

Strange Bedfellows at Ziza

With the Light Horse's Ziza Field in the news lately, some readers have asked about the significance of the name. Troop President Terry Murphy provided this great rendition of the story of the surrender at Ziza that highlights the relevance to their 5th Light Horse Regiment. It serves as an unusual tale of peace between enemies in the midst of a bloody war.

A bizarre situation occurred on September 28, 1918, as 5,000 despondent soldiers retreating from Arabia from the Turkish Maan garrison, arrived at the village of Ziza, south of Amman. The Maan garrison was hopelessly cut off and had been fleeing northwards. The Turkish soldiers were being harassed by a Bedouin Arab tribe numbered in their thousands called the Beni Sakr, who intimidated and circled them like vultures waiting to collect the booty, as they were wont to do.

Soon after daylight, a resourceful young pilot dropped a message into the Turkish camp, telling the commander that Amman with all the water to the north was held by Major General Chaytor, that resistance was useless and that if he did not surrender his force, he would be heavily bombed from the air that evening.

Not receiving a reply, two squadrons of the 5th Light Horse Regiment from Queensland were sent to investigate. They discovered that whilst he was willing to surrender to a British force strong enough to defend his disarmed men against the Arabs, the Turkish Commander could not risk doing so to a handful of Light Horsemen.

Lieutenant Colonel Cameron, the ducy leader of the 5th Light Horse Regiments, promptly took two Arab chiefs hostage, put the Turks around them and ordered the Turks to hold their arms and protect themselves (thus protecting the Australians who were outnumbered eight to one), and told the Arabs that if they attacked, their chiefs would immediately be shot!

(Continued from Page 2)

The 7th Light Horse Regiment assisted in the defence of the position overnight and this unlikely coupling of Turkish and Australian troops stood guard until daylight. By the next morning the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade had arrived and it was safe to disarm the Turks and formally take them prisoner. Thus the Turks and Australians, who had fought one another for 4 years, spent the night happily together until reinforcements arrived in the morning and they were escorted safely away from the disapproving Arabs into the custody of the Allied forces.

H Septimus Power is well known for his superb large-scale paintings of horses in battle. In 'Ziza' the artist has captured this remarkable desert drama. This dramatic painting depicts the unique event where members the Australian Light Horse for one night shared food

and fire with soldiers of the Turkish Army and joined forces with the Turks against Arabs from the Beni Sakhr tribes.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART12673

Surrender at Ziza 28 September 1918

Thanks to MDSRC