

Australian War Memorial
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3DRL 3525
Papers of Lt T A Kidd
5th WA Mtd Inf.
Conflict Sth Africa 1899-1902
AWM file: 419/89/11
1 of 1 Items (s)

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comments in square brackets [] are mine
? means a best guess or can't decipher

T A Kidd
5 West Australian MI
on Service South Africa (South Africa) 1899-1900-1901
Enlisted Border Horse (Brabants') (sic) [Brabant's] @ Durban Natal Dec 1899 and
5th W.A. MI early 1900 to Dec 1901.

May 1901

Fri 10th

We arrive Middelbourg (sic) [Middelburg] after trekking through Sekukunieland and the Blood River Valley and camp with the 6th WA Cont. who have just arrived from WA.

Sat 11th

Remounts are drawn with [part??] kit both of which are distributed during the day.

Sun 12th

We leave early in the day and march with column to a place supposed known as Rondeboosch. Column consists of 5th and 6th WAMI 2nd ILH [Imperial Light Horse] 1st Devons Seaforth Highlanders 2nd Rifle Brigade. (Seaforth Highlanders since left), with 2 Colt guns and 81st Batty. (RFA) [Royal Field Artillery]

Mon 13

Marched 7.30am

Camped at 3pm

Tues 14th

Reveille 4.30 we march at 6.30am. 5th WA advance guard. We come in touch with the enemy and one man (6th) is wounded. Our colt guns and artillery play on the enemy who retire.

May 1901

Wed 15th

We march at 10am and bar a little sniping by the enemy nothing occurs. Camp at [Velteor eden ??]

Thurs 16th

Part of 5th (B Co. {40 men}) and 6th W.As under Capt Campbell leave camp soon after daylight to clear farms in the Brakpan district whilst 6th W.A. who are advance guard meet Boer Scouts and drive them from vicinity of farms. We hold hill [???] cover operations whilst the women and children are taken from the farmhouses and all stock etc is destroyed. We hear firing in the advance but do not take much notice as we believed the enemy was retiring Capt Collick (chaplain) and an Imperial officer ride back to us after a narrow escape. They had evidently been fired upon by a party of Boers in ambush but believing these to have made their escape nothing further was done. After placing the women and children in the wagons burning the property the return home was commenced. The 6th were in the rear holding the ridges. Capt Brown remained in the rear [guard??] waggon. Lieut Forrest guarded the right flank Lieut Griffith the left Advance guards not known Capt Brown had with him Lieut Sherard & division. When the march home was commenced the firing appeared to become very heavy but relying on the rear guard no notice was taken.

Capt Brown sent word to me that Boers where [definitely reads where] seen on the left shadowing us. I searched the hollows with Corp Davis and Farrier Fyfe but the Boers gave us the slip. Soon after this men of the 6th retired through us but thinking this an ordered manœuvre we took no notice. The firing became heavier and bullets commenced dropping in among us, but I was under the impression that they were intended for the rear guard & were aimed high.

Men could be seen about seventy yards in our rear kneeling running about but still I conjectured that they were our own men and was confident that they were making a good stand. Bullets began to rain in on us but I said they could not be for us. They were aimed higher at the rear guards. I gave the order to open out and be ready to dismount to support the rear. Two Imperial officers rode up and scanned through their glasses. One cried out "My God they are Boers" but I said "no sir they must be our men and we will support them." Just then an officer rode up and sang out "retire". He told me that the 6th had retired and the waggon guard had been driven off by overwhelming numbers. The division retired steadily and somewhat sullenly. A horse was shot in front of me and we remained behind a little to cover the rider.

We made a stand on the first ridge and called others to help which was done and after a stiff go drove the enemy off. We advanced on the enemy per foot and they retired. Our men necessarily felt savage and felt like avenging our comrades. We heard that Kennedy, Bissett, Bollinger had been killed and many wounded and that [???? can't decipher] Edwards, Shannon had been captured.

Reinforcements arriving with guns under General Kitchener we mounted and advanced but the enemy had evidently had enough for they hastily retired.

Later

After hearing reports I have made out the following to be a correct version of the matter. After the waggons moved off homewards the large force of the enemy made a determined attack on the piquet posted to cover the whole retirement. The fighting was heavy and considering that this was probably the new contgs first fight our boys made a good stand. Men of the 6th were killed & others wounded. At the time it appears that no one was in command and the retirement was therefore rather disorderly. The piquet fell back on the supports who retired past our (5th) small rearguard. Capt Brown mistook the large party of the Boers who rushed him to be men of the 6th and ordered "no firing". Lieut Forrest on the right flank had with him Serg Edwards, Cpl Bollinger and a couple of men. Forrest evidently saw the enemy making for [???can't decipher] and with his [party ??] raced for it. He must have dismounted & [rushed??] it only to be shot.

It is my firm belief that poor old Fred Edwards seeing his gallant but reckless boy leader shot he attempted to get him out and was shot along with Cpl Bollinger attempting a deed worthy of a soldier and a man. Furlong [Bollinger crossed out] must have been shot,[tried???] his [life???] and dropped dead in a hole or donga for he never returned to camp although his horse did.

Capt Brown saw he was in danger too late and the best that could be done was to get out as quickly as possible. Whilst mounting his saddle slipped underneath his horse. He was called on to surrender but shooting his man dead he jumped on his horse and escaped. Serg M [Major] Shannon called on to surrender shot this opponent but attempting his escape his horse fell and he was taken. Lieut Sherard got away Kennedy was wounded and knocked off his horse. Bob Hancock was wounded twice but noticing his comrades danger rode back in the teeth of the enemy & brought him off despite Kennedy unwillingness.

The final stand was made by the 5th who at the time were maddened and determined to wipe or be wiped out.

The men rushed towards the enemy in the open without shelter and although they had a fire to deal with they were determined to close. They were wild! Nay mad and hatless & panting they rushed on pausing only to [pour??] in a volley. The enemy on the ridge broke and fled. Our killed poor fellows were riddled with bullets showing the stand they made perhaps making the enemy pay dear.

Our killed was

(5th) 2 killed (Forrest and Edwards)

5 wounded (one since dead Bollinger)

1 missing Furlong [Bollinger died 16th crossed out] Cpl Furlong

6th 4 killed 8 wounded (once since dead Pvt Blanck)

May 1901

Fri 17th

I had to drill funeral party before funeral service was conducted at 7am and proceedings were extremely solemn. And after the service had been read the Devon Buglers played the "Last Post". Genl C Walter Kitchener gave a speech before the party dismissed. He said it was very unfortunate but the Boers evidently laid a well planned ambush. He exhorted us not to be vindictive but he said the score must be wiped out. He remarked that we could not blame the Boers for it was truly the way of fighting that they had been taught. He promised to give us every opportunity of wiping the score out. Cpl Furlong [Bollinger crossed out] is still missing. He must be dead as if he were badly wounded and left on the veldt he could not live through the severe cold night.

Poor old Fred one of the best and brave as a lion. It was he that said some of us must go and he is the first of the old boys to go.

Sat 18th

We march at 7am to [???Smuts-oog]. The Boers snipe at us only killing one horse Corp Allen's.

Corporal Bollinger of the 5th and Pvt Blanck die of their wounds.

Sun 19th

Bollinger & Blanck are buried at 7am. We clear farms on the left flank and bring in Boer families after having being forced to destroy splendid properties.

Mon 20th

Reveille 4am March 6am. We escort convoy of captured stock, prisoners etc to Carolina

Tues 21st

Reveille 5am March 7 to near Bothwell. The weather is very severe and cold now. Cold bleak winds blowing throughout the day and at night. Night we are troubled with heavy frost

Wed 22

Reveille 5.30 March 7.30 camp early

Thurs 23rd

Camped

Friday 24

Reveille 5.30 March 7.30 scout the Komat Valley Camp late

Sat 25th

Reveille 5.30 am. Bulk of contingent escort convoy to Carolina. I stay behind in camp

Sun 26th

We have church service in camp. I am sick and do not stir much

Mon 27

Reveille 5 am move off 8 am in a heavy thunder storm. I am sick and ordered to stay with convoy.

Tues 28th

Reveille 6.30 am and March 8.30. Caves in the vicinity of line of march are searched for hidden enemy, waggons & loot.

Wed 29

Return toward Carolina with captured Boers stock & waggons. The night and mornings are severe.

Thurs 30

We spend an awfully cold night and as the morning turning out so busterous we did not move until 2pm .We were advance guard and had a small brush with the enemy. Corpl McKinnon with four men (Benbow, Fisher, and two others) rode within twenty paces of a mass of rocks and were fired upon by concealed Boers hidden in the mass. McKinnon was shot in the hand, his saddle was riddled and his horse shot dead. The horse fell & pinned him down. His hand was badly shattered. The four men escape Fisher had a marvellous ride. A bullet cut his [can't decipher??] in two near his [can't decipher??] One smashed his glasses another went through his water bottle[s], holes were put through his tunic and his horse was shot twice whilst the cantle of his saddle was pierced. The [horse??] was soon right again & the man was not even scratched. Capt Brown brought us up and we charged the rocks on foot. The Boers fired [??? can't decipher] shot and fled

Fri 31st

Before reveille and during a heavy fog myself and ten men out of the camp and search the hills for Boers before the march commences. On account of the heavy fog the work is very difficult. We discover nothing & returned at 7am. We march at 9am.

Sat 1st

We march at 7am & camp near Carolina. Wood being in plenty we are soon sitting down to a meal. I wrote to J Edwards, R Kidd & J Bars

Sun 2

Extreme cold is felt. All water is in the form of ice. We leave Carolina

Mon 3

We march early & camp at Mooifontein we leave several [two words can't decipher??] camp of KRR's to garrison as depot

Tues 4th

We find all water frozen hard and had to break the ice in the dam to water horses. Leave Mooifontein

Wed 5th

Arrive at Genl Pulteney's [spelt as Poulteney] camp at 8pm after a long march in the

icy cutting wind

Thurs 6th

Rode to Genl Kitchener's camp to escort Genl Kitchener back to Genl Pulteney's [spelt Poulteney's] camp. A party consisting 40 men (myself included) under Lieut Scott escort convoy towards Carolina

Friday 7th

Camp late near depot at Rifle [Breygrave???? can't decipher]

Sat 8th

Camp at Mooifontein

Sun 9th

Arrive Carolina & wrote Mother [??? can't decipher]

Mon 10th

Camp Ferniehaugh Wrote [F Jose can't decipher??]

Tues 11th

March with Kitchener's Col southwards. Discharged ILH leave for Carolina

Wed 12 [blank]

Thur 13

Stand to arms 4.30am March 10am. We have a little sniping to deal with in which affair Gen Kitchener had a hot time