



The Last Charge

An exhibition at the Buckinghamshire County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury, HP20 2QP to commemorate the centenary of the last great British cavalry charges at El Mughar, Palestine on 13 November 1917.

31 October 2017 – 5 January 2018

Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust

www.bmmt.co.uk

Buckinghamshire County Museum

www.buckscountymuseum.org

The Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust gratefully acknowledges the support of the following without which this exhibition could not have been held:

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Lord Parmoor

The Crown Commissioners and BNP Paribas

The Institute of Directors

Sir Evelyn de Rothschild and the Rothschild Archive

The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

The Buckingham Heritage Trust

The National Army Museum

The Berkshire Yeomanry Museum Trust

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The London Jewish Cultural Centre's 'The London Jews: We Were There Too' Project

The Last Charge

The charge of the 6th Mounted Brigade at El Mughar in Palestine on 13 November 1917 can claim to be the last great British cavalry charge although there were later charges in Syria in 1918 by an Indian regiment and by the Australian Light Horse.

Significantly, James Prinsep Beadle was commissioned to paint the charge at El Mughar as the cavalry contribution to a representative collection of Great War studies for the United Services Club in Pall Mall. Never previously exhibited outside of the building, which now houses the Institute of Directors, Beadle's painting depicts 'B' Squadron of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars leading the charge against the Ottoman Turkish defenders. The regiment was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. Fred Cripps, later Lord Parmoor. The charge, which also featured the 1/1st Dorset Yeomanry with the 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry in support, was described by General Sir George Barrow as 'a complete answer to the critics of the mounted arm'.

This exhibition brings together Beadle's painting, Thomas Cantrell Dugdale's painting of the same charge, and other artefacts and images, to commemorate the service of men from Buckinghamshire in Palestine. It is one of the forgotten campaigns of the First World War, yet one that left a profound legacy in terms of the shaping of the modern Middle East. The action at El Mughar occurred eleven days after Lord Rothschild, a former officer in the Royal Bucks Hussars, received the letter known to history as the 'Balfour Declaration', promising a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Four days after El Mughar, Lord Rothschild's cousin, Major Evelyn de Rothschild of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars, died of the wounds he had received in the charge.



The El Mughar Ridge from the Wadi Jamus, 1917 (BMMT)

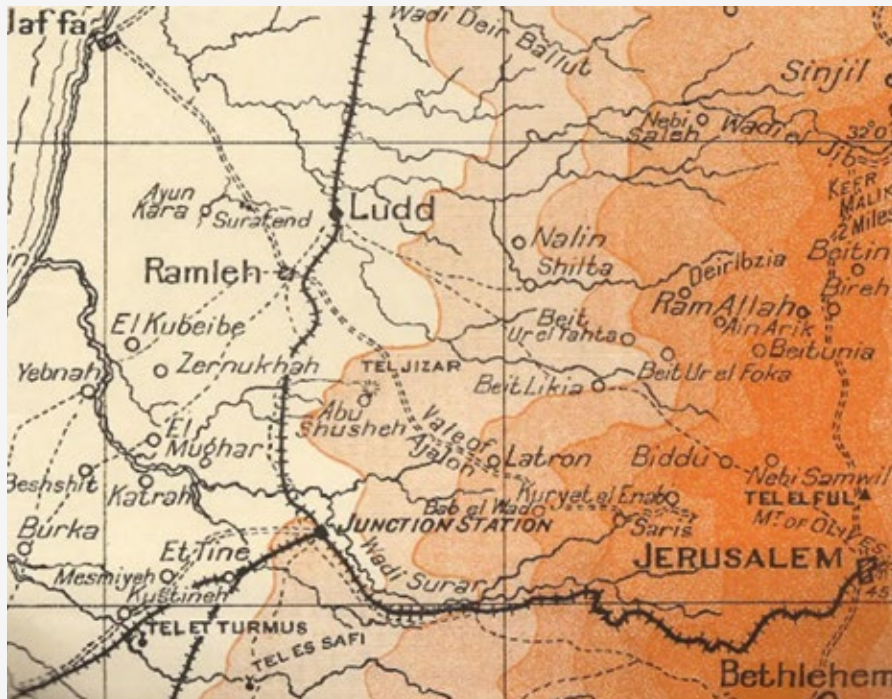


The modern view back from the El Mughar Ridge of the ground traversed by the charge (Berkshire Yeomanry Museum Trust)

The War against Turkey

Ottoman Turkey entered the First World War on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary in October 1914. Britain, France and Russia were confronted with the need to fight on new fronts, which were eventually to include Gallipoli, Egypt, Palestine, the Western Desert, Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula and the Caucasus. British forces landed in Mesopotamia to safeguard oil supplies in the Persian Gulf in November 1914 and were soon drawn into a protracted campaign, including a failed attempt to take Baghdad in November 1915 and the surrender of a British force besieged at Kut in April 1916. British and French naval forces also failed to seize the Dardanelles in March 1915 and the subsequent Gallipoli campaign of April 1915 to January 1916 ended in British withdrawal. On the other hand, Turkish advances in the Caucasus and towards the Suez Canal were repulsed in January and February 1915 respectively and the British overcame the Turkish-inspired insurgency of the Senussi in the Western Desert in March 1916. Among others, T. E. Lawrence played a role in the encouragement of an Arab revolt against the Turks in June 1916.

Following the withdrawal from Gallipoli, it was concluded that the best means to defend Egypt and the Suez Canal and also to continue the war against the Turks lay in an advance across Sinai into Palestine. Appointed to the Egyptian command in January 1916, General Sir Archibald Murray built up extensive logistic support including a railway and water pipe line across Sinai. Murray's attempts to break through the Turkish defences in the first and second battles in Gaza in March and April 1917 were plodding and General Sir Edmund Allenby took command on 27 June 1917. Reinforced to seven infantry and three cavalry divisions, Allenby used a plan previously drawn up by Murray's staff to divert Turkish attention by an apparent third attack on Gaza on 1/2 November 1917 while outflanking the Gaza defences by seizing Beersheba and forcing Turkish withdrawal. Lack of water hampered cavalry pursuit of the Turks but the advance was soon resumed with a series of actions against Turkish rear-guards.



By 13 November 1917 the Turks occupied a front of about 20 miles from El Kubeibeh to Beit Jibrin roughly parallel to the Ramleh-Junction Station railway line. The country was open and rolling with small villages surrounded by mud walls, cactus hedges and occasional plantations of trees. The most prominent feature was a line of heights around the villages of Katrah and El Mughhar, which offered a good defensive position. The advance of the 52nd (Lowland) Division towards the heights was greatly assisted by the charge across the plain under very heavy fire of the 6th Mounted Brigade of the Yeomanry Division (Desert Mounted Corps) led by the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars. By evening the Turks were again in full retreat. 6th Mounted Brigade made another attack on the Sidun-Abu Shusheh Ridge on 15 November. Jaffa fell on 16 November 1917 and, despite vigorous Turkish counter-attacks between 22 and 24 November, Jerusalem was captured on 9 December 1917. Allenby made his official entry into the city on 11 December.

The British forces crossed the River Jordan in March 1918, the final Megiddo offensive in September 1918 bringing the capture of Damascus on 30 September 1918. Baghdad had been captured in a renewed advance in Mesopotamia in March 1917 and, with British forces also closing in on Mosul, the Turks opened negotiations and signed an armistice on 30 October 1918.

El Mughar, 13 November 1917



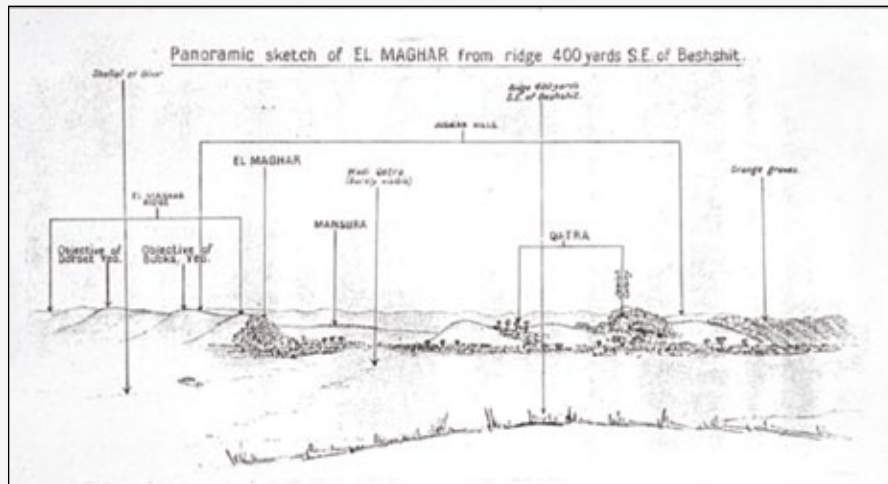
With the advance of 52nd Division stalled in front of the Katrah-El Mughar Ridge by elements of the Turkish XXII Corps, 6th Mounted Brigade was ordered by Brigadier General C. A. C. Godwin to attack the ridge running north-east from El Mughar. The Dorsets were to take the left of the ridge and the Bucks the right just north of the village, their objective extending some 1,200 yards in length. The 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry was in reserve with the 17th Machine Gun Squadron supporting from the cover of the Wadi Rubin in which the brigade was concentrated. The Berkshire Battery, Royal Horse Artillery was also able to support the charge.

At 1500 hours, the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars and the 1/1st Dorset Yeomanry charged some 4,500 yards over the open plain from the Wadi Jamus. The Bucks were led by 'B' Squadron in extended order under Captain John Crocker Bulteel, with 'C' Squadron under Captain the Hon. Neil Primrose and Major Evelyn de Rothschild about 200 yards behind. 'A' Squadron under Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. Fred Cripps and Major Fred Lawson brought up the rear in close formation. The first 2,000 yards were covered at the trot and, after crossing a small wadi previously reconnoitred by Lieutenant Cyrus Perkins, the Bucks Hussars broke into a gallop with swords drawn. The Turkish infantry initially broke as 'B' Squadron rode into them but rallied when seeing how

small the Bucks were. With mounted action on the rear slopes impossible, 'A' and 'C' Squadrons dismounted to complete the seizure of the ridge in hand to hand fighting by 1530 hours. The Bucks and Dorsets together took 1,096 prisoners, two (or three) field guns and 14 (or 19) machine guns. Later in the evening, the 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry cleared the village, taking another 400 prisoners. It was estimated that the Turks had lost over 600 dead.

During the charge, Evelyn de Rothschild was mortally wounded, with three other officers wounded, six men killed, one missing believed killed and 44 wounded (some mortally). A total of 120 horses were also lost. DSOs were awarded to Cripps and Bulteel. MCs were awarded to Lawson, Perkins, Lieutenant G. H. Urwin and the adjutant, Captain Charles Bennett (Buckingham). DCMs were awarded to Squadron Sergeant Major Frank Timms (Aylesbury), and Sergeants H. Hoskins, Victor Marks (Oving), and John 'Jack' Whiting (Stoke Goldington). MMs went to Trumpeter William 'Jack' Gurney (Wendover), Corporal A. T. Read, Lance Corporal Arthur Timms (Buckingham), and Trooper Tom Cox.

Reduced to some 200 effectives, the regiment was in action again at Abu Shusheh on 15 November with Neil Primrose being killed.



Dead Horses after the Charge (National Army Museum)

Charging the Turks

Lieutenant Cyrus Perkins

As the enemy's fire hotted up it became harder to hold the horses to the trot, so gradually the pace quickened while we tried to keep the galloping squadron in line. As we neared the ridge swords were drawn and very soon we were breasting the rise with their guns blasts feeling like pillows hitting one's face. Then in seconds they were all around us, some shooting, some scrambling out of slit trenches and some sensibly falling flat on their faces. It had taken us, I suppose, a bit over five minutes.

Major John Crocker Bulteel

I didn't get one with my sword. Perkins did right through the shoulder blades and he squealed like a wounded horse. Wallace was hit soon after we started and Seaton just before we got into the Turks. Sgt Durrant, Cpl Shaw, Blades, Clarke, Sinfield, Speke and others, you might'nt know were killed. Poor Evelyn was with the 2nd Sq. and was wounded fairly early. In $\frac{3}{4}$ hour the Turks were in full retreat right along the whole line. It was, I must say, an impossible place for them to attack without proper artillery preparation. I lost a lot of horses in the Squadron. The old mare being one of the very few that hadn't got a bullet somewhere.



Major Bulteel and Lieutenants Immanney and Dunkley with captured Turkish machine guns (BMMT)

Major Edward Frederick Lawson

A few flashes as vivid today as then. Fred Cripps' horse jumping a wadi at the foot of the position clear from bank to bank, after 1,500 yards at top speed, and the wadi wide enough for everyone else to go down and through.

As we went up the hill passing a horse and a man lying, the man firm in the saddle, looking for all the world like a tin cavalryman knocked down by a toy cannon.

That was ---- my trumpeter said. Good heavens! That was one of the little boys from the racing stables we kept kicking out of the lines on the Berkshire downs in 1914 until they cried to be allowed to join.

Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. Fred Cripps

The regiment advanced at the trot, for the first mile: it was a long way to cover and our kit was very heavy. The deployment of our regiments was the signal for the guns to open up. Then we broke into a canter and finally a gallop. Much to my surprise, my horse cleared the whole wadi bed, a long jump. Fortunately for us all the Turkish machine-gun and rifle fire came from the top of the ridge. Very soon we were under fire. The leading squadron broke into a gallop, 200 yards from the ridge. The Turks got up and fired at random. Many of them were killed with the sword, and the rest of the Turkish division ran away as we got through. If the enemy had posted their machine-guns at the bottom of the ridge it would have been impossible for us to get through. A large number of Turks were killed as they retired, for the brigade machine-guns squadron had joined us and were able to pour fire into the retreating Turks. We dismounted at the top of the ridge and established ourselves there.



Captured Turkish guns (John Hounslow)

Trooper (later Lieutenant) William Bowyer

I believe the rifle and machine gun fire got heavier as we neared the slope. Anyhow, several horses and riders turned over in quite the approved battle picture style, and the ground was zipping and spluttering as the bullets hit it....We seemed now to be an extraordinary few to be charging a position, but we drew our swords and 'forward on!' We had come through a line of infantry lying flat on the plain and not enjoying life a lot. On seeing swords come out, not flash out as a saddle with two feeds and extra bivvy sheets will not allow of this, the Turks began to crawl back over their trench. This put fresh cheer into us and our shouts redoubled but the last hundred yards up a steep slope, horses blown and almost in a walk, with heavy enfilade fire, were trying moments.

However, now we are on top we jump the Turkish trench and sweep over the hill, down the far side, right through a mob of Turks, and swinging round and driving them into a very convenient ravine on the far side. I think there were about eight of us under Captain Bulteel, and about 90 Turks, all shouting and gesticulating, but quite willing to lay down arms. Immediately we are through the line, the Turks sweep the top of the hill with shrapnel, and we are glad of our shelter, several of the Turks being hit with their own fire. The trouble is that we are isolated - we do not know where the rest of the attackers have got to. I have never seen Captain Bulteel so excited, and we have some rare shooting at bodies of the Turks running back out of the cactus gardens. Soon the firing dies down a bit and we get in touch with the remainder, who, under Captain Primrose, had driven a wedge in, about a quarter of a mile to our right. Here, Major Evelyn Rothschild is mortally wounded at the foot of the hill, and the fire is even hotter than where we went over.



**Trooper William Bowyer
(BMMT)**



**Trooper Bryan Spink
(BMMT)**



**Men from 'B' Squadron
after the Charge (BMMT)**



The graves of Sergeant Durrant and Lance Corporal Shaw (BMMT)



Turkish prisoners taken at El Mughar (BMMT)

Bucks Casualties

Six men were listed as killed and one missing believed killed in action on 13 November.

Killed in action (13 November 1917)

Trooper Ernest Victor BERHONDO (Kensington). Aged 28. Pre-war occupation: clerk. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Trooper John BLADES (Fulham). Aged 26. Pre-war occupation: grocer's assistant. Commemorated on the Jerusalem Memorial to the Missing. Listed as one of those whose graves were relocated from a smaller cemetery but then lost. Conceivably Blades may have been the man originally listed as missing.

Sergeant Cyril DURRANT (Maidenhead). Aged 38. Pre-war occupation: butcher. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Trooper (Shoeing Smith) Arthur George MARKS (Great Horwood). Aged 26. Pre-war occupation: cowman. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Trooper Charles ROOT (Bedfont, Middlesex). Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Lance Corporal Alick Malcolm Graham SHAW (Ponders End, Middlesex). Aged 28. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Sergeant George Frederick TOMPKINS (Hythe, Kent). Aged 38. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

Mortally wounded

Major Evelyn Achille de ROTHSCHILD (Ascott House, Wing). Aged 31. Died, 17 November. Buried in Richon-le-Zion Jewish Cemetery, Israel.

Trooper Raymond Harry Biggs CLARKE (North Marston). Aged 20. Died, 15 November. Buried in Gaza War Cemetery, Gaza.

Trooper (Shoeing Smith) Henry 'Harry' SINFIELD (Great Brickhill). Aged 21. Pre-war occupation: farm hand. Died, 27 November. Buried in Cairo War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt.

Trooper A. J. SPEAKE. Died, 14 November. Buried in Gaza War Cemetery, Gaza.

Possible other deaths related to El Mughar

Corporal George Francis PERKINS (Terriers, High Wycombe). Aged 25. Died of wounds, 14 November. Buried in Gaza War Cemetery, Gaza.

Trooper Alfred William TURNER (Woburn Sands). Aged 24. Died, 14 November. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

The 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars

The regiment mobilised at its squadron headquarters (Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, and High Wycombe) on 5 August 1914, the squadrons moving separately to Reading on 10 August. After ten days, and a reorganisation from four into three squadrons, the regiment moved successively to Churn in Oxfordshire and Steventon in Hampshire, and then to East Anglia for anti-invasion duties in November 1914. Its billets included Whissonsett and Ryburgh. New recruits joined at Churn.

The regiment embarked on HMT Menominee at Avonmouth for Egypt on 8 April 1915. Disembarking at Alexandria, the 1/1st RBH moved on to Citadel Barracks, Cairo for cavalry training. In August, the regiment was dismounted with two strengthened squadrons ('B' and 'C') sent to the island of Mudros on 13 August, and the now understrength 'A' Squadron remaining with the horses in Egypt. From Mudros, the 1/1st RBH embarked for Suvla Bay, landing on 18 August 1915. Following the attack on Chocolate and Scimitar Hills on 21 August, the 1/1st RBH remained in trenches in the vicinity of Chocolate Hill until brought back to Mudros on 1 November 1915.

Reorganising in Egypt, 'B' and 'C' squadrons then joined 'A' Squadron in the Western Frontier Force to undertake operations against Senussi tribesmen allied to the Turks in the Western Desert. Following the successful conclusion of the campaign against the Senussi, the 1/1st RBH returned to Egypt in October 1916. Now part of 6th Mounted Brigade in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, the 1/1st RBH advanced into Turkish-held Palestine, taking part in the battles of Gaza. On 13 November 1917 the 1/1st RBH led one of the British army's last great cavalry charges on Turkish positions at El Mughar. The regiment was pulled back to rest in December 1917.

In March 1918 the regiment was ordered to France to form part of a new 101st (Bucks and Berks) Battalion, Machine Gun Corps with the 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry. Its transport, SS Leasowe Castle, was torpedoed on 26/27 May 1918 but, fortunately, there were only two men lost. After training, the 101st moved into the front line in August 1918, ending the war at Oudenarde on the River Scheldt.



Men from 'B' Squadron, 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars in the courtyard of the King's Head, Aylesbury, 5 August 1914 (BMMT)



'A' Squadron, 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars in Market Hill, Buckingham, 10 August 1914 (BMMT)



**Recruits for 2/1st
Royal Bucks Hussars
at Buckingham,
November 1914
(BMMT)**



**3/1st Royal Bucks
Hussars exercising
at Buckingham, April
1915**

The 2/1st and 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars

The Territorial Force was authorised to raise reserve 'second line' regiments in September 1914. Accordingly, the 2/1st Royal Bucks Hussars began to form on 14 September 1914, although recruits had already been enrolled in Aylesbury. The Rothschilds opened a recruiting office at their London offices in St Swithin's Lane and a number of Jewish recruits were thereby obtained, as well as members of the City of London Mounted Police. Recruits were also obtained from Newmarket through the racing connections of the officers of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars and from the employees of The Daily Telegraph, owned by Lord Burnham. Indeed, Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. William. Lawson, later 3rd Lord Burnham, commanded the 2/1st RBH. His elder brother, Colonel the Hon. Harry Lawson, later 2nd Lord Burnham, was to command the 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars, while the son of William Lawson, Frederick Lawson, later 4th Lord Burnham, served with the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars.

The 2/1st RBH had its headquarters in Buckingham and remained there until May 1915, when it moved to Churn. Converted to a cyclists unit, it became part of 11th Cyclist Brigade at Canterbury in August 1917, remaining there until the end of the war. The function of the 2/1st RBH was to send reinforcing drafts both to the 1/1st RBH and also to other regiments.

Territorial 'third line' units were authorised in 1914, the 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars being raised at Buckingham in April 1915. It was sent to Tidworth in July 1915 to be absorbed into 7th Reserve Cavalry Regiment, this being absorbed subsequently into 3rd Reserve Cavalry Regiment at Aldershot in 1917. As with the 2/1st RBH, the function of the 3/1st RBH was to send drafts to other regiments.

Some Personalities

Captain Cyrus Perkins MC (1896-1986)

The son of a Canadian oil engineer, Cyrus Perkins was educated at Charterhouse. He was staying with school friends in Hull when the war broke out and immediately went up to London to enlist as a Royal Engineers motor cycle despatch rider. Subsequently, he obtained a commission in November 1914 as Second Lieutenant in the 7th Reserve Cavalry at Tidworth, training alongside the 3/1st Royal Bucks Hussars. Anxious to see action, he applied to Lord Burnham to transfer and secured a promise he would be sent out with the first available reinforcing draft. He reached the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars in January 1916 during the campaign against the Senussi. He was promoted to Lieutenant in March 1916. At El Mughar he was ordered to undertake a reconnaissance of the approach to the ridge to find cover for horses closer to the Turkish position. It was said in the later Official History that he 'cantered up and down under a hail of machine gun fire which followed him as the spotlight follows a dancer on stage'. Having found no cover, Perkins was then ordered to find Fred Lawson and bring up the detached 'A' Squadron. Perkins described the sensation of the charge as being constantly hit in the face with a pillow from the blast of shells. He calculated his mare had covered over 7½ miles, much of it at the gallop with almost no break. Perkins was awarded the MC for his role at El Mughar and was promoted Captain in 1918. Perkins remained with the regiment until the end of the war. He then studied geology at Trinity College, Cambridge, becoming a business executive for General Motors (Romania) and then Rediffusion. He was photographed for Soldier magazine standing in front of Beadle's second version of the charge at the Staff College in February 1982.



Cyrus Perkins (BMMT)



Fred Cripps (BMMT)

Lieutenant Colonel the Hon. Frederick Heyworth Cripps, 3rd Lord Parmoor, DSO and Bar, Croix de Guerre (1885-1977)

Originally commissioned into the Royal Bucks Hussars in 1903, Captain the Hon. Fred Cripps was commanding 'C' (High Wycombe) Squadron of the Royal Bucks Hussars in 1914. Cripps was a banker like his father, Alfred Cripps, 1st Lord Parmoor of the Frieth. Wounded on Gallipoli, Cripps rejoined the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars for the Senussi campaign in the Western Desert as Major and second-in-command. He took over command of the regiment in September 1917 with Evelyn de Rothschild as his second-in-command.

Awarded the DSO for his part in the charge at El Mughar, Cripps also commanded the 101st (Bucks and Berks) Battalion, Machine Gun Corps on the Western Front, for which he received the Croix de Guerre and a bar to his DSO. He stepped down from command of what was now the 99th (Bucks and Berks Yeomanry) Brigade, Royal Field Artillery in 1923 through involvement in a banking scandal. Cripps was acquitted of all charges relating to an Indian subsidiary but did not return to military life despite efforts by Lord Cottesloe to have him reinstated in 1928. He succeeded to the title on the death of his elder brother in 1937. His younger brother was Sir Stafford Cripps, the later Labour minister, who was a Red Cross ambulance driver during the Great War.

In the Second World War Cripps was commissioned in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve serving in a number of administrative appointments including Senior Naval Officer, Inverness and Comptroller of Liverpool Docks (South End).



**John Crocker Bulteel, Anthony de Rothschild and
Neil Primrose, 1917 (Rothschild Archive)**



**Evelyn de Rothschild,
October 1915 (Rothschild Archive)**



**Lionel Nathan de Rothschild
(Rothschild Archive)**



**Neil Primrose
(Rothschild Archive)**

British Jewry and the Royal Bucks Hussars

The Rothschild family became associated with the Royal Bucks Hussars soon after moving into Buckinghamshire. Nathaniel Mayer Rothschild, 1st Lord Rothschild (1840-1915) was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in 1863, being promoted Captain in 1885. He was Lord Lieutenant of Bucks from 1889 to 1915. His son, Lionel Walter Rothschild, 2nd Lord Rothschild (1868-1937) was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in 1889, retiring as a Major in 1909. He presented the regiment with its first machine gun in 1897. It was the 2nd Lord Rothschild who was the recipient of the celebrated Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917, by which Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, promised a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Lionel Walter's cousins, Lionel Nathan (1882-1942), Evelyn Achille (1886-1917) and Anthony Gustav de Rothschild (1887-1961), the sons of Leopold de Rothschild of Ascott House, Wing, all also joined the regiment. The Jewish World reported in August 1915 that Lionel Nathan had recruited over 40 young Jews for the RBH, Bucks Battalions and Bucks RAMC. In November it carried an advertisement for the new recruiting office at New Court, noting 'For some time past Major de Rothschild has been accepting recruits at New Court for the Royal Bucks Hussars and the Bucks Battalion.' The British Jewry Book of Honour lists 107 Jews serving in the Bucks

Battalions and at least 13 with the Royal Bucks Hussars. At least 24 Jews died serving with the Bucks Battalions and, of the 24 killed while serving with 2/4th OBLI, no less than 22 had been transferred from the Royal Bucks Hussars. It is highly likely, therefore, that there were many more Jewish recruits to the Royal Bucks Hussars yet to be identified. Lionel Nathan reached the rank of Major and received the OBE in the Military Division in 1917 for his recruiting work. Anthony was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in 1910 and promoted Lieutenant in August 1914 and Captain in 1918. Evelyn was directly commissioned as Captain in August 1914 and promoted Major in 1917. He was mortally wounded at El Mughar. Their cousin, the Hon. Neil Primrose MC, MP, son of Lord Rosebery and Hannah Rothschild of Mentmore (1882-1917), was commissioned in the regiment as Second Lieutenant in 1909, being promoted to Lieutenant in August 1914, to Captain in July 1916. He was killed at Abu Shusheh on 15 November 1917.

Edmund Leopold de Rothschild (1916-2009) of Exbury, the nephew of Lionel, Anthony and Evelyn, was commissioned in the regiment in 1935. He was invalided home with a near fatal blood infection in January 1940, subsequently transferring to the 77th (Highland) Field Regiment RA, with which he served in Tunisia and Italy. He ended the war as Major in the Jewish Brigade Group.

MAJOR ROTHSCHILD AND CAPTAIN PRIMROSE.

“AN UNQUALIFIED DENIAL.”

The following letter has been received by Colonel Lord Burnham, hon. colonel of the Royal Bucks Hussars, from Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. F. H. Cripps, D.S.O., who was in command of the regiment during the Palestine campaign :—

My dear Colonel,—In the recent trial a statement was made that two officers in the regiment were murdered from the rear in the Palestine campaign. I desire to give an absolute and unqualified denial to this foul suggestion against the honour of the regiment and of two of my brother officers, who fell under Turkish fire while leading their men with great gallantry on two different occasions. Both Major Evelyn de Rothschild and Captain the Hon. Neil Primrose were near me when they fell, and in tribute to their memory I wish to make the most positive statement in contradiction of the abominable suggestion made at the recent trial. I hope that for the honour of the regiment you will make my statement as widely known as possible.

Yours sincerely, FRED. CRIPPS, Lt.-Col.

The Royal Bucks Hussars and the ‘Black Book’

In June 1918 the notorious Noel Pemberton Billing, Independent MP for East Hertfordshire, went on trial for libel after accusing the actress and exotic dancer, Maud Allen, of lesbianism. Pemberton Billing also alleged that the Germans had a list of 47,000 British men and women in a ‘Black Book’ open to blackmail for sexual depravity. According to Pemberton Billing the list included ‘the names of Privy Councillors, youths of the chorus, wives of Cabinet Ministers, dancing girls, even Cabinet Ministers themselves, while diplomats, poets, bankers, editors, newspaper proprietors, members of His Majesty’s Household follow each other with no order of precedence’. Pemberton Billing was acquitted by the jury in a manifestation of the public concern with the supposed laxity of wartime sexual mores.

Pemberton Billing’s key witness was Mrs Ellen Villiers-Stuart, a former mistress of Neil Primrose. She claimed to have shared a taxi journey with Evelyn de Rothschild and Primrose, during which the former had shown her the actual book and the latter had said he was going to retire from the House of Commons in order to expose the German plot. She also alleged that Evelyn and Primrose had been ‘murdered from the rear’ during the actions at El Mughar and Abu Shusheh in order to silence them. Both men, of course, were safely dead.

A letter from Fred Cripps to Lord Burnham was published in *The Times* on 7 June 1918 refuting the ‘foul suggestion against the honour of the regiment and of two of my brother officers’.

Tried for bigamy in September 1918, Mrs Villiers-Stuart admitted that she had concocted the whole story in collusion with Pemberton Billing, whose mistress she had become. She was sentenced to nine months’ hard labour. His reputation damaged, Pemberton Billing retired from the Commons in 1921 on the grounds of ill health, turning his hand to invention. He failed on four occasions to win by-elections during the Second World War. Pemberton Billing died in 1948.

John Irvine Corrie Boswell as a Lieutenant in the Royal Bucks Hussars (Alexander Boswell)



Old and New Weapons of War

Cavalry could be used freely in Palestine in a way that was not possible on the Western Front, the Desert Mounted Corps comprising in 1917 three mounted divisions and three independent brigades drawn from Australian, New Zealand and Indian units as well as the British yeomanry.

Nonetheless, modernity was just as apparent with the use of lorried transport alongside horse, mule and camel. Poison gas was used at Third Gaza albeit none too successfully, and alongside more traditional field intelligence methods such as the planting of a haversack with false British plans by Richard Meinertzhagen, which helped deceive the Turks, there was interception of Turkish wireless signals.

Tanks, too, were used in the Gaza battles, eight machines - a mixture of the Marks I and II - being deployed in March 1916. One of the tank crews was John Irvine Corrie Boswell of North Crawley. Originally commissioned as lieutenant in the Royal Bucks Hussars in 1909 before becoming a tea planter in Ceylon, Boswell initially joined his father in working as a Red Cross ambulance driver in France in 1914. Boswell rejoined the regiment in 1915 as a private soldier despite his previous rank. Transferring to the new Tank Corps, he was enlisted as a gunner. Aged 27, he was killed at Gaza by a sniper on 2 November 1917 and is buried in Gaza War Cemetery.

The tanks were used as individual machines rather than en masse. Two were knocked out at Second Gaza while one was ditched and another broke down. Three Mark IVs arrived in time for Third Gaza. Six tanks were then used on 2 November, five being damaged with one knocked out and one stuck and abandoned. Boswell was the only crew member killed. The press was enthusiastic but tanks were not deemed a success in desert conditions. They were not used again in Palestine. The additional impact of desert heat on the appalling working environment within a tank - considerable noise and vibration as well as the engine fumes and ever-present danger of carbon monoxide poisoning - can hardly be imagined.



Lieutenants Manning and Archer by an abandoned tank, Gaza 1917 (BMMT)

The Paintings

The Charge of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars at El Mughar by Thomas Cantrell Dugdale (1920)

Thomas Cantrell Dugdale (1880-1952) was born in Blackburn and educated at Manchester Grammar School, the Manchester School of Art and the Royal College of Art. Dugdale first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1901, becoming an associate in 1936 and a full member in 1942. Dugdale saw war service as an NCO with 1/1st City of London Yeomanry at Gallipoli and in Egypt and Palestine, some of his wartime images from the Middle East being acquired by the Imperial War Museum including a painting of the charge of the 2nd (Indian) Lancers at El Afuli (Afulah) in Syria in September 1918. Later portraits are held by the RAF Museum and Dugdale worked for the War Artists Advisory Committee in the Second World War. Dugdale's familiarity with Palestine may well account for Frederick Cripps, later 3rd Lord Parmoor, commissioning this work.

[Lord Parmoor/Bucks Military Museum Trust]





BMMT

The Action of the 6th Mounted Brigade (The Bucks, Berks and Dorset Yeomanry) at El Mughar by James Prinsep Beadle (1922)

James Prinsep Beadle (1863-1947), son of Major General James Beadle, was born in Calcutta and studied at the Slade School and the École des Beaux Arts in Paris as well as with G. F. Watts in London. A prolific painter of military subjects in traditional style, Beadle first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1884. This first version of the charge of the 1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars was undertaken for the United Service Club, Pall Mall and still hangs in what is now the Institute of Directors. Beadle did a second version of the painting in 1936 with the slightly different title of 'Charge of the Bucks, Berks, and Dorset Yeomanry at El Mughar, Palestine Campaign, 13 November 1917) for the Staff College, Camberley. It now hangs in the UK Defence Academy, Watchfield. After the war, Beadle turned increasingly to landscapes, last exhibiting at the RA in 1929. The three named officers of the Royal Bucks Hussars depicted - the left-handed Captain 'Crocker' Bulteel, Lieutenant Richard Manning, and Lieutenant Cyrus Perkins - all sat for Beadle in his studio on dummy horses.

The original pencil sketch also displayed was presented to the Bucks County Territorial Association by the artist, 1921 (BMMT)

[Crown Commissioners/Institute of Directors]



1/1st Royal Bucks Hussars on the move, 1917 (BMMT)