

# General Sir Harry Chauvel

(Henry George Chauvel)

Oatley History and Heritage Society

29 April 2026



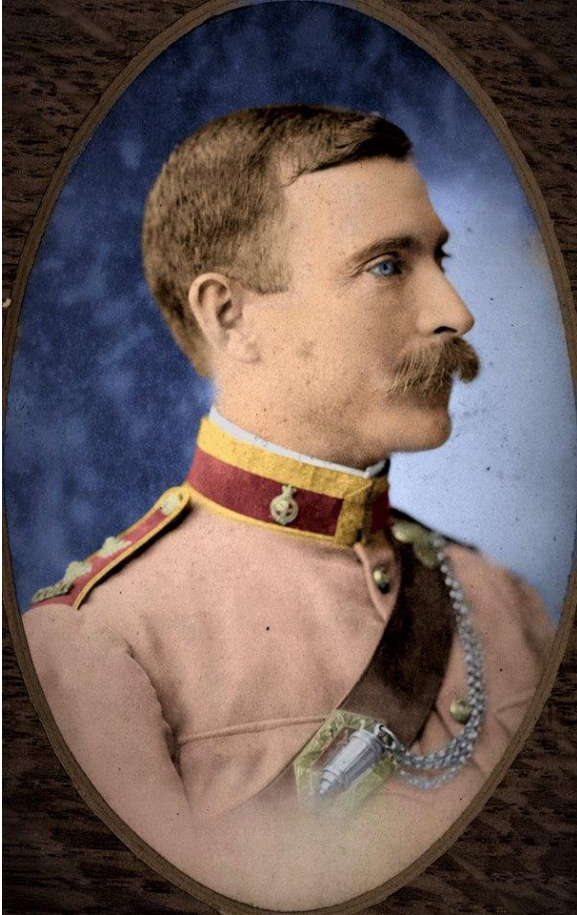
# HARRY WHO?

- ROCKSTAR Status in the 1920s
- Almost forgotten today

# The Family



# What's in a Name



# AIF 1914-18



# YIN and YANG



# The Early Years

- Born 1865 Northern Rivers NSW
- Relations with the Aboriginal People
- Sydney Grammar School
  
- Joined the Tabulam Troop of the Light Horse
- Depression of the 1890s caused a downturn in family fortunes





AB 'BANJO' PATERSON

# Early Military Career

- Two tours of duty in the Boer War Awarded CMG
- Staff Officer Australian Army
- Described as 'Slow' by visiting British Officer and not having the right 'Imperial' attitude
- Seen as reaching his terminal rank as Colonel

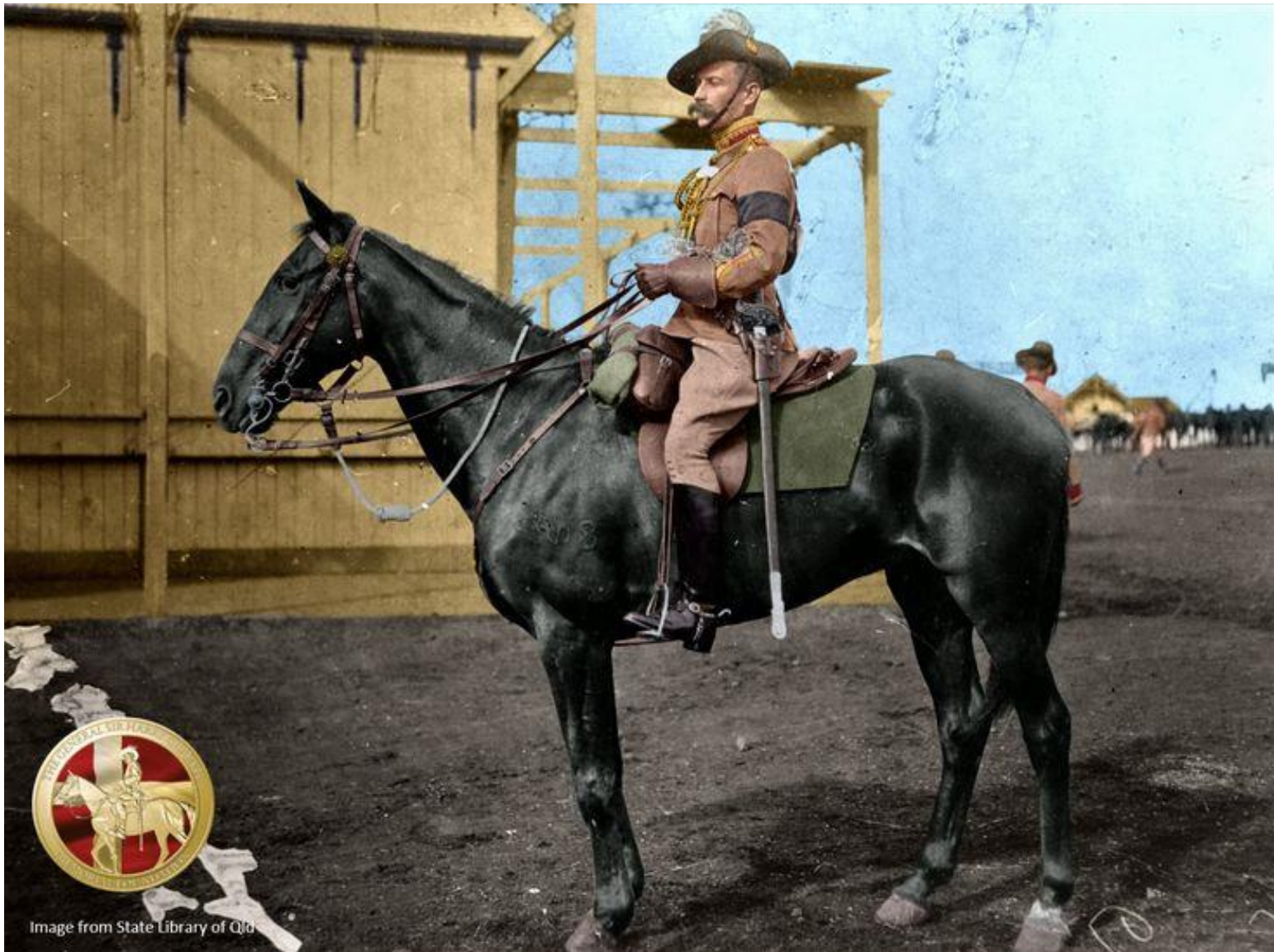


Image from State Library of Qld

# Australia goes to war

- 4 August 1914 the Australian Government immediately offered to send a volunteer army of 20,000 men. An Infantry Division and Mounted Brigade
- The provisos
  - a. Australians were to remain Australians
  - b. Were to be commanded by Australians where possible
  - c. Where commanded by Non Australians, the commanders would be honorary Australians and have direct access to Melbourne

# 1914-15

- Australia's Military Representative in London
- His Impact on the AIF
- To Command the Mounted Brigade (Light Horse)
- Gallipoli and Monash Gully
- A Question of Leadership
- The Men most likely to???
- Commands the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Conducts its withdrawal at night over Water



- *I was particularly struck with the coolness of his behaviour on that morning – – – his calm and collected manner was a fine example of soldierly bearing to all – – – for a considerable time – – – the situation was one what one might call ‘hot’ – – – in all this confusion and excitement there was no soldier whose demeanour was cooler than General Chauvel’s. He stayed with us for hours until the situation was adjusted to his satisfaction.*

# The Desert Campaign

# Romani and Sinai





# The Aftermath

- Who won Romani?
- *The simple truth is that, so far as leadership went, Chauvel won Romani single-handed, despite all the fumbling on the part of higher staffs.*
- General Murray conceives a dislike for Chauvel



# Desert Mounted Column





MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Damietta

Port Said

Kantara

XXXX

EEF

Ismailia

Suez Canal

Suez

EGYPT

Sinai  
Railway/Pipeline

Bir

El Abd

El Arish

Sheikh  
Zowaiid

El Magdhaba  
Dec 1916

El Kossaima

El Auja

SINAI DESERT

Rafa  
Jan 1917

Gaza

XXXX

4

Beersheba

Hebron

Dead  
Sea

OTTOMAN  
EMPIRE

Construction on the EEF Sinai railway and water pipeline from Kantara to Sheikh Zowaiid began in Apr 1916 and was completed in Mar 1917.

# Sir Phillip Chetwode



- *The Chief is of the opinion that Chauvel and co-are a bit fond of digging in and walking on their flat feet instead of using their horses to the utmost.*
- *...the higher strategical and tactical handling of the cavalry left much to be desired*
- *I hope for better strategical and tactical handling.*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H03791

**Major General Arthur Lynden Bell**



- Chauvel takes command of the Desert Column
- Is Conspiracy afoot??

# Allenby takes Command

## Will Chauvel keep his job?

*Brigadiers from France for the Australian brigades... But for political reasons it is quite impossible to get rid of our present Australian Brigadiers. They are all good brave fellows but lack knowledge of combined cavalry action. **Lynden Bell***

*certainly capable and extremely steady and reliable in action. I have now seen him on five stricken fields and I have always had the utmost confidence that he would never lose his head and always carry out his mission particularly, a defensive one, admirably. He is however, no cavalryman, slow to grasp the situation and slower to act, that is offensively. **Chetwode***

- *Fancy giving command of the biggest mounted force in the world's history to an Australian! (Paterson)*



- *My mounted troops are fine material and have experience in fighting but the higher military education of their leaders is a weak point. Chauvel is not a trained cavalry leader and although he has the capacity for command and fighting instincts, he would be improved by having a trained and experienced cavalryman as his BGGs.*

# Desert Mounted Corps









**PORTABLE STRETCHER.**

(Used by Stretcher-bearers of Light Horse and Mounted Rifle Regiments)







CENTRAL



ITALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P10283.004









AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL



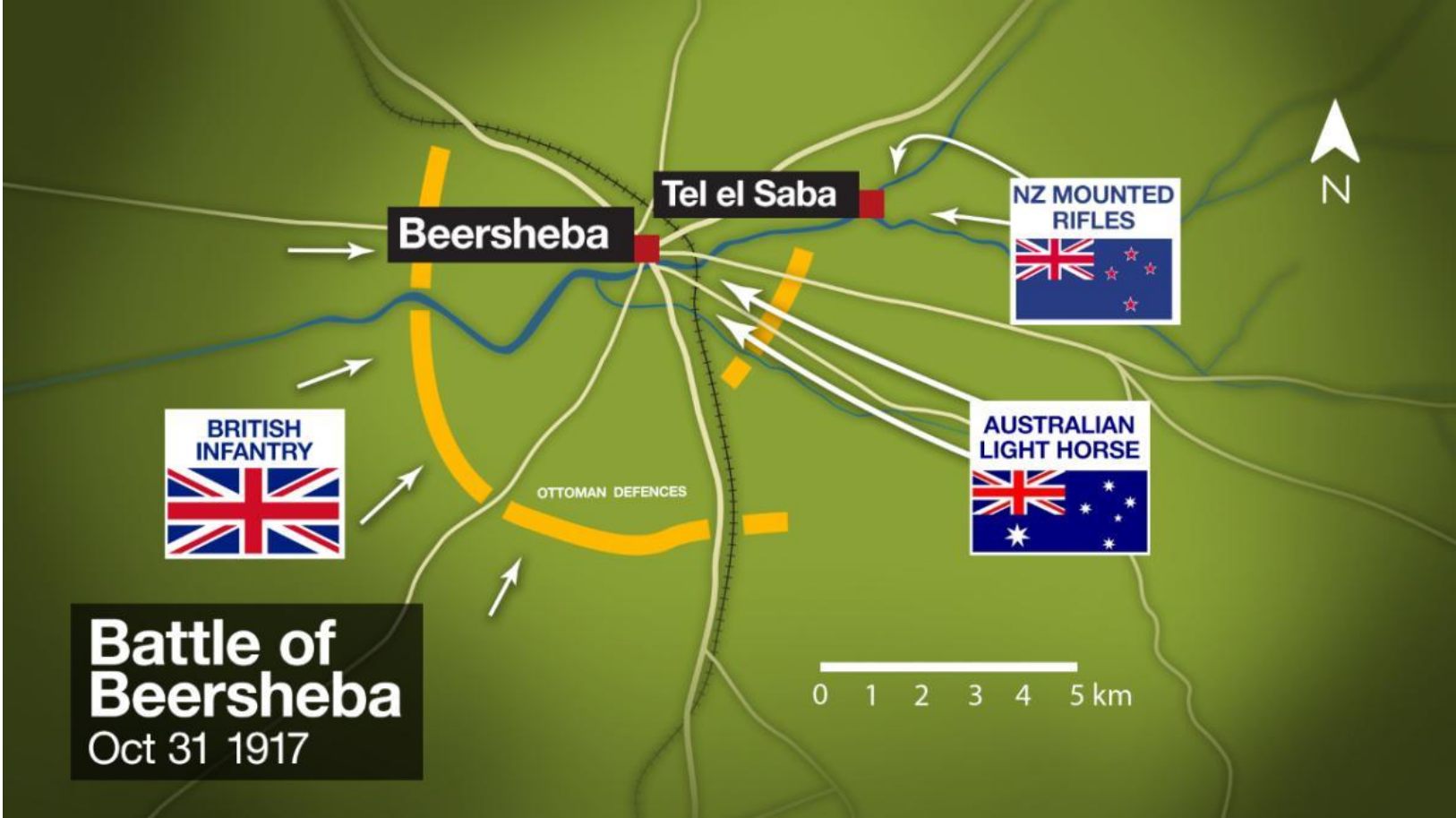
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WAR MEMORIAL

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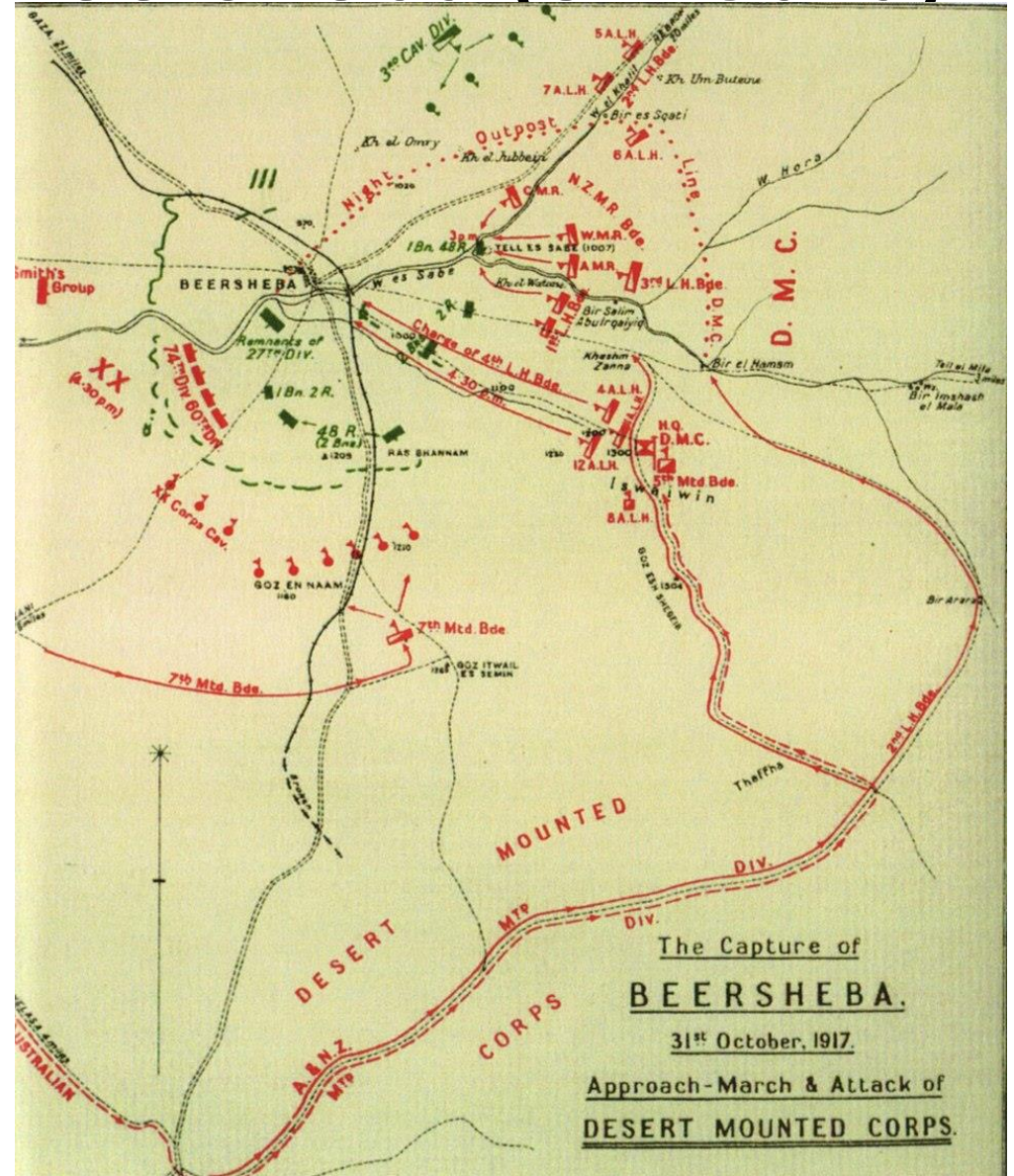
Supply Waggon on Jaffa Jerusalem Road



# Beersheba



# Beersheba (3<sup>rd</sup> Gaza)









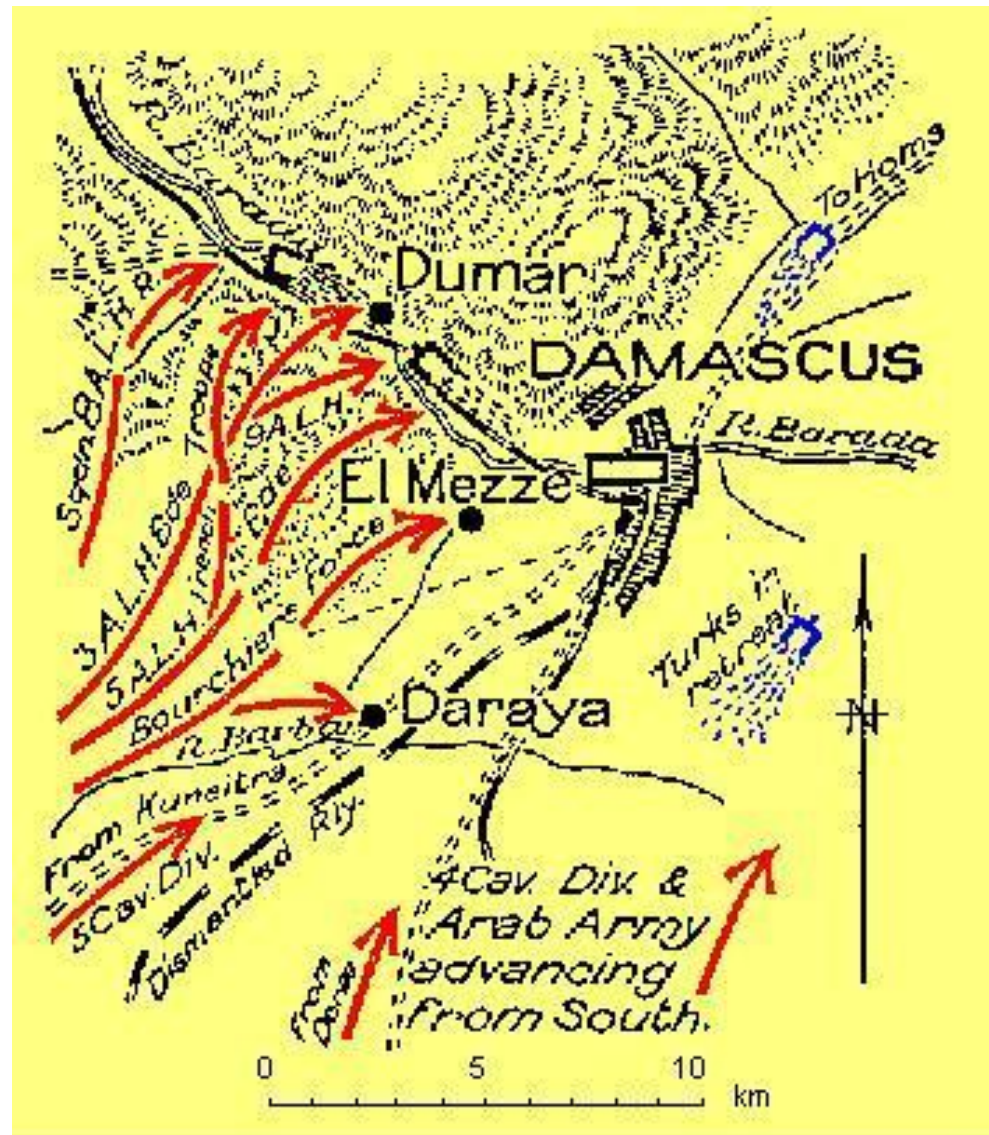
# Megiddo

- The climactic battle of the Sinai and Palestine campaign of the First World War

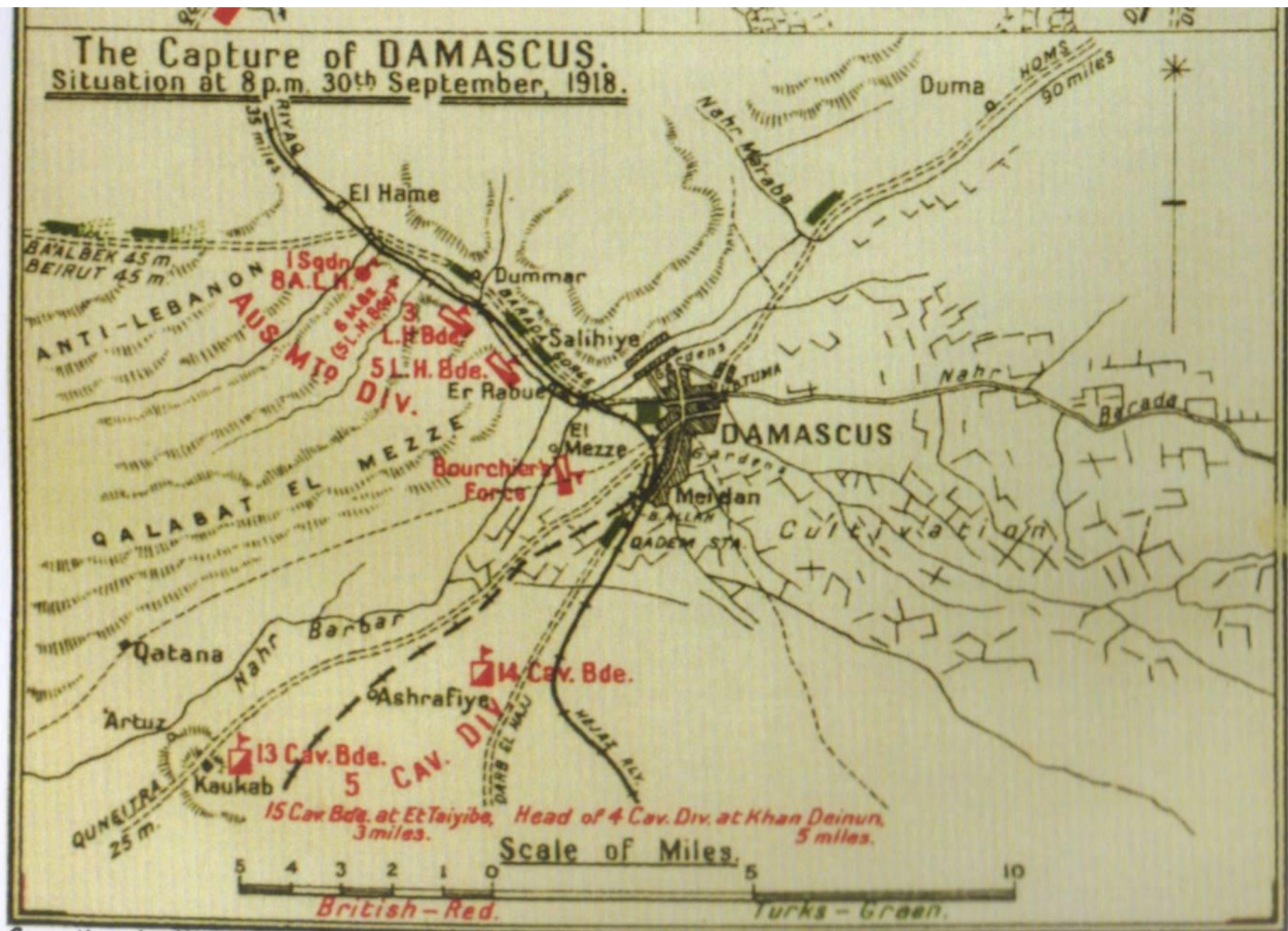




# Damascus



**The Capture of DAMASCUS.**  
Situation at 8 p.m. 30th September, 1918.



Compiled in Historical Section (Military Branch).  
3000/30.

Ordnance Survey 1929.





**The Billjim, 30 Sept. 1918, poised  
to take Damascus at sunrise.**

[youtube.com/user/billjiniplugs42](https://www.youtube.com/user/billjiniplugs42)

# The Problem of Lawrence





# WARS END



The Desert Mounted Corps composed of British, Australian, New Zealand and Indian cavalry with a French regiment of Spahis and Chasseurs d'Afrique and the Arab forces of King Hussein captured Damascus, Homs and Aleppo October 1918



- *The greatest exploit in the history of horsed cavalry... Within a short distance of the battlefield of Issus, where Alexander the Great first showed how battles could be won by bold and well handled horsemen.*
- *You will not find recorded distances covered and results achieved comparable with those which distinguished the last great ride of the mounted divisions from the Jaffa – Jordan line to Damascus and on to Aleppo. half the world was represented under the pennant of Chauvel. His was the most coveted Corps command in the whole war. Every ambitious and capable cavalryman coveted it. Not a few army commanders would gladly have changed positions with the little Australian leader.... And how quietly and decisively Chauvel carried his great responsibility!*

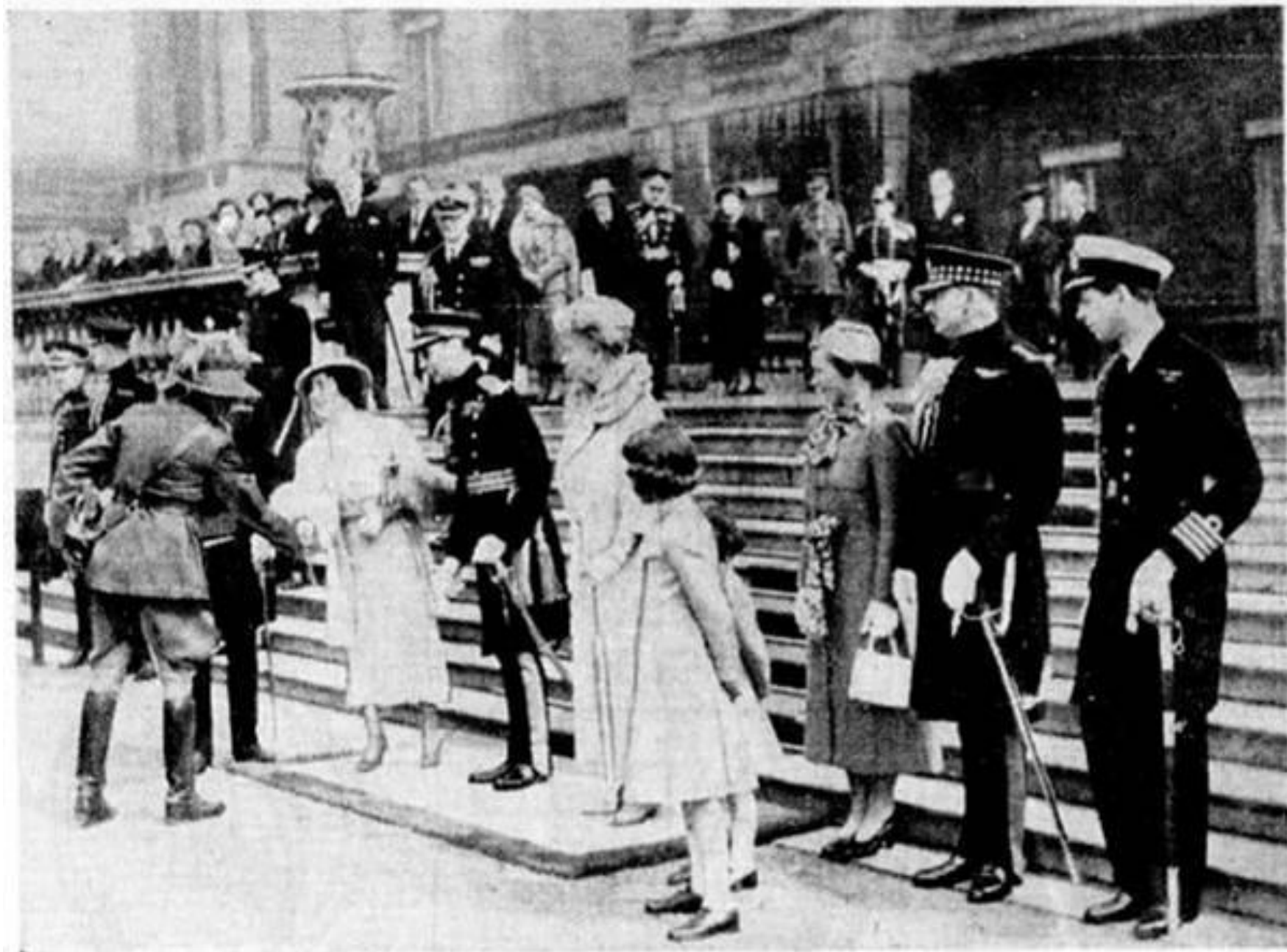
# Post War

- Occupy Gallipoli
- Inspector General of the Army 1919-1923
- Then Inspector General and Chief of the General Staff 1923- 1930
- Promoted General with Monash 1928
- Still wanted in retirement
- Led the Coronation contingent May 1937



State Library of Western Australia





# World War 2

- Consulted by Menzies 1940
- Recommends the appointment of Brudenell White then Vernon Sturdee as CGS
- Appointed Inspector General Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC)

# Volunteer Defence Corps





VDC MARCH IN MELBOURNE - 1/11/42. At the saluting base. From

