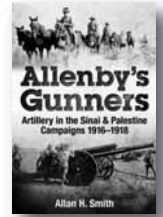


Allenby's gunners: artillery in the Sinai & Palestine campaigns 1916-1918

by Alan H. Smith

Big Sky Publishing: Newport, NSW; 2016; 376 pp; ISBN 978-1-925275-75-9 (hardback); RRP \$34.99



Allenby's Gunners tells the story of artillery in the Sinai and Palestine campaigns of World War I. A shortage of Australian gunners saw British Territorial artillery allotted to the Australian Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Rifle brigades. It was a relationship that would prove highly successful and *Allenby's Gunners* provides a detailed description of the artillery, cavalry and infantry operations.

Most Australians have heard of the Australian Light Horse exploits in the Sinai and Palestine and particularly the charge

at Beersheba in October 1917 by Chauvel's Desert Mounted Corps. Few, however, have studied the details of the difficult campaigns and heavy losses undertaken by the mainly British Divisions in the Middle Eastern campaigns, including in the Sinai and Palestine in 1916-17, that led up to the successes at Beersheba, the capture of Jerusalem on 9 December 1917 and the subsequent advances up the Jordan Valley to eventually take Damascus. Few understand the stiff resistance offered by the Turkish

Forces with their German advisers or the effectiveness of the Ottoman gunners in the Sinai. Less still has been written about the critical fire support provided to General Allenby's forces by the Royal Artillery gunners and through the bombing and counter battery actions of the fledgling Australian and Royal Flying Corps. I found that this book covers all these aspects well.

The author, Alan Smith, is well-known in Australia as an Army historian. Alan has drawn upon his service as a Reservist with the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) and on attachments with the Royal Artillery and Royal Canadian Artillery to build his extensive knowledge of artillery history and heritage and to subsequently research and publish on gunnery. In addition to writing several RAA biographies and being the editor of the RAA Historical Company's periodic journal *Cannonball* from 2004 to 2012, Alan has published three earlier manuscripts: *Gunners in Borneo: artillery during confrontation 1962-66* in 2008; *Do unto others: counter bombardment in Australia's military campaigns* in 2011; and *Battle winners: Australian artillery in the Western Desert 1940-1942* in 2014. *Allenby's Gunners* is a fine addition to his collection.

in the Sinai and Palestine. The book is well organised as a series of three narratives with supporting chapters which describe: the Background through to April 1917; the Northern Thrust from November 1917 to May 1918; and, finally, the exploitations up the Jordan Valley and through Syria from May – November 1918. For each of the major battles in these phases of the campaign, the role of fire support in the success or otherwise of the action is discussed in detail.

The book is very well researched and laid out. It is replete with photographs, maps, tables and diagrams that amplify the description. In addition to well-developed endnotes, bibliography and an index, it includes eight appendices that clearly describe the chronology of the campaigns, key staff and organisation of the Australian Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles of the Desert Mounted Corps, various artillery and cavalry orders of battle, and details of artillery and other major ammunition expenditures during the battles. These assist the reader to appreciate the intricacies and difficulties of the artillery support to the campaigns.

I was fascinated by the way that Allenby's forces coped with the harsh desert conditions, their perseverance during setbacks and the way in which they developed their firepower planning, logistics and tactics to respond to the difficult situations faced. I believe all those interested in the Middle East campaigns of World War I, and particularly the development of gunnery and the use of the Desert Mounted Corps during this period, will enjoy this book.

Major General Tim Ford, AO (Ret'd)