

TEAM EFFORT:

Ethnic Groups and other Armies in the Allied Forces – Jill Curry

Australian Curriculum, Year 9 – ACDSEH095

Not all ANZACs were white Australian males of British extraction. The Allied forces had amongst their ranks soldiers from many different nationalities and ethnicities. There was a Hong Kong and Singapore Battery manning mountain guns. Especially in the latter part of the Middle Eastern campaign Indians played a vital part. Other soldiers came from the West Indies and Malaysia. Britain was recruiting from all her colonies to replace the thousands who were being killed and injured on the battle field. They fought side by side and often died side by side also.



There were at least 16 soldiers of Chinese extraction in the ANZAC Light Horse forces. The most famous of these was William Edward 'Billy' Sing. Billy Sing was born in Clermont, Queensland to an English mother and Chinese father and served in Gallipoli and France. He had honed his shooting skills at the Proserpine Rifle Club before he volunteered for the army in October 1914. As a sniper in the 5th Light Horse Regiment at Chatham's Post on the Gallipoli peninsula he became known as the 'crack shot of the ANZACs', picking off at least 150 enemy fighters in three months. He won a Distinguished Conduct Medal in March 1916 for his ability. Transferred to the 31st Battalion in France, he continued his successful work and was awarded the Belgium Croix de Guerre in 1918. He did not escape the bullets himself and was wounded several times in his legs and back as well as being gassed and contracting illness. He returned to Australia in July 1918 and was eventually discharged as unfit for service.



Sir John Monash was an Australian Jew who led the forces through Gallipoli and the Western Front. It was largely due to his strategies and expertise that the war finally came to an end.



There were also about 50 Jews who served amongst the ANZAC Light Horse. Most notable of these was Major Eric Montague Hyman from Tamworth who led the 'A' Squadron of the 12th Light Horse in the charge at Beersheba. He was awarded a Distinguished Service Order (despite being recommended for a VC) for his "conspicuous gallantry and dash in action. He led his squadron at full gallop against a Turkish redoubt, which was strongly manned with enemy machine guns and rifles. The enemy opened up with a very heavy fire but the charge was so vigorous and skilled that the enemy was overrun and his fire silenced in a few minutes, thus enabling the regiment to carry on the assault and complete the capture of Beersheba".¹

The Zion Mule Corps was formed in 1915 of Jews most of whom were secular (many of them refugees forced to leave Turkish Palestine). The mules were used for transporting purposes, often carrying ammunition. It was disbanded after Gallipoli. By February 1918, the Jewish Legion – 38th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (called by the British the ‘Jewsiliers’) was formed. This soon expanded into the 39th and 40th Battalions and American Jews also enlisted. Amongst their ranks were Yitzak Ben Zvi (who later became the 2nd President of the Israel) and David Ben Gurion (the first Prime Minister of Israel). The Jewish Legion played a crucial role in capturing and holding the Jordan River crossing, which allowed the allied troops to cross for the last campaign into Transjordan and the final capture of Amman.



Indian infantry served as part of the British troops throughout the campaign in the Middle East. Additional infantry and cavalry troops were added from May 1918 to replace the British troops that had been transferred from Palestine to the Western Front. Their mounted horsemen joined the 4th and 5th Cavalry and played a significant role in the final thrust to break the Turkish line and swept north taking Haifa and Mt Carmel before continuing on along the coast to Tripoli and Beirut. There were Lahore and Meerut infantry divisions, Alwar and Patiala infantry and Gurkha Rifles, and Hyderabad, Jodhpur, Mysore, and Poona Lancers in the cavalry. Gullett records good relationships with the ANZAC troops when they were working together and that they had performed well with special praise for the lancers.²

Notes:

1. <http://www.jwire.com.au/remembering-light-horse/>
2. Gullett, H., *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918. Vol VII, Sinai and Palestine*. Angus and Robertson, 1923, P 595-596, 654

Pictures:

1. Billy Sing – DCM, 5th Light Horse Regiment. Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P03633.006> Gale's Studios Ltd, UK.
2. Medallion given to Billy Sing <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/REL38023>
3. Major Eric Hyman <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/H01633/>
4. Zion Mule Corps <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30248216>
5. Indian cavalry entering Damascus <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/B00314/>

Powerpoint:

1. Text only
2. Billy Sing – DCM, 5th Light Horse Regiment. Australian War Memorial <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/P03633.006> Gale's Studios Ltd, UK.
3. Medallion given to Billy Sing <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/REL38023>
4. Major Eric Hyman <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/H01633/>
5. Sir John Monash <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/A02697/>
6. Zion Mule Corps <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30248216>
7. Indian cavalry entering Damascus <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/B00314/>