

## Historical Officers Report

February 2019

### The Egyptian Rebellion 1919

Most of the light horse regiments before their campaigning was over were employed in the unhappy work of suppressing the rebellion in Egypt, which broke out early in 1919.

It had been carefully fostered by the malcontents, and demonstrations by Cairo students early in March were the signal for widespread rioting. Native civil servants at once contributed to the trouble by declaring a general strike; and the position of the British was made difficult by the suspension of most of the railway and telegraph services. Within a few days the outbreak had spread through all the lower provinces and extended to upper Egypt.

At that time the Anzac Mounted Division (less the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Regiments) was still at Rafa, but the Australian Mounted Division had been moved by sea from Tripoli to Moascar. All units had handed in their equipment, and were awaiting embarkation to Australia. No. 1 Australian Flying Squadron and the 1st and 2nd Light Horse Regiments had already sailed. There were no large forces of British troops in Egypt.

As the efficient organization and the ugly temper of the revolt were disclosed further embarkations for Australia were arrested; horses and equipment were rapidly assembled, and within twenty-four hours the 3rd Light Horse Brigade under Wilson was on the march across the desert for Zagazig. The wholehearted response of the troopers was impressive: they abandoned without a murmur their dreams of Australia, and went out gaily on a new enterprise the probable duration and seriousness of which were uncertain.

All the regiments of the two Dominions, with the exception of the 1st and 2nd, were soon in the saddle, and their zone of activity extended from Upper Egypt to the Delta. So urgent at the outset was the call for the mounted men that even the convalescents from the hospitals were enlisted. There was no actual organized fighting, but a few sharp decisive brushes with the rioters cost the Australians about twenty casualties.

Seven of the twelve regiments, under the capable command of Wilson, were based on Zagazig, three on Damanhur, one at Cairo, and one in Upper Egypt (Minia)', and other small columns were commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. Foster and Lieutenant-

Colonel Olden.

The Egyptians lost their nerve at the sight of the horsemen, and soon most of the leading spirits were in prison, while others at the firm bidding of the soldiers were strenuously mending the broken railways, and generally were as emphatic in their expression of loyalty as a few days before they had been turbulent in revolt.

The Australians and New Zealanders formed the great part of the British force employed, and owing to their mobility, their reputation, and their decisiveness, they were undoubtedly the dominant factor in temporarily restoring tranquillity to Egypt.

Within a month all present danger had passed, but before embarkation the mounted troops, engaged in patrolling and other light work, comfortably billeted and with an abundance of fresh rations, passed several pleasant weeks beside the Nile.