

THE FINE AND EXTREMELY RARE 2ND AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE PALESTINE OPERATIONS M.M. AND M.I.D. AWARDED TO AN N.C.O. WHO AFTER BEING WOUNDED AT QUINN'S POST, GALLIPOLI IN AUGUST 1915, WAS M.I.D. FOR GALLANTRY AT COZ EL GELEIB IN APRIL 1917 AND FOR ATTEMPTING TO RESCUE A SCOUT UNDER HEAVY FIRE NEAR HILL 410 IN MAY 1917. LATER AWARDED THE M.M. FOR GALLANTRY DURING A DARING RAID NEAR ES SALT IN MAY 1918. HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION AT THE BATTLE OF ABU TELLUL, 14 JULY THAT YEAR, DURING A GALLANT STAND MADE BY HIS TROOP, ALL OF WHOM WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED. THIS THE ONLY KNOWN ACTION IN PALESTINE WHEN THE GERMAN ASIA CORPS ASSAULTED AS 'STORMTROOPS'



MILITARY MEDAL, G.V.R. '155 SGT: J. R. GEDDES. 2/AUST: L.H.R.'

M.M. London Gazette 13 September 1918. The original recommendation states:

'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in the field. On the night of 1st May, 1918, he was in charge of 10 men who accompanied Lt King in the raid on enemy posts near ES SALT. He had to cover the most difficult ground in the dark and led his party in the assault with great coolness and daring. The raid yielded 5 enemy killed and 5 prisoners (including two wounded), 7 horses, one machine gun, 4,000 rounds of bullets and 10 rifles captured. The enemy squadron supporting the post fled in disorder. The conduct and determination of Sergt Geddes inspired the party and were largely responsible for the complete success of the raid.'

*This NCO has done excellent work from GALLIPOLI onwards. He was Mentioned in General
+++ Despatches for conspicuously good patrol work near SHELLAL 28/6/17'*

M.I.D. London Gazette 11 January 1918. The original recommendation states:

'For conspicuous gallantry near COZ EL GELEIB on 23/4/17 when in command of a half troop on an advance post to the Brigade outpost line (HISERIA to SHELLAL), a troop of enemy cavalry threatened to attack, but Sgt Geddes, taking one section with him galloped boldly at them to within close range and opened rapid fire. He displayed great dash and courage. Later, on 18th May 1917 when on patrol near HILL 410 a scout was shot close to a concealed enemy position, Sgt Geddes galloped forward to rescue him but found him dead. He removed personal effects and endeavoured to bring body back but was prevented by heavy enemy fire- a bullet passing through his bandolier.'

155 Sergeant James Robinson Geddes, originally from Scotland, immigrated to Australia in youth and attended public School in New South Wales. At the age of 15 he enlisted in 2nd South Africa Light Horse during the Boer War and served nearly 2 years (medals and 5 clasps). At the outbreak of WW1, he was noted as a 31 year old sailor and enlisted into the 'A' Squadron, 2nd Light Horse Regiment on 31 August 1914. His next of Kin is given as his Aunt, Mrs Gibb, 99 Regent Street, Sydney, New South Wales

Promoted Corporal 8 May 1915, he landed in Gallipoli on 12 May 1915 and was wounded in action 'Gunshot Wound R thigh' 7 August 1915, during the costly attacks from Quinn's Post. Returning to duty 29 September 1915, the Regiment left the peninsular in December 1915. Promoted Sergeant 1 January 1916, the 2nd Light Horse joined the ANZAC Mounted Division in Egypt and went on to serve with distinction during the Sinai and Palestine campaigns, as did Sergeant Geddes who was Mentioned in Despatches for his bravery on two occasions in April and May 1917, and decorated with the Military Medals for his gallantry during a daring raid led by Lieutenant King in May 1918.



Sergeant James Robinson Geddes

Sergeant Geddes was Killed in Action during a major German attack at Abu Tellul on 14 July 1918. Here the 2nd Light Horse fought off a determined attack on their positions but with significant loss. Geddes's troop under Lieutenant King was all but wiped out, gallantly defending their post, indeed every man was either killed or wounded. The 14 July attack cost the enemy at least 105 dead and 45 wounded (these being found within the Australian-held ground), and as well 425 prisoners were taken; 358 of the latter were Germans. This was, in fact, the only time in which the Asia Corps was known to have carried the primary role in an attack, or - as the Official History puts it - the German infantry was used as 'stormtroops' in

Palestine. As well, 41 machine-guns were taken from the enemy as a result of the action. Australian losses amounted to 31 killed and 46 wounded.

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

Sergeant Geddes is buried Jerusalem War Cemetery Palestine and interestingly his grave is featured in the superb Australian documentary 'Beyond Beersheba' (at 5:27):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=br0oGt1a8k&list=PL71FA1CFE21F44144&index=8>

More details of the raid for which Geddes was MID's can be found from the Military Cross recommendation for his troop commander, Lieutenant Kenneth King:

"I wish to bring to your notice the splendid work carried out by Lieut. K. King of A Squadron 2 L.H. Regt. during the recent operations in the Es Salt district. While the Squadron were on outpost duty guarding the junction of No. 6 & 7 roads. Shortly after taking over the outpost line it was found that the Turks had occupied two commanding-points on the left front of the outpost position. From these points the enemy were able to snipe on to a portion of No 6 & 7 roads, also to enfilade one of our neighbouring posts with Machine Gun fire. On the afternoon of May 2nd it was decided to raid both posts as soon as it became dark. Lieut. King was selected to do the raiding and although he had to go over 1200 yards of very difficult ground and had only twenty men at his disposal he carried both points in a most dashing manner. After creeping up and bombing his first objective he then rushed it with the bayonet killing 5, capturing 3 And wounding 2 of the enemy. He also captured 7 cavalry horses 1 Machine gun 10 Rifles and 4000 round MG ammunition. It was ascertained afterwards that this position was held by a Squadron of Turkish Cavalry and those that got away fled in wild disorder. It was found that the Turks on the second point to alarm and left hurriedly and the position taken without opposition. I consider the success of this raiding "stunt" was due to the way Lieut. King handled his raiding party and the dashing way in which he attacked his objective."

THE 2ND LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT DURING THE GREAT WAR

"The 2nd Light Horse Regiment was raised at Enoggera in Queensland on 18 August 1914. Its recruits came mainly from Queensland but some hailed from the northern rivers district of New South Wales. The 2nd was one of three regiments of the 1st Light Horse Brigade - the first Australian mounted formation raised by Australia during the First World War. The regiment sailed from Brisbane on 25 September and disembarked in Egypt on 9 December.

The 2nd Light Horse Regiment deployed to Gallipoli without its horses and landed there on 12 May 1915, joining the New Zealand and Australian Division. It played a defensive role for most of the campaign but did attack the Turkish trenches opposite Quinn's Post, one of the most contested positions along the ANZAC Line. The first assault wave was mown down and fortunately the officer commanding the attack had the wisdom and courage to call it off. The 2nd was withdrawn from the front line in September and left the peninsula on 18 December.

Back in Egypt, the 2nd Light Horse joined the ANZAC Mounted Division. Between January and May 1916, the regiment was deployed to protect the Nile valley from bands of pro-Turkish Senussi Arabs. On 18 May, as part of its parent brigade, it joined the forces defending the Suez Canal. The 1st Light Horse Brigade played a significant role in turning back the Turkish advance on the canal at the battle of Romani on 4 August. In ensuing days the

regiments of the brigade participated in the immediate follow-up of the defeated Turks, but were soon withdrawn to rest.



The 2nd Light Horse Regiment rejoined the Allied advance across the Sinai in November and was subsequently involved in the fighting to secure the Turkish outposts on the Palestine frontier - Maghdaba on 23 December 1916 and Rafa on 9 January 1917. A stint of protective duty along the line of communications through the Sinai followed. The 2nd's next major engagement was the abortive second battle of Gaza on 19 April. Gaza finally fell on 7 November, after a wide outflanking move via Beersheba, in which the 1st Light Horse Brigade played a part.

With the capture of Gaza, the Turkish position in southern Palestine collapsed. The 2nd Light Horse Regiment participated in the advance to Jaffa that followed, and was then committed to operations to clear and occupy the west bank of the Jordan River. It was involved in the Amman (24-27 February) and Es Salt (30 April-4 May) raids and the repulse of a major German and Turkish attack on 14 July 1918.

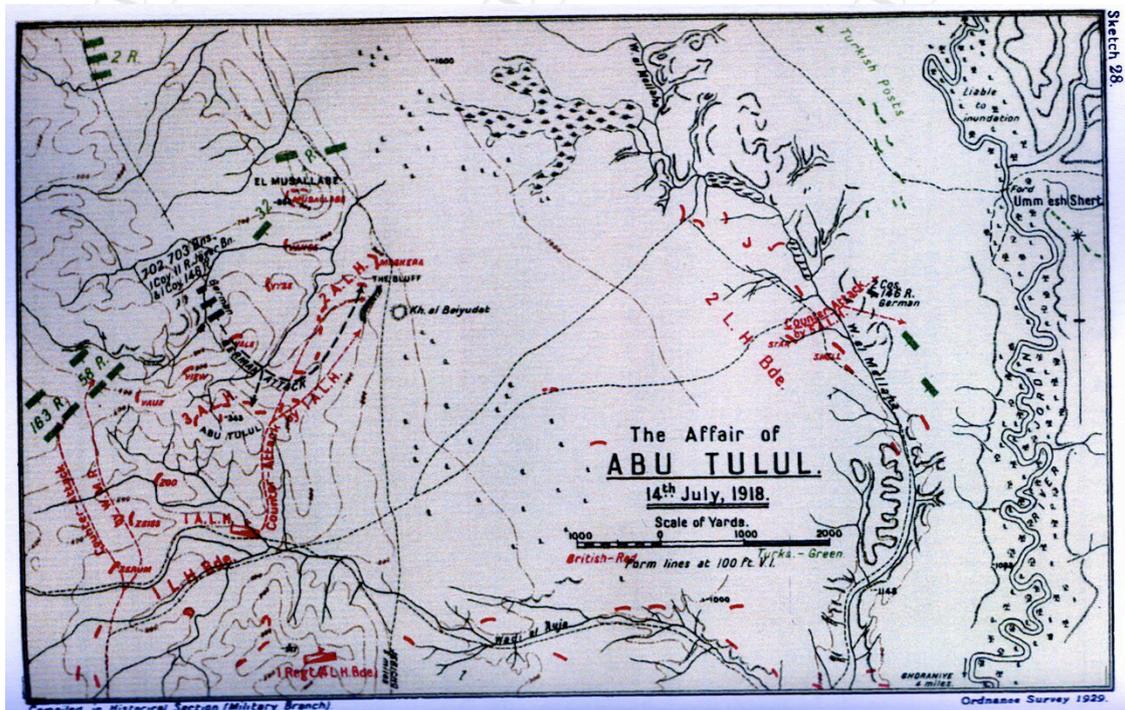
The final British offensive of the campaign was launched along the Mediterranean coast on 19 September 1918, with the ANZAC Mounted Division taking part in a subsidiary effort east of the Jordan aimed at Amman. Turkey surrendered on 30 October 1918. The 2nd Light Horse Regiment sailed for Australia on 13 March 1919 without their horses, which were either shot or transferred to Indian cavalry units.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Light_Horse_Regiment_\(Australia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Light_Horse_Regiment_(Australia))

ABU TELLUL 14th JULY 1918 FROM BEAN

“As the attack developed, Bourne, fearing Vale would be overrun, prepared to shift his headquarters. At the same time he sent one of his three reserve troops, under Lieutenant W. K King, to occupy a post on the east of Abu Tellul, with orders to co-operate with the post on The Bluff in delaying the advance if the enemy should break through. Immediately afterwards the enemy swarmed through Vale and up the ravines on either side, swept over Bourne's headquarters, and swung eastwards down the valley between the line of posts and the slopes of Abu Tellul. Bourne, with his staff and regimental details, withdrew to Abu Tellul, firing briskly as they went at the enemy close behind. At the same time a heavy assault was made on

the garrison at Musallabeh. Cutting the entanglements in the darkness, the Germans bombed the light horsemen off one of the posts ; but a spirited counter-attack, led by Sergeant J. E. Carlyon: at once drove them out, and, although they many times advanced resolutely against the four posts on the position, the Australians steadily held their ground. Vyse, to which the bombing party on Vane had retired, gallantly withstood the heavy frontal attack, but was soon completely surrounded.



At daylight the garrisons at Musalla Leh and all the posts were isolated and under vigorous assault; but the light horsemen, not at all flustered and having good cover, were able to direct a very effective fire at close range on the enemy massed in their rear. The Germans, who were now climbing the slopes to the northern side of Abu Tellul and The Bluff, were directly behind and exposed to the machine-gun, Hotchkiss, and rifle fire of the garrisons at Vyse and Musallabeh, and were at the same time being enfiladed by Bell's men from View and Vaux. These two latter garrisons had poured heavy fire into the force which overran Vale in the darkness and had been largely responsible for its swing to the east. The posts were furiously attacked, but their garrisons could not be broken and they shot down and beat off wave after wave of the German infantry. The post on Maslcerah was now attacked from the rear, and Captain Evans rushed his men to an alternative position, already prepared, where they could hold their ground and at the same time bring fire to bear on a movement developing against The Bluff. The attack had unfolded very rapidly, and the situation was yet too obscure for Cox to commit Granville's reserve regiment. But when the Germans, despite the galling fire on their right flank and rear, began to climb the slopes of Abu Tellul and The Bluff, the position was becoming critical. Had they gained complete possession of Tellul, they might easily have withstood the counter-stroke of Granville's weak squadrons and seized the batteries immediately on the southern side; while if they received reinforcements, they might, even without capturing Tellul, still overcome the heroic resistance of the posts in their rear. The Bluff was at this moment occupied by one troop, less than twenty strong, under Lieutenant L. J. Henderson, and the extreme right post of Abu Tellul by Lieutenant King with a similar force. The two adjoining posts on the main ridge were manned by Bourne's regimental staff and a handful of details. As day broke the Germans marched in force on the little garrisons under King and Henderson, and at the same time assailed the posts further to the west. Bourne's orders were that the ground must be held at all costs, and the isolated parties of Queenslanders fought doggedly in the face of irresistible odds. King was killed while

directing his men, but his gallant troop fought on and the Germans did not enter the post until every man had become a casualty. Henderson's men on The Bluff showed the same fine tenacity. Their young leader fell severely wounded, but continued to direct the unequal fight, and with only three men who were not killed or wounded kept the enemy outside the sangars. This heroic remnant were still on their ground when the fight closed.....



This exciting little fight had some features which gave it an interest far beyond the destruction of a few hundred enemy troops. It was the last deliberate offensive attempted against the British in Palestine; and it was the only occasion in the campaign in which German infantry were used as stormtroops. It had, therefore, significant effects upon the two rival armies. All through the campaign officers going to Palestine from France were disposed to belittle the fighting qualities of the Turks, and to declare that the British in the Holy Land were very fortunate not to be opposed to Germans. The fact that a force of German infantry about a thousand strong had been so decisively beaten by a brigade of light horsemen in position was not in itself remarkable. But the Australians were none the less elated at the result. They found on this day, as they had discovered before the attack was made, that the German, although incomparably superior to the Turk as an offensive fighter, was very inferior as a rifle shot to his despised ally. The constant sniping duels between the light horse and the Turks were evenly matched affairs, in which excessive keenness and exposure on either side always ended in disaster. But Australians sniping Germans quickly learned that they could move with relative safety into the open, and rely upon their quicker and straighter work to beat the enemy. Another point arising out of the attack, of considerable interest and value to the British, was the additional evidence it provided of the discord in the enemy's camps. The captured German officers complained bitterly that in the assault they had been betrayed by the Turks, who were to have attacked simultaneously on the Mellahah front and against the bridgeheads east of Jordan. They spoke very frankly and in terms of disgust of their allies, and made no attempt to conceal their chagrin at the result of their first essay in Palestine. Moreover, the Australians were flattered by the statements of both German and Turkish officers that they had been assured by their German Intelligence that the light horsemen and New Zealanders were resting at Bethlehem, while the position which they were to attack was held by Indians and a few British yeomanry."



GERMAN PRISONERS TAKEN AT ABU TELLUL BEING ESCORTED BY LIGHT HORSE

Lieutenant King, Geddes's troop commander who was killed along with Geddes at Abu Tellul was a 18 year old Trooper when he joined the 2nd Light Horse in Gallipoli as a reinforcement in August 1915. Promoted Lance Corporal in March 1916 and Sergeant in November that year, he was Commission 2nd Lieutenant in May 1917. For his gallantry in holding the post, King was recommended for a Mentioned in Despatches, however the recommendation does not appear to have granted for some reason. The Recommendation is of interest as it relates to Geddes final hours:

"For conspicuous gallantry and self-sacrifice and devotion to duty in the field. In the MUSALLABEH salient on 14th July at 0315 when the enemy broke through between the posts his C.O. ordered him to take his troop and deny ABU TELLUL RIGHT, No.1 to the enemy till the Reserve Regiment could be sent up. Lieut King, realising that the ridge was the key to the situation and that if the enemy forestalled the Reserve Regiment there. The Batteries would be in jeopardy, and the right flank of the Third Regiment threatened. He held on to his post with the greatest gallantry and determination until overwhelmed by vastly superior numbers. He was killed and every man in his troop either killed or wounded, but his heroic action so delayed the enemy that he was greatly instrumental in preventing them from gaining possession of the crest till the First Regiment arrived about 0500. This had a considerable influence on the whole operation."

During WW1 members of the 2nd Light Horse was Awarded 14 MM's and 27 MID's, 3 men (including Geddes) were awarded both MM and MID.



Condition GVF, some contact wear. Sold with a good deal of digital research, including service papers, citations, War Diary entries etc.

A superb and rare Light Horse double gallantry award.