

tuted a very distinct threat to the whole of the Gaza position, which could be developed on any sign of a withdrawal on the part of the enemy.

Our losses, though considerable, were not in any way disproportionate to the results obtained.

10. Meanwhile on our right flank the water and transport difficulties were found to be greater than anticipated, and the preparations for the second phase of the attack were somewhat delayed in consequence.

On the early morning of the 1st November the 53rd (Welsh) Division, with the Imperial Camel Corps on its right, had moved out into the hills north of Beersheba, with the object of securing the flank of the attack on Sheria. Mounted troops were also sent north along the Hebron Road to secure Dhaheriyeh if possible, as it was hoped that a good supply of water would be found in this area, and that a motor road which the Turks were reported to have constructed from Dhaheriyeh to Sheria could be secured for our use.

The 53rd (Welsh) Division, after a long march, took up a position from Towal Abu Jerwal (6 miles north of Beersheba) to Muweileh (4 miles north-east of Abu Irgeig). Irish troops occupied Abu Irgeig the same day.

On November 3rd we advanced north on Ain Kohleh and Tel Khuweilfeh, near which place the mounted troops had engaged considerable enemy forces on the previous day. This advance was strongly opposed, but was pushed on through difficult hill country to within a short distance of Ain Kohleh and Khuweilfeh. At these places the enemy was found holding a strong position with considerable and increasing forces. He was obviously determined not only to bar any further progress in this direction, but, if possible, to drive our flankguard back on Beersheba. During the 4th and 5th he made several determined attacks on the mounted troops. These attacks were repulsed.

By the evening of November 5th the 19th Turkish Division, the remains of the 27th and certain units of the 16th Division had been identified in the fighting round Tel el Khuweilfeh, and it was also fairly clear that the greater part of the hostile cavalry, supported apparently by some infantry ("Depôt" troops) from Hebron, were engaged between Khuweilfeh and the Hebron Road.

The action of the enemy in thus employing the whole of his available reserves in an immediate counter-stroke so far to the east was apparently a bold effort to induce me to make essential alterations in my offensive plan, thereby gaining time and disorganising my arrangements. The country north of Beersheba was exceedingly rough and hilly, and very little water was to be found there. Had the enemy succeeded in drawing considerable forces against him in that area the result might easily have been an indecisive fight (for the terrain was very suitable to his methods of defence) and my own main striking force would probably have been made too weak effectively to break the enemy's centre in the neighbourhood of Sheria Hareira. This might have resulted in our gaining Beersheba, but failing to do more—in which case Beersheba would only have been an incubus of a most inconvenient kind. However, the enemy's action was not allowed to make any essential modification to

the original plan, which it had been decided to carry out at dawn on November 6th.

By the evening of November 5th all preparations had been made to attack the Kauwukah and Rushdi systems and to make every effort to reach Sheria before nightfall.

The mounted troops were to be prepared in the event of a success by the main force to collect, as they were somewhat widely scattered owing to water difficulties, and push north in pursuit of the enemy.

Tel el Khuweilfeh was to be attacked at dawn on the 6th, and the troops were to endeavour to reach line Tel el Khuweilfeh-Rijm el Dhib.

11. At dawn on the 6th the attacking force had taken up positions of readiness to the S.E. of the Kauwukah system of trenches. The attack was to be commenced by an assault on the group of works forming the extreme left of the enemy's defensive system, followed by an advance due west up the railway, capturing the line of detached works which lay east of the railway. During this attack London and Irish troops were to advance towards the Kauwukah system, bringing forward their guns to within wire-cutting range. They were to assault the south-eastern face of the Kauwukah system as soon as the bombardment had proved effective, and thence take the remainder of the system in enfilade.

The attack progressed rapidly, the Yeomanry storming the works on the enemy's extreme left with great dash; and soon after noon the London and Irish troops commenced their attack. It was completely successful in capturing all its objectives, and the whole of the Rushdi system in addition. Sheria Station was also captured before dark. The Yeomanry reached the line of the Wadi Sheria to Wadi Union; and the troops on the left were close to Hareira Redoubt, which was still occupied by the enemy. This attack was a fine performance, the troops advancing 8 or 9 miles during the day and capturing a series of very strong works covering a front of about 7 miles, the greater part of which had been held and strengthened by the enemy for over six months. Some 600 prisoners were taken and some guns and machine guns captured. Our casualties were comparatively slight. The greatest opposition was encountered by the Yeomanry in the early morning, the works covering the left of the enemy's line being strong and stubbornly defended.

During the afternoon, as soon as it was seen that the attack had succeeded, mounted troops were ordered to take up the pursuit and to occupy Huj and Jemmamah.

The 53rd (Welsh) Division had again had very severe fighting on the 6th. Their attack at dawn on Tel El Khuweilfeh was successful, and, though they were driven off a hill by a counter-attack, they retook it and captured another hill, which much improved their position. The Turkish losses in this area were very heavy indeed, and the stubborn fighting of the 53rd (Welsh) Division, Imperial Camel Corps, and part of the mounted troops during the 2nd to the 6th November drew in and exhausted the Turkish reserves and paved the way for the success of the attack on Sheria. The 53rd (Welsh) Division took several hundred prisoners and some guns during this fighting.

12. The bombardment of Gaza had meanwhile continued, and another attack was ordered to take place on the night of 6th-7th.