



# The Mesopotamian Front

Turkey's entry into the war on October 29, 1914, immediately prompts Britain to open a new military front in the Ottoman province of Mesopotamia to secure vital oil supplies for the Royal Navy

**1 Nov 1914:** *Indian Expeditionary Force D* and British *13th (Western) Division* under regional Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant General **Arthur Barrett** (top left) arrive in Persian Gulf. Force tasked with protecting oil facilities at **Abadan**

**2 Nov 19-21:** Barrett captures strategic city of **Basra**, defended by Turkish force of 4,500. Anglo-Indian force increased to 30,000

**3 Dec 3-19:** Indian *6th (Poona) Division*, under **Sir Charles Townshend**, takes **Qurna**, securing British front line

**9 Nov 22-23:** Campaign suffers major setback at **Battle of Ctesiphon**. After suffering 4,500 casualties Townshend retreats to Kut to await reinforcements from Basra

**10 Dec 7:** Turkish *18th Corps*, under command of German Field Marshall **Baron von der Goltz**, lays siege to 6th Division bottled up at Kut

**Apr 29, 1916:** Having suffered thousands of casualties, and with many starving or wracked by disease, Townshend surrenders\*

**Aug:** **Sir Frederick Maude** (top right) appointed Commander-in-Chief following humiliation of Kut. By October Maude has 150,000 troops under his command

**11 Feb 24, 1917:** After nine weeks of fighting Maude's forces retake Kut

**Mar 5:** Maude advances towards **Baghdad**, Ottoman Empire's southern capital, which is defended by 12,500 Turkish troops

**12 Mar 11:** British troops enter Baghdad, taking 9,000 Turkish prisoners

**13 Mar 13-Apr 23:** Maude launches **Samarrah Offensive**, taking town, control of **Berlin-Baghdad railway** and **Falluja**



**14 Sep-Nov:** **Ramadi** and **Tikrit** taken

**15 Nov 14:** Indian cavalry division enters **Mosul**, securing control of oilfields

**Nov 17:** General Maude dies of cholera – he is replaced by General **William Marshall**

**1918:** British resume offensive but have to move troops to **Sinai** and **Palestine Campaign**

**16 Oct 25:** In final conflict Ottoman **Sixth Army** is captured at **Sharqat**

**Oct 30:** Turks sign **Armistice of Mudros**



**4 Feb 1915:** Turkish and German agents attack **Anglo-Persian Oil Company** pipeline

**5 Apr:** Turkish bid to retake Basra repulsed at **Shaiba**. **Sir John Nixon** replaces Barrett

**6 Jun:** British troops take **Amarah**

**7 Jul:** After 28 days of fighting in searing heat and mosquito-infested conditions, Anglo-Indian force of 5,000 takes main Turkish supply base at **Nasiriyah**

**8 Sep:** Townshend takes **Kut**, routing force of 10,500. Some 5,000 Turks retreat to **Ctesiphon**



**\*Mar 20-May 26, 1916:** **Lawrence of Arabia – T.E. Lawrence** (left) – and **Aubrey Herbert** are sent on secret British mission to Kut to offer Turkish commander **Khalil Pasha** up to £2 million for release of Townshend's army. **Mission to save force fails**

| Casualties           |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Killed in action     | 11,012 |
| Died of disease      | 12,678 |
| Died of wounds       | 3,985  |
| Wounded              | 51,836 |
| Missing or prisoners | 13,492 |