

## Light Horse field ambulances

Field ambulances were attached to each of the AIF brigades. A field ambulance was a military unit, not a vehicle. The field ambulances played a vital role in triage.

Each infantry division had three field ambulance units with 10 officers and 182 other ranks from the Australian Army Medical Corps.

Staff in each ambulance unit gave immediate care to wounded soldiers. They were responsible for managing advanced, main, and walking wounded dressing stations.

Field ambulance staff moved the wounded from the regimental aid post (just behind the front lines) to an advanced dressing station. The trip was about 1 to 3 miles (1.6 to 4.8km) and took around 6 hours to complete.

The main dressing station was another 3 to 8 miles (4.8 to 12.9km) beyond the advanced dressing station.

Stretcher-bearers worked in relays. At least 36 stretcher-bearers handled each patient along the way.

*Australian Government, Dept. of Veterans' Affairs*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

H02796

*One of the original teams of the Field Ambulance of the 2nd Australian Light Horse, harnessed to an ambulance wagon at Wadi Hanein, Palestine, 1918.*

*Australian Army Medical Corps horse drawn kitchen and driver, 1915*



Archives of Australia



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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*Four horses of an original ambulance team of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance.*

*The light ambulance wagon mark 1 vehicle was designed as a light, swiftly moving wagon to support cavalry and horse artillery. A protective covering was made of waterproofed canvas and duck.*

*Rishon, Palestine. November 1918.*

## Lest we forget

Most photographs from WW1 unfortunately do not record the names of the horses who served. The horses did not enlist, they were conscripted to serve and endured great hardship in so doing. Approximately 137,000 Walers were transported from Australia to serve in WW1, of those approximately 36,500 went to the Middle East. One came home.

Those who served with them, and those who gave up horses to the AIF, knew their names. We should too. Lest we forget.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

C00318

**Topsy and Prance**

*Two champion wheelers, 6th Battery, Egypt, 1916*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

B00522

**Billy, Cambo, Tommy and Saida**

*2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment, Palestine, 1918*



**Black Bess**

*Jock Davidson from Cowra with his beloved mare Black Bess, 1st Light Horse Regiment, Egypt, circa 1914*

## The Battle of Beersheba

The Australian Light Horse units were made up of troops on horseback. They served in multiple wars, including World War I, and played an important role in 1917.

The Battle of Beersheba was part of a campaign in the latter stages of the war and saw Allied forces tasked with seizing the heavily fortified city 43km from Gaza. The one-day conflict occurred on October 31, 1917 between British Empire forces, including Australians, and those of the Ottoman and German empires.

The historic charge was the focal point of the battle and helped break the Turkish lines, allowing the Australians to enter the city and secure its water supply. Allied victory led to the conquest of the city and the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The 4th, 8th, 9th, 11th and 12th Australian Light Horse Regiments were employed in the attack, in which soldiers used their bayonets as 'swords' with their rifles on their back, and the Imperial Army Corps.

The surprise nature of the attack overwhelmed the Turkish defence who had more than 1000 killed or wounded. The Allies lost 171 men and captured about 2000 prisoners. *(from Kidsnews October 25, 2017)*



*Gerald Digby, Gordon Abbott, Harry 'Rex' Coley and Colin Bull, 1917.*

*These four men were part of the 12th Australian Light Horse Regiment. The photo is from the online archive of the Digby family, titled 'Four men, Gerald Digby, Gordon Abbott, Rex Coley and Colin Bull, charged towards Beersheba. Only two came home.' Colin Bull and Rex Coley were both killed at Beersheba.*

## Some WW1 facts for kids

A hundred years might seem like a very long time ago, but it isn't really. Your great-great grandparents were around then, and they would have lived through, and maybe even taken part in, this terrible conflict.

World War 1 was fought between July 28th, 1914, and November 11th, 1918 between two large alliances (families) of countries, the Entente Powers and the Central Powers.

The Entente Powers included the British Empire, Empire of Japan, French Republic, Kingdom of Italy, Russian Empire and the United States of America, and the Central Powers include Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. Germany invaded Belgium and Britain declared war on Germany as a result of their commitment to stand with and protect the members of their alliance.

The Entente Powers were victorious and won World War 1. However, both alliances had millions of military and civilian deaths, suffered from diseases and major economic hardship. It's estimated that over 9.9 million military personnel and over 7.7 million civilians were killed.

The 1918 influenza pandemic (the Spanish flu) broke out during WW1. It's believed the transporting of troops helped spread this H1N1 influenza strain more across the world.

*Facts just for kids website*

## The bugle call

A bugle call is a short tune, originating as a military signal announcing scheduled and certain non-scheduled events on a military base, battlefield, or ship.

Bugle calls typically indicated the change in daily routines of camp. Every duty around camp had its own bugle call, and since cavalry had horses to look after, they heard twice as many signals as regular infantry. "Boots and Saddles" was the most imperative of these signals and could be sounded without warning at any time of day or night, signalling the men to equip themselves and their mounts immediately. Bugle calls also relayed commanders' orders on the battlefield, signalling the troops to Go Forward, To the Left, To the Right, About, Rally on the Chief, Trot, Gallop, Rise up, Lay down, Commence Firing, Cease Firing, Disperse, and other specific actions.



*An army bugler boy, circa 1914  
State Library of South Australia*