

1902

HMS Rattler

January 1st

Forester's fete. Rode to 'Rosemary Hall' where the Foresters are having a fete. We arrived there just at the finish. They had a had some athletics sports to enliven the proceedings but they were not altogether successful. The competitors were nearly all 'Tommys' and prisoners of war, and in consequence of a dispute as to who was the victor of one of the events, a free fight ensued between the two parties, and some nasty blows were exchanged but it came to nothing serious. The place was crowded with islanders who were more or less drunk, and a number of the soldiers were in a similar condition so that the scene was not edifying.

January 8th

POWs. Rode to High Knoll Fort in the afternoon. Just as we arrived we met a very strong escort of Wilts Regiment conveying Mr Eloff and three other POWS to the Fort for a further term of confinement. It was found that they spread conspiracy and discontent among the others at Deadwood Camp and so they are again incarcerated for an indefinite time. They are not fit to be at large and should never have been liberated.



Comandante Sarel Eloff was the grandson of President Paul Kruger and an influential commander in the Boer War.

January 18th

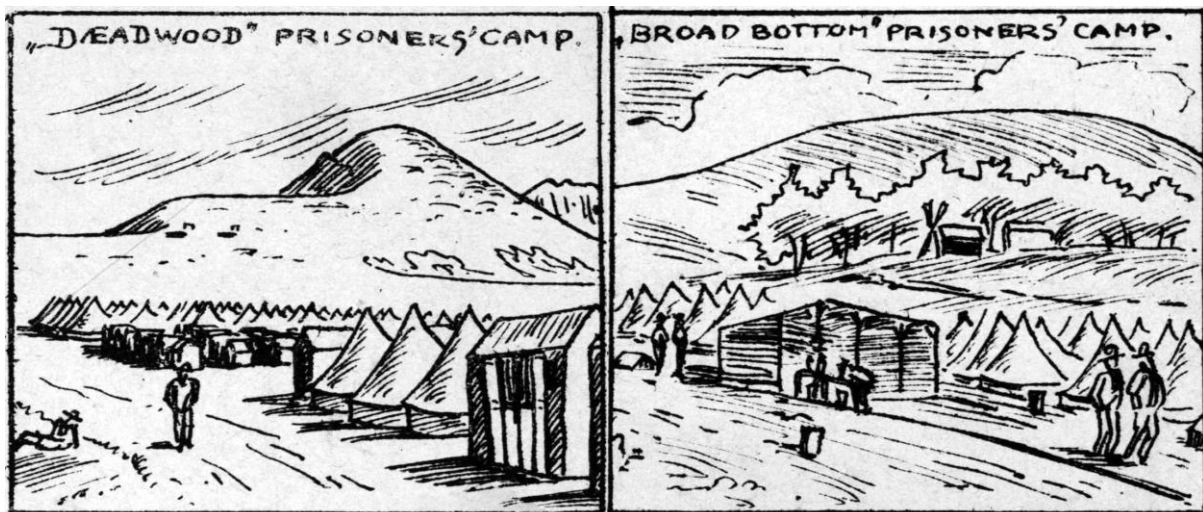
More POWs. Received news today that 1050 more prisoners are to be sent to the island shortly. I rode up to the Governor in the afternoon to tell him about it. He was not pleased with the idea as it means more troops to look after them and perhaps some trouble.

January 22nd

Arrival of POWs – Relief. The transport ‘Orient’ arrived today bringing 1050 more Boer POWs to the island. Owing to the plague at the Cape, they will not be able to land until Monday *[note - six days later]*. To my surprise, HMS Philomel arrived. They are homeward bound. I was informed that we are shortly to be relieved by the gunboat ‘Magpie’, which leaves the Cape on the 27th.

January 27th

POWs. The POWs in the ‘Orient’ landed today and marched off to Deadwood and Broadbottom camps. They were a filthy looking lot and amongst them were old men and quite young boys. It is terrible to contemplate the amount of trouble and valuable lives these scallywags have cost us and I could not help despising them.



Sketch of POW camps on St Helena

February 4th

Arrival of the flagship. The long expected flagship ‘Gibraltar’ was sighted in the early morning and anchored during the forenoon. I visited Rear Admiral More on his arrival and found that he is going to tow us part of the way to the Cape and that we are to leave with him next Friday.

February 6th

Relief. In the forenoon, HMS Magpie arrived with our mails from the Cape. She comes to relieve us as Guardship at Saint Helena and will remain here for some time.

February 7th

Depart Saint Helena. I received the signal to weigh and stood away from the anchorage to wait for the 'Gibraltar'. She very soon afterwards picked up our hawsers and we proceeded in tow of her. I am very sorry to leave Saint Helena, where I have spent such a happy time for nearly five months, and am hoping to return someday again.



Boer POWs leaving St Helena. The peace treaty was signed on 31st May 1902. The St Helena Guardian of 5th June 1902 carried the headline 'Peace, Perfect Peace' and expressed the hope that the peace would be a lasting one. On 26th June 1902 the first batch of PoWs embarked for [Cape Town](#); the last batch left on the 21st October.

February 7th to 18th

Passage to Port Nolloth, Cape Colony

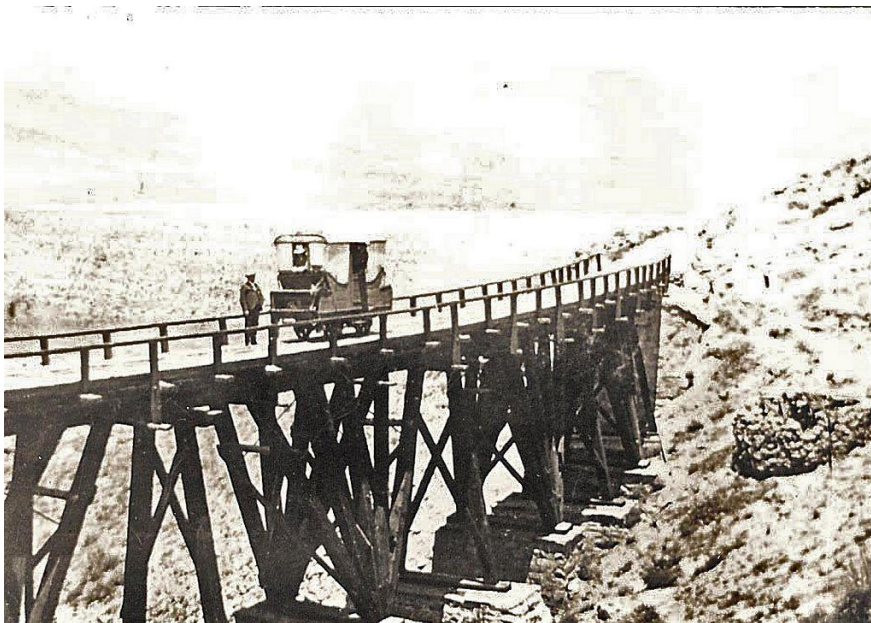
February 18th

Port Nolloth. Port Nolloth is important because of its copper mines, which are situated a few miles inland. The Boers have left these untouched and have not attempted to tamper with the railway connecting the mines with the port. It is a miserable place,

consisting of few shanties in a waste of sand. A town guard protects it in case of emergency. There appeared to be little news and I was not sorry to get on board again.



Port Nolloth Civic Centre, looking North about 1905



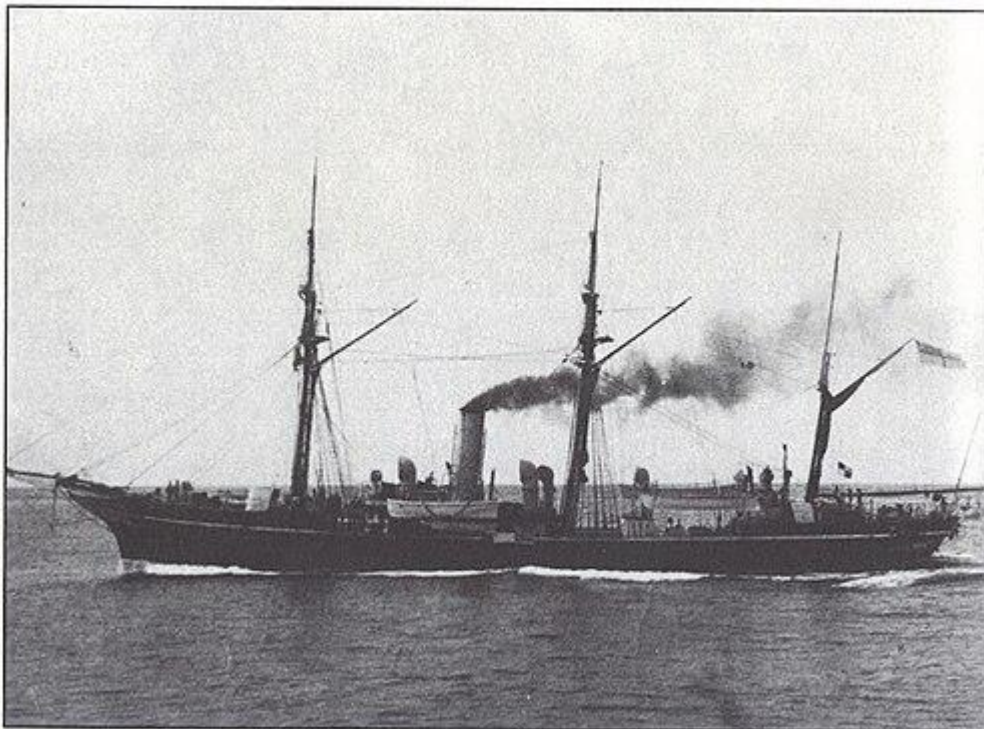
*Narrow gauge railway linking the Okiep copper and diamond mines to Port Nolloth.
Train crossing the Barkly Viaduct.*

February 19th to 20th

Passage to Lambert Bay

February 21st to 24th

At Lambert Bay - loss of HMS Condor. Lambert Bay is a wretched spot. The country around is a vast plane with low scrub eking out an existence in the sandy soil. Intelligence has been received of the sad fate of HMS Condor, which it is said foundered in the Pacific. She has not been heard of for some months and no trace has been discovered of her at present. Ships have been sent in search. It is thought that she may have capsized and that class of ship have a bad reputation for stability. I was in a similar ship, the 'Vestal' for trials, but never saw her tried under sail. The terrible loss of life following so closely on the 'Cobra' disaster is another sad blow to the Navy.



*HMS Condor was sunk in a storm on 3rd December 1901 in the middle of the Pacific.
HMS Cobra sank off the coast of Cromer on 18th September 1901.*

February 24th to 25th

Passage to Simon's Bay

February 25th

Arrived Simons Bay

February 26th

Boiler Defects. The fleet engineer came on board to see me about the boiler defects. He came to the conclusion that the repairs would take about 5 weeks and so we shall be here for sometime.

March 5th

Messing arrangements. Today I severed my connection with the Wardroom mess and started messing entirely by myself. Hitherto I have lived alone, but have been supplied from the Wardroom but this arrangement of late has proved unsatisfactory both to myself and to them. Of course it will now be more trouble, as I shall have to do my own housekeeping with the assistance of my steward, Beal.

March 19th

War News. There is some disquieting news from the war, rumours being circulated that Lord Methuen has been wounded and that a column has been cut up by a force of De La Rey. Owing to the strict censorship we received nothing authentic, and have to wait for the news to come from England. I suppose it is right to suppress all information, but it has disadvantages, for the Boers get hold of it just the same and spread it amongst the pro-Boers of the Colony, who exaggerated amongst the rebels and cause unrest.

March 25th

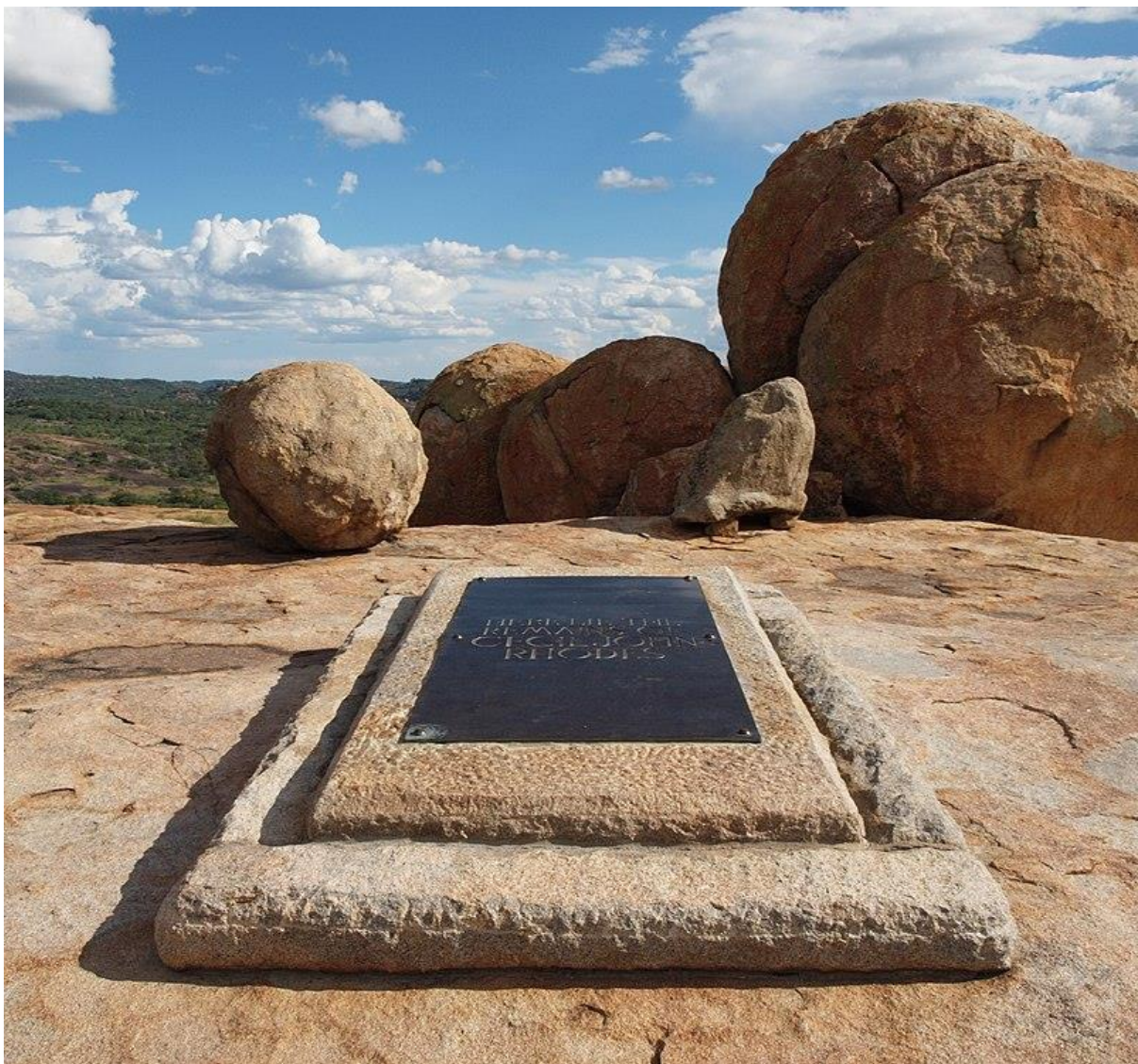
Rudyard Kipling.

We went to call on Mr Rudyard Kipling, celebrated author and popular rhymster. He occupies a charming house close by lent to him by Mr Rhodes. *[note - Rudyard Kipling was a very close friend of the mining magnate and great Imperialist Cecil John Rhodes to the extent that Rhodes had built a holiday home, "The Woolsack", on his Groote Schuur estate in Newlands, Cape Town so that the Kipling family could spend the English winter in Cape Town every year].* I was very glad to meet this celebrated man, whose writings have caused so much popular enthusiasm. He is undoubtedly very clever and has a wonderful insight into character. In course of conversation, I soon found out that he was quite as familiar with life in the Navy as I was myself and his expressions and nautical parlance demonstrated this the more. His father, who illustrates some of his books, was also there and I met Mrs K and his two children. Mr Kipling is a medium height with a heavy dark moustache and wears spectacles. I do not think anyone would take him for the man he is if they met him casually.

March 26th

Death of Mr Cecil Rhodes. The death occurred at shortly after six this evening of Mr Cecil Rhodes, the great African statesman. He came out from England a few weeks ago and the change seems to have been detrimental to him and he developed 'dropsy' and he has been suffering for a long time from a weak heart. For the past fortnight he has been dangerously ill and his life was despaired of. He died at his small cottage and Miusenberg, where he has been staying to gain the benefit of the sea air. The sad intelligence will universally received with the deepest regret, and the Empire has lost

one of its great men. Rhodes was born in 1853 at Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire. His father was rector of the parish, and he studied for the church at Oxford, but suffering from weak lungs, he came out to South Africa in 1870 to join his brother. He is said to have had great ideas in those days of establishing the Empire in South Africa, and his chief aim dream was that all Southern Africa should be British. He has been cut off in the midst of his labours, and it is impossible to realise at present the terrible loss sustained in his death by South Africa in particular, and the Empire in general. He expressed a wish that he should be interred in the Matoppo Hills in Matabeleland. Here he will rest in a spot on which he made a treaty with the Matabele Chiefs, by which the Empire became possessed of huge country. *[note – the 'huge country' refers to Zimbabwe and Zambia, which were acquired through negotiation and military force.]*



Cecil Rhodes' tomb on Malindidzimu, the 'Hill of the Ancestral Spirits' to the local tribes. Rhodes as well as a number of other white colonialist are buried on top of this sacred hill which many interpret as gesture of colonial triumph and conquest over indigenous Africans and their religious belief systems.

April 1st

War received. The news received on March 20th turns out to be true. Lord Methuen has been badly wounded and we have lost about 800 men (killed, wounded and prisoners) which is indeed bad news.

April 3rd

Funeral of Cecil Rhodes. Today the funeral of the late Cecil Rhodes took place at Cape Town. A service was held in the Cathedral and there was a state procession from there to the railway station and the body conveyed by train to Matabeleland.

April 10th

Sail drills. We loosed sails and 'hailed out to a bowline' this morning, a very unusual evolution nowadays, I think I was the only person in the ship who had ever seen it done. The bowlines were bent to the buntline toggles and hauled out, which gives the sails a better chance of drying. The Admiral told me he was going to signal to us to do it when I was dining there last night. He is very fond of seeing a little sail drill as it reminds him of the old days.

April 15th

Accident on board HMS Mars. News was received today of a terrible gun accident on board the battleship 'Mars' by which 2 lieutenants and 13 men lost their lives and one midshipman and men were badly wounded but details are wanted. This is the fourth terrible misfortune which has happened to the Navy in the last nine months.



Funeral of eight victims of April 14th gun explosion on HMS Mars - Bluejackets and marines presenting arms as the coffins pass on the way to the biers.

April 29th

Smallpox. HMS Partridge arrived this morning with a case of smallpox on board. The man died during the forenoon and was 'buried' in False Bay. It was very unfortunate for them as they will have to go into quarantine. All the men of the 'Rattler' who were not vaccinated at the beginning of the commission are being done. There was one 'conscientious objector', but he came round on my informing him that I had conscientious objections to him going ashore.

May 12th

Disaster in the West Indies. News was received today of a terrible disaster in the West Indies. The island of Martinique has been almost entirely devastated by a volcanic eruption and it is said that the town of St Pierre is destroyed with the loss of some 3000 people [note the actual number was 30,000]. St Vincent is also said to be disturbed and the inhabitants are leaving that island. Details are anxiously awaited.



On May 8, 1902, on the Caribbean island of Martinique, Mt. Pelée erupted, killing more than 30,000 people in the city of St. Pierre within minutes. It was a devastating event, notable as the worst volcanic disaster of the 20th century (and so far, the 21st).



The devastation of St Pierre due to the eruption of Mt Pelee in May 1902

May 28th to June 2nd

Passage to Durban

June 2nd to 6th

At Durban.

June 2nd

End of the Boer War. At 4:30 PM we arrived off Durban and proceeded inside the harbour securing to the Bluff Wharf. Flags were flying at the signal station and nearly all the ships in the anchorage and harbour and we found that it was because 'peace' had been signed with the Boers. This was indeed good news, and doubly so as it comes before the approaching Coronation. It appears that the documents were signed by the Boer leaders at 10:30 on Saturday evening last. There was not very much excitement ashore, probably because the announcements were not altogether a surprise. The conference had lasted for three weeks or so, and the Boer prisoners all declared some time ago that peace was certain. There was great interest when the terms were published, and everyone seemed to be thoroughly satisfied with the result. We have obtained everything we have fought for, and the Boers have been treated most generously. Universal satisfaction will be felt throughout the Empire and by the Boers themselves that this prolonged struggle is at last finished.

June 8th to 21st

At Lorenzo Marques (Delagoa Bay) *[note – now Maputo, Mozambique]*

June 24th to July 5th

At Durban

June 24th

Fever. I had to lay up on arrival in Durban, malaria having got a hold of me.

June 25th

King Edward VII's Illness. The sad news was received today of the bad illness of HM King Edward. He has been suffering from 'suppurative peripetitus' *[note – appendicitis]* and it has been found necessary to operate. This is a somewhat dangerous proceeding at his time of life *[note – he was 60]*. He has evidently been bearing up in spite of his disease, in the hope that he would be able to go through the ceremony, but alas! he has had to give in on the eve of his Coronation. It is really a terrible calamity and the sympathy is worldwide, but what the consternation must be at home, where so many elaborate preparations have been made, I cannot imagine.

June 26th

The Coronation postponed. The great ceremony of the Coronation was to taken place today. The news of the King is reassuring, but he is no means out of danger. All the festivities ashore have been put off, but we landed the men to take part in a special service to pray for the King's recovery. The 'main brace' (double allowance for grog) was

also spliced. The last occasion on which this was done was the Queen's Jubilee review in '97. My attack of the fever still continues, but it is very mild.

June 27th to 29th

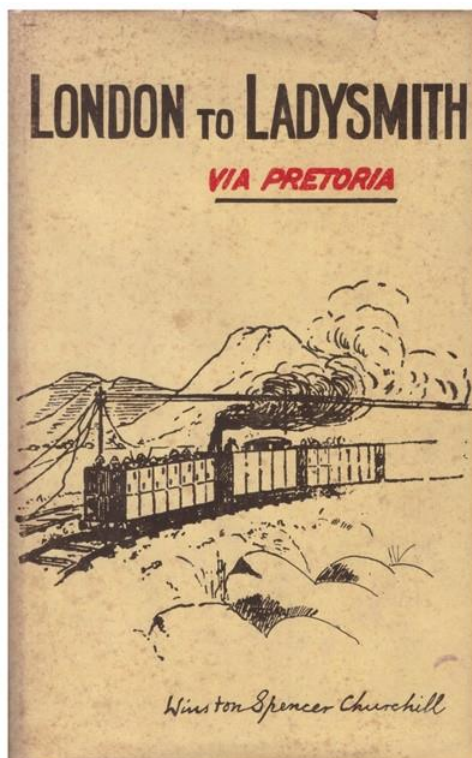
Laid up with fever

June 30th

Travelled to Maritzburg. We left Durban by the 10:15 AM train, our intention being to visit the battlefields around Ladysmith. Arrived in Maritzburg around 3:00 PM.

July 1st

Departed for Ladysmith - sites of interest. The first point of interest we reached was Nottingham Road Station, which was the limit reached by the Boers in their invasion of Natal. We afterwards passed Willow Gorge (where fighting took place), East Court, where we could see the entrenchments which were thrown up by our troops and Frere near to which the lamentable disaster to the armoured train took place [*note - on 15th of November 1899*], a party of men left in the train from Eastcourt to reconnoitre in the neighbourhood of Chieveley and Colenso. They were allowed to pass unmolested but on the return journey the Boers had ruined the railway, the train was derailed and upset. The men made a stand but were exposed to a deadly fire and had to surrender. Over 100 were captured including Mr Winston Churchill (correspondent).



Churchill escaped and wrote about his adventures, making him a celebrity in the UK.

A few escaped on the engine which was fortunately not derailed. A cemetery alongside the railway marks the place where the victims of this ill advised enterprise are buried. Arrived Ladysmith about 5:00 PM and put up at the Royal Hotel. Ladysmith lies on the Klip River in a hollow and is surrounded by two circles of hills. The inner circle is roughly from one to three miles from the town and the outer from three to five miles. It contains, I should say, a normal population of about 10,000 at the outside. Like most South African towns, it is dull and unattractive. There is a small Town Hall with a clock tower which during the siege was hit by a Boer projectile and two sides of it taken off. It has been just left as it was with an iron prop on the centre to keep it safe.



The town hall at Ladysmith, showing shell damage to the tower

July 2nd

Spion Kop. We decided to visit Spion Kop today. It is situated about 115 miles from Ladysmith. Spion Kop consists of a hill of about 1000 feet, with five nipples. These are marked 1,2,3,4 and 5 in the accompanying rough sketch. On the night of January the 24th, 1900, a party under General Woodgate crossed the Tugela River and succeeded in reaching the centre summit (1) without firing shot. Here they remained until daylight and found themselves in close proximity to the Boer trenches which were on the slope of the hill. A sharp fire began at close range, under which our men attempted to throw up sangars (rough defences) for their protection, this precaution having apparently been neglected before it was too late. The hilltop is a considerable plateau, but unfortunately the Boers had a great advantage in having their trenches on the slope of the hill, for they could pick off our men as they appeared on the skyline. The troops were

also exposed to the crossfire from numbers 3, 4 and 5 in addition to shell fire from the distant hills. It would appear, though, as if this was an equal disadvantage to the enemy, for the two were so close together that some of the shells must have burst over them. Throughout the day, this terrible encounter continued with great loss of life to our men, who were so badly protected in comparison. General Lyttleton had occupied the slope between 3 and 4 with the Kings R.R. but the positions were not carried, otherwise we should not have suffered so severely from the cross fire. General Woodgate was mortally wounded, and the command fell to Major Thorneycroft. Apparently the whole thing was badly arranged, and no one had any definite orders. By nightfall the troops were absolutely played out, having had no water, very little food, and the terrible day fighting under the heat of the sun. They were not supported by any reinforcements and it is concluded that they thought themselves abandoned. At any rate, Thorneycroft gave the order to abandon the Kop which they had so gallantly taken. The 'key' to Ladysmith was thus lost to us, and many noble lives sacrificed for no purpose. It subsequently transpired that the Boers evacuated the positions at the same time, and there was no one in the possession. They acknowledge that they had suffered severely, and thought they had left us in charge. I heard a story which corroborated this, which I believe to be true. General Joubert was laagered at the foot of Spion Kop and hearing that his men had given the place to us, had given orders for his troops to abandon the siege and trek away. Some of the commandos had actually started trekking. However some British prisoners were brought into the camp, amongst whom was an officer who said that we had retired. Joubert sent the some scouts to find out whether it was true. To their astonishment they found no one on the Kop and returned hurriedly and informed their general who immediately reoccupied it. It is impossible to estimate the difference that would have been made to the campaign had we only held on. There has been, and continues to be, much discussion as to who was to blame for the miserable management of this affair. General Buller is supposed to have put the matter in the hands of Sir C Warren, who seems to have taken no steps for supporting his men, and to have given no attention to details. Thorneycroft was responsible for abandoning the position and I understand did so in spite of protest from other officers. Buller is reported to recognise that Spion Kop was the 'key' to Ladysmith and it is therefore difficult to realise why he did not hold it at any price. The loss of Spion Kop altered the whole of Buller's plans and he had to start afresh on the other Boer flank and recross the Tugela. It seems to me that if we had held the Kop and had placed guns on it, the army could have marched into the town almost unmoletsed. This the Boers evidently realised.

July 3rd

Wagon Hill, Caesar's Camp, Nicholson's Neck and the Naval Brigade. Today we drove out to Wagon Hill. It is about two miles from the town, and is a ridge about 300 foot high increasing in height towards Caesar's Camp, which is at its other extremity. That top at Caesars camp is a fair sized plain, and was occupied chiefly by the

Manchester regiment. The ridge formed part of the inner defence, and commanded the town, which is within rifle shot. On the night of 6th January 1900 a party of Boers from the positions opposite (distance about two miles) crossed the intervening plains and climbed Wagon Hill. They surprised the small garrison there. These stuck to their ground and fought splendidly, the R.E. losing nearly all their men. They were obliged to surrender, and thus Wagon Hill was captured. The Boers then went along the ridge towards Caesar's camp, taking cover and making sangars along the plain. The situation became alarming and General White sent up reinforcements. Eventually, after a terrific days fighting, during which took place the brilliant charge of the Devons, the Boers were dislodged and driven back to Wagon Hill and finally back to the plains over which they fled. A terrific storm now took place, accompanied by a deluge of rain which filled the Sprint which they had to cross, and converted it into a roaring torrent. They were exposed to galling fire from our men, and from a battery of field artillery which had been brought into action. They suffered great loss and were utterly routed. If they had been able to hold their ground, Ladysmith would have fallen. The way our men fought must have been wonderful when it is considered that they were considerably emaciated after a long siege and were on short rations with disease rampant among them. White is blamed for not having defended, Wagon Hill adequately, and this is no doubt the reason which led the Boers to believe that they could capture it. In the afternoon we drove out to see Nicholson's Neck about 5 miles off. This was the scene of the disaster of the Glosters, when part of two battalions and a mountain battery surrendered to the Boers. On the morning of 30th October, 1899, a general sortie was made by White from Ladysmith in the direction of Lombard's Kop. He sent off overnight the Glosters and the Mountain battery to take possession of Nicholson's neck in order to protect his left flank. Whilst on their way, and when close to the hill a sudden panic seized the pack mules which carried the guns and ammunition, and they all stampeded in all directions. Some of them arrived in the Boer laagers, and both ammunitions and guns, which they carried proved of great use to them during the siege. The incident greatly demoralised the force, but they proceeded to the top of the hill, which is about 600 foot, and took possession without opposition, throwing up sangars for defence. The only ammunition they had left was that carried in their pouches. Soon after daylight the Boers appeared at the other end of the hill, and taking every advantage of cover, advanced towards our men. A sharp fight ensued, in which we suffered severely, and ammunition speedily ran short. A most lamentable incident then occurred. A young officer (who was afterwards dismissed from the service for the offence) held up a white flag and the whole force surrendered. The Boers captured about 1000 prisoners. It is said that the order to surrender was given by the CO as a situation was helpless. The sortie generally seems to have been ill advised, and critics say that White should have busied himself in making defences. This was the first occasion on which the heavy Boer artillery was brought against us, and it was an 'eye opener' for our authorities. It was in the evening of this disastrous day that the 4.7 inch gun with the Naval Brigade arrived in Ladysmith.

As soon as they were out of the train, the guns were brought to bear on the long range guns of the Boers. Otherwise more serious results might have occurred. Three days afterwards, Ladysmith was isolated so they were in the 'nick of time'. Drove back to Ladysmith and left about 8:00 PM for Colenso.

July 4th

Colenso, Greenhill, Hart's Hill and General Buller.

Visited the battlefield of Colenso and the various positions. It is so extensive as to require a pony and trap to get about. The first battle was fought about December 15th, 1899 when Buller, having collected his enormous army, advanced from Chieveley. His plan appears to have been badly thought out, and his information of the enemy's positions scanty and unreliable. The main body advanced in the centre, and he had two columns, one on either side, the left was to cross the River Tugela at Bridle's Drift (found afterwards not to exist), and the other to cross the river on the right. The Boers were entrenched on the other side of the river, on the lines of small kopjes, which they had extensively defended. From all accounts, not a Boer was to be seen as we advanced, and probably through this Colonel Long and his battery of 12 guns rushed madly towards the positions in front of the main body. When he was within close range, the Boers opened a murderous fire, killing the mules and many men and putting the whole battery in confusion. The men stuck nobly to the guns for a time and suffered terribly, and they were finally abandoned. The advance was made on a flat plain, which offered every advantage to the enemy. Later on in the day an attempt was made to rescue the guns, and two were brought back at terrible cost, in which Lieutenant Roberts (son of F.M. Lord Roberts) fell mortally wounded. The Boers made no attempt to take away the guns until the evening when they sallied forth from their trenches and took them away without opposition! This seems a most inexplicable thing, for it would have been just as easy or easier for us to have done the same for the Boers had to take them across the river. One would have thought that their action would have been anticipated and men left to protect them in the rear, but nothing seems to be done. Meanwhile the fight had been progressing most disastrously all round. The left flank found Bridle's Drift, a myth and could not ford the river.

The right flank fared no better and eventually Buller fell back utterly defeated. His loss was over 1000 and also the guns, whilst the Boers hardly lost a man. We went on to Greenhill having passed the huge trench with the Boers had made on the plain. This was finally taken by our troops at the final attempt to relieve Ladysmith (February 27th, 1900). There were many small sangars thrown up by the men as they attacked the hill. We rode on to Hart's Hill. On the top are magnificent trenches used by the Boers. The hill receives its name from General Hart, who captured it with such gallantry. The Boers

must have had a hot time, but they were admirably protected. Stones all round were blown to fragments, and the trees on the top were mutilated considerably. The fight took place on February 22nd to 24th, 1900. General Buller is said to have refused to listen to reason when advised to occupy Hlangwane Hill. He would insist that it was on the Boer side of the river, although repeatedly told that it was not, by men who knew the country. It seems to me that had we taken it before the ill fated battle of December 15th it would have commanded the Boer positions and assisted greatly in our advance. It was not until February 19th that it was taken, when it proved most useful, and some of the shells fired at Hart's Hill were from the naval guns mounted there. I cannot help thinking that General Buller deserves the censures lately passed up on him after seeing these battlefield. The behaviour of 'Tommy Atkins' all through was beyond reproach. His bravery, patience and dogged perseverance in the face of difficulties is clearly shown, and it must have been through bad generalship that we suffered so severely in this campaign. After a most interesting day, we returned to Colenso and having had dinner left by the 8:40 PM train for Durban.

July 18th

At Delagoa Bay (Lourenco Marques)

July 23rd

Cockroaches. Today I caused the mess deck to be cleared of everything in order to make a raid against the cockroaches, which have increased in prodigious numbers since we got into warm weather. By squirting hot water and carbolic into their haunts they killed millions, but they will be as plentiful as ever very soon no doubt.

July 27th to August 12th

At Zanzibar

July 27th

New Sultan. Anchored about 11:00 AM and dressed ship. I found that the reason for dressing ship was in honour of the new Sultan, who has just arrived from England, where we where he has been for the Coronation. His father died about a fortnight ago. The present Sultan is hardly 18 years old and has spent some time at school at Harrow. He was put on the throne by the Foreign Office, who evidently require a man with a knowledge of English ways. The Sultan is nothing but a puppet, but he has been found useful in controlling the Arabs. *[note - In 1902, Sayyid Ali bin Hamud Al-Busaid became the Sultan of Zanzibar, succeeding his father, Hamoud bin Mohammed Al-Said. He reigned from 1902 to 1911.]*



Sayyid Ali bin Hamud al-Busaidi (7 June 1884 – 20 December 1918), also known as Ali II, was the eighth Sultan of Zanzibar from 1902 to 1911.

July 29th

Levee and Sultan's fit. At 9:30 AM the Admiral supported by the CO's and a number of officers from the Fleet landed at the palace and attended a 'baraza' or levee given by the new Sultan. Outside the palace was a large guard and band and a number of people. The salute had just taken place for the Admiral when it was announced that the Sultan had had a fit and was unable to see anyone. There was therefore nothing left for us but to return on board. It appears that the excitement and his sudden exaltation had produced an attack of nerves and the poor youth had thrown an epileptic fit.

August 13th to 24th

At Mombasa (Kilindini)

August 14th

18 months in Commission. We have been 18 months in Commission today. The men did not celebrate the event in any way except that they requested me to allow them beer in the evening, to which I acceded.

August 24th to September 26th

At Zanzibar

August 24th

Letters of thanks - The ship's company. This morning, I assembled the ship's company and read to them the letters of thanks passed by the Houses of Lords and Commons to the Navy, for the way in which the Service had done its duty during the prolonged campaign in South Africa. Although we did not do very much except guarding the prisoners at Saint Helena, I thought the men should know that their effort would have been appreciated if we had been called upon for active service. It is also most pleasing to read them a letter I received yesterday through the Commander in Chief from the Admiralty, in which "their Lordships expressed themselves very much pleased at receiving such favourable inspection report in May last." I also alluded to our being halfway through the Commission and hope that we should pull together in the second half as well as we had done in the first. I am fortunate in having an excellent ship's company. They are of good physique and well behaved and I seldom have any drunkenness or leavebreaking, and their conduct is exemplary.

August 27th

Hubert's wedding. My brother Hubert (Bert) should be married today to Miss Lucy Harman, sister of my brother John's wife (Harriet).

September 27th to 30th

At Mombasa

October 37th

At Kismayu (now Kismayo, Somalia)

October 5th to 6th

Visit to Gobuen and Youti. The officers kindly arranged for us to go for a trip to Gobuen [*note – now called Goobweyn*] and Youti [*note – probably Yoontoy*], returning tomorrow. Leaving the ship about 6:00 AM, we found them waiting for us with camels on which we were to ride to Gobuen, which is about 10 miles distant. Having never ridden a camel before, it was quite a new experience for me, but I soon got into way of it and found the trotting not at all unpleasant and I should say an excellent thing for the liver. The walk, however, is very uncomfortable and one is shuffled about so much. At Gobuen we were welcomed by the two officers stationed here who are in charge of the camel corps. They seemed very pleased to see us as we were new faces which was very unusual in these very outlandish places. Gobuen is a village on the Juba River about 3 miles from its mouth and is now the depot for the camel corps. The Juba marks the boundary between British and Italian spheres of influence, the north side of the river being Italian. After breakfast we embarked on Protectorate River Steamer 'Rose' for passage to Youti, the next military station which is about 10 miles from the Gobuen across country and about

5 miles more by river. The Juba swarms with crocodiles and we saw some basking on the banks on our way, but they slid into the water on our approach. They are very ferocious and much to be dreaded. It is not even safe to put your hand in the water for fear of being dragged in and natives are often lost in this way and have also been upset in canoes and taken. After about 3 hours in the steamer we arrived at Youti and were received by the resident officers and they all seemed delighted to see us and were most kind. Youti is enclosed by a stockade and consists only of barracks which convey about 150 Sudanese troops and the officer's quarters which are very comfortable. They have not any trouble in the district for some time, but the Somalis are treated with suspicion as they are so treacherous. After a stroll around the barracks next day we returned to Gobuen by steamer. After tea at Gobuen we were mounted on the best camels in the corp. Mine went like the wind the whole way back in spite of my pulling, and I arrived before the others. An escort of Askaris came with us as it is still considered risky to go about without, owing to the threatening character of the Somalis.

October 11th to 16th

At Lamu (Kenya)

October 17th to 19th

At Malindi (Kenya)

October 18th

Vasco de Gama's Pillar. In the afternoon I walked out to the point to see Vasco de Gama's pillar. It is said to have been erected on the return of the renowned Portuguese Admiral on his return from India in 1498. He sailed from Madrid on the outward and homeward voyage, and it is thought that they never ventured further north along the coast. The pillar is of loose stone cemented together and whitewashed, it is about 25 feet high, rounded and surrounded by small stone crosses. There's no inscription on it.



October 20th to November 4th

At Mombasa

November 4th to 6th

At Shimoni

November 6th to 15th

At Zanzibar

November 10th

HM King Edward's birthday. The 61st birthday of HM The King was celebrated today. We dressed the ship at 8:00 AM and the Sultan's yacht in 'Nyasa' fired a royal salute at noon.

November 11th

Orders from Mogadishu. Received news last night that we are to go for a trip up the coast to Mogadishu to join the 'Beagle' there and take her some provisions [*note – not Darwin's Beagle!*]. Mogadishu is in Somaliland, in Italian territory, about 200 miles north of Kismayu. Owing to the terrible trouble we are having with the Mad Muller, I thought it possible that we might be cooperating with the Italians in the work of suppressing him, but at present there is no news as to the object of our voyage.

A sepia-toned illustration by Frank J. Keller depicting a scene in a desert. In the foreground, a man with a white turban and a long white robe is seated on a dark-colored camel, holding its reins. To the left of the camel, a man in a white tunic and shorts, barefoot, walks alongside the animal, holding a lead rope. The camel is in profile, facing left. In the background, several other camels and riders are visible, some carrying loads, set against a hazy, mountainous desert landscape. The artist's signature, 'FRANK J. KELLER', is in the bottom left corner.

November 18th

At Mogadishu. Anchored about noon. An Italian gunboat was anchored, but no 'Beagle'. Very soon afterwards a Swahili came on board with a letter from Commander Elliot of the 'Beagle' to say that if she was not at Mogadishu we were to proceed down the coast to Merka and Brawa [*note – now Merca and Baraawe*] to look for her, and in

the event of not meeting her, to go to Mombasa. Our hopes of a little fun have all ended in smoke (a waste of coal) and we have a regular 'wild goose chase' before us. We reached Merka just after dark and were sufficiently close to see that the Beagle was not there, so proceeded for Brawa.

November 19th

Brawa. Off Brawa about 10:30 AM but did not anchor. A boat communicated with us and I heard that the 'Beagle' had left the previous day, so we filled again and stood for Mombasa.

November 22nd

Mombasa. Just before sunset we were entering Mombasa and looking forward to a quiet night in harbour, but we were again disappointed for we were met by a shore boat in which was a man frantically waving a letter, which turned out to be ordered to go to Zanzibar and the information that the 'Beagle' had gone there yesterday. There was nothing for it but to 'bottle up our indignation and cork it down', slew round and to sea once more.

November 23rd to December 5th

At Zanzibar

December 3rd

Orders for Mombasa. He told me we should go to Mombasa to assist in receiving the Right Honourable Mr Joseph Chamberlain (Colonial Secretary) who is on his way out here in HMS Good Hope on a visit to South Africa.

December 6th to 26th

At Mombasa

December 12th

Orders for England. The Chief Engineer of the 'Forte' came on board in the forenoon to examine the boilers. He reported very unfavourably on them, and curiously enough, he was talking to me about the ship going home in consequence when the signal was made "'Rattler' will proceed to England on being relieved by 'Odin'". This is evidently the result of the boiler troubles. The word was piped forward, and I think the majority of the men are pleased, except a few who are waiting for the last year of the commission before saving their money. In many ways I'm pleased myself. It will be very pleasant to get home again, but I think I would rather have seen the commission through, as I have an excellent lot of officers and a good ship's company and with all its disadvantages. I

do not dislike the station, but the ship is certainly anything but efficient in her present condition and besides, she is old and played out, so perhaps it is the best thing after all.

December 16th

Mr Chamberlain's visit. I saw Mr C, who looked very much interested in what was going on both ashore and afloat. I was rather disappointed with his appearance. The last time I saw him was at Warwick when the General Election was going on, and then he was smartly turned out in a frock coat, etc. Today he was wearing whites and a kind of yachting cap which made him look quite puny and insignificant, but there was no mistaking the eagle eye and sharp features of the great man. After lunch [*note - at the Law Courts*] Sir Charles called up for Mr C for a speech. There was not very much that he could say, considering that he had only been in the country for about an hour. Nevertheless, he showed a great sound grasp of everything connected with it. He remarked that he had been very pleased with the reception that he had had and that he was looking forward very much to his trip up country, especially as he had been one of the principal advocates for the building of the railway. With a few encouraging remarks to the Protectorate officials, he closed his speech, hoping to say more on his return when he had seen more of the country. His disclosure was received with vociferous applause during which he left for the station.

December 16th to 24th

Up country

December 25th

Christmas Day - Future of East Africa Protectorate.

I returned aboard the 'Rattler', which I found decorated outside with evergreens, the same as last year. The men had wisely decided not to spend a large sum out of the canteen for their dinners in view of the ship going home and supplies being dear and scanty. The day thus passed very quietly, leave being given to the wet canteen at English Point where they could get beer and make plenty of noise without interfering with anyone. I cannot help feeling rather pessimistic at the moment for the Protectorate. The railway has been built and prodigious expense and will cost some hundreds of thousands of years to maintain. At present, there is very little freight and few passengers, so that it will be years before it pays. In spite of its huge size, the country produced practically nothing except ivory and sundries, and under the present regime seems as if it can never be developed in spite of its richness. However, some people are very hopeful of its future and I trust they may be right in their forecasts.

December 30th

At Kismayu

December 31st to January 1st

At Lamu - New Year's Eve. At midnight we were remanded outside my tent by a 'squeejee band' similar to that of last year. Strut struck 16 bells, 8 for the parting year and 8 for the new. The band had a peg of whisky each and after singing 'Auld Lang Syne' retired to their hammocks with mutual good wishes. Thus ends my 30th year in this world.