

# The Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine in World War I

- I. Background of the British in the Holy Land*
- II. Early Years of the War - 1914, 1915, 1916*
- III. EEF Military Organization*
- IV. Order of Battle - 1917*



<https://youtu.be/L3Ka3oRD8G8>

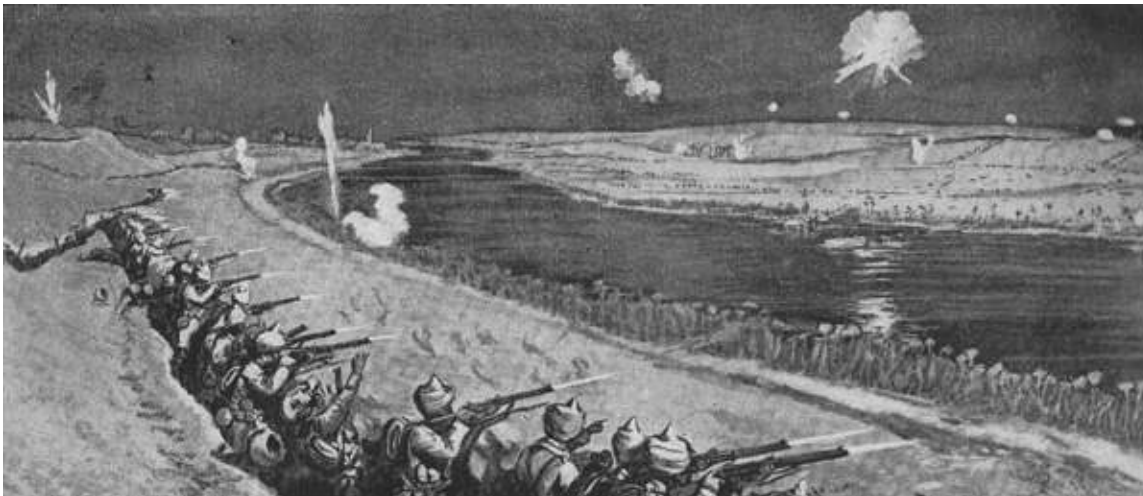
By Michael Bass, November 2020

# I. Background of the British in the Holy Land



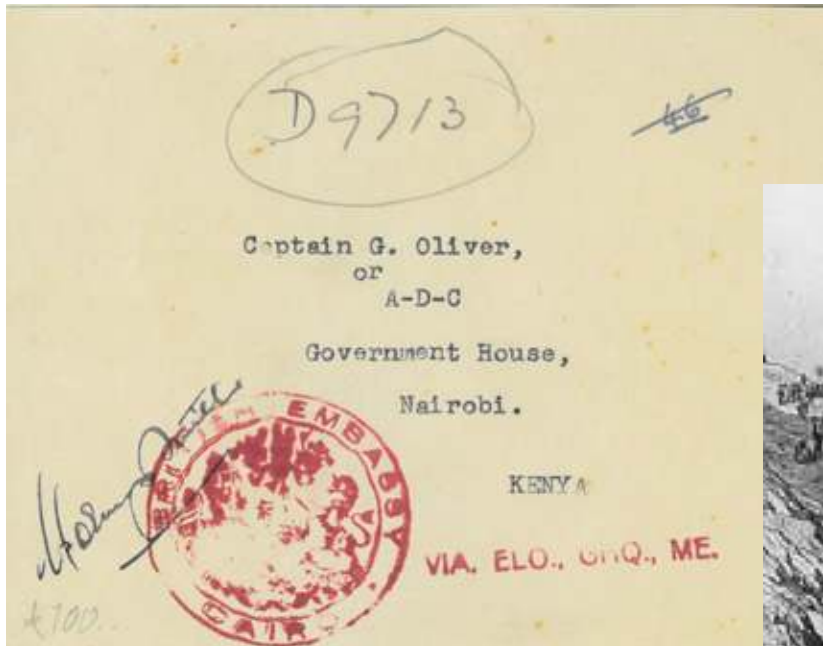
# I. Background of the British in the Holy Land

Suez Canal  
at Port  
Said 1914



Indian troops repelling a night attack by the Turks on Toussoum

# I. Background of the British in the Holy Land



British Embassy Mail Cairo, Egypt to  
Government House Nairobi 27 Jul 1914





## II. Early Years of the War - 1914

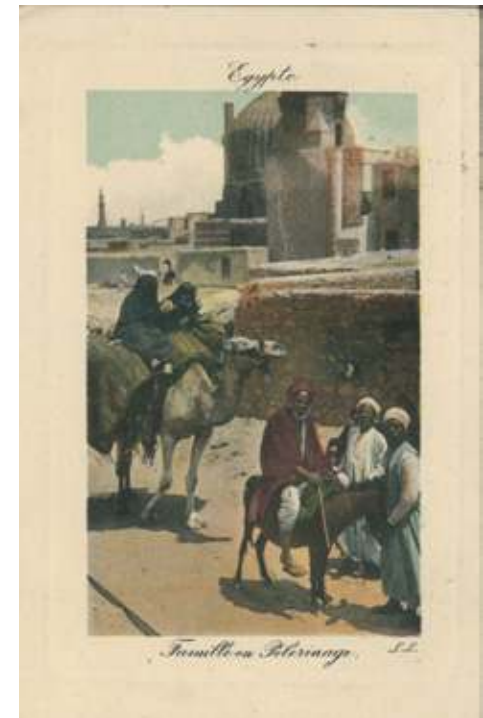


Mails to Turkey, Syria and other Ottoman Post Offices were officially suspended on 9 Nov and 23 Dec 1914

Sent from Cairo to Beirut on 30 Oct  
1914, suspended and returned on 15  
Nov 1914



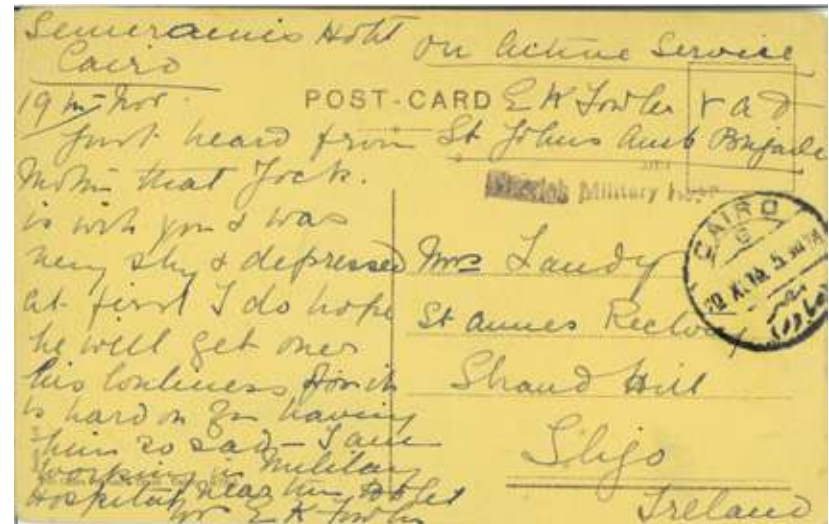
19 Apr 1914  
Sent in code  
from Heliopolis  
to France



### Postcard reverse

## II. Early Years of the War - 1914

reverse



Military Hospital cachet Cairo to Sligo, Ireland



reverse

New Zealand Military Expedition Post Office to Auckland, NZ

## II. Early Years of the War - 1915



YMCA Army Branch Civilian  
Mail through Military Post  
to New Zealand



Indian Field Post Office 312 to France



reverse



## II. Early Years of the War – 1915



Sent to Director of Red Cross in Geneva, Switzerland



reverse

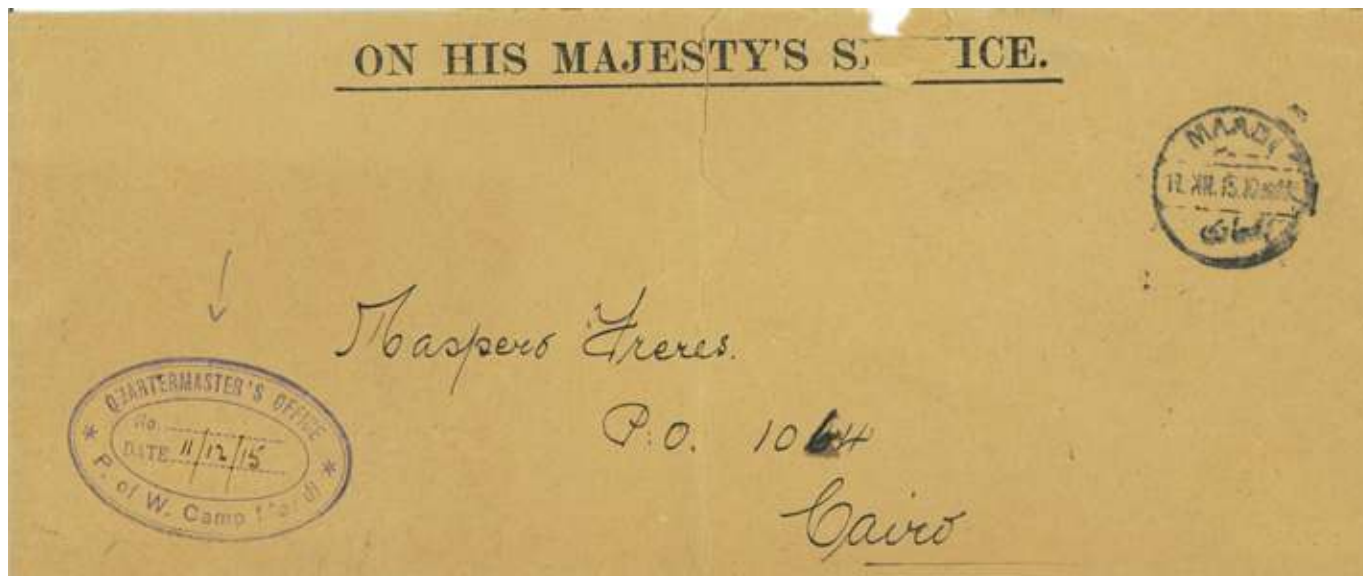
Arrival mail passed Censor coming in to 42<sup>nd</sup> East Lancers Division





## II. Early Years of the War - 1915

MEF precursor to EEF  
1 Nov 1915 Cairo to  
Scotland



12 Nov 1915  
POW mail from  
Camp Maadi

## II. Early Years of the War – 1915-1916



Registered letter  
sent April 1915  
from Babylon, NY –  
undeliverable - to  
Corporal Robinson.  
Mail came back to  
Babylon March  
1916



reverse



## II. Early Years of the War - 1916



Sent from Italian Military  
Division 13 May 1916 to  
Capt. Gaff in Egypt



reverse



Sent 6 Nov 1916 via Marine Francaise at Port Said to Saint Raphael



# III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine

## Military Organization

### Scope

Documents all the British military units of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) by showing the postmarks and censor markings used by the EEF Corps, Division and Brigades throughout the WWI campaign to capture Palestine from the Turks. This story begins with the formation of the EEF in the spring 1917, when the British government ordered the EEF in the Sinai to capture the Holy Land, and concludes in late 1918 when the EEF occupied the upper Galilee region. Civilian mail is not included in this exhibit.

### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

## Background

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force was the successor of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF). Since the late 19th century, the British maintained a military presence in Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean region to protect the shipping lanes operating through the Suez Canal. The vital sea lanes provided quicker transport from British colonies throughout Asia and Africa to Europe and England. The MEF was formed at the outset of WWI in 1915 to protect this region and fight in the Gallipoli Peninsula and Dardanelles. When the British government decided to concentrate resources in the Middle East and conquer Palestine, it formed the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and gave command to General Edmund Allenby in mid-1917. Under Allenby's leadership, the EEF reorganized into the formations shown throughout this exhibit.

### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

#### Treatment

- This exhibit displays mail from all the EEF formations organized from the headquarter level down, and includes the three Corps, nine Divisions and twenty-seven Brigades that fought in the Sinai and Palestine.
- The significance to the postal history of the EEF formations lies in the primary evidence and archive of the units that conquered Palestine after 400 years of Ottoman rule.
- Supplemented by maps and photos, this exhibit differs from other Middle Eastern studies of WWI because it narrowly focuses on the history of the units fighting in the Palestine Campaign.



### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

# Corps Formations

## EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



10 <sup>TH</sup> IRISH DIVISION	53 <sup>RD</sup> WELSH DIVISION	60 <sup>TH</sup> 2/2 <sup>ND</sup> LONDON DIVISION	74 <sup>TH</sup> YEOMANRY DIVISION
29 <sup>TH</sup> BRIGADE	158 <sup>TH</sup> NORTH WALES BRIGADE	179 <sup>TH</sup> 2/4 <sup>TH</sup> LONDON BRIGADE	229 <sup>TH</sup> BRIGADE
30 <sup>TH</sup> BRIGADE	159 <sup>TH</sup> CHESHIRE BRIGADE	180 <sup>TH</sup> 2/5 <sup>TH</sup> LONDON BRIGADE	230 <sup>TH</sup> BRIGADE
31 <sup>ST</sup> BRIGADE	160 <sup>TH</sup> WELSH BOR- DER	181 <sup>ST</sup> 2/6 <sup>TH</sup> LONDON BRIGADE	231 <sup>ST</sup> BRIGADE

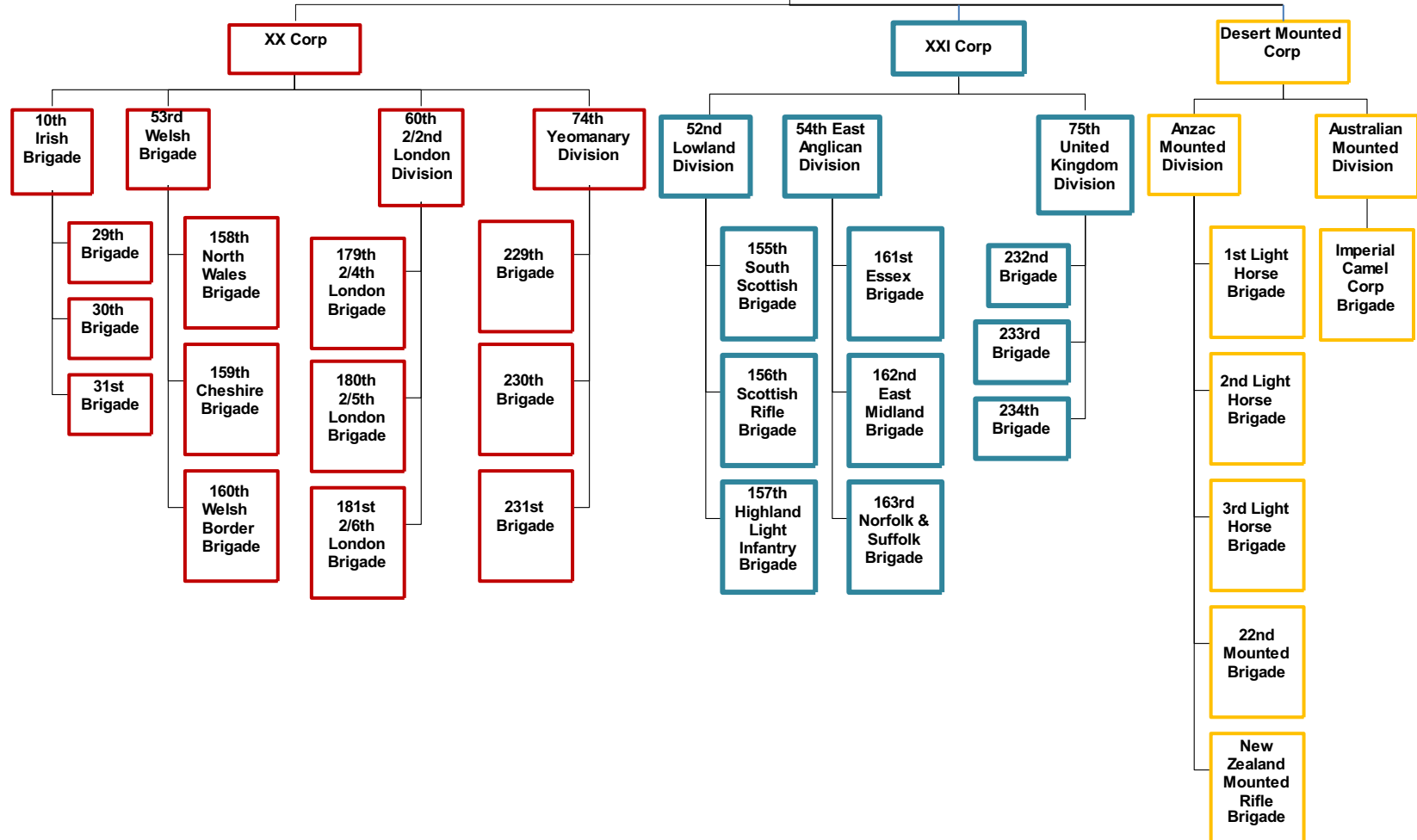


52 <sup>ND</sup> LOWLAND DIVISION	54 <sup>TH</sup> EAST ANGLIAN DIVISION	75 <sup>TH</sup> UNITED KINGDOM DIVISION
155 <sup>TH</sup> SOUTH SCOTTISH BRIGADE	161 <sup>ST</sup> ESSEX BRIGADE	232 <sup>ND</sup> BRIGADE
156 <sup>TH</sup> SCOTTISH RIFLE BRIGADE	162 <sup>ND</sup> EASTLAND MIDLAND BRIGADE	233 <sup>RD</sup> BRIGADE
157 <sup>TH</sup> HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE	163 <sup>RD</sup> NORFOLK & SUFFOLK BRIGADE	234 <sup>TH</sup> BRIGADE



ANZAC MOUNTED DIVISION	AUSTRALIAN MOUNTED DIVISION
1 <sup>ST</sup> LIGHT HORSE BRIGADE	3 <sup>RD</sup> LIGHT HORSE BRIGADE
2 <sup>ND</sup> LIGHT HORSE BRIGADE	4 <sup>TH</sup> LIGHT HORSE BRIGADE
NEW ZEALAND MOUNTED RIFLE BRIGADE	IMPERIAL CAMEL CORP BRIGADE

# Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF)



### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

## Commander General Allenby

General Allenby Self-Censorship Signature  
- mail required no additional markings

General Edmund  
H.H. Allenby





### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

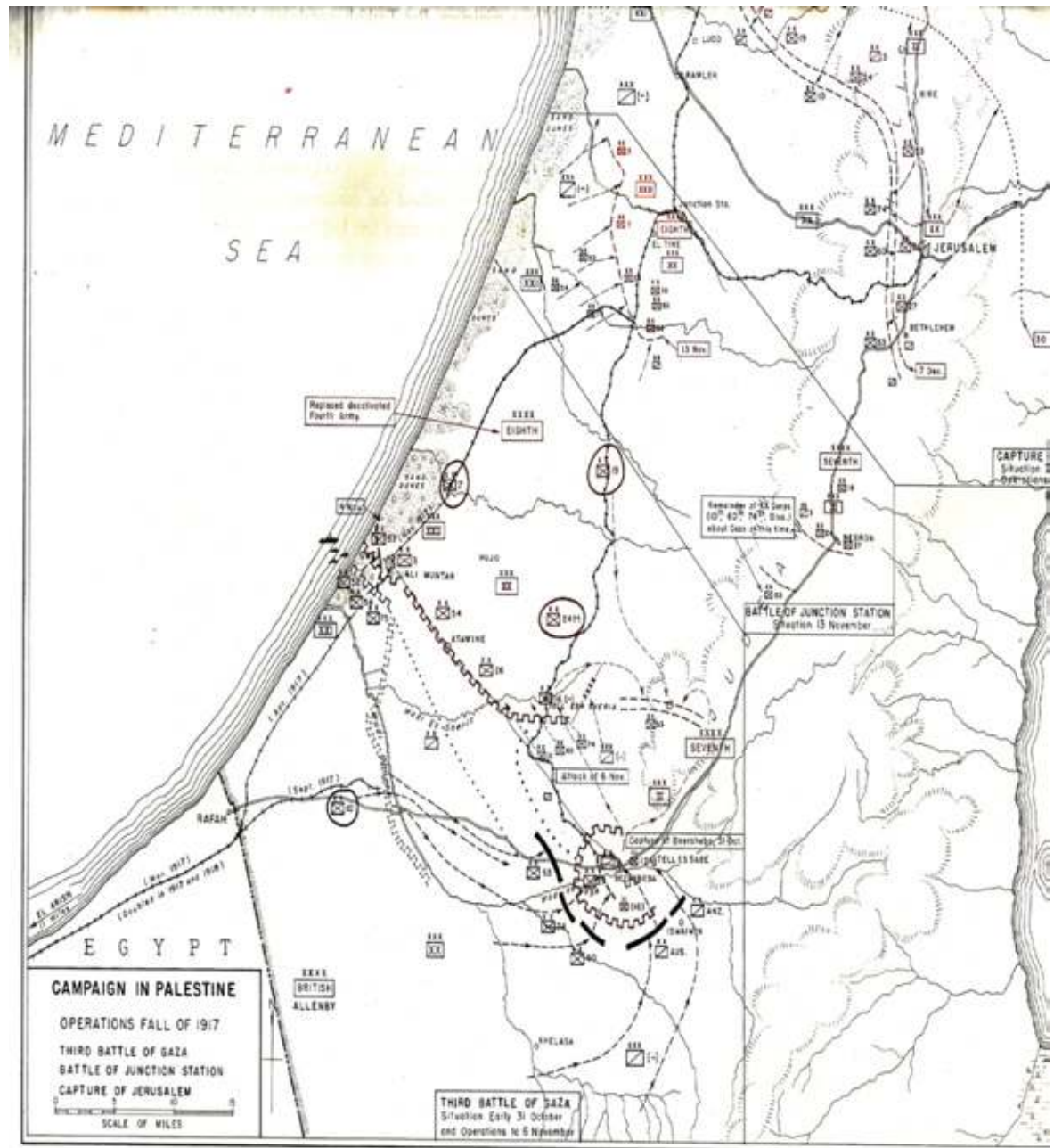
MAP OF CAMPAIGN  
IN PALESTINE

OPERATIONS FALL OF 1917

THIRD BATTLE OF GAZA

BATTLE OF JUNCTION  
STATION

CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM



### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization



# EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



XX CORPS



XXI CORPS



DESERT  
MOUNTED CORPS

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) was formed in Egypt at the beginning of the Sinai and Palestine Campaign of the First World War. The EEF was initially organized to guard the Suez Canal and Egypt, but pursued a wider war effort to push the invading Ottoman Army eastward and conquer Palestine. After losing two successive battles at Gaza in March and April 1917, the EEF command was assumed by General Edmund Allenby in June. Allenby reorganized the EEF into the XX Corps, XXI Corps and Desert Mounted Corps. In November 1917, the consolidated EEF captured Beersheba's ancient water wells and the Gaza port town from the Turks. Under government orders, the British EEF pressed forward and captured Jerusalem on December 9th. The victory by the EEF over the Holy Land capital led to the ultimate conquest of Palestine in 1918. The historical significance of the EEF's military mission to defeat the Turks and gain control over Palestine during WWI was the end of 400 years of Ottoman rule over the Holy Land.



EEF HQ GM1





### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization



EEF HQ GM2



### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

## XX CORPS



*Lieut. Gen. Sir Philip Chetwode G.C.C.  
XX<sup>th</sup> Corps, with Maj. Gen. Shea.*



# XX CORPS

The XX Corps was formed under the Egyptian Expeditionary Force's army after the British defeat at the Second Battle of Gaza in the Spring of 1917. The XX Corps was comprised of four infantry divisions: 10th (Irish) Division, 53rd (Welsh) Division, 60th (2/2 London) Division and the 74th (Yomanry) Division. The XX Corps first saw action during the capture of Beersheba in the Third Battle of Gaza on October 31, 1917. Following Beersheba, on November 6, the Corps made a frontal assault against the Turkish fortifications in the vicinity of Sheria where the 10th, 60th and 74th Divisions succeeded in breaking through. The 10th Division captured the Harolra Rodoubt on November 7 and the 60th Division advanced on Huj in support of the Australian Mounted Division's efforts to cut off the retreating Turkish army. The Corps' Divisions played an ongoing role throughout the conquest of Palestine and was led by General Philip Chetwode.



XX CORPS



# XX CORPS

XX Corps Train



# 10TH IRISH DIVISION

At the outbreak of World War I, the 10th (Irish) Division was formed on August 21, 1914 by Lord Kitchener's call for volunteers. It included three brigades (29th, 30th and 31st Brigades) from the various provinces of Ireland, and saw action in Gallipoli and Salonika before landing in Egypt to participate in the Sinai and Palestine campaign in September 1917. The Division was led by Major-General J.R. Longley and fought in the Third Battle of Gaza which succeeded in breaking the resistance of the Turkish defenders in southern Palestine. The Division went on to help capture Jerusalem on December 9 and participated in the Battles of Megiddo and Habbus.

EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

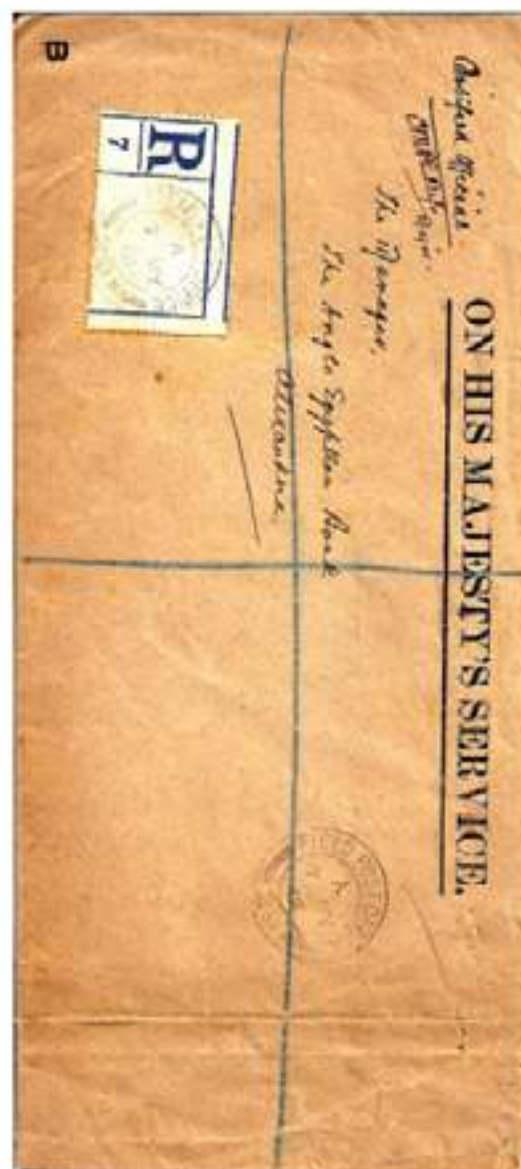


XX CORPS

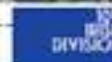




# 29TH BRIGADE



## EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Commanded by Col R.S. Vandeleur, this brigade was made up of infantrymen from Dublin. The brigade had four battalions during the Sinai and Palestine campaign; the 1st Leinster Regiment, the 5 Connaught Rangers, 6th Royal Irish Rifles and 29th Light Trench Mortar Battery. After the capture of Jerusalem in December, 1917, the 29th Brigade captured Deir Izbzia, Abu el Ainein and Kh. Rubin Ridge. The Brigade held their positions during the winter, and participated in the Spring offensive, encountering much resistance by Turkish and German fighters. In March, 1918, this Brigade occupied the Hoby Salah, overcoming difficult terrain.

# 30TH BRIGADE

Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel F.A. Greer and made up of soldiers from the Dublin region of Ireland, the 1st Royal Irish Regiment, 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers and 30th Light Trench Mortar Battery comprised the Brigade. In late December 1917, this brigade helped capture Abu el Ainain and Kh. Rubin Ridge and hold their positions in Judea over the winter months. The 30th Brigade attacked from the right flank in the March, 1918 offensive north of Jerusalem, helping capture a town called Ajul.

EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



XX CORPS

DIVISION

10th BRIGADE

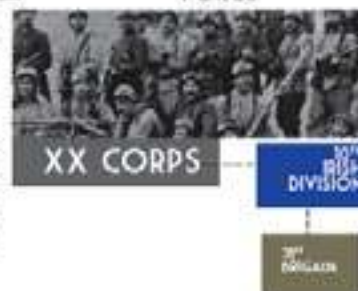




# 31ST INFANTRY BRIGADE

EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY  
FORCE

Colonel E.M. Morris commanded this Brigade, which was comprised of the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers, the 5th and 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and the 31st Light Trench Mortar Battery. This brigade fought alongside the 30th Brigade on the right column offensive in March, 1918. This Brigade captured Ras el Tarfu and Attara on March 9. Afterwards, the unit crossed the Wadi Jib and seized the lower slopes of the hill forming the main defense of Jiljilia. They drove the enemy in disorder through the village and overwhelmed a small German holdout with a bayonet charge.



# 53RD WELSH DIVISION

The 53rd Division was composed originally of Territorial battalions, and landed in Egypt from Gallipoli. The Division was commanded by Major-General S.F. Mott and had three brigades: 158th, 159th and 160th. It took part in the advance from the Suez Canal during the unsuccessful First and Second Battles of Gaza in March and April, 1917. The Division went on to support the conquest of Beersheba in the fall of 1917, occupied Hebron on December 5, Bethlehem during the night December 8, and attacked Jerusalem on the 9th. In early 1918, the 53rd Division prepared for an assault on Jericho and captured important ridges in the Judean hills.

EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



### III. Egyptian Expeditionary Force Military Organization

## 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division



*Maj. Gen. I. F. Mott. G.O.C. 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, at German Consulate.*























































































































































