermelon.

11 Wednesday; Letters from Mrs Wright, York, Dad & Hol. Back from rest camp.

13 Friday; Took on cooking.

14 Saturday; Letter to Mrs Wright, Hol.



Turkish prisoners of war being guarded by an English soldier.

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

15 Sunday;
Letter to Dad.
Pay.

16 Monday;
Capture spy.

17 Tuesday;
Letter to York
letter from our
mate Bullocky.
Spy captured 19
April.

18 Wednesday;
Shifted to
Makhrur(?) to
take up private
work for Army
HQ. Turks
advance towards
Fara but our

chaps push them back, Taubes drop bomb and killed 19 horses same day.

19 Thursday; Go out for night but yeomanry get in our road so come in early. Heavy bombardment all night at Gaza trenches the Tommies took the post Quambala/Ambralla? Hill and 100 prisoners. Our casualties very heavy.

20 Friday; Out all night no luck. We only take revolvers with us.

21 Saturday; Turks bombarded wadi so we didn't go out, heavy fighting on Umbralla Hill.

23 Monday; Letter from Marcus. Out all night no luck.

24 Tuesday; Out night no luck.

25 Wednesday; Parcel from E Fahey. Out all night

26/7/1917 Thursday; Heavy fighting through night Gaza. Out [all?] night.

27 Friday; Letter to Miss Fahey, Marcus. Out for night.

28 Saturday; Out all night we have great feeds of prickly pear and got some large pumpkins in no man's land.

30 Monday; Out all night.

31 Tuesday; Out all night.

1 Wednesday **August 1917**; Back to brigade on beach saddle up again 5 pm for Khan Yunis. We surround a house west of Khan Yunis, too late spies had connected onto main line up in tree but had cut it and gone, only found few Turkish letters.

3 Friday; It's good on beach, plenty of sport two bands are stopping with [us?] for work, Argyle and Sutherland Bagpipers & H.A.C.[Honourable Artillery Company] Div Band 32nd.

4 Saturday; Boxing contest starts.



German plane brought down near Gaza October 1917

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

6 Monday; On beach. Concert by H.A.C.

7 Tuesday; Letters to Dad, York, Hol, Marcus.

8 Wednesday; Septic breaking out on us/me? Bad.

10 Friday; Leave to P.S.[Port Said] rest camp a rotten trip on stinking track.

17 Friday; Ordered to Port Said 31 General

Hospital septic out all over me. They tie me up like a mummy & I'm dumped in isolation, it's rotten & a big Jama? [farmer?] is put in a bell tent with me.

18 Saturday; Letters to Fahey, Hol, Dad.

[Blank pages]

31 July Friday; left 31st for Port Said. [Blank pages]

September 1917

24 Monday; Left Port Said for Moascar

26 Wednesday; Left Moascar for front.

27 Thursday; Camped Rafa

28 Friday; Joined up 8th D Troop. Camped El Fara.

29 Saturday; Letter from Dad, Marcus. [Undated blank pages]

July 18 Took on private work for Army HQ for purpose of catching spies getting through in vicinity of El Jemmi.

October 1917 1 Monday; Go out on stunt.

2 Tuesday; Letters to Dad, Ethel, Marcus, York, unclear.

5 Friday; Good fight in air, clouds spoil it.

8 Monday; Taubes shot down one of our planes.

9 Tuesday; letters York, Dad, Hol.

10 Wednesday; Out to Kashid Bek A Squadron, stable picquet.

11 Thursday; 4 LH concert.

12 Friday; Letter to Dad, York Don, Hol. Donkey stable man.

13 Saturday; Letter to Marcus & from Ethel.

14 Sunday; Church Parade.

15 Monday; Spraying gas helmets in wadi. Taube down.

16 Tuesday; On Wadi Guzzhi water guard.

17 Wednesday; Received parcel from Mrs - , Marcus & Miss Gray & Jhons. Night stable picquet.

18 Thursday; Out on stunt arrived home 9am.

19/10/1917 Friday; Out day patrol.

20/10/1917; Saturday; Tooth drawn. Night stable picquet.

21 Sunday; Out on day patrol to 3.00.

22 Monday; Night stable picquet.

23 Tuesday; Papers from York, letter from Marcus.

24 Wednesday; Letter to Gray & Jons, Hol, Don, Marcus. Dad. Go out Brigade did trenches in front of railway Kharm. Out all night.

25 Thursday; Out all day outpost Kharm relieved by 4 Brigade 5pm. Receive letters from York, Dad, Hol, J Marcus & strange letter from a Mrs Dairson, all dated July to 5 of August.

26 Friday; Getting ready for big bust. Guns going all ways.

27 Saturday; Call out. 3000 Turks advancing El Buggar? Front Tommy Squad captured, 6 left in another. Austrain [Austrian] Cavalry charge 2 of our machine guns and get cut up to a man. We got home at 1am Sunday morn.

28 Sunday; Move out Fara 3am arrived El Gassi? 1am. camp till [blank at end of page].

29 Monday; Leave Fara 5pm for Kallasa arrive 11 pm. Wells are blown up and village empty.

30 Tuesday; Leave Kallasa 1am arrive Asluf a nice little white town and white mosque just as the sun rose it's there we blew up the big stone railway bridge.

31 Wednesday [marked with a X]; The 8th are attached to 1 Div & last night ? attacked on east of Beersheba while infantry attacked on south and west. We travelled all night and got into holts with Turkish outposts at sunrise Col[onel] Maygar lost arm [later died of blood loss]. Taubes bomb 4th going into Beersheba.

1 Thursday **November 1917**; We came up wadi from Beersheba plenty of grain. Taubes attack us early we brought one down rifle fire.

2 Friday; Saddle up at 4am go into Beersheba for water, move out about 7 miles and attack towards Sheria [Tel el Sheria?] [several written lines crossed out.]

3 Saturday; At daybreak rifle fire gets very heavy, fighting all day. Lieut Watt killed. We & our horses are suffering for water. Turks holding wells. Relieved by infantry before sundown. Ride back to Beersheba for water & camp.

4 Sunday; Move to Kharm, cross ground where infantry fought. Awful ride through broken ground.

5 Monday; Letters from Dad, Saddles on all day. Water Shalal.

6 Tuesday; Terrific bombardments towards Sheria. Standing in reserve at [Hill] 300, Infantry & LH took Sheria, us guarding their left flank.

7 Wednesday November 1917; Move from Kharm in forced march round Sheria

8 Thursday; Camp on railway & advance 4am & shelled back at gallop, enter [unclear] Turks' rail head & large dumps all burning.

9 Friday; Horses 54 hours without water. Watered early joined regiment. H? 10pm escort battery travel all night & water in morning at Hesi springs in hill (salty) in escort for Notts Battery.

10 Saturday 11 Sunday; Watered at salt hole daybreak. Moved into Sunneil shelled back remained battalion all day, camped for night. Water at Menslarge(?)...get belt & buckle. 7 aeroplanes motor transport railway station & trucks camp all day near village Sunneil . Yoked up to go 4 miles and shell [unclear word] Regt moves out on outpost boys [get into warm corner lot of casualties (bracketed words on top of next page but crossed out)]

12 Monday; At Sunneil Turks still flying away leaving their dead, place stinking, planes burned supply dumps still burning boys get into warm corner lots of casualties.

13 Tuesday; Turks reinforce several of ours knocked including Gen King.

14 Wednesday; 3rd Brigade joined up & we travel to Nebi? Yunis (sic) on coast cam. Pass through several villages on the way. Tommies give us their water bottles to drink and natives sell us oranges.

15 Thursday; Still camped Nebi Yunis. Buy a sheep & do washing we are all dirty and lousie. 2000 prisoners pass.

16 Friday; Camped Nebi Yunis

17/11/1917 Saturday; Nebi Yunis left 9am watered at Katra been big fight here and women & children killed in big building on hill. Germans had machine guns on top storey. 7 spies shot and bombed in one building. Letters from Dad, York and Ethel.

18th Sunday; Saddled up 5.30 passed through Wadi Sarrar Junction, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Beersheba Junction.

19 Monday; Fought yesterday nearly hit with shrapnel travel back to Sarra last night founded briddy? pack mare.

20 Tuesday; Camped near Sarra Junction very heavy rain, country very claggy.

21 Wednesday; Travelled 18 miles back to Mydel arrived 7pm camped in olive grove.

22 Thursday November 1917; Mydel. Plenty of oranges 6 for 2½d. Mydel dirty natives' town.

23 Friday; Mydel go swim in sea.

24 Saturday; Camped Mydel, notes to Marcus, Dad, York, Ethel.

25 Sunday; [Scrawled sentence unable to transcribe.]

26 Monday; Mydel.

27 Tuesday; Washing on beach, parcel from Dad.

28 Wednesday, 29 Thursday; Move out of Mydel at 9pm and travel all night to French village Duran, bought brown bread 1/6 a loaf. Call out midnight for front line, Duran built by Rothschild baron around El Burge. Dead horses and Red Cross wagons lay smashed up all along passes.

30 Friday; Took led horses back to Duran French village.



Notts Battery Royal Horse Artillery was one of several batteries which provided artillery support to the Australian Light Horse during the Middle Eastern campaign, WWI.

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

1 Saturday **December 1917**; Shifted Rhamhli(?) with led horses. Good water, cabbages, spring onions, oranges.

4 Tuesday; Letter to Dad, Ethel, Ork, Marcus.

7 Friday; Ramhli rain.

8 Saturday; Ramhli rain.

9 Sunday; Ramhli rain.

11 Tuesday; Bombed by Taubes lost 30 horses. Q.M. Daniels.

12 Wednesday; Shifted back from Ramhli. Bombed. Another 35 horses and 3 men.

15 Saturday; Shifted to Katra.

17 Monday; Letter from Marcus, Hol, Mr Wright, Dad, York.

19 Wednesday; Inoculated Katra

20 Thursday; Letters to Ethel, Dad, York, Marcus, 3253. Johns & Gray, Miss Fahey. Received old pay book back.

21 Friday; Went to Hesk-Ludh for Xmas gifts.

22 Saturday; Eat up with navies? [two unclear words]

23 Sunday; Still waiting at...

24 Monday; Flooded out last night. Gifts arrived 276 cases. 6 of us left behind to guard stuff. Terrible rain and thunder, sit up all night. Transport arrived & load up for camp. Got thrown off my horse, head badly hurt dragged long way. Lay in rain all night. Rains awful. E.L.C. [Egyptian Labour Corps] & camels dead in hundreds.

25 Tuesday; My head and neck pain, still raining everything sopping & may go to village to camp for night. Lieut Austin buys water cart full of wine from village £30. Get our Xmas boxes, better than last year.

26 Wednesday; Go to doctor, neck still bad. Off duty – parcel from Mr York. Off duty.

27 Thursday; Drying clothes fine day. Bought Christmas cards & send away. Great work with Scotties shooting Bedouins for looting.

28 Friday; Neck and head still bad. Sent Xmas cards to all.

29 Saturday; Issues of Victorian butter?

30 Sunday; Letters from Dad & Anglo Egyptian Bank.

November 1916 [inserted on undated page, at end of diary dates crossed out.]

24; Left Romani.

27; Got to Mahla.

29; Patrol all night.

30/11/1916; Sent back to scouts again.

31; Scouts go to Lazasmar? Hills. Recd letters from Ken, Don, Dad, Mick, York.

[December 1916] 3; Three Taubes hit anti guns & killed gunner/s? & wounded 5.

4; Train runs off line into Camel Corp 2 men killed and several wounded.

6; Clipped pony. Called out, false alarm.

8; Letter to Dad £5.

10; Another false alarm. Taubes visit us often.

12; Taubes dropped bombs & killed horse & a piece of shell nearly hit me in the pants. Kill a horse.

13; Out skirmishing. Letter to Holl.

16; Taubes still bombing us.

17; Taubes still busy got into hols [holts?] with one of ours & ours came out second best.

18; Letters from Holl, Dad.

19; Got Xmas billies [Aust women filled tin billies with goods and sent to soldiers] & bombs from Taubes, killed 5 niggers, wounded a NZ, killed a horse & several wounded. 20 left Balah galloping orderly [messenger] for Brig.

21; Still making for El Arish. Turks retreating from El Arish.

22. March into El Arish natives very friendly. Transports drop anchor off El Arish. We are very tired after days and nights in saddle but we are ordered to saddle up at 5pm for attack on Magdhaba over 20 miles off. We got supplies of El Arish in El Arish wadi [Wadi el Arish] & pushed on, at daybreak we attacked Magdhaba.

23: Fought all day and captured position at dark, got into our saddles and rode all night again back to El Arish, mostly the few thousand horsemen slept on their horses along the great river bed home.

[The following entries are inserted after pages altered for November 1916 entries.]

25/12/1917; Xmas day tin of P.Pudding from London Daily Mail & tin of bully beef at Masaid 3 miles west of El Arish a lovely hod of plums a couple of hundred yds of brack.

26/12/1917; rained all night.

27; Our Magdhaba prisoners march along beach past us to meet train for canal. We gave them cigarettes & matches.

28; letters from Dad, York.

30; Letter to Don.

31; Letter ? Holl. P. Holl. Dad.

[Undated pages.]

Attacked Rafa on **January 9 [1917]** marched all night. Left El Arish 4.45 got supplies on east side of wadi & moved on again got to Shiek Zourit at 9am had a couple of hours blow got to S.E. of Maj mountain at daylight & attacked with NZealanders on NE us on SE. Yeomanry on west, New Zealanders swung round to north & we had them on all sides forced the position at sundown, capturing 1,600, 29? Turkish officers & some German officers, 603 German M.G. Corps, 45,000 rounds of ammunition, 16,000 rifles, 58 horses & mules, 83? camels, 4 Krups guns etc.

[Undated pages] **18 April [1917?]** The big attack on Gaza opened up at daybreak with heavy bombardment from our guns & off the monitors [floating heavy gunships] in the Mediterranean, we are guarding the road south east of Gaza but up to midday we have not attacked only exchanged a few shots, from the hill we are on can see the tanks & infantry going into action with my glass. The Turk[s] heavily bombard them. We are very sleep[y] & tired after riding all night, the bombardment is getting quieter, it is about 11am. McDonald, an Aus black is with me, a good fellow. Lacy's horse got hit, one of our tanks got put out of action, our guns did very little today only the ships' guns.

19; The big fight started daybreak this morning to take Gaza. Divisions of infantry & for miles on our left are divisions of Light Horse. Yeomanry & camels & artillery are going in at a gallop, a width of about 10 miles, shrapnel is fairly

screaming over them & high explosives are tearing holes up. At last the lads are up & the rifle fire is deafening, tanks, armoured cars all taking their share. One of their big guns has hit a tank and blew her lights clean out. This is our third go at Gaza and another failure. Before midday we are backing out, they are too strong for us and we are getting hell shoved into us. The casualties is (sic) awful, the sand carts are loaded but we have to hold on till night for dark to cover our retreat. Nearly all the officers of the 8th are wounded, no more scouting to be done. I'm busying myself giving the slightly wounded a lift in, but the artillery fire is so thick that they prefer waiting for the sand carts. Through the evening the NZers galloped in to support us for we were weakening and would not be able to hold out till night. I just rode up to NZ when some Taubes flew down at us, dropped a load of bombs amongst us, killed 2 men near me and 4 horses. A bit of bomb casing cut a hole in the leather on my pants, killed 2 men and 4 horses at my side, another tank blew to pieces, big naval guns of the [blank] is fixing the tanks, then they turned them on us retiring. I see 8 big horses go down in one limber, all dead from one of these shells. Nealy all our staff is hit, only the old brigadier seems to hold out. He is a marvel, always in the thickest is Hellfire Jack, as they call him. One of our lads got beat with sleep. The Turks shot him and bayoneted him four times and took £15 out of his pocket left him for dead. Some yeomanry found him and brought him in but died soon after. They are getting very cruel. A Taube came down like a witsock? [windsock?] over us. Father Gordon was in the fight got hit in the leg. Our camel brigade nearly all got captured. They followed in a tank it was doing good work when a direct hit toppled it over and the [Turks] got encouraged and came out on all flanks and surrounded the Camel Corps and capturing a fair lot. Our wounded were that numerous they could not compete with them at the clearing station and some were laying out for over 24 hours waiting to be treated. This is the second attack on Gaza.

The first was also disaster and is believed a whole division of infantry got cut up. We went out to meet Turkish reinforcements that day from Beersheba. They were too many for us but we hung on till dark and retired early next morn under five miles of shrapnel. This attack is another failure. To my knowledge 2000 wounded passed through one clearing station and a station put up for us to hold another two hundred. Seventeen thousand have gone through. Our prisoners are heavy and other losses. [Name scrubbed out] blew out his brains over the first attack at Gaza at Kantara.[Undated diary pages]

May 7th [1917] Left Abasan [el Kebir?] 2am yesterday to attack El Buggar/Buzzar we travelled all night & cross wadi at Bir el Sani? At this point the Turks are firing on our flank and advance guard on the left. Taite(?), McDonald, Herks(?) and myself are on right flank. Sergeant Rickerby and several more scouts are on left. The tanks then fell back and the Bedouins took a hand. Rickerby and several scouts got close on to them and gave chase. They were well mounted, so were my mates and it was hard on them in the dark, wadis and strange country. Rickerby got alongside one & shot his horse, got him just sent him back when another came up thinking it was the Turks getting the best of the deal, it was too late. The scouts after a smart chase ran him down they had both been using our rifles had our ammunition on them one of them had hid on him 12 Turkish sovereigns he handed in to the general. We could not find them stiff luck for us. It got up a heavy fog at daybreak but we got the Brigade safely round El Bugar? then about 20 of us

scouts got leave to go in and get in touch, we worked our way in carefully to El Buzzar and found the enemy gone, we crossed under their telegraph line the fog had lifted and we saw small body of mounted Turks on our flank at about 2,000 yds. We tried to cut one lot off [but] in doing so ran us into about 40 over a ridge and, before we could pull up and get back, the bullets were like a swarm of bees around us at about 200 yds range. Lucky none of us got hit, we took up the ridge and after some sharp shooting we [then] galloped off leaving 1 man and 3 horses, up went his hands. We were going down to take him when a cry came from one of our men that got round on our left flank, it was another snare. The little rocky creeks were full of Turks & we would have all gone under. There were hundreds of men on different hills but it was no good fetching up the brigades as we did not know where their main front or their artillery was and it was getting late and we were 20 miles from our supplies so we formed up again and the brigade moved for home. Got back very tired & to hear of our poor hospital getting bombed 11 killed & 33 wounded while we were away.

22/5/1917; Yesterday moved off from our nice little camp behind Khan Yunis for another stunt similar to El Buzzar one, only a little heavier fighting. We brawled all night at Goz Me Bruk & struck out for Rashid Bek. For miles on both sides of us were columns of our mounted troops about 12,000 all moving the same way. The idea was for us to engage the enemy along the Beersheba line while some of our force got in and blew up their railway bridge down southeast of us, we were to keep them from sending reinforcements and to fight a rear guard action if needed while they got back again. Us 8th scouts were told to join our regiment & lead them in. We could hear the NZ rifles cracking on our right and the Imperial Mounted on our left told us we were up against it. We crept down to the wadi & could see plenty of Turks across it in the hills. We were well into rocky country. I crept on a rise on the edge of the wadi & was looking through my glasses at a Turk camp ¼ mile across when four concealed Turks on the other side of the wadi fired at my head & nearly hit it. They shifted the loose stones from around it, made get down quicker than I got up, all through the day we kept up sharp shooting sometimes they put some shrapnel into us, but we did not cross the wadi only wanted to make them think we were going to, so to keep back their reinforcements while our fellows got their bridge. It was blown up and a large length of the line then we fell back fighting a rear guard action we were more frightened of their guns getting onto our division backing out than themselves following. But it was done very clever and no damage. Across the wadi they have big forces. 3 of our planes flew across very low besides their anti guns. Thousands of rifles spoke up out of the hills, we wounded a Turkish sergeant & questioned him he said there was 15,000 cavalry & 17,000 infantry, the sergeant died before we left for home, we got back to El Gamli & camped for night & left day break for the camp on the beach. I think we will have to take a large force to attack the position, we fooled around yesterday the bridge we blew up had 17? Stone arches a lovely bridge & about 10 miles of railway.

4 July; The infantry attacked two posts, bayoneted 30 and fetched in 50 prisoners. They were surprised at the tucker that was given them. We suggested to let one go to see what he would do, he cleared out but came back next night with 4 mates.

[Next page 'July 7th Month – 31 Days' 'Letters 1918" List begins January and finishes 5 Feb. The remaining pages of the diary begin from the back cover and have several pages of addresses; list of money and dates from 'old pay book'; two pages of subjects of photos; lists of letters written or received; unfinished January 1918 list of notes [perhaps for diary?].

**1072 Harry Turner C Troop. A. Squadron.
8th Australian Light Horse.**

1917 Letts's Quikref Pocket Diary and An Almanac. Badly damaged diary, 100mmx70mmx12mm, brown hard cover, brown ribbon attached to back and tied in knot to keep diary closed. Inside front cover has half pocket, marbled frontispiece. Inside back cover pocket is folded newspaper map which included Shechem, Jerusalem, Jericho with printed dotted line and one small ink dotted line. Several pressed flowers throughout the diary which have stained and bled through pages. Entries in pencil. Pages of almanac information in front. This 1917 diary continued for one week into 1918. There are no entries for 1918 after that until the writer re-uses the diary from September 1918, altering the dates to suit the year.

H. J. Turner, 220 Albert Street Brunswick Victoria, Australia. Culluluane?
Turner [written sideways on page]

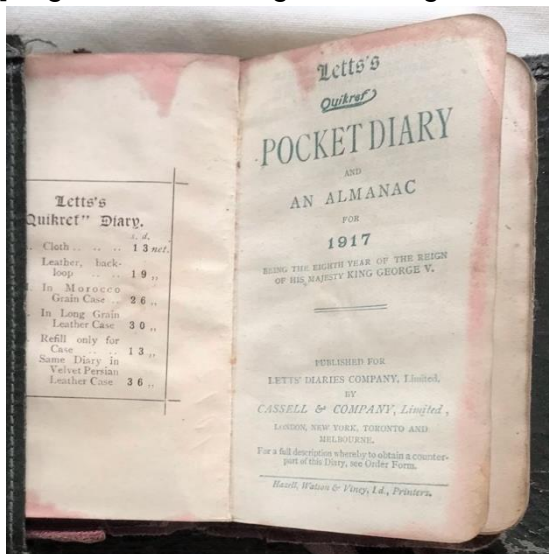
1072 Harry Turner C Troop A Squadron, 8th A.L.H.

Memoranda pages

1918 Oct 14; Got discharged drew £15 – gave Mrs Smart 10/-.

15th Gave Mrs Haz... 10/-

[Page has other illegible writing and lines across pages].



**Small Quikref pocket diary for 1917.
Staining round the edges probably comes
from the leather wallet it is stored in.**

Kennelly 6 Mary St Richmond.

State Council

No 5 floor

6d Sweet Nitre 6' Balsam Capir 6-
Sandlewood Oil

January 1917 8 Monday (crossed out)

[Continued from back of diary **1918**,
dates are altered to fit different
year.]

8 Tuesday: Brigade starts off again
9am passes through Gaza. 10am
arrive Belah mid-day.

9 Wednesday: Getting settled
down in new camp. Papers from
Dad and Marcus & wedding cake
from Mick Fahey.

11 Friday. Rain.

12 Saturday; Rain Stable picquet.

13 Sunday; Rain, letter from ? Mem:Change from Taylor PT 26 Lent Warner
4/-.

14 Monday; Post cards to York, Dad Ethel, Mick. Letters to Dad, York, Ethel.

15 Tuesday; Stable picquet.

16 Wednesday: Had a night with Glosters Y [Gloucestershire Yeomanry]

17 Thursday: Letter No 1 to York.

February 1917

1 Thursday; letter to Mother? & Mac.

15 Thursday; Letter to Mena?

17 Saturday; Letter to Mac Ivy.

18 Quinquagesima Sunday: Letter to Will.

March 1917

18 Sunday; ½ Letter to Bill? Letter to Mum.

[A pressed flower in the third week of March has stained through many pages no entries.]

April 1917

13 Friday; Letter to Maggie.

15 Sunday; Letter to Mum.

4 pages of what appear to be horse names with 2/- next to some of them. Earlier entries of names of letters sent. Another pressed flower.

June 1917

11 Monday; Letter to Mum Letter to Arch.

More pages of horses with 6/- next to one entry.

July 1917

7 Saturday; Letter to Mum, letter to Nev, letter to Ket.

9 Monday; Letter to May.

29 Sunday; Letter to Mum, Sig, Card Mir.

30 Monday; Letter to Ivy " " Jack.

31 Tuesday; Field? Card (Len) (Frank 5) (Jack card).

August 1917

[Another page of race horses.]

11 Saturday; Started Rosary.

12 Sunday; Letter to [Unclear] xxx (Nell) (Mum and [unclear]).

August 1917

20 Monday; Letter to Mum.

25 Saturday: Letter to Arch.

20 Sunday; Letter to [unclear] and crossed out. Drew Kits [Thought to be 1918]

[1918 1917 entries crossed out and date changed to suit the different year.]

27 Tuesday; Drew 10/-.

29 Thursday; Left P[ort] Said in oil boat then by train to Suez. Ran over? [unclear] boarded boat 3am.

30 Friday; Boarded 11am.

31 Saturday; Concert night. Hot.

[1917 diary goes into 1918. Turner writes 1-7 January and then reverts to September 1917 in diary, changing days.]

1 Tuesday January 1918; Horses out to frontline [unclear lines] lost horses hot and wet.

2 Wednesday; Letter today in reply to many sent.

3 Thursday; Back from trenches. Papers from Mum and Dad.

4 Friday; All together again.

5 Saturday; Start on track for Belah. Travel 8 miles rain. Camp at [blank]

6 Sunday; Raining heavy. Brigade moves 9am terrible trip. Travel 7 miles and camp at Megdel?

7 Monday; Still raining heavy. Start off again 15 miles to outside of Gaza.

September 1918

1 Saturday; Hot.

5 Thursday; Rough in Indian Ocean nearly all sick. Pay of 10/- & took private address.

6 Friday; Very rough. Pay orderly 6/- .

11 Wednesday; Leave to Columbo Arrived Columbo.

12 Thursday; Leave to Columbo sailed about 5pm.

13 Friday; Boat drill.

14 Saturday; Concert & boat drill.

24 Tuesday; Arrived Freemantle.

25 Wednesday; Left Freemantle at breakfast.

26 Thursday; Rough.

27 Friday; Had very rough night.

October 1918

1 Tuesday; Passed Wilsons Promontory.

3 Thursday; Enter Sydney Harbour.

The final pages of this diary include addresses.

Memoranda of Things Lent [crossed out and Borrowed inserted.] and list of topics probably for writing up.

10/- L Julian

5/- McGibbon

7/6 Jones

Notes for 1918

About the Country

Women wear harem skirts

About having no films

About Col Maguer [Colonel Maygar?]

Slush camp with dul?

Into a section of rain [unclear word]

Aeroplane flights

Water at [degrees unclear]

Cakes

2 feeds of eggs at 8/-

How Bedouins lux (?)

33 brats firing 200 rounds a

The yermang (?)

How they cultivate (?) and grow

Jackals snakes

Rum issue

How our horses are fed

Out of bounds all towns

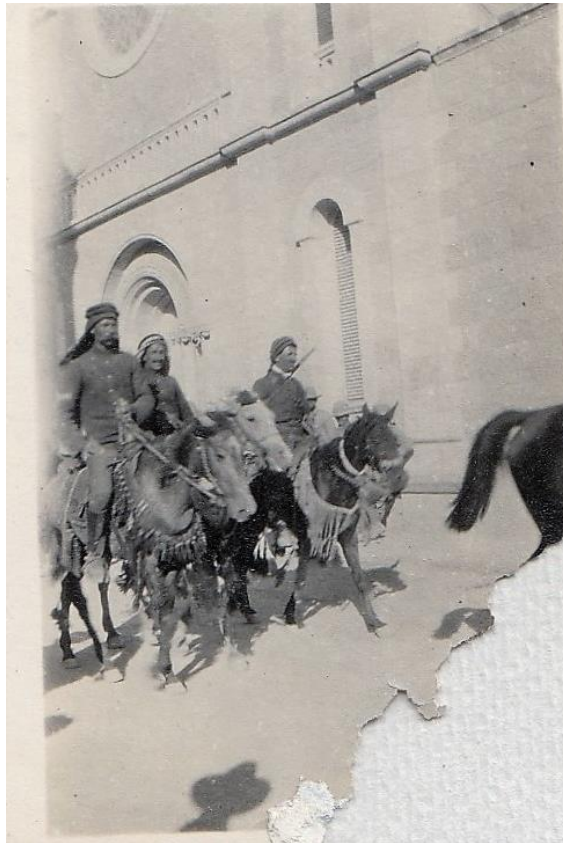
Pepsin [two words unclear]

sheep

arose shining on them made it a picture. We camped on the edge of the town a good part of the day glad of a spell to boil up & a bite to eat.

That morn a body of men passed which interested us & it takes something out of the box to do this but these did. They were Arabs very orientally(sic) dressed in all colours of silk and cotton, armed to the teeth & can't say I liked the look of them much. They carried flags big & little. What was described on them I don't think they knew themselves. They were on donkeys, Arab steeds & camels all done up in robes & tassels, such a get up was fit for any fancy dress carnival. Anyhow I found out later they were some of the Shreff(sic)[Sheriff] of Mecca staff. Well to go on with that

morn we watered our horses alongside the great bridge the Anzacs [Anzac Mounted Division] blew up. I think you would see the pictures of it in the illustrated papers. While they were doing it we engaged the Turks along the Beersheba front to give them the fair run. It was a pretty bridge I think of 17 arches of yellow stones cut by good masons, anyhow we blew it up. It was there we watered our horses. It was towards dark & we moved further round Beersheba riding all night & the break of day to Jacko['s] [term used for the Turks] surprise found us arriving in his outpost on the east side, the last place he thought to be attacked & to make things worse his impregnable Beersheba wasn't too well defended round the back and the infantry had advanced along the western front and the big guns were tearing up his trenches like some great volcanic eruption. We, being on the high ground, could look across onto the high ridges on the other side, could



The Sheriff's guard on their decorated ponies riding through Jerusalem.

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection

see our big shells tearing off the top of them. Still we had some nasty positions to take before we could get the town & it seemed a go who was going to get the place; the infantry division coming up on the west or the LH division from the east. Our own little battery, which had followed us across the desert & done such good work, seemed to think the same for their shells were fairly humming over our heads as we galloped for ridge after ridge. On our left towards dark [we] were on the last ridge overlooking the town, then a fresh div came galloping up behind to relieve us we let them take over and carry on & they did it, for in the night we got word [text finishes here followed by blank pages]

Mr William Adair

142 Hyndford St

Belfast

Ireland

Letter No 2. The morn after we got bombed by Taubes we shifted to a large wadi with plenty of water & camped for [the] day. We found plenty of grain buried in great holes at the Bedouin camps & we also got some of their fowls so we were well off for that day. Severe fighting was going on towards Sheria. We buried some Turks that lay near our camp. In the early part of the morn we heard a hum & looking up saw 2 Taubes going towards [the] Div where they bombed us the last night. We heard a few explosions & knew they were laying eggs. The damage I heard later was 2 killed & 30 horses. In the wadi where we were camped were thousands of horses & men & over further was thousands of infantry. Now I knew if these Taubes came back our way they would get a warm reception & they did & orders rang out – “1 man to 4 horses, the rest line the ridges”, so we lay watching those two big birds coming for us. One of them we knew killed our Colonel & a lot of our mates last night. On they came. “Fire!” came the order & so we did & not only us but thousands of rifles & machine guns spoke. One of the Taubes dived at us, the one we wanted most. Then we saw her quiver & roll, the rattle of rifles & guns was terrific & [the] air was humming with lead. One Taube was well away but we kept it on to this one & no wonder she fell about 3 miles away amongst our infantry, the pilot dead & the observer breathing his last & hardly a square inch of that Taube that wasn't hit. Our Colonel was avenged & our mates in the 8th.

We rode into Beersheba. About one hundred laden camels that had been waiting for the town to fall had arrived & troops were everywhere, all waiting for water all sorts of engines were pumping out the wells. The meaning of Beersheba is the mother of wells. At last we got in & watered & to our surprise our brigade were ordered to prepare for a march back to Kharm near Fara where we started from. We didn't like the idea but it gave us a chance of seeing the battle ground & fortification. The infantry had fought through on the west side of the town. Our big guns had played havoc ripping up trenches & ploughing great holes fit to bury tanks in. Wire entanglements were torn to pieces, dead animals everywhere & broken guns. There were strings of captured guns & wagons of all descriptions & with the dust we were making, our eyes smarting, it took us all we knew to keep out of the holes & trenches. But the worst was to come. At dark we entered the low ground among great craters & wadis & the dust full of lime, [probably chalk like soil] just hung about our heads. We could not open our eyes, tears were falling down our faces through the dust that was coated on us, we had to leave it to our poor horses to follow each other. If we did open our eyes we could not see the tail of the horse in front. There was a lot of horses broke their legs & riders hurt. At last we got out of it & got on to the flat country towards Kharm & got there about midnight still wondering what the game was. Next day we stood to arms for 2 days, us and our horses kept their gear on & we were facing Sheria. Fighting was going on very heavy towards that point & I think we were there as a reserve as the yeomanry was out in front of us & made that great charge up to the Turks' guns. The papers say [it] was the only charge to come up to Balaclava. They got through, cutting down the gunners & captured the guns. Next day we were ordered to be ready for a forced march back to where we came from. On the second we moved out to stop about 8000 Turks who were advancing on the right & had to be stopped at all costs. After travelling about 10 miles towards

Sheria we got into action about 4pm. Under a very heavy fire we took a high line of hills & stopped. The Turks had another line higher than us having the drop on us we were told to keep our heads down as well as possible, his machine guns would keep sending a noise round our ears like a thousand canaries whistling. The Lieut that I came over with got knocked here for keeps. The infantry was to be up and relieve us that night but it never came & we had no water & the day set in awful hot. One chap left the line & got back to the valley where our horses were to see if the horse holders had any water & came back with some saying the men down there were parched & horses tucked up

Dismounted Light Horsemen using cover of a rock wall while holding off a Turkish attack.

Photo: 8/13 VMR Collection



but he got 3 tins of condensed milk & we sucked that into us. Jacko kept getting an odd one of us but we

kept hold of that ridge. By midday we were suffering for water, the milk made us worse but we were to hang on at all costs. If Jacko broke through there, someone would cop on our left. At last about 4pm over the ridge at our back came a few Tommies in their steel helmets, we could have cheered. In another hour they were swarming up the hill to relieve us. It was late that night we got back to Beersheba, men & horses mad for a drink & to see them rush the troughs like hungry pigs. Gen Chauvel complimented the 8th on the way they held them 8 thousand Turks up under trying conditions. It's terrible to be thirsty & we've done a large share of that since we started fighting on the canal. We camped at Beersheba that night & thoughts of a blow next day but it never came off. About 10am we got word to saddle up for a march back to Kharm.

Letter No 3

On Nov 7 we were ordered to move from Karm(sic) on a forced march round Sherair(sic)[Sheria?] which was taken the day before. We passed through that place & saw hundreds of prisoners under guard & strings of camels & motor ambulances with wounded of both sides. After watering our horses we pushed on coming on to the railway line somewhere I don't know, it was dark. We camped for the night or rather lay down beside our horses till 4am & the whole brigade advanced on to the hills. I shall never forget that morning it was Oaks Day in Australia & about the time it was getting run off we were galloping for our life, how it really happened I can't say perhaps our scouts were not out far enough, perhaps the Turks got as great a surprise as us, anyhow on we went all massed, the brigade guns & armoury & all. I heard a couple of shots fired out on our flanks, some of our men got a Turk outpost, still we went on, not dreaming of any danger, when all of an instance right in front of us opened up a line of machine guns. Was ever 8000 horsemen in such a plight all mounted and massed in one large heap? Then to our horror the enemy batteries opened

up on us, it was just beginning to break day. It seemed like hours instead of seconds waiting for an order of some sort. At last it came, 'right wheel, walk, trot, gallop' & out we went not the same way as we came in. What saved us [was] we were that close up to the Turks' guns they could not get elevation low enough to hit us for they were behind a ridge & they thought we went out the same way as we came in. Another half hour, daylight would have done for us. What happened their mach gunners was they must have thought us cavalry & instead of retreating were charging them, for they lost their blocks & were firing into the air. The greatest sight of all was our battery coming out, though I was galloping for dear life out on the flank & a few yds [in front?] of [us] were our guns. It was a sight one would give to see on a moving picture but not where I saw it. The great draught horses were stretched out to their full length with the Tommy riders crouching out along on them driving their spurs into their flanks & cutting at them with their whips. Half the time the guns were flying(?) not on their wheels, it's a crime for their [the gunners] to lose a gun & they weren't going to lose theirs. After a few miles of this mad gallop we pulled up, men and horses all winded and covered with sweat, a lot of people would think I'm telling a lie when I say not a man or horse got hit. I was talking to some of the gunners after and they said it was no good of going back to England and telling a yarn like it as nobody would believe it. So now you know while Melbourne's gay crowds were watching the Oaks run, some of Melbourne's lads were galloping for dear life underneath a terrific point blank fire from the Turks' guns. We moved off again a mile or so & our guns went into action and we were lined up behind them. I [never?] thought such a thing would happen. Our guns drew fire from the Turks [unclear word] and a small shell landed a few yds [missing word?] me, two horses standing near me got the force of it one with a broken leg the other got hit in the head. We put them out of their misery and was glad to get orders to move off again. The next pull up was on a high hill below was the town of Huj, the great rail end and great prisoners dumps belonging to the Turks all ablaze. In the distance was the fleeing Turks trying to get away with (unclear) and convoys. Captain – of our squadron (been killed since) set off with two troops, lined a ridge & just shot them down like rabbits. Corporal – got out with a machine gun after two big Turks' guns, killing the animals that were drawing them & remaining guard over them till they were taken. Got [unclear name] & M.M. the reason of the Turks flying from Huj was our guns from Gaza flank and infantry were pushing in and the L.H. were coming round at their back again. It was a hurried retreat; officers' tables were laid as if for breakfast, tents with all their belongings. We found a large tent full of oranges, wagons of vegetables; well they hardly had time to set their large dumps burning & blow up the wells & pumping plant. Even their dead and dying men & animals & broken guns & wagons that lay everywhere told an awful tale of the work our guns had done. Prisoners were still coming in large numbers, poor beggars, tired & worn out. That night we did outpost on the hills, search lights were flashing for miles & great shells bursting & dumps blazing made it a pretty sight but our poor horses were suffering & they still had to wait till late next day. [It] made it 54 hours without water with hard (unclear) through heat & dust.

[Blank pages, last few pages of notebook]

19/1/18

Dear Father

A line to thank you for your kindness by sending me a cheque. I've got notice from Anglo Egypt saying it was at Port Said as I won't be able to get [there] they will get it transferred in my pay book. We're having awful weather & have been [in] wet things for weeks. It rains terrible here & is awfully cold. Any how we got relieved from the trenches & after ploughing our way through mud up to the horses' knees are back near the (unclear). I tell you we looked pretty after our couple of months fighting first through the heat & dust then up to our necks in water, but at last were going to have a hard earned spell, how long don't know.

[Written from back of book upside down]]

Khan Yunis & Belah. Both villages of about 699-700 inhabitants, houses mostly mud set in midst of figs planted. There is little importance except as marking the proximity of good wells.

[Second last page is damaged and faded and gives a description of Gaza. Inside back cover, badly damaged are some figures and a piece of vocabulary(?) and on the last page are notes and a scrawled address].

**1072 Harry Turner C Troop. A. Squadron.
8th Australian Light Horse.**

Notebook, red cover, 165mmx105mmx5mm. Inside front cover is calendar for 1917, 1918 with the first four months of 1918 crossed out. 'Made in Italy' printed under calendar Undated pages with faint horizontal lines. Cover badly crazed and edges worn and torn on upper lh front and back. The diary is written in pencil, now very faint with the occasional pressed flower or grass inserted. Notebook one of two inserted in a badly damaged black wallet with pockets and stud fastening.

Across top of inside front cover '1072 Harry James Turner 8th A.L.H. Across bottom of inside front cover A Squadron D Troop.

January Monday 1918 [assumed year]; Rifle 10172, Paybook 234898, Horse

1; Candle, Turner, Taylor, Smith, N. Arrend?

2; C Preston C Squadron 9th LH.

20; Letter to Dad & Marcus, Ethel, Mick and York

January 21; General parade, speech by Gen Chauvel.

Letter to Grey, John and photos & papers to Dad.

22; Started drill. Letters to Mrs Davison, Jim Fahey.

23; One man shot and one man wounded, engineers. Letters to Archie, Marcus.

24; Tommies shoot at 9th for stealing stirrup irons.

25; Started shooting at butts, one of B Squad shoots off his arm.

26; Butts, gifts arrive.

27; A large waterspout in the sky. Letter to York & photo 2.

January 28; Drill.

29; Drill, letter & photo to Dad.

30; Drill, Stable picquet, letter to Marcus & photo 2.

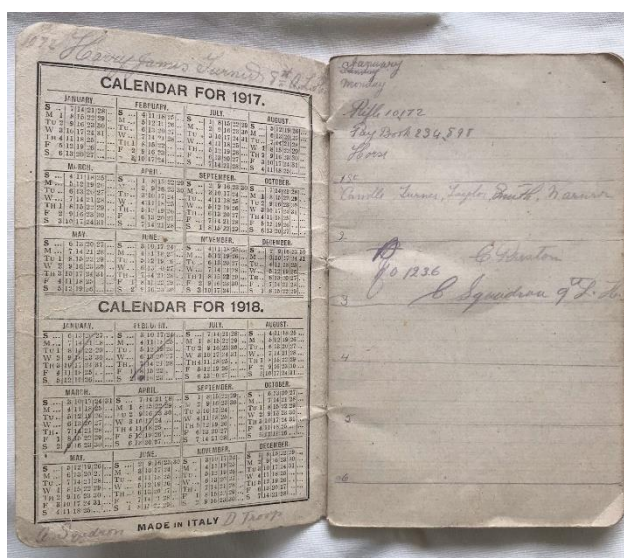
31; Drill.

February 1; Day stable man.

2; 1st Masters fatigue [dury], papers to Dad.

3; Church. Stable picquet.

4; Papers from Mr York.



Opening page of red covered notebook showing the first four months of 1918 crossed out.

5 February 1918; 2nd Masters fatigue, brigade goes out to Gaza to fill in trenches, letter & photos to Ethel, 2 eggs.

6; Gaza fatigue, on light duties, pay, letter to Dean.

7; Gaza fatigue, on light duties.

8. Rai;. Gaza fatigue £3.19 out of £5 entered in pay book.

9. Rain, our mail gone down.

10; Rain, no parades.

February 11; G Groves gives me camera.

12; Out to Gaza, weather lovely grass & flowers splendid, men left in refuses to clean transports, harness & get the riot act read out.

13; Out to Gaza trenches, 4 Brigades counts out. Grants.

14; Q.M [Quartermaster] fatigue, on general parade ground.

15; Rehearsing general parade before Gen Hodgson for Duke of Connaught. Stable picquet. Letter to Dad and York.

16; Salvage at Gaza.

17; Q.M. fatigue Belah.

18; Gaza salvage.

19; Gaza salvage.

20; Joe Luckford arrives. [all crossed out]

21; Stable days.

22; Pack horse fatigues, inoculations T.A.B.

23; Suffering from T.A.B.

24; Pay.

February 25; Gas drill, bayonet drill.

26; Went through gas.

27; Drill, letters from Dad, Marcus, Joe Luckford arrives.

28; Letter to Dad.

March 1, 1918; Witness on case.

2/3/1918; Sports.

3; Letter to Marcus, 2 letters.

4; Fatigue, sports, paper to Dad. Read out entitled to 3 blue stripes.

5; Mounted cavalry drill. Sports. Letter to R. York.

6; Mounted cavalry drill, sports, races. Letter to Ethel, papers to Dad.

7; Stable picquet. Letter to Gray & Johnson.

8. Joe Luckford arrives. [Third entry like this.]

9; At Div. sports. Notts wins.

10; Pay. Belah fatigue.

10 March [second entry on 10th]; Drill. 10% rations cut out.

12; Reashal(?) for Duke..

13; Fatigue stable. Letter from York & Dad, papers from York & Dad.



**Tents and horse
lines, desert
camp, January
1918.**

**Photo: 8/13 VMR
Collection**

- 14; Review before Duke of Connaught. Stable picquet.
- 15; Sent book of photos to Marcus, bad cold. On L.D. [light duties]. Letter to Marcus.
- 16; Races at Gaza. Sent 3 papers to Marcus, Dad, York. Pump fatigue. Sergeant & M.P. [Military Police] killed at races.
- 18; Mounted drill. Letter from York & Dad. Paper from Marcus & Dad.
- 19; Days stable, concert at night.
- 20; Sham attacking at gas hut. Concert at night. H.A.C.
- 21; Sham fighting. Tank Corp concert.
- 22; Sword drill. Notts concert. Papers to York, Marcus, Dad.
- 23; Inspection, grazing. Sent letter to York.
- 24; Took George Grove(?) photo.
- 25; Should be field day, saddled up but rain stopped us. Gywin goes to hospital.
- 26; Started salvaging again at Gaza. Letter to Dad & Marcus.
- 27; Salvaging.
- 28; Salvaging.
- 27/3/1918**; Salvaging
- 28; Salvaging.
- 29; Drill.
- 30; Pay. Drill. Letter from Marcus.
- 31; Packing up.
- April 1, 1918**; Moved out camp at Gaza about 5am under El Muntar, passed tank badly battered & graves everywhere.
- 2; Left Gaza 12.30, travelled through Dur S? saw Turk ammunition train blown up by monitors arrived Medgel? [Majdel?] 5pm camped.
- 3; Left Medgel for Neb Yunus

4; Left Neb Yunus 10.30am passed through Yelmah and arrived near Deiran went to canteen. bought up. In hearing of guns again.

5; Left 11am passed through miles of orange groves & vineyards. Enormous vine cellars. 5pm camped about 4 miles SE of Jaffa Gelmeh.

6; Busy building camp. Go to Jaffa.

7; Letters from Gray, York, Dad, Letters to York & Gray.

April 8; Out roineering(sic) cutting track across wadi.

11; Entered hospital. Ludd.Wills come in all cut up.

12; Board train for Elarial? & stopped night. Sisters good., had a picture show.

13; Left El Arish 9am for Kantara, arrived at Kantara, go into hospital for night.

14; Still at Kantara.

15; Still at Kantara.

16; Left Kantara 12pm. On Red Cross boat for P.Said.

17; In 14th Hospital P. Said.

18; Meet Joe Jose, Les Kirkbride, Bert Canning.

27; Saw Lieut Smulder.

28; Letters to Marcus, Dad, York.

24; Patient cut his throat.

26/4/1918; Received parcel from Oaklands' Soldiers' Fund & Mrs Marcus.

28; Letter to Oaklands' Soldiers' Fund & Marcus.

30; Letter to York, patient throws himself off top 4 ward, breaks neck.

May 1; Letter to Miss Fahey.

4; Letters from Dad, Marcus, Wright.

5; Wrote to Mrs Wright.

6; Rest? (unclear word)Tom Coulter arrives hospital.

7; Pay 10/-.

9; Bill William, Jack Mack, Frank Cowell come in wounded.

10; Sergeant Lawler, Bill Jardean come in wounded.

[Next entry] 29 May; Allenby visits hospital.

24; Went to Armenian Camp up canal.

25; Letter from York;

26; Letter to York.

28; George Powell, James, Walsh came to hospital.

June 4,1918; Very weak & dizzy. 8 stone 8 [lbs?].

10; No improvement in health.

11; Letter from Nabob.

12; Letter to Nabob. Letters from Ethel and York.

13; Up for Australian Board.

27; Paper from Marcus.

[Undated;] letter to Taylor, Warner, York. Hol. Mar

The next page has 3 pairs of birds drawn across the top, then a list of vocabulary, e.g. 'Kolosh-finish'.

July 10 1918; Letters from Marcus 2, York, Dad, John, Hol, Got teeth in. Boat left with patients for Australia.

11; Letters to Marcus Dad York.

12; Parcel from Marcus;

15/7/1918; Letter to Hol, Wright, Archie, Marcus.

16; Letter to V Johns.

[Undated] Signed for kit.

August 1918

1; Took our pay books.

5; Letters York, Dad, Hol.

9; Letter to Belfil.

[Blank page]

13-14 July

Square Heads [slang term for Germans] attacked at half past 3 in the morn

Broke through captured HQts & all the bivveys(sic)

First thing Lieut. - saw was HQts staff bolting up a hill, saddlers batman groom etc.

Several prisoners taken, drank all the bar & whisky, such a row every officer & bugler blowing trumpets & the yelling was awful.

A small body of men held a hill at back rammed in on 3 sides fighting for dear life. Later over the side of a [missing word] they heard 'tulla ina you b- ' & knew something was doing. Down the hill came a squad of [blank space] regiment & threw themselves into the square heads fighting like mad drove out the S Hs took the camp the Germans retired down a gully into the arms of a M G section of [blank space] who mowed them down in heaps that a horse would have shied at, a few only got in a gully got back to their own lines to tell the sad tale to their friend Jacko[Turks] some of the squareheads talked good English said they were satisfied the Aussies were too good for them.

[Blank pages, with a red pressed poppy].

[Page titled 'Mess' with several names and amounts, e.g. G Powell 2 sauce 2/-

Half page of names and money amounts but all crossed out.]

Sergeant J Johnson 171

Taylor I

Powell

Warner 2021

[On the inside of the back cover are various numbers and on the next page a list of names and addresses.]

C Turner, 220 Albert St Brunswick Victoria
Miss P Donovan Roseleigh St Eagle Farm Brisbane
Miss E Holland, 27 Pickett St Footscray Vic Australia
M.Fahey, Chiltern, Vic. Australia
Miss Fahey, Yarrowonga, Victoria, Australia
R York Officers Qts, Stockade Coburg. Victoria
Miss A Elsum 29 Cecil St Williamstown Victoria Aus. socks
Mrs Sutherland Elaine PO Vict Aus. Shirt
Mrs M Hutcheon 60 Walkers Rd Fony? Scotland
Horatio? Charters St Georges Grenada BWI
850 Driver W G S Holland 6th Army B.A.C.
F Jewell? Sg Major 4 ALH M.G.
3153 S.T.A. Marcus 26 Reg 7th A.L.H. B. Squadron
W Adair 142 Hyndford St Belfast Ireland
Misses Gray, Oaklands
Mrs Davison Mongal Pk Lansdale PO Tottenham
J Marcus Oaklands NSW
Miss Jhon, Oaklands
Wright Staffordshire PO Ballarat.