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German East Africa

Major General Arthur's report

upon Tanga River

Five Bottoms Bay
Low Point

Dr. G. Zeller

A well-written account, but a
unlambently record. Quite apart
from the actual military and
naval operations, there are a
number of blunders for which
we can only ^{hold} the Govt. of the U.S.
responsible.

(1) The fact that news about the coming of Force B was allowed to leak out.

(2) Insufficient precautions taken to prevent news reaching S. E.A. - 30 to 40 enemy subjects at large in L.S. Post.

(3) Failure to obtain reliable

t subsequent Paper

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PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

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before the arrival of force B.

All this is sufficiently obvious,
and when the ^{it} ~~is~~ is added

- (1) the extraordinary decision to abide by the survived Tanga ~~there~~ ^{there} thereby giving the enemy time to reinforce the town and prepare for the attack.
- (2) the utter unreliability of a large proportion of the Indian troops, it can only be said that it would have been remarkable if the attack had succeeded, however good the higher command.

P. H. B. 27/1/15

As to the first no (1), we got word of 27/1/15.
of the leakage early & tomorrow & asked the G.O. for a report. The Germans could not know that we were not going to Dar es Salaam, but if they knew of the movement of our land force towards Tanga (which was attacked on Nov. 2) they could conclude that Tanga was also attacked from there.

27/1/15

J. J. H.

28/1/15

I am sure Sir Edwards' statement is correct. He has been to see it & is correct. P. H. B. 30. 1. 15

Dr. J. J. H.

It is indeed a melancholy record of ineptitudes.
incurring certain disaster.

Reply not yet received.

before the arrival of the B.

all this is sufficiently serious,
and when to ^{it} is added

(1) the extraordinary decision to abide
by the demoralized Tanga ^{force} ~~there~~ thereby
giving the enemy time to reinforce
the town and prepare for the attack.

(2) the utter unreliability of a
large proportion of the Indian troops
it can only be said that it would
have been remarkable if the attack
had succeeded, however good the
higher command.

Putby's Enqy 27/1/15

As to the first no. (1), as you heard of 27.1.15.
of the escape early in November & asked the Gov for a
report. The Germans could not know that we were
not going to Bar. or Salween, but if they heard
of the movement of our land force towards Tanga
(which was attacked on Nov. 2) they would conclude
that Tanga was to be attacked from there.

dated 27/1/15

H. J. R.
28/1/15

I am sure Sir E. B. errors 'atavism'
as he has said that he has been to
Korea it is correctly.

Jan. 30. 1. 15

Mr. J. H. 15

It is indeed a melancholy record of ineptitudes.
inspiring certain timidity
A sorry story: Sir Stewart J.
The British 31.1.15

1 Reply not
yet rec'd
" 5/1



384

Report with Maps by Major-General A. J. A. Smith, Commanding
Indian Expeditionary Force V, of the operations at
(Central West Africa) on November 2nd. to November 25th 1914.



384

Report with Maps by Major-General, Commanding
Indian Expeditionary Force V, of the operations at
(German East Africa) from November 1st. to November 30th 1914.

No. 63 S.

From Major-General A. E. Aitken, Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "B," to the Secretary, War Office, London.

Sir,

Mombasa, 1st December, 1914.

In submitting my despatch on the recent operations at Tanga, I have the honour to forward, for the information of the Army Council, the following remarks on certain points (a) connected with those operations; and (b) points which would have to be borne in mind if further offensive operations are contemplated, and I will deal with them in that order.

2. The first difficulty met with was the naval armistice which had been agreed to between the British naval authorities on this coast and the Germans. It prevented my doing anything in the nature of a surprise attack, and it ended in giving the Germans ample time to reinforce Tanga by the time we were ready to advance on it. Moshi is only some 15 to 18 hours by train, and therefore within easy reach. Whether anything of a surprise would have been possible is open to doubt, as the Germans have a thoroughly organised system of coastguards and signals, but it certainly lost us much valuable time in landing and attacking, by having to wait while it was concluded.

3. The date of the arrival of "B" Force appeared to be well known here in Mombasa, and was being openly talked about when I first arrived. Consequently there is little doubt the Germans knew all about it; though they did not know whether Tanga or any other place was our objective. I mention this merely to show that in spite of the secrecy and care taken in India the information somehow got out and was public property here. Its being passed to the Germans was an easy matter, and I have just recently discovered that there were some 30 or 40 enemy subjects in the Protectorate, nominally on parole or bond, practically free to come and go as they chose. In view of possible future operations and present needs, I at once approached his Excellency the Governor, and these have all been now interned and are going to India.

4. The meagreness of our information as regards not only Tanga itself, but the interior of German East Africa generally, was very marked, and this meagreness is very noticeable when reading the handbook in the light of information we have since acquired. The Germans have most successfully prevented any efforts of ours to establish an effective secret service since the war began, and little useful information appears to have been collected of military value before the war, especially as regards the difficulty of the country from an operations point of view.

Second Lieutenant Ishmael's death was a serious loss to us as regards strictly local knowledge of Tanga.

5. As regards the actual fight at Tanga, the following were the chief points that came out—

- (i.) The very careful preparation of Tanga for defence. This had evidently been very thoroughly and carefully carried out beforehand, and certainly does not support the information given me here that Tanga would not be strongly held. The defences there have also been very materially strengthened since the fight, and at least two guns (believed to be 4-inch) mounted on the eastern shore.
- (ii.) The denseness of the bush and plantation, through which we attacked, made the advantage we had in guns of very little use to us, as the latter could see nothing and we could indicate no target to them, although in touch throughout the fight both with the "Fox" and "Bharata."
- (iii.) The Germans put selected shots up in the thickest trees, and these were passed by unnoticed during our attack. They then fired at us from behind, and this fire from the rear, added to the demoralised condition and wild firing of some of our troops, was very trying to the units fighting hard in front. I fancy, too, that a proportion of our losses in officers was due to these concealed marksmen.
- (iv.) The vigour of the German counter-attacks was very noticeable. The way they were launched, their rapidity, and the way they apparently rallied again at once when beaten off, was very marked and pointed to high training of their men.

(v.) Their preponderance of machine guns is very marked, and they have in German East Africa a great many more than we have. I would suggest more being sent out here if available. Any addition to our strength in this respect would be useful, but it would take another pair of guns per unit, at least, to make us anything like proportionately equal.

(vi.) As regards the final result of our fight there, I have no doubt whatever that if I had had two more reliable battalions at the end, I could have occupied Tanga. As it was, when the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and Kashmir Rifles, supported by a certain number of men of other units, got in, I had no reliable troops left to support them with. Even if I had succeeded in gaining Tanga, I am more than doubtful if we could have retained it with the troops I had. The complete demoralisation of certain units not only made them useless and a source of anxiety to all of us, but it had a very bad effect on the good troops who had fought well, as they had naturally looked for support which they had failed to get. They had consequently lost confidence. This want of confidence, added to the certainty of not getting the demoralised units to make any effort again at all, rendered any hope of success in a renewed attack out of the question, and I therefore decided to extricate my force as quickly as I could, and save possible worse trouble or even disaster.

Presuming again that I had got and held Tanga, I do not think that, with the force available, we could have pushed in very far owing to the extraordinary difficulty of the country, unless the German resistance had collapsed in a most unexpected way, or the natives had risen against them or come over to us. There was nothing to show that either of these would happen for some time, and certainly not as long as the Germans were able to take advantage of the difficult country and put up a strong resistance.

(vii.) As regards the natives, they are certain in any case not to come over to us till they know for certain we mean to stay in German East Africa. So soon as they are sure of that they would certainly come, as they hate the Germans. The Germans themselves are very well organised, there is no want of supplies, and they are certain to fight hard. Nothing is known of their full strength, as they have certainly received some reinforcements from outside.

(viii.) As regards future operations, if undertaken, an attack on, and occupation of, the Moshi area seems to offer the best chance for any operation less than the capture of the whole country. It could be combined with a thrust on Tanga; but the occupation of Tanga would now mean hard fighting probably, nor would a subsequent advance up towards Moshi be anything but slow and difficult. The country is hilly, with dense bush or thick growth all the way, no roads, but only paths and tracks; a part of the way water scarce even for small bodies, and another part of the way believed to be waterless. In this latter region (as on the Kipindi line in one part), the railway depends on a gravitation pipe water supply. If this is cut there is no water, and the Germans, besides destroying the railway would be certain to do this. The number of carriers for any force of the requisite strength to fight along some 200 miles of it, would be very nearly one per fighting man, which again adds to water and road difficulties. On the other hand, the attack on the Moshi area would be much more open country, would probably have much effect on the tribes, and would be much more free from the physical difficulties and bad climate of an advance from the sea. Bearing in mind that the Germans are not at all likely to surrender the colony unless effectively attacked at all three places, which would mean a very large number of troops, I am of opinion that carefully organized operations against the Moshi area would produce the best immediate results, combined with a threat at any rate, if no more, on Tanga.

(ix.) I mention all the above, not with any wish to dwell on the difficulties, but simply to bring them to your notice, as the military handbooks give little or no information on these points.

* Moshi, Tanga, Dar-es-Salaam.

My information on the Tanga—Moshi line is picked up from an English planter who was at work in the Mombasa district and was turned out on the outbreak of war. My information as regards Tanga, as it is now, is from an European secret service agent who succeeded in getting in for us.

(x.) In short, every bit of information we have gathered clearly indicates the necessity for first-rate troops, and enough of them for whatever operations are decided on. Even then these will take time and careful preparation.

(xi.) There are some 4,000 reliable troops in the Protectorate, but these would not all be available as they are distributed for defence.

I have taken steps to improve the defences at certain places on our probable lines of advance (particularly against Moshi) which would enable them to be held by fewer troops; the remainder can then be kept in hand for such operations as may be necessary.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

A. E. AITKEN, Major-General,
Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "B."

Copy forwarded for information to the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi.

The Residency, Zanzibar, 29th December, 1914.

Being temporarily laid up with a touch of malaria in Zanzibar, I authorize Lieut. Colonel S. H. Sheppard, General Staff Officer, India, to affix my signature to the despatches and covering letter, already written out by me, and left to be typed while I was away at Zanzibar and Dar-es-Salaam.

A. E. AITKEN, Major-General,
Commanding the Forces in British East Africa.

DESPATCH ON THE TANGA OPERATIONS.

The convoy sailed from Bombay on the 16th October, 1914, in company with another and larger convoy bound for Europe.

Force Headquarters, Headquarters of Brigades, and miscellaneous staff were in the "Karmala."

The voyage was devoid of incident. On 30th October the convoy arrived within 30 miles of Mombasa, and Captain Caulfield, R.N., the Senior Naval Officer, came out in H.M.S. "Fox" to meet us; and he, with Commander Headlam, the Marine Transport Officer, came aboard the "Karmala" for a conference.

The ~~convoy~~ was left as ~~seen~~ cut of sight of land, and the "Fox" and "Karmala" went into Mombasa, arriving late in the evening, the "Karmala" having painted her number out and hoisted the red ensign.

On 31st October I went ashore with my Staff, also both my Brigadiers and their Staffs, in plain clothes, so as not to attract attention; and met the Governor of British East Africa and Brigadier-General Stewart. At the conference which followed, the Senior Naval Officer, besides the above, was present. The orders of the Secretary of State for India, as set forth in his No. 1106 of 30th September, 1914, were taken as the basis of our discussion regarding the coming operations; and the plan decided on was that Force "B" should land at Tanga, establish a base there, and then work up the Usambara Railway, General Stewart co-operating from Voi and Longido.

A small expedition was to be sent, as soon as possible after landing, to co-operate with a detachment of Force "C" at Gazi, in crushing a force of the enemy reported to be at Vanga.

All our information, from whatever source, pointed to the probability that the main strength of the enemy, in the Tanga—Moshi area, was concentrated at or about

the head of the railway, and that it was improbable that Tanga would be defended at all. German papers subsequently found on shore confirmed this as their intention, which, however, they did not follow.

Combined naval and military orders for the disembarkation were completed on this supposition, and the "Fox" and "Karmala" put to sea.

The convoy was picked up at a given rendezvous; and all arrived some 15 miles east of Tanga by daybreak on 2nd November.

Certain terms of truce had been arranged between the naval authorities and the German governors of the coast towns; these had not been ratified by the Home Government; but it was necessary to inform the German governor at Tanga of this fact, before commencing hostilities.

Accordingly the "Fox" steamed into the outer harbour at 6 a.m., and, under a flag of truce, informed the acting governor that the truce no longer existed, and gave one hour for unconditional surrender. This was not agreed to, and the "Fox" therefore came out again to the convoy.

None of the convoy accompanied the "Fox" when she first entered the harbour, as it was considered that this would not be acting up to the terms of truce. There was a great shortage of pilots—only three being available—so the "Karmala," "Jeddah" and "Pentacota" alone followed the "Fox," when she entered the outer roadstead of Tanga for the second time.

The inner harbour might well have been mined, so it was not feasible to land there until the harbour had been "swept"; the three transports therefore anchored about a mile east of the Ras Kasone point.

The only remaining landing-place available was at the Red House, one mile south of the Ras Kasone point; this had been described beforehand by 2nd Lieutenant Ishmael, Intelligence Officer; and had been reconnoitred through telescopes by the "Fox," in the early morning, from her position just off it.

It proved to be by no means a favourable spot for disembarkation. The edge of the coral reef was about 500 yards from the shore, and tugs and lighters could not come closer to the shore than this, except at high tide; and men going ashore had therefore to wade deep. It was 5 p.m. before the three transports were anchored; lighters were got alongside as soon as possible, and when all were ready the disembarkation commenced, so as to save further loss of time by taking advantage of the full moon.

No more transports could be got in on the 2nd November—as night fell before the pilots could go out and bring them in.

However, the 13th Rajputs, 61st Pioneers, and Loyal North Lancashire were available; and, in view of our intelligence, the first two seemed ample to secure the town and seize a covering position under which the rest of the troops could disembark. The disembarkation proved more difficult than was anticipated—and it was not till very early on the 3rd that the 13th Rajputs and the 61st Pioneers (less two double companies) were ashore.

Leaving the rest of the covering party to follow, General Tighe pushed on for the town of Tanga. Time was of importance for the enemy had the Usambara railway at their command, and it was only a 15–18-hour journey from the Moshi and to Tanga; I was, therefore, anxious that the town should be secured as soon as possible.

General Tighe's patrols had, during the night, reported that the enemy had two Maxims in position near the railway workshops, and that he had an outpost line covering Tanga from the east.

Lieut. Colonel Stewart, with four companies 13th Rajputs, was directed on the railway workshops, while General Tighe followed with the remainder; leaving one company 61st to cover the Red House, where the greater part of the administrative and embarkation staffs, including two members of the Headquarter staff, had by this time assembled. (See Sketch No. 1 for position of Red House.)

General Tighe found touch difficult to keep in the very thick country east of Tanga, but at 6.30 a.m. reinforced Colonel Stewart, who had been checked, and the enemy were driven back towards the town.

By 7 a.m. the enemy had fallen back to an entrenched position east of the railway cutting, and it was evident that they were in considerable strength, both of Germans and black troops, and at least three Maxims were in position. By this time the whole of the 13th had joined the firing line, and were in close touch with the enemy. Three officers, including Lieut. Colonel Codrington, the Commanding Officer, were hit. The

* Captain Clothier (Adjutant) and 2nd Lieutenant Day, both mortally wounded.

61st were now brought up on the left of the 13th, as this flank was becoming exposed, but the men did not respond at all willingly; a section however, under Captain Manson, endeavoured to rush one of the enemy's machine guns and were all killed in the attempt, including Captain Manson. At the same time a counter-attack was thrown against the left of the line, which was repulsed, largely owing to the individual exertions of Captain Carr-Harris, R.E. (who was killed), and Private Lobb of the Brigade Signal Section.

By 8 a.m. the casualties, especially among British officers, were becoming heavy, and another counter-attack threatened the left.

The men could not be brought to charge or to face the counter-attack, and, as the 13th were already falling back in some disorder, General Tighe thought it advisable to withdraw his force. Captain Waller, Staff Captain, Imperial Service Brigade, was killed at this juncture while conveying orders.

H.M.S. "Fox" had by now got to the inner harbour, and was asked to shell the enemy following up the 13th. This was done, with the result that the pressure was materially relieved.

The men were quite unmurrowed, and could not be rallied, though the British officers worked magnificently in endeavouring to get them together. About 9 a.m. another double company of the 61st was brought up under Captain Hart, and further relieved the pressure; this officer was killed shortly after.

Major Keen, Brigade Major, was now sent back to the Red House to see that a rallying position was taken up, covering the landing, and by 10 a.m. the force had been successfully withdrawn.

By this time the rest of the 61st Pioneers and the Loyal North Lancashire were ashore, but General Tighe, quite rightly, did not deem it advisable to re-assume the offensive, as a material portion of the 13th and all of the 61st were quite demoralized. The former had fought well up to a certain point, but the 61st were of little value throughout the operations. At noon, General Mallison came on board the "Karmala," and explained the situation to me. Early in the morning, the harbour had been swept for mines and found clear, and when the "Fox" went into the inner harbour (whence she shelled the enemy pressing General Tighe), she covered two more landing places, which were at once used to disembark troops for the rest of the day. Every endeavour was made to hasten the arrival of the rest of the convoy, but only the three original pilots were available, and the other ships were therefore still some way out, so that, by nightfall, only the 2nd Kashmir Rifles, 3rd Bn. Kashmir Rifles, and two companies, Gwalhars, had been got ashore.

I, myself, went ashore at 5 p.m. and assumed command of the force.

The position occupied as a base by the force was not an ideal one; but there was no choice. The area capable of occupation was restricted by dense woods and plantations, and the position, therefore, lacked depth, while anything like complete clearance of the thick undergrowth in front was impossible. Both flanks, however, rested on the sea and the night was covered by the "Fox." Water was not plentiful, for the tanks in the area occupied only contained a bare 3 days' supply.

It was thought better to leave the Mountain Battery aboard; the dense jungle, often restricting the view to 100 yards or less, was singularly unsuitable for the employment of artillery, while intercommunication between the two arms, and the indication of targets, would have been a matter of extreme difficulty, whereas by keeping aloft they could cover our right flank so far as the dense woods permitted.

The "Bharata" was, therefore, moved as far up the inner harbour as possible, and the Mountain guns made ready to fire from her deck.

The remainder of the Infantry was got ashore as early as possible on the 4th, and by 12 noon, all having had a meal, orders had been issued, and the force commenced its advance on Tanga at that hour.

Sketch No. 1 shows the position on the night of November 3rd–4th and the formation for attack on 4th November.

The Loyal North Lancashire directed, on the right of the 27th Brigade. The object of the attack was to take the town and then, swinging the left of the 27th Brigade round south of the railway workshops, to cut off the enemy's retreat.

The bush was soon found to be very dense, and particularly difficult for closed bodies of troops to work in, and all, therefore, had to adapt themselves to the thickness of the undergrowth and advance as carefully as they could.

Sketch No. 2 shows the nature of the country and also the arrangements for intercommunication.

Though communication from front to rear by telephone, and thence via the Signal (1742)

Tower by visual to the "Fox" and "Bharata," was easy enough; the difficulties of lateral communication, in such thick country, was very great, and messages had to be sent by officers and men on foot.

The day was very hot, and the close country made it hotter still. Touch was hard to keep, and the advance was slow.

The Imperial Service Brigade on the right met with little opposition till the deep railway cutting came in sight, soon after 2.30 p.m., when fighting began in earnest. The 2nd Kashmir Rifles made steady way and drove the enemy from the cutting. Here they were temporarily checked, and were reinforced by three companies of the 13th Rajputs, under Lieut.-Colonel Stewart; the remainder of the 13th, with its Maxims, being kept in reserve.

The half battalion 3rd Kashmir Rifles now began to move over to the right, and joined hands with the 2nd Kashmir Rifles; the company of Gwalior Infantry, as soon as the fighting really began, disappeared for good.

Copies of operation orders had, early in the morning, been sent to the "Fox" and "Bharata," and both covered and assisted the attack as far as possible; but even the "Bharata" could not get far enough up the harbour to enfilade the railway cutting or the streets of the town; while the high, thick trees between the German hospital and the jetty greatly impeded the fire of both the 28th Mountain Battery and the "Fox," and made it practically impossible to point out definite targets to them.

About 3 p.m., the General Officer Commanding, 27th Brigade, hearing the heavy firing in front of the Imperial Service Brigade, ordered the Loyal North Lancashire to take ground at their right and push into the attack, and the 63rd and 101st were ordered to conform to this movement.

The 27th Brigade had as yet met with little opposition, but it was soon found that the 63rd had already given way from their place in the line, leaving a considerable gap, which the 101st made a great effort to fill. At 3.30 p.m., the Loyal North Lancashire, moving towards the southern part of the town, were opposed, as they neared the railway cutting, by heavy machine gun and rifle fire; they, however, pressed on, and half the battalion succeeded in entering the town, and advanced westwards along the streets. At the same time, the Kashmir Rifles and the three companies 13th Rajputs entered the town at the northern or jetty end, and regular street fighting began.

For a time all went well—the Kashmir Rifles captured a machine gun, and killed the garrisons of several houses in a hand-to-hand fight, while the half battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire penetrated well into the town, and took three machine guns. A double company of the Loyal North Lancashire was engaged with the enemy to the south of the town, and other parties of the regiment, inclining more to the north, joined hands with the Kashmir Rifles.

The enemy, however, had barricaded the larger houses in the town, and placed carefully masked machine guns in them; and these, combined with heavy rifle fire, sometimes in three or four tiers, suddenly opening on the Loyal North Lancashire in the open streets and squares, threw them into some confusion; and at the same time a counter-attack was delivered on them from the west, along the principal streets of Tangra.

About 4.45 p.m. the half battalion in the town, being unsupported, owing to my having no more troops available capable of effective support, had to retire across the railway and into the fringe of the woods, where they began to re-form, and captured Maxims being abandoned.

It will be remembered that the 101st to fill the gap caused by the untimely retirement of the 63rd, had inclined to their right. This exposed the left flank of the 27th Brigade; and, about the same time that the Loyal North Lancashire were being forced back from the town, a determined counter-attack was made on the left flank of the 101st, who came under a heavy crossfire, were partially enveloped, and, after making a gallant effort and suffering severely (seven British officers and six Indian officers being killed during the day, with over 200 rank and file) were also forced to retire, naturally considerably shaken by the heavy punishment they had received.

General Wapshare had, some time before, ordered up his brigade reserve, the 98th, to support the Loyal North Lancashire; but the men, as a whole, showed the greatest reluctance to advance. Small parties, both of the 98th and 63rd, were, however, pushed forward by the efforts of their British officers, and suffered considerable losses, as they were not supported by any material portion of either regiment. In the meantime the Kashmir Rifles on the right, with the party of 13th Rajputs, had made their way along the sea front as far as the Kaiser Hotel (Sketch No. 2 (b)), where two German flags were hauled down by Captain Seymour, 13th Rajputs; the guns of the "Fox" materially helping this advance, by shelling the houses facing the sea.

About 4.45 p.m., however, hearing the sounds of firing passing further and further away to the south-east, and being, like the Loyal North Lancashire without effective support, they began to retire towards the railway cutting.

General Tighe had, some time previously, sent for the remaining five companies of the 13th to reinforce the Imperial Service Brigade; but these, being left temporarily without officers (all being at the front, and the Maxim gun detachment having gone forward), had retired without orders.

The situation, soon after 5.30 p.m., was as follows (see Sketch No. 2 (c)):

On the right the Kashmir Rifles held the railway cutting and some houses on the edge of the town nearest the jetty; on their left were the three companies of the 13th, a party of the Loyal North Lancashire, and a double company of the 61st, with the greater part of their officers. The line then turned round to the mound A, near which were the Maxims of the 13th and 61st; and was continued southwards by the bulk of the Loyal North Lancashire, now re-forming. Beyond these, to the south, there were practically no troops at all, the 101st having been forced back towards the east, and the 63rd and 98th having long since retired. The woods on every side were full of stragglers.

The 61st Pioneers, which I had kept as general reserve under me, were scattered and demoralized. Except for the double company which had gone forward to the railway cutting, and two Maxims which, by the personal exertions of their Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Colonel Batten), had been brought up to mound A and did very good work there, the remainder of this regiment could not be got to advance at all, and it was evident they could not be relied on, especially as Colonel Batten had been wounded shortly before.

I myself was at the mound, and sent back two staff officers to try and get them up to support the troops in Tangra; but both came back and reported to me that they could not get the men to move.

A counter-attack—either the continuation of that which had driven back the 101st and Loyal North Lancashire, or a fresh one issuing from Tangra—now swept along the east of the railway cutting, and as the Loyal North Lancashire had not yet fully re-formed, and the 61st could not be got to advance to meet it, the situation was somewhat critical; for had the centre been broken near mound A the force would have been cut in two. I was at this time at mound A. However, the attack was checked, partly by the fire of the Loyal North Lancashire, chiefly by the Maxims of the 13th and 61st. Shortly after the enemy's bugles were heard sounding near the town and to the south, and all but desultory firing ceased.

There was no water whatever within the area now held by us—and I had to abandon my first idea of holding on to the position we occupied—accordingly, I issued orders for a retirement of about 500 yards to the precincts of the German hospital—the only place between the town and Ras Kasone where water was obtainable. (See Sketch No. 3.)

I had hoped to renew the attack next morning early, but subsequent reports compelled me to abandon this idea, too.

The troops thus falling back arrived at the German hospital shortly after dark, and a defensive position was laid out and entrenched, care being taken not to trespass on the hospital compound, covered by the red cross flag, except for water. General Tighe was placed in command, and at about 7 p.m. I went back to Ras Kasone to interview General Wapshare, who had collected the remnants of his brigade there.

General Tighe had been very emphatic on the conduct of a certain portion of the 13th Rajputs and the company of Gwalior Infantry. I heard from General Malleison that the three companies of Gwalior Infantry left with him to guard the Ras Kasone position were perfectly useless; General Wapshare had an equally unfavourable account to give of the 98th and 63rd, while the 101st, owing to heavy losses, were for the time being somewhat shaken, and I had myself seen the state of the 61st and part of the 13th.

I, therefore, decided in view of what I knew myself, and the emphatic opinion of both my Brigadiers as to the uselessness of certain units, that I had no alternative but to re-embark next day, or risk what might have turned into disaster.

To hold on to the Ras Kasone position and await reinforcements was impossible, as water was very deficient, and immediate reinforcement out of the question. On the other hand, the renewal of the attack by a force, the greater part of which was by now entirely unreliable, would merely have meant the sacrifice of such good troops as remained, and further heavy losses among the surviving British officers of the force, without any reasonable hope of success to justify it.

The troops under General Tighe were, therefore, ordered to retire on to the Ras Kasone position, during the night.

The Senior Naval Officer was asked to come ashore at once; a conference was held, at which he and my two Brigadiers were present, and plans for the re-embarkation were sketched out.

The first position selected near the German hospital and that taken up on the Ras Kasone position, on the night of the 4th-5th November, are shown on Sketch No. 3.

Various reports were received during the night to say that the enemy was advancing on one or both flanks; but, except for patrols, no real activity was shown. The force stood to arms just before dawn on the 5th, the entrenchments being improved, and jungle cleared in front, directly it was light enough to see.

Daylight was ushered in by a tremendous rain-storm, during which the Senior Naval Officer and Marine Transport Officer arrived at the Signal Tower, and the re-embarkation was thoroughly discussed.

Beaches B and C were out of the question, as both were in full view of the enemy at Tanga, and it had been agreed that, owing to the difficulties of the only remaining beach at A, the condition of some of the units of the force, and the fact that 1,000 coolies as well as the slightly wounded had to be got off, a night re-embarkation (apart from loss of valuable time in waiting till then) was out of the question.

Captain Caulfield produced his naval orders, which were carefully discussed, and these served as a basis for my own orders.

The operation of re-embarkation promised to be one of great difficulty. The coral reef, as already explained, extended for 500 yards from the shore (Sketch No. 4), and no lighters or tugs could come closer than this; the cliffs near the Red House were 40 feet high, and only one or two steep and narrow paths to the beach existed. The plying nature of the foreshore made deep wading necessary to reach the ships' boats, plying between the lighters and the shore; which, added to the insecure foothold, made the carriage of heavy loads a matter of great difficulty and delay; while we were warned by the Marine Transport Officer that the ships' boats were unsuited for heavy weights and that an ammunition box or medical pannier hastily thrown in might easily stove in and sink the boat.

The Red House itself was our hospital and was full of wounded; its houses and compounds could, therefore, not be used for purposes of defence.

A presumably energetic enemy capable of getting full information of what we were doing, was within 2 miles—and the condition of the greater part of my troops was such that they could not possibly be relied on to face an attack.

It is, perhaps, not hard, therefore, to imagine the very real difficulties of the situation.

The defensive line taken up, to cover the re-embarkation, was as strongly entrenched as was possible in the time, but the jungle too thick for any complete clearance, was often not more than 200 yards distant. The covering party consisted of the Loyal North Lancashire, 2nd Kashmir Rifles, and the half battalion 3rd Kashmir Rifles, and General Tighe was placed in command. The line held is shown on Sketch No. 4. Constant patrols were sent out to front and flanks, for it was all-important to prevent the enemy discerning that a re-embarkation was taking place. The sea coast, however, extended for miles southwards, with a gentle curve to the east, and had any hostile patrol, or even a single scout, got to that part of the coast nothing could have prevented information being sent to the enemy, who would certainly have attacked us in a very short time.

The "Bharata" was shifted, and now lay about a mile to the east of the Red House ready to assist the covering party with the fire of the Mountain guns, and the "Barjora," on which two 3-pr. Hotchkiss and a Maxim had been prepared for action, stood rather closer in to the edge of the coral reef.

H.M.S. "Fox" took the "Bharata's" billet of the 4th, in the inner harbour, as if to support another attack on the town.

Paths were made down the cliffs, and forming-up places and routes pointed out to each unit.

The time agreed on for the commencement of the re-embarkation was 1 p.m., as it was thought improbable that tugs, lighters, and ships' boats would be ready sooner.

However, as dead low tide was at 12 noon, when the distance between lighters and shore was at its minimum, the precaution was taken of having units ready to re-embark by that time.

Soon after noon the ships' boats began to approach the shore, and the work of re-embarkation commenced.

At first things went well, and the men were kept well in hand by the numerous staff and other officers told off for this purpose on the beach.

Soon after 1 p.m., however, a party of the enemy appeared in front of the covering position; they were driven back by a burst of fire, and were prevented from seeing anything; but the sound of the firing led to an incipient panic among some of the troops re-embarking, a rush was made for the boats, and some, throwing rifles and accoutrements into the sea, actually tried to swim towards the lighters.

Patrols of the enemy continually approached the position, and rendered the situation decidedly anxious, but were always driven back.

The arrangement made by the Senior Naval Officer and the Marine Transport Officer worked excellently, and they were ably backed up by volunteer crews from the various transports who rowed the ships' boats. During this time a number of bogus messages was sent "in clear" to the "Fox" from the Signal Tower by Captain Hawtrey, R.E., by order of Headquarters, which were intended to be read by the enemy—

"Take up a position whence the houses, which checked us yesterday, can be shelled." "Advance commences at 1 p.m." &c. &c. Whether these served their purpose or not, can only be a matter of conjecture, but no serious attack was made on the covering party, and General Tighe and his Brigade Major, Major Keen, the last to leave the shore, reached the "Karmala" shortly after 4 p.m.

It was impossible to bring off any but the slightly wounded from the hospital, for they would have been put to great suffering had the attempt been made to put them into ships' boats, quite unprepared for them in hurry, while the time necessary for this would have imperilled the whole re-embarkation. Apart from this I hoped to get them given over to me under a flag of truce.

The operation was a most hazardous one, but there was no choice.

It appeared almost impossible that such an extensive re-embarkation could be carried out without attracting attention, and there is no doubt that, had the enemy really attacked in force between 12 and 4 p.m., the results might have been very serious.

A. E. AITKEN, Major-General,
Commanding Indian Expeditionary Force "B."

Recd 30/1/15

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29/1

My dear Fiddes
Herewith my
note on the Panga
Report which may
interest you

Yrs

EgD Jones

Recd 30/1/15

390

29/1

My dear Fiddes
Herewith my
note on the Tanga
Report which may
interest you

Yrs

Eg Dames

391

Secretary of State,

The printed official Report from General Aithen dated 1st December 1914 is now before us, and I venture to make the following observations thereon.

Para (2) of covering letter.

(1) There seems to have been absolute ignorance at Embassy regarding the so-called 'Naval truce'. Orders were I believe sent from the Admiralty on the 22nd October to repudiate it yet although the Naval authorities were in personal touch with General Aithen from the 30th October nothing apparently was said about this truce till the Convoy arrived outside Fanga on the 2nd November when the Fox was sent in to repudiate the truce.

para 4 of despatch.

Some one is to blame for this unfortunate mistake which probably influenced the course of subsequent events.

para 3 and paras 4 & 5(1) of letter.

(2) From this paragraph, and from what General Aithen has told me verbally, it appears that no attempt had been made prior to General Aithen's arrival either at Zanzibar or at Mombasa to intern Germans or to prevent communication with the mainland or even to establish a censorship. This extraordinary laxity may perhaps account for the destruction of the 'Pegasus' when unprepared for defence. The Governor of East Africa, the Resident at Zanzibar and the Naval and Military authorities in East Africa would all appear to be to blame for these negligences and telegraphic enquiry on the subject might be made. General Aithen also informs me that no information had been collected and that he was told both by the Governor and General Stewart that Fanga was undefended, that no serious opposition need be

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C.O. 533 / 160

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There is a new 11 inch anti-aircraft gun which is being used to attack the town from the sea. The gun is being used to attack the town from the sea.

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...waiting for reinforcements and without even ... his guns. An explanation on these points ... invited from General Aitken. General Aitken ... probably say that it was an urgent matter as the ... might obtain further reinforcements by rail, but ... would be only a supposition, whereas he knew the ... already strongly held.

... 8 a.m. this premature, haphazard and aimless attack had been driven back in hopeless disorder covered to a certain extent by the fire of the 'Fox'. It seems unfortunate that the 'Fox' was not in ^{position} before the attack was launched. I observe that General Aitken himself did not go on shore till 5 p.m., which under the circumstances was a mistake as he could not possibly form a just appreciation of the ^{actual} ~~position~~ ^{situation} on board ship.

(5) On the 11th November the second attack was made. Even then the serious nature of the task had not been grasped as the general idea governing the operations indicated, but we have no copy of the 'operation orders' which were issued, so it is not easy to give an opinion as to their suitability. One thing however is clear; the right of the attack got into the town "materially helped by the fire of the 'Fox', and had General Aitken been in a position to throw in another battalion at this point he would probably have succeeded. It is his gun fault that he ^{did} not. He disseminated his attack with a view to cutting off the enemy's retreat instead of concentrating a heavy attack on the M.E. end of the town. The tactical advantages of concentrating on this point are self evident as it secured the jetty, turned the whole line of defence and secured the advantage of the ^{intensity} of the fire from the 'Fox'. That it was not ...

(7) The impression left on my mind by the whole of this deplorable episode, is that General Aithen exhibited an entire inability to grasp the situation and to adapt his measures to fit it. The only redeeming feature appears to have been the valiant behaviour of the Officers and the steady conduct in spite of mismanagement of certain regiments. In extenuation of his failure it may be said that he received little or no assistance from the advice or knowledge of Governor Belfield or General Stewart and that the Senior Naval Officer displayed none of the enterprise or initiative which we usually expect from the cooperation of Naval Forces. I would add that I have been informed - I do not know with what truth - that General Aithen never took his Brigadiers into his confidence or availed himself of their experience in forming his plans. The net result was hasty arrangements for attack without sufficient information or preparation, insufficient tactical reconnaissance, faulty dispositions, a haphazard assault and consequent disaster.

(id) : Baron

SKETCH N°1

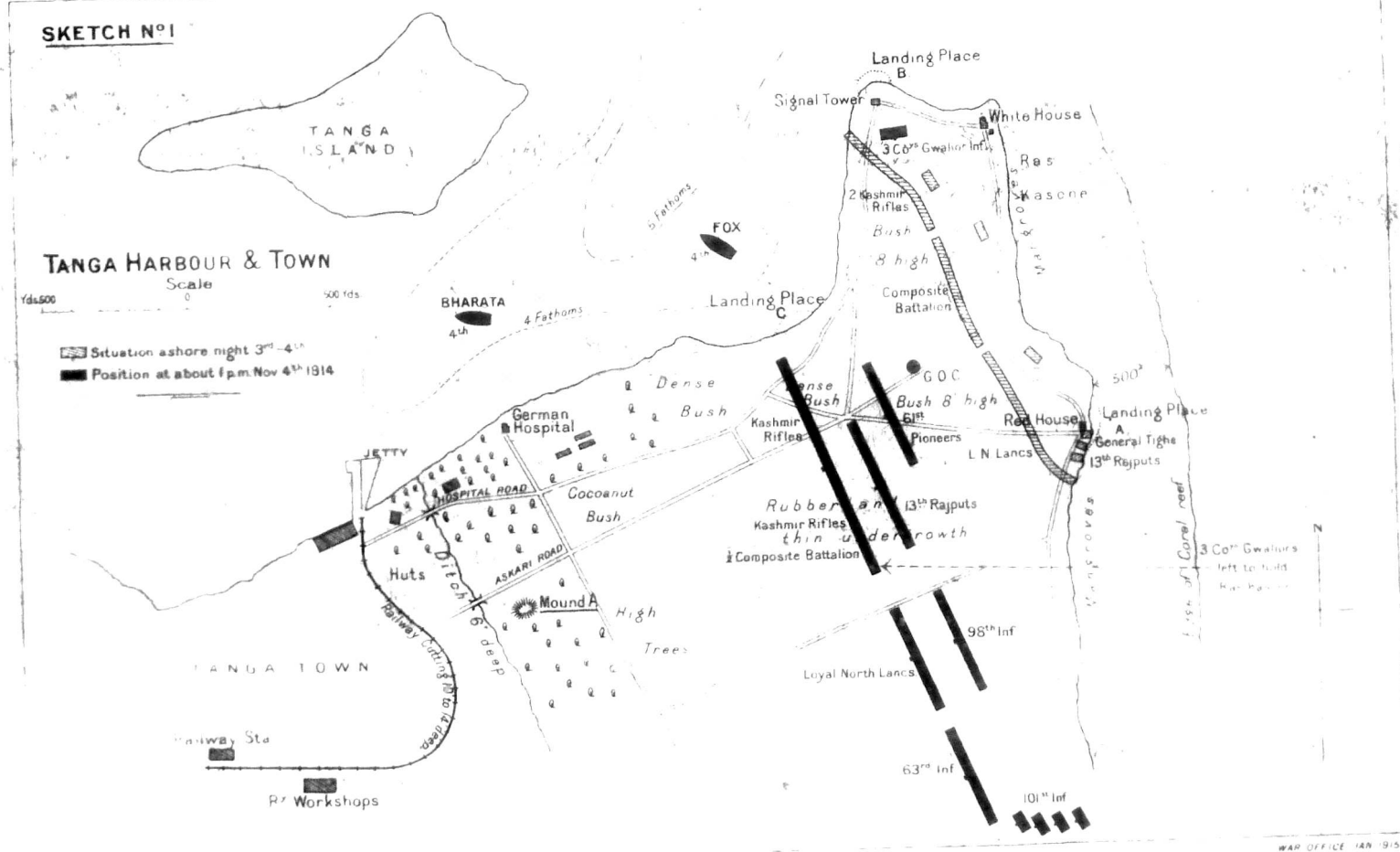
TANGA HARBOUR & TOWN

Scale

Yds. 500

500 Yds.

 Situation ashore night 3rd-4th

 Position at about 1 p.m. Nov 4th 1914


SKETCH N° 2.

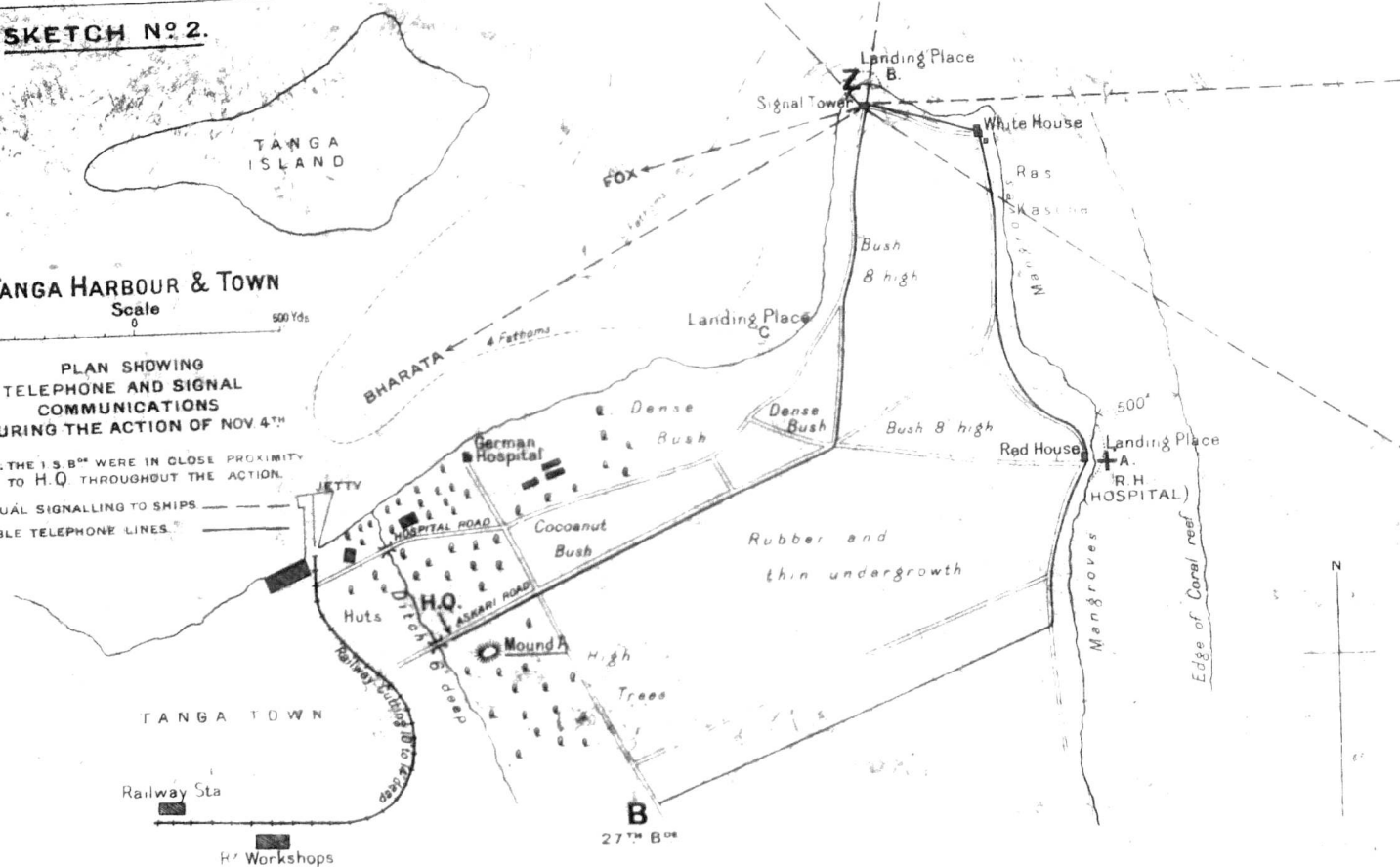
TANGA HARBOUR & TOWN

Scale 0 500 Yds

PLAN SHOWING
TELEPHONE AND SIGNAL
COMMUNICATIONS
DURING THE ACTION OF NOV. 4TH

N.B. THE I.S.B.'s WERE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY
TO H.Q. THROUGHOUT THE ACTION.

VISUAL SIGNALLING TO SHIPS
CABLE TELEPHONE LINES



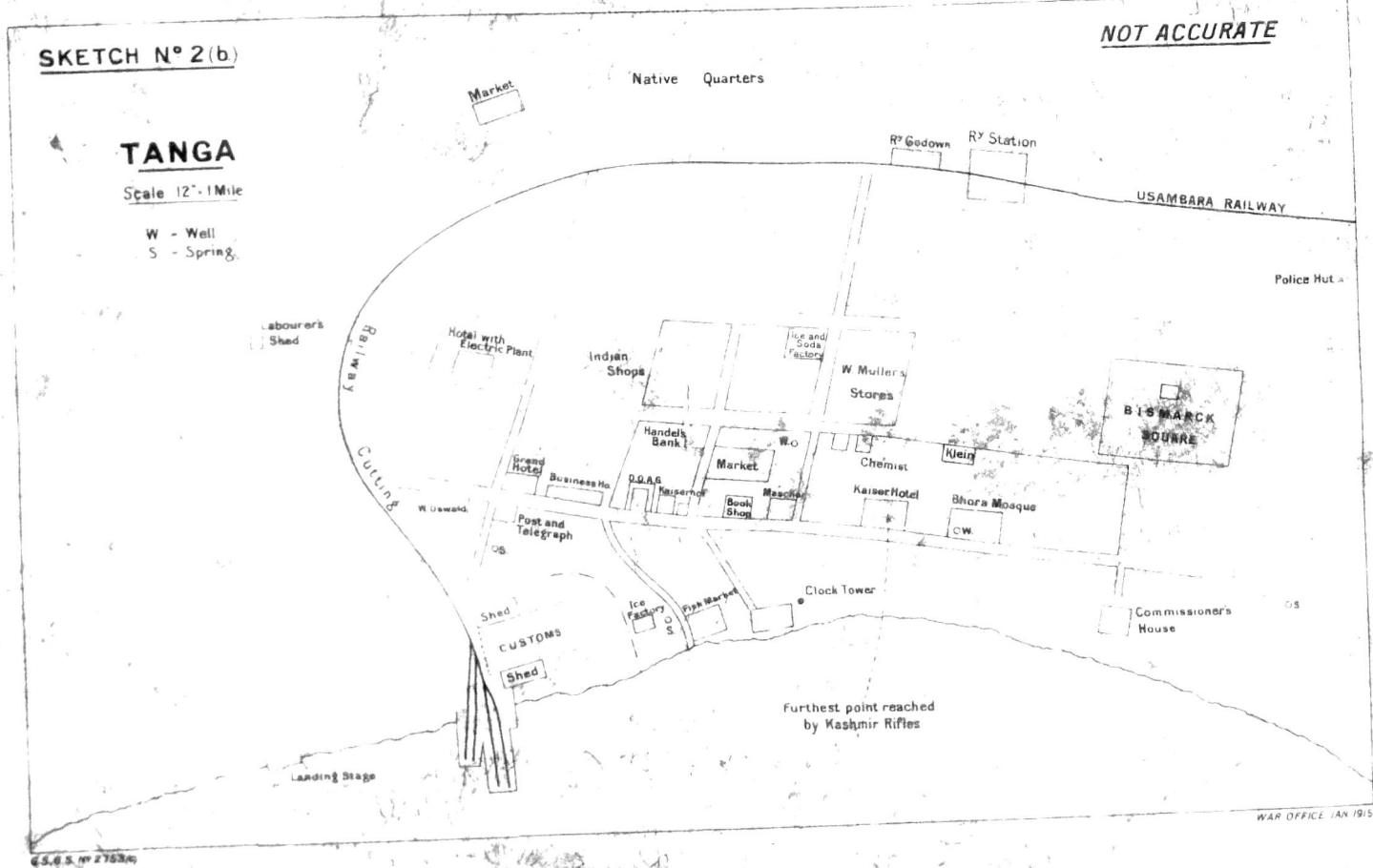
SKETCH N° 2 (b)

NOT ACCURATE

TANGA

Scale 12" = 1 Mile

W - Well
S - Spring



SKETCH N° 3.

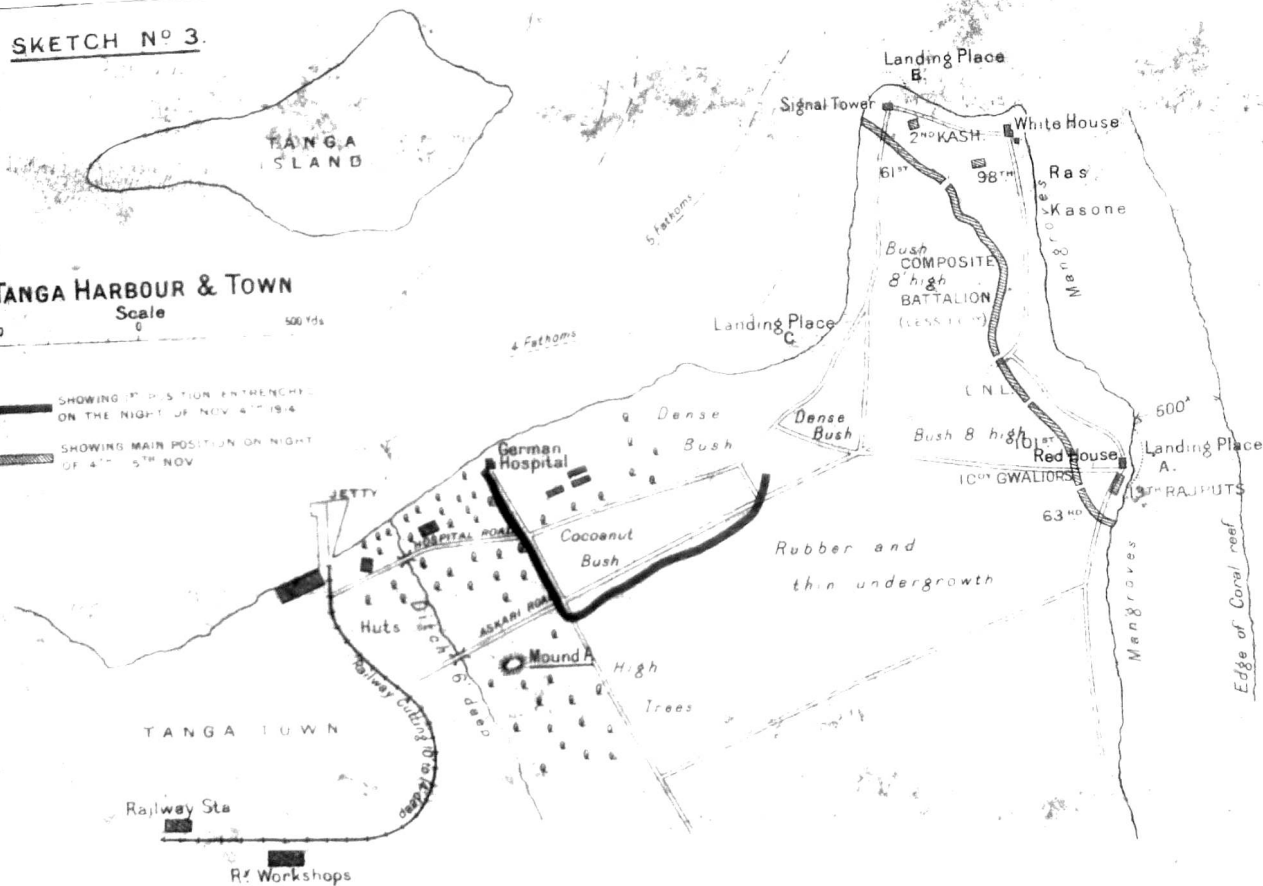
TANGA HARBOUR & TOWN

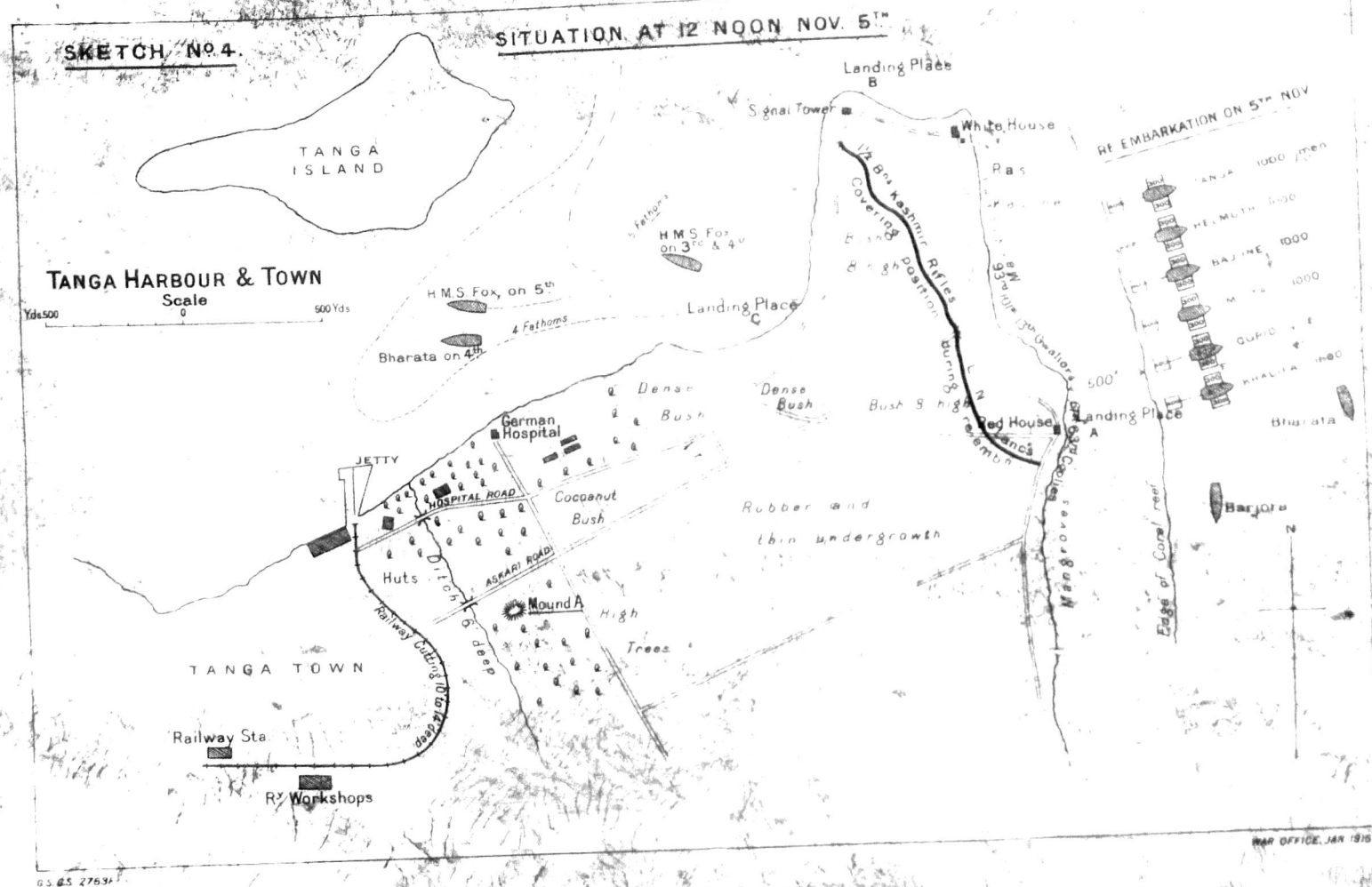
Yds 500

500 Yds

— SHOWING POSITION ENTRENCHED
ON THE NIGHT OF NOV 4TH 1914

— SHOWING MAIN POSITION ON NIGHT
OF 4TH - 5TH NOV





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