10. Field Ambulances, Hospitals and Convalescent Homes

From the lessons learned from the Gallipoli Conflict, the structure and organisation of the Australian Hospitals and Convalescent Homes for the Light Horse Campaign was far more superior and is categorised in the following sections:

10.1 Field Ambulances

The Field Ambulance was a mobile front line medical unit, manned by troops of the Army Medical Corps. Most Field Ambulances came under command of a Division, and each had special responsibility for the care of casualties of one of the Light Horse Brigades of the Division. The Field Ambulance was responsible for establishing and operating a number of points along the casualty evacuation chain, from the Bearer Relay Posts which were up to 600 yards behind the Regimental Aid Posts in the front line, taking casualties rearwards through an Advanced Dressing Station to the Main Dressing Station.

A rare front line photo of the Field Ambulance hospital at El Mala, Egypt in August 1916. Captured Turkish doctors were assisting with the wounded.

German Wounded

A rare photograph of a wounded German soldier being led to a hospital railway carriage for shipment west to Cairo.

In this case, the wounded German soldier would be transferred to a POW hospital before being interned for the remainder of the war.
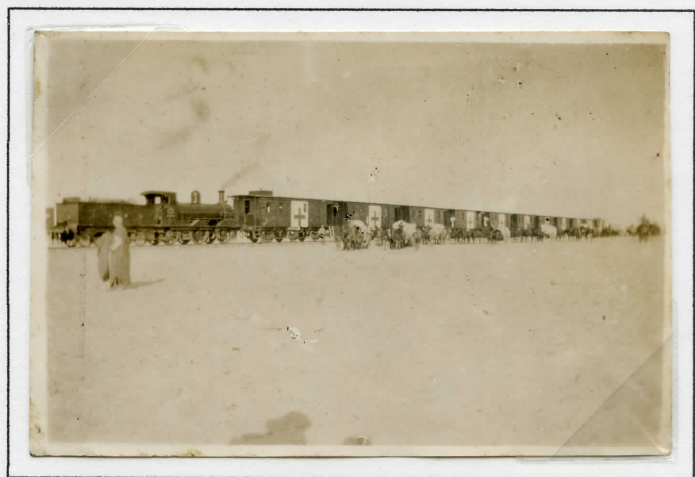
Transportation of wounded soldiers

The railway network was vital for the supply lines to the Light Horse Brigades. Conversely, the network was instrumental in shipping wounded soldiers back to the large hospitals in Egypt to provide better care for the wounded soldiers.

This card was written by
Private Sydenham Young of
the 1st Australian Remount
Unit who was repatriated
back to Australia a month
after this card was posted
on the 18.10.1916.

A picture postcard with AIF Interbase cds dated the 22.9.1916 with an oval double framed "10TH FIELD AMBULANCE/
A.A.M.C." cachet in violet (not recorded by Firebrace) of the Australian Army Medical Corps and initialed for censorship.

8.2 Australian General Hospital No. 3

The No. 3 Australian General Hospital was transferred from Lemnos Island after the evacuation from Gallipoli to the Egyptian
Army Barracks at Abbassia in March 1916 before closing and sailing for England in August.

A postcard with the framed oval "AUS. GENERAL HOSPITAL/ P.O./ No. 3" cachet in violet dated the 8.6.1916 (Firebrace
Type CA 46 A).

The No. 14 Australian General Hospital was formed in 1916, departing Melbourne on the 19.8.1916 aboard the A63 "Karoola" and was located within the English barracks at Abbassia, Cairo for the duration of the war.

A registered envelope cancelled by the English Field Post Office Number F2 allocated to Abbassia dated the 1.3.1917

On the reverse and illustrated at the right is a scan of the reverse showing the framed oval "AUS. GENERAL HOSPITAL/ P.O./ No. 14" cachet in violet of the same date (Firebrace Type CA 47).
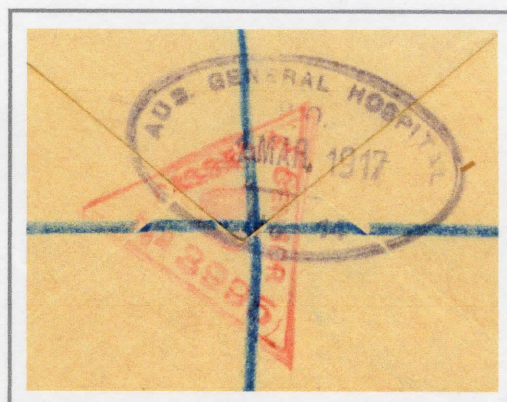
10.3 Australian General Hospital No. 14

The No. 14 Australian General Hospital sailed for Egypt in H.S. "Karoola" on the 18.8.1916 and was established at the Abbassia Barracks in Cairo in September. It moved to Port Said on the 14.1.1918 when it took over from the 31st British General Hospital before returning to Abbassia in January 1919.

An envelope with the framed oval "AUS. GENERAL HOSPITAL/ P.O./ No. 14" cachet in violet dated the 25.9.1916 (Firebrace Type CA 47).

This is the earliest recorded date of use of this cachet.

8.4 Australian Auxiliary Hospital No. 2

The No. 2 Australian Stationary Hospital was established on the 26.1.1915 at the Mena Camp as a venereal disease hospital with 500 beds. It was moved to Mudros Island before the Gallipoli evacuation and shifted to Port Said. This hospital continued to operate during the Australian Light Horse Campaign, relocating to Romani, and finally Moascar on the 26.8.1917.

A rare inwards addressed envelope
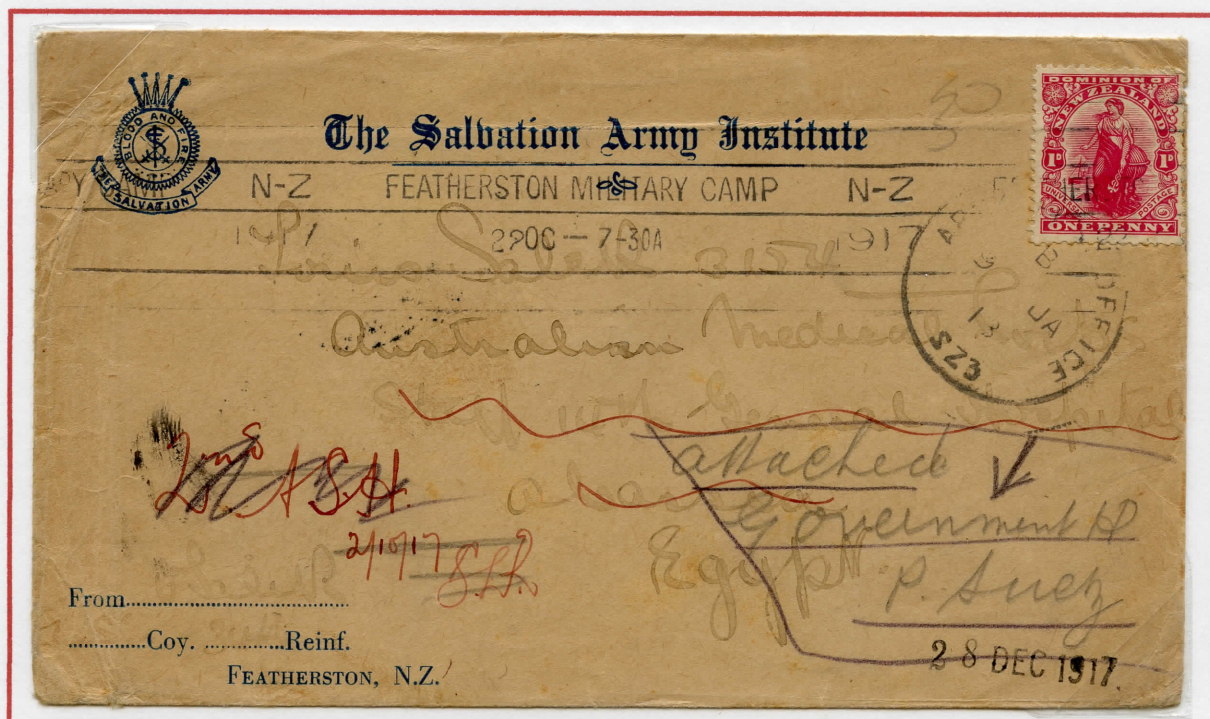
A Salvation Army envelope used from the Featherston Military Camp in New Zealand on the 29.10.1917 and addressed to Private Louis Salek of the Australian Medical Corps. The envelope was readdressed to Port Said, and there is a manuscript at the left *"2nd ASH 2/10/17"* for the 2nd Australian Stationary Hospital. Private Salek survived the war and returned to Australia on the 30.12.1918.

11. Soldiers Killed in Action and Prisoners of War

This section is classified into the following sub categories:

11.1 Soldiers killed in action

11.2 Soldiers dying of illness

11.3 Australian prisoners of war

11.4 Turkish prisoners of war

11.1 Soldiers Killed in Action

At the end of the war, many relatives of soldiers who had been killed in the war enquired with the Base Records Office as to where their loved ones were buried.

Since most of the soldiers had died on foreign soils, the Base Records Office organised for photographs of the graves to be taken and this, together with a small booklet detailing the cemetery where the soldier was buried, were presented to the next of kin on request.

Trooper Sydney Nelson   **3rd Light Horse Regiment**
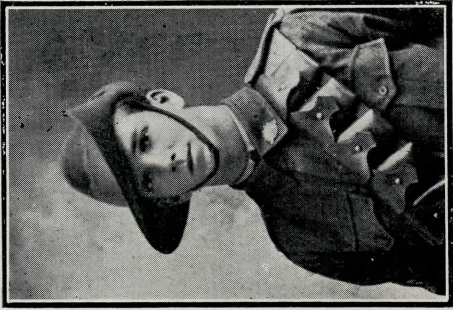

A real life postcard of the grave of Trooper Sydney Nelson who died of illness on the 24.10.1918, less than three weeks before the signing of the Armistice. He is buried at the Cairo War Memorial Cemetery in Egypt. He was Mentioned in Despatches twice in 1918.

This photograph was sent to Trooper Nelson's mother as the next of kin.

Memorial Card for Trooper Cecil Purkis - 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade

In Sad but Loving Memory

OF OUR DEAR SON AND BROTHER.

TROOPER C. ROY PURKIS

(No. 3423).

3RD LIGHT HORSE, A.I.F.

WHO DIED OF ILLNESS AT THE 14TH AUSTRALIAN GENERAL
HOSPITAL, ABBASIA, EGYPT, ON FEBRUARY
15TH, 1919.

IN HIS 20TH YEAR.

The blow was sudden, the shock severe,
We little thought his death was near;
Only those who have lost can tell
The pain at heart at not saying farewell.
A painful shock, a blow severe,
To part with one we loved so dear;
Not one he loved was by his side,
But with God in heaven he will abide.

A memorial card for Trooper Cecil Purkis of the 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade who died from tuberculosis at the 14th Australian General Hospital in Abbasia, Egypt after the war had ended on the 15.2.1919. These memorial cards were prepared by the soldier's family and presented to relatives and friends of the soldier at their funeral back home.

11.3 Australian Prisoners of War

The total Australians taken prisoner of war across all the conflicts with Ottoman Empire are believed to amount to 217. Of these, 69 soldiers were taken at Gallipoli, 16 seamen from the submarine AE2, leaving 132 from the Australian Light Horse Campaign to Syria. The Australian Army were particularly proud that no Light Horse officer was taken prisoner during the campaign.

Mail to Australian prisoners of war in Turkey   **Private Ernest Ingram**

Two Prisoner of War envelopes recorded from the Australian Light Horse Campaign

A 1d Postal Stationery envelope used from Sydney on the 22.4.1918 and addressed to Private Ernest Ingram through the Red Cross in Switzerland. The cover is endorsed "British (Australian) Prisoner of War at Turkey".

Private Ingram embarked at Sydney on the 23.10.1915 with the 6th Light Horse Regiment. His stated occupation as a jockey made him an automatic acceptance in to the newly formed Imperial Camel Corps in early 1916.

He was captured by the Turks at the Second Battle of Gaza on the 2.4.1917 and interned as a prisoner of war until the end of the war.

Private Ingram was repatriated back to Alexandria on the 6.11.1918 and admitted to the 14th Australian General Hospital suffering from malaria and dysentery. He retuned to Australia in May 1919.
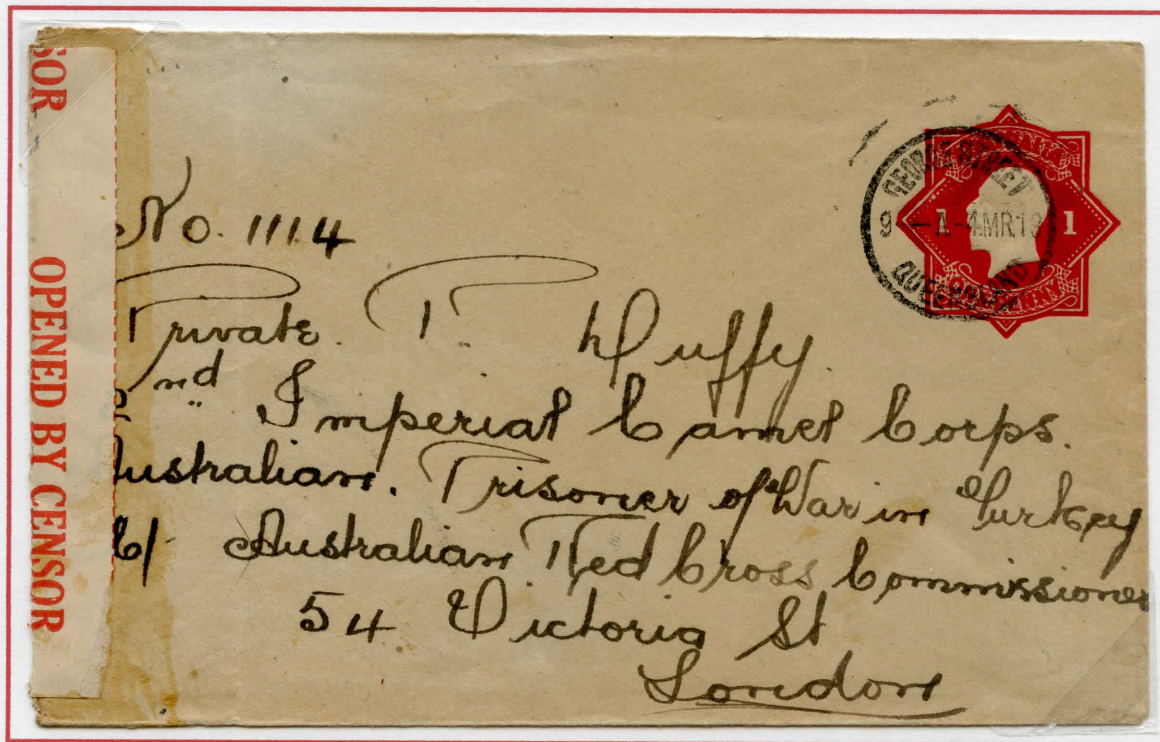
Note: It is surprising how rare the mail from Australian prisoners of war from the Light Horse Campaign is. There is much more Gallipoli envelopes available. It could possibly be that most of the Australian POW's were taken late in the war and had very little opportunity to write home.

Two Prisoner of War envelopes recorded from the Australian Light Horse Campaign

A 1d Postal Stationery envelope used from Brisbane on the 4.3.1918 and addressed to Private Patrick Duffy through the Red Cross in Switzerland. The cover is endorsed "2nd Imperial Camel Corps/Australian Prisoner of War in Turkey".

Private Duffy embarked at Sydney on the 20.8.1915 with the 2nd Light Horse Regiment and he was transferred to the newly formed 1ST Imperial Camel Corps in early 1916.

He was captured by the Turks at the Second Battle of Gaza on the 9.4.1917. Sergeant Fred Saville and Privates Patrick Duffy and Albert Kimber were trapped at the Tank Redoubt, ran out of ammunition and could not return to the Australian Lines. These three soldiers were lucky. A small group Australian Cameleers a short distance away were killed whilst surrendering.

Private Duffy was interned at Yarbaschi, Amanus, near Adana. He retuned to Australia on the 15.11.1918.

Note: The most Light Horsemen captured during the war was at the 2nd Battle of Gaza where twenty two soldiers were interned as prisoners of war.

11.4 Turkish Prisoners of War

This series of photographs of Turkish prisoners of war unfortunately do not have endorsements on the reverse stating where they were taken. However, contemporary photos of prisoners of war from the Light Horse Campaign are particularly scarce.

"Turkish prisoners"
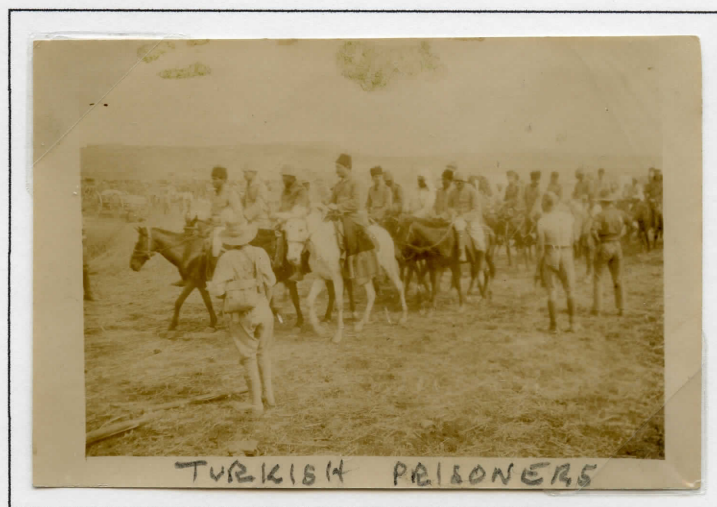
"Turkish prisoners"

"Captured Turkish cavalry"

"Some Bedouin prisoners"

Repatriation of Australian Troops

After the Armistice on the 11th November 1918, the Australian troops occupied various towns in Lebanon and Syria, with others returning to Egypt. The war was over, and many of them rested, with soldiers did not starting the return journey to Australia until late February 1919.

Mail from an Australian Flying Corps mechanic enroute to England

A rare postcard describing the repatriation headed "Faenza", Italy to Tasmania and cancelled by the Army Post Office S.70 cds of the 27.2.1919 allocated to the British Forces in Italy.

The postcard was written by Sergeant David Harper, an air mechanic with the No. 1 Squadron from the Australian Flying Corps. He writes:

"we are about half way through Italy now and have just halted here for a hot dinner and wash…….we expect to get to England on Monday".

The squadron was abandoned in England on the 5.3.1919. Harper returned to Australia, but was not discharged from the AFC until the 31.3.1920.

A studio portrait of Sergeant David Harper at the right. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal on the 1.1.1919.

12. The Legacy of the Australian Light Horse Campaign

The Middle Eastern Legacy

The legacy of the Light Horse Campaign from Egypt to Syria had far reaching implications locally within the Middle East. The Australian troops were far and away the most effective cavalry soldiers of the campaign. The Third Battle of Gaza and the charge at Beersheba had the Turks rapidly on the back foot for the whole of 1918. Without these decisive wins, the Turks would have had the time and recruits to stop the advance until the end of the war. Which meant that the political landscape of the region would have changed little. The Australian Light Horse were instrumental.

The first major legacy was the ending of 400 years of Turkish rule in the Middle East ended. This provided the fulfilment of Arab nationalisation in Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states. This could not have been achieved without expelling the Ottoman Empire.

Secondly, with the end of Turkish rule, it opened up the region to the West, who exploited the Middle East for their oil reserves. With the discovery of oil after the war, it became a valuable commodity and became a significant battle field in WW2 to defend from the invading German and Italian armies.

Finally, the defeat of the Ottoman's encourage Jewish immigration to the region, which in thirty years time, provided the desire to create the state of Israel.

S. Feint, Publisher. SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL, NARRANDERA. W. Christian (Copyright.) (Photo.)

A World War One memorial built at the New South Wales town of Narrandera, where volunteers for the 1st, 2nd and 4th Light Horse served. This monument is characteristic of the hundreds erected in the towns and cities across Australia in the 1920's.

The Legacy at Home

In 1915, Australia's official First World War correspondent C.E.W. Bean proposed a memorial site where families and friends could grieve for those soldiers buried in places that were far away and difficult to visit. This included soldiers buried at Gallipoli, England, the Western Front, and the 1,300 soldiers who died during the Light Horse Campaign.

The Australian government endorsed his proposal and announced that it would create a national war memorial in 1917 at Canberra which was officially opened on the 11.11.1941 during the Second World War.

During the 1920's hundreds of towns and cities throughout the country built memorials for those soldiers who had lost their lives in the First World War. For many of the country towns where the Light Horse troops volunteered, these memorials were the heart of ANZAC Day marches and celebrations up to the Second World War where returned soldiers, friends and relatives would mourn the soldiers who did not return.

In addition, during this period, the Australia government sponsored the acquisition and building of Returned Service Leagues (RSL) Clubs around Australia providing formal and informal gatherings for soldiers who had returned from the First World War. In many towns dotted across Australia, the returned Light Horse troops had a place to congregate.

However, the Light Horse Campaign has been largely forgotten by most Australians both after the war and to the present day. More relevance has been focused on soldiers from Gallipoli and the Western Front. Yet the legacy of the Australian Light Horse changed forever the political landscape of the Middle East, a statement which could not be made by the outcome of the Western Front.