

**A SUPERB AND SCARCE GREAT WAR SINAI AND PALESTINE M.M.
AWARDED TO A SERGEANT, LATER LIEUTENANT OF THE WELLINGTON
MOUNTED RIFLES FOR HIS GALLANTRY AT THE ACTION AT RAS EL NAGB 4
NOVEMBER 1917**



MILITARY MEDAL, G.V.R. '11-1026 SIG: SGT: J. A. LITTLE. N.Z. M.R.R.', 1914-15
STAR, '11/1026 2/LIEUT. J. A. LITTLE. N.Z.E.F.', BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY
MEDALS '11/1026 2/LT. J. A. LITTLE. N.Z.E.F.',

M.M. *London Gazette* 19 March 1918

Joseph Alexander Little from Gisbourne, New Zealand, was born on 13 May 1892 and joined the Wellington Mounted Rifles as a Trooper on 1 January 1915. He embarked for Foreign Service in Egypt on 14 February 1915. Initially training in desert warfare, the Regiment landed at ANZAC (Gallipoli), on 11 May 1915. During his service at Gallipoli, the Wellington Mounted Rifles would take their full shares of the horrors of that campaign, spending much time on the front line, in particular at Walker's Ridge. Amongst others, they took part in the battle of Chunuk Bair, 7-19 August, losing 117 Officers and men killed or wounded on the 9 August alone, or just over a third of the Regiment's strength. Taking part in the battle of Hill 60 on 21 August, on the 27th they sustained a further 109 casualties. By 13 September, the Regiment numbered just 4 Officers and 80 Other ranks, with just 24 of the original landers from May still on duty. These men were evacuated to the Island of Lemnos and from there, enough reinforcements joined so that the Regiment could return to Gallipoli (at Hill 60) on 27 November. A month later, they were evacuated from the Peninsula and landed in Egypt on 26 December 1915. Little had been promoted Signal Sergeant on 17 August 1915, though between 1 August 1916 and 24 September 1917, was ranked as Sergeant only and this pattern seems to have continued into 1918.

Having been reunited with their Horses, towards the end of January 1916, the Regiment were deployed in defence of the Suez Canal and joined the newly raised ANZAC Mounted

Division under Major General Harry Chauvel in April. As part of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, over the next two plus years, the Wellington Mounted Rifles would participate in the Sinai and Palestine Campaign, taking their full share in ANZAC Mounted Division's operations and battles. Taking part in the battle of Romani, 3-5 August 1916, Bir el Abd, 9 August and battle of Magdhaba 23 December 1916. Sergeant Little having been attached Headquarters Staff of his Regiment between 1 August and 29 October 1916, before rejoining his Squadron.



On 9 January 1917, the regiment crossed the Egyptian–Palestine border and took part in the battle of Rafa, which completed the recapture of the Sinai Peninsular. The Regiment would further take part in the failed First and Second battles of Gaza, 26 March and 17 April 1917. From 24 September 1917 Sergeant Little was on detachment at Rest Camp, Port Said, rejoining his Regiment on 4 October 1917. He took part in the operations around Gaza, including the battle of Beersheba on 31 October and were heavily engaged at Ras El Nagb 4 November 1917, Sergeant Little being awarded the Military Medal for his Gallantry during this action. See the following from the Regimental history:

“THE FIGHT AT RAS EL NAGB

Meanwhile the troops in the line to the north had encountered stout opposition, and on the 4th, whilst the W.M.R. and A.M.R. were taking their turn in the search for water, the Brigade was hurried forward to relieve the 5th Mounted Brigade, the latter being heavily engaged in the general line facing Ras El Nagb, thirteen miles north-east of Beersheba. The C.M.R. effected the relief at 5.30 p.m., the two other regiments arriving later, the W.M.R. having meanwhile located a good well, where the water-cart and bottles were filled. The 6th Squadron was placed on the left of the C.M.R. on a ridge facing Khuweilifeh, against which the Infantry were operating, two A.M.R. Squadrons reinforcing the right of the C.M.R., the strength of the enemy eight hundred yards in front of the New Zealanders being estimated at two thousand rifles and three batteries of artillery. The Turks commenced to attack at three o'clock next morning, their numerical strength, supported by the fire of cleverly concealed batteries, enabling them to maintain aggressiveness throughout the day. From Khuweilifeh, on the left, their guns bored our front line. From other directions shells were landed amongst the horses in the Wadi-Sultan, and long-range fire from the north of Khuweilifeh swept the position at intervals. The Somerset and an Indian Mountain Battery were in position south of Ras El Nagb, the fire of these being directed principally at Khuweilifeh. At

eight o'clock the 9th Squadron relieved the 6th Squadron, and a couple of hours later the 2nd Squadron took up a position on a knoll west of Ras El Nagh. The enemy were trying to work round the flank there, but well-directed fire from the Squadron dispersed them.

By this time the fall of Beersheba and the forcing back of the Turkish left were taking effect along the Gaza-Beersheba line, from which the enemy had commenced to retire. Mounted troops were required to pursue the fleeting Turks, and the New Zealand Brigade received orders to hold itself in readiness to proceed with the Anzac Division and co-operate with the 20th Corps south of Sharia. The Imperial Camel Brigade was to relieve the New Zealanders at Ras El Nagb, but failed to arrive at the appointed hour, with the result that the departure of the Brigade was delayed for some time.

Meanwhile the left of the New Zealanders' line had been further strengthened by the 6th W.M.R. Squadron, the latter occupying the crest of a ridge on the left of the 2nd Squadron, where it checked an advance of a force of about four hundred Turks who were trying to work round the flank there.

The Turks were very aggressive on the left, and at about 1.30 p.m. the 2nd Squadron was heavily bombarded from the direction of Khuweilifeh, many casualties being inflicted. Major Scott and Captain Hine having been wounded, Captain A. H. Herrick assumed command of the Squadron. Later the Turks advanced with fixed bayonets to within two hundred yards of our line, but heavy cross-fire broke the attack, the Turks retiring to a position five hundred yards from the New Zealanders, where they maintained a vigorous machine-gun and rifle fire till dusk.

Water and rations had been brought forward on packs for the men during the afternoon, but the horses had not had a satisfying drink for at least two days. It therefore became necessary for the men not engaged in holding the line to lead the horses to Beersheba, a distance of fourteen miles, where the nearest water was to be obtained. Next morning the 6th Camel Brigade arrived, giving half a pint of much appreciated water to each of our men before taking over the line. Tired, and sorely in need of sleep as the result of a strenuous week of continuous trekking and fighting, the W.M.R. marched on foot over broken country to Likeyeh, six miles south, where the horses rejoined them later.



The powers of endurance which the horses were found to possess during these trying times in

continuing to work under a blazing sun without water for periods ranging from forty-eight to seventy-two hours (the latter time refers to the Hotchkiss gun pack horses) are probably without parallel in the history of warfare. Only acclimatised animals could have survived such an ordeal, and the fact that none of the W.M.R. horses were lost from causes other than casualties speaks volumes for the horsemastership of the men. The Regiment's casualties were:-

Two officers and seven other ranks wounded, six horses killed and thirteen wounded. For gallant conduct during this engagement the following decorations were awarded :-

Military Cross, Lieutenant C. J. Pierce; Military Medal, Sergeant J. A. Little, Sergeant T. H. Hulton, Lance-Corporal J. J. Austin, Trooper W. G. Fargie, Trooper W. Southern.

The Brigade remained in support of the 53rd Division in the waterless area close to Ras El Nagb till the night of 9th November, when it received welcome orders to move next day.

Gaza had fallen on 7th November, and the Turks had meanwhile been driven northward till the right of their line rested on the sea coast to the north of Hamameh, where the Anzac Division faced them. General Allenby's right, in the vicinity of Ras El Nagb was then firmly established, but strong forces opposed him on the left, so the New Zealanders were to join the Division there."



Their was no let up for the mounted men, for on 14 November, they were took part in the battle of Ayun Kara, where the New Zealand Brigade was heavily engaged. On the 15 November, elements of the Wellington Mounted Rifles entered Jaffa and the Regiment took part in the battle of Jaffa, 20-21 December. Into 1918, the Regiment took part in the Jordan Valley campaign and were present at the capture of Jericho, 19-21 February 1918 and a raid on Amman, 21 March – 2 April. Over the next couple of months, the Regiment was involved in various operations in the Jordan Valley, including the raid on Es Salt, 30 April – 4 May.

In mid 1918, Sergeant Little was nominated to be Commissioned and on 24 June was detached for training in the Imperial School of Instruction (Cadet Course) and was Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, 3 October 1918. Rejoining his Regiment on 15 December 1918 which had just embarked for Malta, he was finally discharged in New Zealand on 26 February 1919. He served overseas for some three years, 348 days. Service papers note service in Gallipoli in 1915, Egypt 1915-16, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, 1916, 1917, 1918.

<https://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH1-Moun.html>

and a good résumé of service here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington_Mounted_Rifles_Regiment

Condition VF, several minor EK's and contact marks. Sold with copy service papers etc on CD

A very scarce gallantry group, being one of just 20 Military Medals awarded to the Wellington Mounted Rifles during the Great War.