

positions of readiness for the night march to its positions of deployment.

8. The night march to the positions of deployment was successfully carried out, all units reaching their appointed positions up to time.

The plan was to attack the hostile works between the Khalasa Road and the Wadi Saba with two divisions, masking the works north of the Wadi Saba with the Imperial Camel Corps and some infantry, while a portion of the 53rd (Welsh) Division further north covered the left of the corps. The right of the attack was covered by a cavalry regiment. Further east, mounted troops took up a line opposite the southern defences of Beersheba.

As a preliminary to the main attack, in order to enable field guns to be brought within effective range for wire-cutting, the enemy's advanced works at 1,070 were to be taken. This was successfully accomplished at 8.45 a.m., after a short preliminary bombardment, by London troops, with small loss, 90 prisoners being taken. The cutting of the wire on the main line then proceeded satisfactorily, though pauses had to be made to allow the dust to clear; and the final assault was ordered for 12.15 p.m. It was successful all along the front attacked, and by about 1 p.m. the whole of the works between the Khalasa road and the Wadi Saba were in our hands.

Some delay occurred in ascertaining whether the enemy still occupied the works north of the road; it was decided, as they were still held by small parties, to attack them from the south. After a preliminary bombardment the works were occupied with little opposition by about 7.30 p.m.

The casualties were light, considering the strength of the works attacked; a large proportion occurred during the advance towards the positions previous to the assault, the hostile guns being very accurate and very difficult to locate.

Meanwhile, the mounted troops, after a night march, for part of the force of 25 and for the remainder of 35 miles, arrived early in the morning of the 31st about Khasim Zanna, in the hills some five miles east of Beersheba. From the hills the advance into Beersheba from the east and north-east lies over an open and almost flat plain, commanded by the rising ground north of the town and flanked by an under-feature in the Wadi Saba called Tel el Saba.

A force was sent north to secure Bir es Sakaty, on the Hebron road, and protect the right flank; this force met with some opposition, and was engaged with hostile cavalry at Bir es Sakaty and to the north during the day. Tel el Saba was found strongly held by the enemy, and was not captured till late in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, attempts to advance in small parties across the plain towards the town made slow progress. In the evening, however, a mounted attack by Australian Light Horse, who rode straight at the town from the east, proved completely successful. They galloped over two deep trenches held by the enemy just outside the town, and entered the town at about 7 p.m., capturing numerous prisoners.

The Turks at Beersheba were undoubtedly taken completely by surprise, a surprise from which the dash of London troops and Yeomanry, finely supported by their artillery, never gave them time to recover. The charge

of the Australian Light Horse completed their defeat.

A very strong position was thus taken with slight loss, and the Turkish detachment at Beersheba almost completely put out of action. About 2,000 prisoners and 13 guns were taken, and some 500 Turkish corpses were buried on the battlefield. This success laid open the left flank of the main Turkish position for a decisive blow.

9. The actual date of the attack at Gaza had been left open till the result of the attack at Beersheba was known, as it was intended that the former attack, which was designed to draw hostile reserves towards the Gaza sector, should take place twenty-four to forty-eight hours previous to the attack on the Sheria position. After the complete success of the Beersheba operations, and as the early reports indicated that an ample supply of water would be available at that place, it was hoped that it would be possible to attack Sheria by November 3rd or 4th. The attack on Gaza was accordingly ordered to take place on the morning of November 2nd. Later reports showed that the water situation was less favourable than had been hoped, but it was decided not to postpone the attack.

The objectives of this attack were the hostile works from Umbrella Hill (2,000 yards south-west of the town) to Sheikh Hasan, on the sea (about 2,500 yards north-west of the town). The front of the attack was about 6,000 yards, and Sheikh Hasan, the furthest objective, was over 3,000 yards from our front line. The ground over which the attack took place consisted of sand dunes, rising in places up to 150 feet in height. This sand is very deep and heavy going. The enemy's defences consisted of several lines of strongly built trenches and redoubts.

As Umbrella Hill flanked the advance against the Turkish works further west, it was decided to capture it by a preliminary operation, to take place four hours previous to the main attack. It was accordingly attacked, and captured at 11 p.m. on November 1st by a portion of the 52nd (Lowland) Division. This attack drew a heavy bombardment of Umbrella Hill itself and our front lines, which lasted for two hours, but ceased in time to allow the main attack, which was timed for 3 a.m., to form up without interference.

It had been decided to make the attack before daylight owing to the distance to be covered between our front trenches and the enemy's position.

The attack was successful in reaching all objectives, except for a section of trench on the left and some of the final objectives in the centre. Four hundred and fifty prisoners were taken and many Turks killed. The enemy also suffered heavily from the preliminary bombardment, and subsequent reports from prisoners stated that one of the divisions holding the Gaza Sector was withdrawn after losing 33 per cent. of its effectives, one of the divisions in general reserve being drawn into the Gaza sector to replace it. The attack thus succeeded in its primary object, which was to prevent any units being drawn from the Gaza defences to meet the threat to the Turkish left flank, and to draw into Gaza as large a proportion as possible of the available Turkish reserves. Further, the capture of Sheikh Hasan and the south-western defences consti-