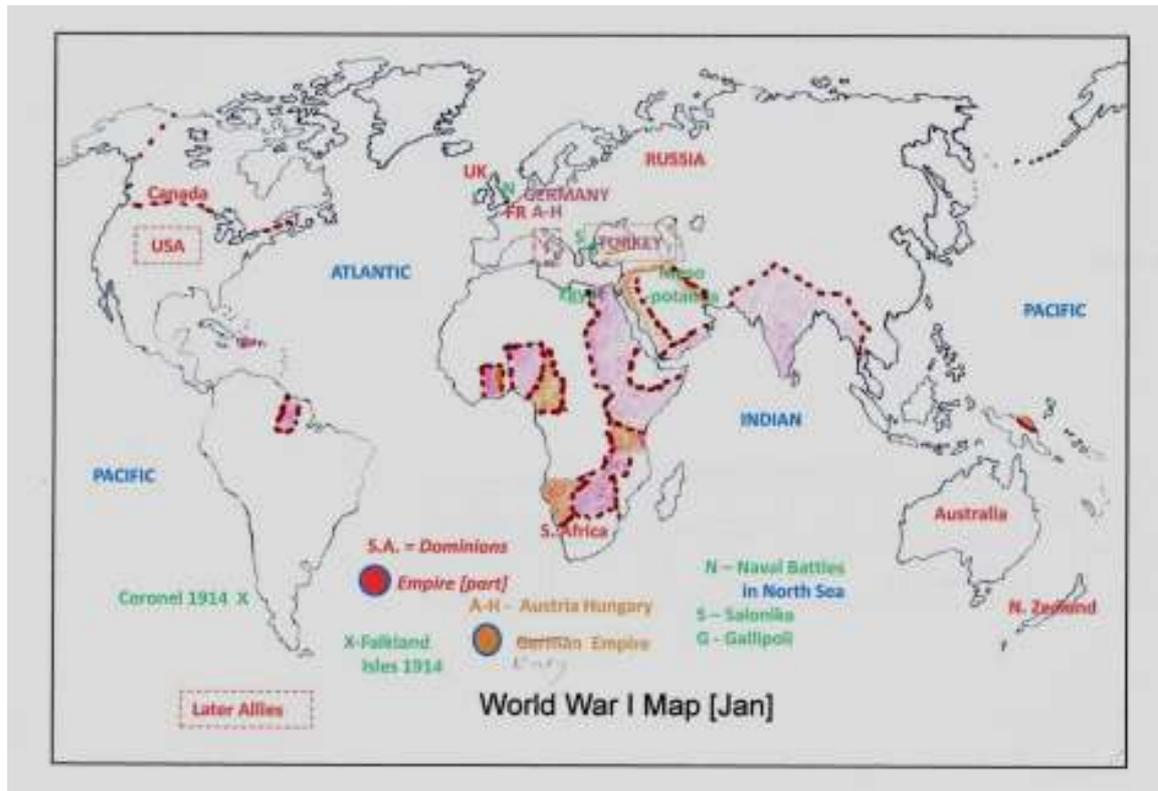


# The War through the Eyes of Combatants

## Map of First World War

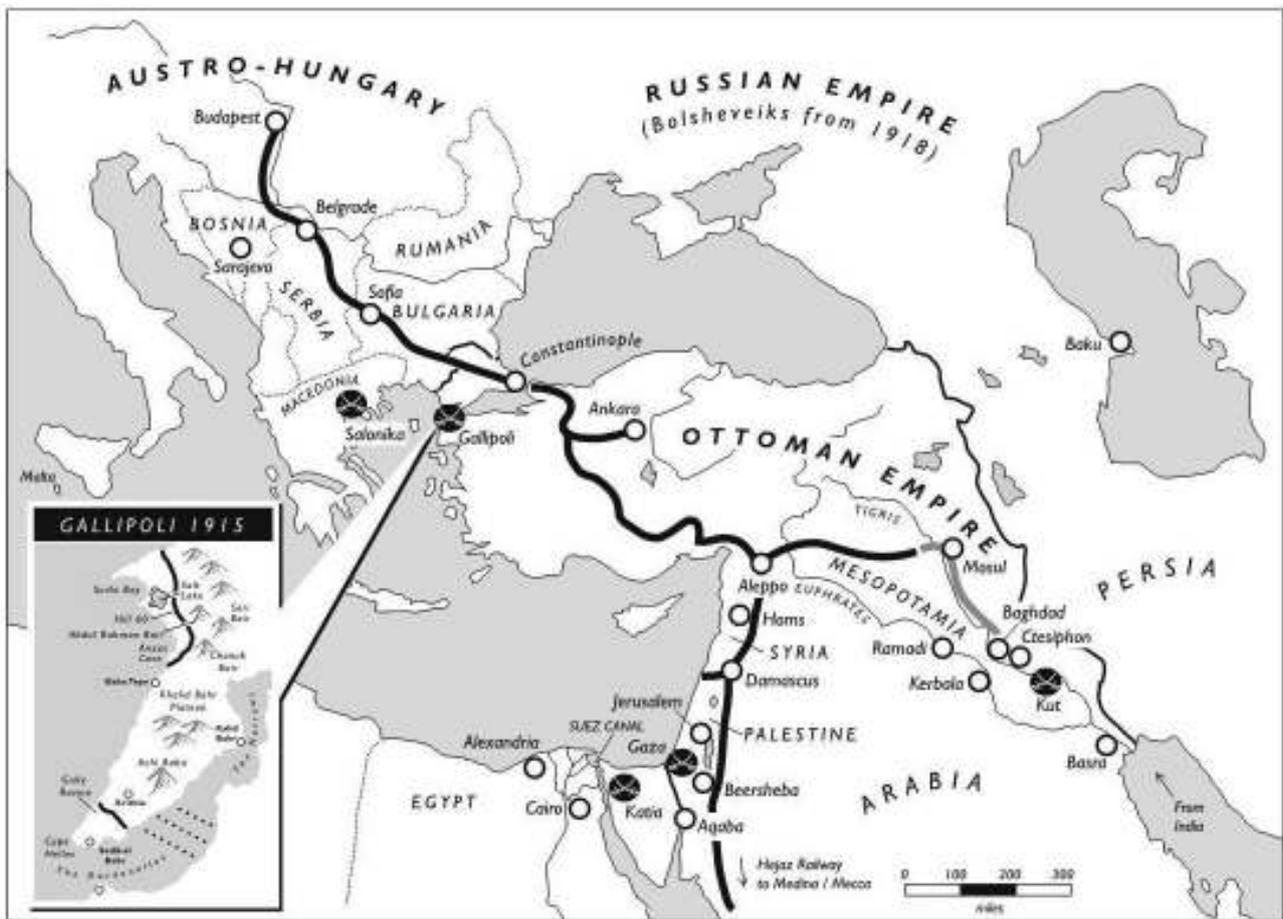


Map showing areas affected by World War I [Draft]

### Synopsis of Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>"Western Front"</u>	<u>World</u>	<u>Naval Warfare</u>
1914	Aug-Sept: <i>Mons, Marne, Aisne</i> Oct-Nov: Ypres I & Trench War	Declaration of War	Blockade Nov: <i>Coronel &amp; Falklands</i>
1915	Trench Warfare & Ypres II Sept-Oct: <i>Loos</i>	<b><i>Dardanelles/Gallipoli/ Mesopotamian Campaign</i></b>	<i>Dogger Bank</i> U-Boats: <i>Lusitania</i> sunk
1916	April-Dec: Germans v <i>Verdun</i> March: <i>Conscription</i> in UK Jul-Nov: <i>The Somme</i>	Egypt: <i>Katia &amp; Mesopotamia [Iraq]: Kut</i> v. Bulgaria: Salonika, Greece	<i>Battle of Jutland</i> Unrestricted U-Boats
1917	Spring: Germans withdraw to <i>Hindenburg Line</i> Jul-Nov: Ypres III [ <i>Passchendaele</i> ]	<b>April USA enters WWI</b>  <b>Nov: Russian Bolshevik Revolution</b> Dec: Jerusalem taken from Turks	Unrestricted U-Boats German Blockade tightens
1918	Trench Warfare 21 March: German Attack  8 Aug: Allied Counter-Attack 11-11 Armistice	Russia makes peace: UK sends force to fight in Civil War UK Italian Campaign v Austria German allies withdraw	German Blockade tightens German Naval Mutiny
1919	28 June Peace of Paris with most belligerents ends war		Blockade continues until June
1920-1926		Memorials erected in Tewkesbury	

## *The Gallipoli Campaign's Context on the War*



As 1915 came to a close, another year of disappointment and huge losses for the Allies, some key events unfolded. General French, as we have seen, was replaced by General Sir Douglas Haig as commander of the *BEF*. The decision had also been taken to evacuate *Gallipoli* – which had been taking place in 1915 as a very expensive sideshow - and concentrate efforts on the Western Front. The British Army in France was continuing to grow and, at the year-end, comprised 37 infantry divisions and five cavalry divisions, giving it a strength of nearly one million men; the *BEF* now held around 70 miles of the front. Its casualties for 1915 amounted to 312,000 men; those in the French Army exceeded 1.2 million.

### i. **The Gallipoli Campaign 1915-1916: Ending the Stalemate?**

The *Gallipoli* Campaign was a very bold, and some would say misconceived, attempt to end the stalemate on the Western front by launching a campaign against Turkey. The Allies had originally sent supplies to the Russians via the only available route, the *Dardanelles* and the Black Sea. That became impossible after the Allies declared war on Turkey (the *Ottoman Empire*) on 5 November 1914 as the Turks then mined the *Dardanelles Straits*. However, the Allies saw an opportunity to strengthen their own cause, and weaken Germany, by seizing the *Gallipoli Peninsula* on the western shore of the *Dardanelles*, with Constantinople as its objective. By capturing Constantinople, the Allies hoped to link up with the Russians, knock Turkey out of the war and, possibly, persuade the Balkan states to join the Allies.

The campaign began with a naval attack, conceived by Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty. British and French warships bombarded Turkish forts on the *Dardanelles Straits* in February and March 1915. However, the assault failed; many of the ships were damaged or sunk by mines and the naval force was withdrawn. With the element of surprise already lost, a major land invasion of the *Gallipoli Peninsula* started on 25 April, involving British and French troops, as well as divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (*ANZACs*) was then hastily organised with the aim of capturing the north coast of the Peninsula and silencing the Turkish artillery. Lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the terrain,

along with fierce Turkish resistance, hampered the success of the invasion. By mid-October, Allied forces had suffered heavy casualties and had made little headway from their initial landing sites.



1: Ship repatriating the wounded Fred Green, 7<sup>th</sup> Gloucesters, Oct. 1915 [Museum]

At the outset, the nearest soldiers were Australians and New Zealanders resting in Egypt on their way to Europe - and the **Royal Naval Division** comprising naval reservists who were surplus to requirements. Further British and French colonial divisions were added to create what became the *Mediterranean Expeditionary Force*. However, the delay enabled the Turks to organise their defences under German command.

Mediterranean mounted more significant problems. It was no surprise, therefore, that the first Tewkesbury loss on 17 April 1915 came with the sinking of a troopship, *SS Manitou*, by a Turkish submarine: “*What might have been the destruction of an entire brigade of artillery resulted in a regrettable but comparatively small number of casualties by drowning and bruises*”. One of them was **Shoeing-Smith Walter W. Pittman** [#] of *147th Royal Field Artillery Regiment*: to lose vital guns was an inauspicious start to the campaign.

Cross-Channel supply routes were never really hampered by the enemy – but supplying an army in the

### Map and Events of Gallipoli Campaign

<u>Date</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Map [S. Eedle]</u>
August 1914	Russian defeat at <i>Tannenburg</i>	
5 Nov. 1914	UK declared war on Turkey	
18-23 March 1915	Naval attack via <i>Dardanelles</i>	
25 April 1915	Landings at <i>Cape Helles</i>	
<b>May 1915</b>	<b>Formation of Coalition Gov. in UK</b>	
12-13 July	Third Battle of <i>Krithia</i>	
19 July	7 <sup>th</sup> <i>Gloucesters</i> land	
8 August	Suvla Bay Landings & Battle of <i>Chunuk Bair</i>	
6-21 August	Battle of <i>Sari Bair</i>	
20 August	Reinforcements land at <i>Anzac Cove</i>	
21 August	Battle of <i>Hill 60</i>	
11 October	Declaration of War by <i>Bulgaria for Central Powers</i>	
Dec. 1915- Jan. 1916	Evacuation of <i>Gallipoli</i> Theatre by Allies	

The initial landings at *Cape Helles* were successful, if costly, in that the Allies managed to establish poor quality coastal footholds. However, they were not able to progress inland and were subject to effective

counter attacks by well-organised Turkish forces, determined to expel the invaders. It does not seem that Tewkesbury men took part in these early battles. **Cpl. George Eagles [#]** of the Royal Naval Division was a replacement, who only joined his battalion at *Cape Helles* on 30 May. He was involved in the protracted trench warfare on the barren peninsular. He was merely posted “*missing, presumed dead*” on 13 July, the day when his unit was involved in a follow up attack to the *Third Battle of Krithia*. Some limited progress was made but at great cost; *the Royal Naval Division* suffered some 600 casualties, including Cpl Eagles.

Six days later, reinforcements arrived straight from Britain, among them the 7<sup>th</sup> *Glosters*, one of the *Kitchener Battalions*. They were soon in battle and, just a week later on 26 July, **Pte. W. J. M. Parker [#]** was shot through the head in the vicinity of *Gully Ravine*. The final offensive on this front petered out by the middle of July so it is reasonable to assume that Pte. Parker was killed in the trench warfare that followed; the nature of his wound suggests he may well have been the victim of a sniper.

Failures caused both sides to call up reinforcements and, on 8 August, the allies sent a new invasion force to *Suvla Bay*. Again it was initially successful but, by the time the Allied troops attempted to move inland, Turkish reinforcements had arrived to strengthen their defences. The *Battle of Sari Bair* then took place during which the Australian *15th Battalion* was part of a force involved in an attack on 6 August against the *Abdel Rahman Bair* heights, known to the Australians as ‘*Hill 971*’. The attack was a failure and, by 8 August, the 15th battalion alone was reduced to about 30% of its normal strength. **Pte. J. G. Coleman [#]** was one of the casualties and was the first Tewkesbury pre-War emigrant to be killed.

At the same time the 7<sup>th</sup> *Glosters* were involved in this final attempt to break out of the *Anzac Cove* perimeter. The *Battle of Chunuk Bair* was one of a number of battles to this end. Although the plan was sound, previously taken aerial photographs were deceptive, as they did not reveal timber-reinforced overhead protection on the Turkish trenches. The fighting was bloody, confused and both sides suffered ‘friendly fire’ casualties. Despite that, elements of the battalion reached the crest of *Chunuk Bair* and, as Turkish reinforcements arrived, repulsed repeated attacks throughout the day. The dwindling band of survivors was relieved on the evening of 8 August by other British units but, two days later, the position was lost to a major Turkish offensive. The battalion lost every officer and sergeant and over 350 other ranks: **L/Cpl. W. G. Prosser [#]** was killed in action on 8 August 1915; his body was never recovered.

Part of the same attempt to break out of *Suvla Bay* involved the *1<sup>st</sup> Herefords*, a Territorial battalion, which included Tewkesbury exile, **L/Cpl. T. J. Osborne [#]**. He was killed on the last day of the battle on 15 August; one hopes that the family took heart when the battalion was specifically mentioned in despatches by C-in-C General Ian Hamilton: “*the 1st/1st Herefordshire attacked with impetuosity and courage*”.

Reinforcements arrived at *Anzac Cove* on 20 August 1915. The second of Mrs. Didcote’s sons, pre-war emigrant, **Pte. W. B. Didcote [#]**, took part almost immediately in the *Battle of Hill 60*, the last major assault of the **Gallipoli** campaign. The attack was launched on 21 August and, whilst the men were fresh and healthy - in stark contrast to the veteran troops - they were inexperienced and ill equipped. Attacking with bayonet only, they suffered 383 casualties in their first attack. Pte. Didcote’s body was never recovered. However, the Australians seemed to mount an inquiry into every death and it concluded that, “*the intervening ground was covered with low scrub which caught fire from the bursting Turkish shells, so that it was impossible to recover the discs or recognise the bodies. It is to be hoped that the knowledge that Pte. Didcote fell in one of the most gallant and historic charge, which has taken place in this war, will be of comfort to his friends*”.<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, the campaign petered out into stalemate, dysentery seeming to be the most serious enemy.



2 *The Successful Evacuation from Gallipoli*  
[Hammerton]

However, the environment could still be lethal as evidenced in November 1915, when the *Record* reported that **Pte. W. A. Attwood [#]**, *1<sup>st</sup> Herefords*, had received a gunshot wound in the head, presumably during the endemic trench warfare. He was successfully evacuated to the hospital base on Malta. Despite the claim that he was attended by the best surgeons, he died on 6 December as the last local casualty of this campaign. The lack of success, and the declaration of war by Bulgaria, led to the campaign being abandoned: the decision to evacuate *Gallipoli* was inevitable.

It is generally acknowledged that the evacuation was the

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Didcote received a pension of 40s (£2) fortnightly from 23 October 1917; not from the date of his death.

best-executed segment of the entire campaign. More than 100,000 troops were successfully evacuated, although much capital equipment had to be destroyed or left behind. Official casualties were estimated at 205,000 British, including around 33,000 ANZAC troops, 47,000 French and 251,000 Turkish. To illustrate the conditions in Gallipoli, around 145,000 of the British casualties were due to sickness; dysentery, diarrhoea and enteric fever. Politically the Turks were much encouraged to confront the British in Mesopotamia - while Russia descended into chaos and revolution in 1917.

The campaign had also caused a major political crisis in England; as early as May 1915 a Liberal-Conservative Coalition Government was formed with the demotion of Churchill as a pre-condition. The failure in Gallipoli caused the resignation of P. M., **Herbert H. Asquith** and his replacement by **Lloyd George**. The leader of the Turkish defence forces, **Mustafa Kemal**, became President after the war.

Even the surviving British soldiers did not earn the expected '*Blighty One*' as some were sent on to **Salonika** and others back to the Western Front. Churchill, in a quixotic gesture, joined them temporarily as the commander of a battalion of Royal Scots Fusiliers in the trenches near *Ypres*.

Tewkesburian **Pte. Thomas Day** was one of the lucky ones – his shot in the arm earned him that precious "*Blighty One*" - he went on to father two founding members of *THS*



Pte. T. Day's Souvenir of Gallipoli [C. Day]

## Postscripts to the Gallipoli Campaign

### 1. Naval

Just as naval rivalry to build revolutionary '*Dreadnought*' battleships had contributed to the atmosphere that had led up to war with Germany in August 1914, it had been similar concerns that provoked the Ottoman Empire into siding with the central Powers in late 1914. That ambitious country had ordered two '*Dreadnoughts*' from British shipyards. However, Winston Churchill, suspended the contract; this provoked outrage and the Kaiser opportunistically presented the Ottomans with two battle cruisers, the *Goebben* and *Breslau*. There followed the first naval drama of the war as the two ships evaded the British Navy to reach Constantinople, after which hostilities broke out and Churchill's **Gallipoli Campaign** was the consequence.

However, on 20 January 1918 a British submarine *E17* tried to attack the *Goebben*, then flagship of the Turkish navy. *E17* was sunk by mines during an attack when Turks attacked British base of Mudros in Aegean Sea - only 7 hands were saved. One crewmember, **Signaller Charles M. Timbrell**, a professional seaman, Council School volunteer and grandson of Chance Street Crossing gatekeeper Charles Haines, was posted as a POW but was later freed.

### 2. Recruitment 1915

The Declaration of War and the appeals of Lord Kitchener had combined with other factors to create the 1914 "*Storm of Recruitment*". In 1914 the total available number of men of military age was 5.5 million, with around 500,000 more reaching the age each year. By late September 2.25 million men had been enlisted and 1.5 million were in "*Starred Occupations*", being deemed vital to the war effort. It was soon realised that uncontrolled volunteering would deprive industry of vital war workers - yet at the same time such was the fervour to persuade men to join up some men were being unfairly targeted by women's white feathers. Hence an unofficial scheme of starred workers with a badge was devised to protect them.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that the initial fervent enthusiasm would abate but, in addition, the realities of war were beginning to sink in with reports from serving soldiers, like **Jack White**, reaching the local newspapers in November 1914. In addition, the **Gallipoli Campaign** made it clear that



3 The 1915 Badge for 'Starred' Occupations [Sole Society]

soldiers were expected to fight a long way away from Belgian atrocities. Thus volunteer numbers fell to around 70,000 a month. More worryingly, almost two in every five volunteers were entirely unsuitable on health grounds.

So the government felt compelled to intervene, although at the time *Conscription* was inconceivably “un-British” despite being commonplace on the continent of Europe, recalling as it did folk memory of the unpopular 17<sup>th</sup>C Cromwellian government. The result was the inevitable compromise. The *Derby Scheme* was a voluntary policy created in 1915 by Edward Stanley, 17th Earl of Derby, later became Director of Recruitment. The concept was that men who voluntarily registered would only be called upon for service when necessary. In addition, married men would only be “called up” once the supply of single men was exhausted. A *National Registration Act* created a register that revealed the number of men still available and they were targeted in a number of ways - with posters, tales of German atrocities, and the threat of shame. The 'Derby Scheme' used door-to-door visits to encourage men to 'attest' to serve if needed.

### 3. Imperial Wars in Mesopotamia and Egypt, 1916

#### a. Mesopotamia

Map to Show Egypt and Mesopotamia [S. Eedle]

	<p>We have noted already that Britain and Turkey declared war on each other on 5 November 1914. However, on the same day, the <i>Indian Expeditionary Force D</i> landed at <b>Fao</b>, on the Persian Gulf. By 22 November 1914 the force had captured <b>Basra</b>. This indicated an unpublicised but important war aim</p> <p>For the Turkish government at this period, however, the defence of Mesopotamia was not a priority. It was for Britain and this explains the haste of the expedition. The <i>Berlin to Baghdad Railway</i>, started in 1903, was now almost complete and the government realised the importance of oil to its war effort and sought to protect its interests in the <i>Persian Gulf</i>, even casting eyes on the oilfields of <b>Mosul</b> and <b>Baku</b> in 1918.</p>
--	---

Instead of remaining on the defensive, therefore, in September 1915, the **6<sup>th</sup> (Poona) Division** was sent north along the **River Tigris** to take **Baghdad**. This was a force of both Indian and British Battalions; one of the latter was the **1<sup>st</sup> Ox & Bucks**, one of the few battalions stationed in the Empire that was not recalled home to fight. Serving with it was **Regular, Pte. W. A. Price** [#] from Twynning who would have shared the initial success moving north along the Tigris until the Ottoman army decided to make battle 22 miles south of Baghdad at **Ctesiphon**. At this time, the **Gallipoli Campaign** was petering out into stalemate before the evacuation by 9 January 1916.

Realising their predicament, the Army sent a relief force that was checked in costly battles in January so that the rescue was called off. The garrison, therefore, had no choice but to surrender on 29 April 1916. This was a shattering blow to British prestige following the failure in *Gallipoli*. British dead or wounded at 30,000 were three times the losses of the Turks – but 13,000 were made prisoners of war; 2,500 of them British.

#### b. Egypt

Egypt was immediately regarded as a vital part of the Empire to be defended from Ottoman attack, especially because of the Imperial artery of the **Suez Canal**, through which soldiers from India and the **Dominions** flowed to the crucial base at **Alexandria**. The **Royal Gloucestershire Hussars**, a **Yeomanry** unit of the *Territorial Force*, was despatched there in April 1915 (before being diverted to *Gallipoli* as infantry, landing at **Suvla** on 18 August and being evacuated in December).

April 1916 was, therefore, a dreadful month for the survival of the Empire since, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> six days in advance of **Kut**, a British force was defeated at **Katia** whilst defending the **Suez Canal**. It had been cut off by a superior Turkish force and lost 500, mainly as prisoners of war to join those from **Kut**.

### **c. Mesopotamia after Kut, 1916**

Mesopotamia was deemed to be too important to be abandoned even after what has been described as “*the most abject capitulation in Britain’s military history*”. After this, its leaders were replaced with a new commander, General Maude, who trained and organized his army and then launched a successful campaign that captured **Baghdad** on 11 March 1917. With Baghdad captured, the British administration undertook vital reconstruction of the war-torn country and **Kut** was slowly rebuilt.

Tewkesbury men were involved in this second phase of the war in Mesopotamia because, after fighting in *Gallipoli*, the 13<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division was withdrawn in early January 1916 and arrived back in Egypt later in the month where the division held forward posts in the Suez Canal defences. However, as the crisis developed around Kut in February 1916, the Division began to move to Mesopotamia in order to strengthen the force being assembled for its relief. It was the only British Division to serve there and was part of the *Tigris Corps*. The division then took part in the failed attempts to relieve **Kut**, after which the British force in the theatre was built up and reorganised in order to renew the offensive in 1917.

### **The Middle Eastern Campaign in 1917-1918**

After the *Gallipoli, Katia and Kut disasters*, the government lost focus upon this theatre - except that Suez could never be neglected.

By 1917 the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was so desperate for some success that he invested in building up the army in Egypt for an attack on **Palestine**. He re-employed General Allenby who had “failed” on the Western Front but he was a cavalryman suited to desert warfare. He promised his Prime Minister that the capture of Jerusalem would be his Christmas present – and he delivered. Damascus fell in October 1918.

The army was also invigorated in **Mesopotamia** with a new Commander, Maude, and he managed to capture Baghdad in March 1917. Thereafter progress was slow but in 1918 the Kirkuk Oilfields were captured and a special unit, *Dunsterforce*, was formed to push north rapidly to capture the oilfields on the Caspian Sea. That attack was a failure but the end of the war in 1918 brought the success in Mesopotamia that had been envisaged in 1914.