



In Memory of
Corporal
JOHN ARTHUR THOMSON
359, 11th Australian Light Horse
who died age 24
on 8th November 1917

Son of Arthur Polloch Thomson, and Marianne Thomson,
of Marnhull, Dalby, Queensland

Remembered with honour
BEERSHEBA WAR CEMETERY, ISRAEL



CORPORAL
JOHN ARTHUR THOMSON
11TH AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE
SERVICE No: 359



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P03452.022

John Arthur Thomson was a young Dalby man, the son of Arthur Polloch Thomson and Marianne Thomson of “Marnbull” near Dalby, whose name came to the Toowoomba Mothers’ Memorial through his student days at the Toowoomba Grammar School. John was almost 22 years of age when he presented for his medical on 24 April 1915; he formally took the oath as a volunteer on 2 May.

John wrote his occupation as stockman, with military experience in the school cadets. He was 5’6” tall and weighed 144 pounds, with a fair complexion, light brown eyes, dark brown hair and gave his denomination as COE. Upon marching into the light horse camp he was posted to the 11th Light Horse Regiment as an original of B Squadron. The 11th embarked for overseas at Brisbane aboard A30 *Borda* on 2 June 1915. There was some urgency to John’s training schedule as the new unit was desperately needed as reinforcements at Gallipoli.

The men of the 11th LHR were broken up once they stepped ashore at Gallipoli on 25 August, John’s squadron being attached to the 5th LHR, a mixed Queensland/South Australian unit that had been fighting on the peninsula since late May. A particularly uncomfortable aspect of the fighting at Gallipoli was the use of “bombs” – later, better known as hand grenades. On 8 October John was wounded in action, fortunately not severely, but worrying nonetheless, with a wound described as “bomb wound, face, slight”. He was evacuated to the St Eline Hospital at Malta. His Gallipoli campaign was over.

John recovered at Malta and was shipped back to Egypt at the same time the men withdrawn from Gallipoli arrived at Christmas 1915. He was re-attached to his old 11th LHR.

For the remainder of 1916 and well into 1917 the light horse operations in the Middle East consisted of a long mobile fight in Sinai and then a static battle for the strategic city of Gaza, the gateway to Palestine. One hundred years later the city is still the scene of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. For most of 1917 the British forces laid siege to Gaza; the Turkish garrison proved very difficult to crack, although the British tactics were often inept. Finally, in the late months of 1917 the British efforts were rewarded with success and the city was occupied. Towards the end of this struggle John Thomson was given a couple of weeks at the Port Said rest camp. He returned to the front on 7 October.

The capture of Gaza led to a general Turkish withdrawal to the north and widespread fighting throughout southern Palestine. The AIF light horse regiments were integral to the British advance. The vital town of Beersheba, east of Gaza was captured in the famous charge on 30 October 1917. In fighting on 7 November at Sheria John received a “GSW abdomen”. The wound was described as dangerous; he was evacuated to the 75th CCS where he died the following day. He was buried at El Imara by the chaplain O.H. Knight. After the capture of Beersheba, a major military cemetery was established and John’s remains were transferred there after the war (grave Q.70).

From 1921 to 1923 Arthur and Marianne Thomson received the medals and mementoes due to their son's sacrifice. John had turned 24 years of age when he died.

Toowoomba Grammar School Archive Records State that he started school on 30th January 1906 and left on 16th December 1911. His achievements are recorded as:

- Sports & Activities -

1908 - Cricket, 1st XI

1910 - Cricket, 1st XI

1909 - Rugby, 1st XV

1910 - Rugby, 1st XV

1911 - Rugby, 1st XV

- Leadership -

1910 - School Prefects, School Prefect

1911 - School Prefects, School Prefect

The School Magazine of May 1918 states, '*THOMSON, J. ARTHUR-Prefect 1910-1912. Football Capt. 1912. Corporal iith (afterwards Vth) Light Horse. Died of wounds at Gaza, November 9th, 1917. Aged 24. Son of A. P. Thomson, of Marnhull, Dalby.*'

External Links:

[CWGC](#)

[AWM4 AIF unit war diaries 10/16/26 11th LHR NOV 1917](#)

[Australian War Memorial Honour Roll](#)

[Australian National Archives Military Record](#)



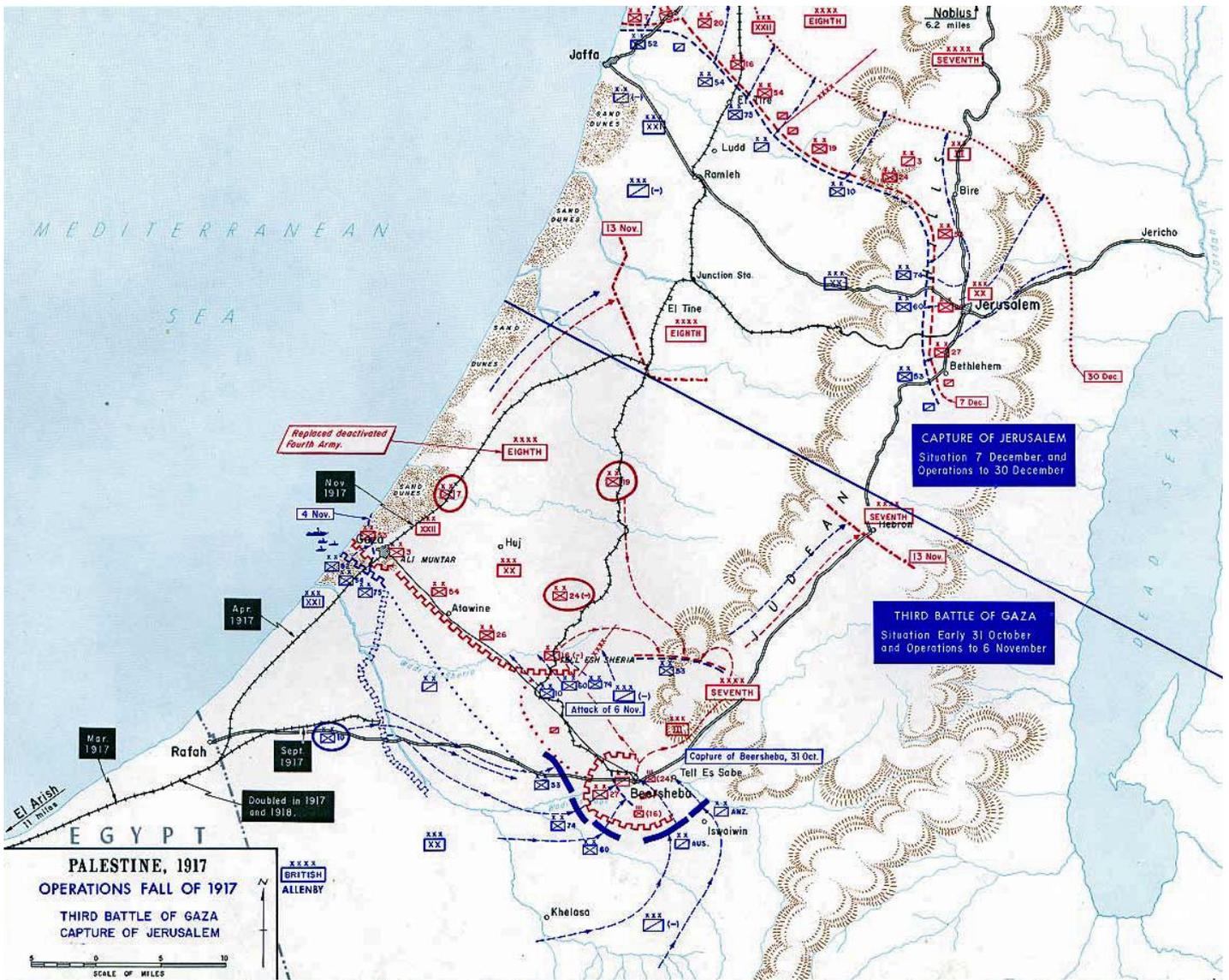
The 4th LHR charge on 31st October 1917. The 11th LHR was in reserve.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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B Squadron, 11th Australian Light Horse



Third_battle_of_gaza