

THE CHARGE AT AGAGIA 26th February 1916

## CHARGE OF THE DORSET YEOMANRY “Unparalleled Bravery”

In the official communiqué issued in Cairo on February 28th, relating to the fight at Agagia, mention was made of “the brilliant and effective charge of the Dorset Yeomanry”. The following supplementary details are now to hand.

The British force, which left Matru on the morning of February 20th, had a long and trying march across the desert sands for five days before they were enabled to engage the enemy. It was early in the morning of February 26th that they set out for Unreilah to attack him. The position of the enemy was, as already stated, a strong one. Nuri Bey had assembled his followers on a dominating ridge at Agagia, about 15 miles south-east of Sidi Barani. Somewhat in front of the main body General Gaafar Pasha had established his machine-guns. He had had plenty of time to examine the ground and choose the most suitable and screened position for his machine-guns which he had ready to meet the onslaught of the British. But he never bargained for one thing --- the “madness”, as he termed it, of our Yeomanry. “Never did I calculate,” he said, “that your Yeomanry would do such a unwarlike thing as to charge my machine guns. It was magnificent, but it was not war.

The Dorset's, well opened, swept across the open towards Gaafar Pasha and his machine-guns. Concentrated fire was immediately brought to bear on the advancing troops, and Gaafar waited calmly to see them melt away and waver and retreat. But not so, the Dorset's. On they came like the wind, as if such a thing as a machine-gun did not exist. Men were falling; it is true, but not a head looked to the right or left to take stock of the loss. Nearer and nearer they came, and, as he spurred on his gunners, Gaafar stood amazed at the intrepidity of these British Yeomen. On they swept like an irresistible force, while the machine-guns ticked out their deadly missiles; but the enemy's fire was becoming unsteady as the courage of the gunners ebbed before such fearless bravery. Still Gaafar Pasha looked for a waiver in the British ranks, but in vain. The fire of his gunners became more and more unsteady as the Yeomanry got closer and closer. Then their hands seemed to become paralysed, and like a cyclone the Dorset's swept over them and in the next minute Gaafar, with a sword cut across his arm, lay on the ground with his follower's dead or wounded beside him.

It was a great charge, in the words of the Arab commander himself it was “Bravery unparalleled”. “It was not war,” he said, “but it was immense. In theory it should have failed; in practice it succeeded, and I am to-day a prisoner. Nobody in the world could stand against such an onslaught; against men who evinced such scant regard for death.”

In a despatch from the Palestine front the special correspondent of the Press Association wires: -

The mounted troops charged across the swelling upland straight upon the enemy. They were received with heavy fire from rifles, machine guns and field pieces, but nothing could stop them. They cut right through the Turks' sabreing right and left. When the enemy found themselves cut off they threw down their arms.

The Yeomen have the glory of making one of the biggest bags that have fallen to the lot of any single unit, namely, 1100 prisoners, 14 machine-guns, and two 77mm guns. This is the second time these particular troops have distinguished themselves; and this is the second time in the course of the present operations that cavalry has thus swooped upon the enemy forces and completed their discomfiture.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant J. H. Blaksley, a Troop Leader, took part in the charge, he had two horses shot out from under him and then on foot captured the enemy General assisted by the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel H.M.W. Souter who had also had his horse shot from under him.**  
**Lt Col Souter was awarded the DSO on the day and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Blaksley won the MC.**