Queensland Times (Ipswich, Qld. : 1909 - 1954), Monday 9 October 1916, page 2

https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/113173694?searchTerm=R%20P%20Watson%20Light%20Horse#

Letters from the Front. - Mr. W. Morgan, manager of the Grantham Butter Factory, has received a fine descriptive letter from R.P. Watson who was at one time manager of the Royal Bank in Grantham. He says :-

"We have had busy and exciting times of late. About a month ago, while out on reconnaissance duty, we learned that large forces of Turks were approaching, our people had been out so often and seen so little of 'J.T.' that we were getting a bit careless and this day the ambulance camel transport pushed off two hours ahead of the advance guard - camels are so slow. There was one officer and myself, mounted on horses, in charge and without any armed escort. After proceeding four miles we noticed one of our planes approaching from the east. It passed over and then turned and volplaned down to within 100ft of the ground and dropped a message. Might as well have been a bomb for the effect the news it contained had on us. It advised that there were 10,000 Turks within 10 miles; We did look silly for a bit. Soon after, however, the regiment came up and we camped at a palm grove a couple of miles further on for the night, while the regiment went on to get the strength of things. Our brigade would go on duty, say, leave camp at 2 a.m. and return 10 or 11 the same night.

On the 4th the Turks had approached close enough to attack our position here, which they did early in the morning. Soon after daylight, Turkish shrapnel got fair on to our position, scattered the bearers and horse transport, and frightened the 'dickens' out of our niggers. The camel transport was ordered to return to camp, as they would, with the niggers, be useless under fire. On our way back we were subjected to the most severe bombing from Taubes that we have ever had. Six of them swept across the whole of the plateau where our encampment is and bombed every solitary camp well and good. They must have dropped over 60 bombs. Getting back to camp we found every tent and palm shade full of wounded.

The artillery and Light Horse fell back about this time, and took up positions on both sides of us. Then the artillery duel started. Talk about pandemonium! This was it. In the afternoon the Light Horse put in some good work with the bayonet, and raptured some hundreds of prisoners. We spent a hot time in camp on Friday night. The place was alive with flying bullets, and we had several casualties, our friend Blyth, of Helidon, sustaining a severe wound, a bullet in the back. I had some narrow escapes. One bullet struck the tent pole at my back, another flicked the sand a couple of inches from my foot, and another embedded itself in my kit-bag, be-hind which I was trying to get a snooze.

The Light Horse pursued the Turks, and had a severe engagement on Saturday afternoon - red-hot it was - and the casualties filled our little hospital to overflowing again. I've never worked so hard or for such long periods before in my life. Our bearers and transport did great work, and brought wounded in from under fire, with great courage and persistency. I am pleased to say several have been recommended for honours, one man, I believe, for the V.C. On Tuesday afternoon we were ordered out again. I was up on a camel again and tad a rough spin. One only wants to mount a camel and go out under fire to realise the absolute helplessness of one's position. We were entirely at the mercy of the Turkish artillery if they had spotted us. All the wounded had to be taken away, and we got every man on camels and away as fast as we could. It was rough on the wounded, for the camels are dreadfully rough things to ride on. I never realised till lately how proud we should be of our countrymen, who suffer so gamely. They're men, and the Light Horse have made good. The amount of work and fighting put into the last three weeks is wonderful. We have won a victory here second to none since the war started, and the Light Horse and the Scottish and English artillery bore the brunt of it. There's tons of incidents I could tell you if I had the time."