

EAST AFR. PROT

1042192  
OCT 14

Tsavo Engagement.

Forward copy of report of G.O.C. on Tsavo River engagement, containing recommendations that certain men should be granted distinctions.

~~has been sent~~ Sir G. Fuller

This contains <sup>Genl.</sup> Stewart's report on the Tsavo River Engagement, a copy of which has also, it appears, been sent to the G.O.C. Simla. I think, however, that we should send a copy of it to the India Office; it may take some time before they get it from India. Genl. Stewart considers that his action was a creditable one for to all

See also 1042191

1914  
September 29  
previous Paper.  
1042191/5

copy to Mr. 1042191  
copy to Mr. 1042191

1043161/5

engaged, considering the novel  
nature of the country in which  
it was fought. It is evident  
that the work done by the Germans  
was complete.

Five men are recommended for  
distinctions:

Lieut. Hardingham, K.A.R.  
for D.S.O.

Captain Pottinger, 29<sup>th</sup> Punjab  
for D.S.O.

Subadar Sher Bag (killed) of  
29<sup>th</sup> Punjab

and

Naick Gul Mahomed (twice  
severely wounded)  
29<sup>th</sup> Punjab

for Indian Order of Merit.

Sergeant G. Williams 3rd Bn. K.A.R.  
for Distinguished Conduct  
Medal.

~~Distinction was recommended for~~  
~~of the Punjab and the~~  
~~was recommended for~~  
~~the Punjab and the~~

I understand that it is unlikely  
 that the Interdepartmental Rewards  
 Com. will meet for some time  
 and I suppose that the course of  
 these recommendations will have  
 to wait until it does. In  
 the meantime we might ask 99  
 the Gov. who the Serjt. P. William  
 recommended is. I suppose he  
 is a native as he is not a  
 European N.C.O. of the K.O.R.

Eqn 2/11/14

I should be inclined to await further  
 despatches before considering as to Rewards; but  
 the officers, as mentioned certainly did  
 very well. Serjt. William, D.C.M. will  
 I presume be the ordinary K.O.R. D.C.M.

Why to I.O. as proposed?

Major Jenkins was the  
 duplicate - see on 4219.

W.C.S. 2/11/14

+ copy also to W.O.  
 for info I.F.?

H-J.R.  
 3/21/14

W.C.S. 4/1/14

I did have thought that rewards of this

Another I  
 am sure  
 have heard of  
 a special apt  
 to the  
 examples of the  
 K.O.R.

character would best be given  
at the end of the War. The names  
of the assignments being noted  
now for better consideration

J

5.11.14

at once

LA. 5.11.14

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100  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
NAIROBI,  
BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

EAST AFRICA PROTECTORATE

29th September 1914.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit, for your  
O.C. 25.9.14. information, the report in original submitted by  
the General Officer Commanding on the engagement  
which took place on the Tsavo River on the 6th of  
September last.

2. You will probably agree that it is scarcely  
within my province to offer comment upon a  
communication which deals solely with military  
operations, but I should like to endorse General  
Stewart's remark that the action was fought in  
peculiarly thick and difficult country, where  
observation except at close quarters is practically  
impossible, and that the behaviour of our troops  
was under the circumstances most creditable.

3. As I have no information regarding the conduct  
of those officers and men of the force who are  
recommended for distinction beyond that which is  
contained in the report, and as I am unaware of the  
standards

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LEWIS HARCOURT, M.P.,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES,

DOWNING STREET, LONDON, S.W.

standards by which His Majesty's Government decides the eligibility of members of the Services for such rewards, I do not think it necessary to trouble you with my personal views on the subject.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

*John B. ...*

GOVERNOR

ENCLOSURE

In Enclosure Confid. of 29.9.1914

99-C.76

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Headquarters Staff Office,  
Nairobi, the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1914.

From  
The General Officer Commanding Troops  
British East Africa and Uganda Protectorates

To  
His Excellency the Governor

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and Commander-in-Chief,

British East Africa Protectorate

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to submit a report of the  
action which took place on the Tavo River, on the 6th  
September 1914.

2. On the 4th September, the distribution  
of troops in the Voi District was as follows:-

- VOI. 2 Double Companies, 29th Punjab (Major A.A. James)
- 1 12 Pounder Field Gun, from H.M.S. "Fox".
- MURA. 82 Rifles, East African Regiment.
- 134 Rifles, King's African Rifles.
- 1 Hotchkiss Gun.
- 1 Machine Gun.
- 20 Somali Scouts.
- AKTAU. Lieutenant Davis, and 20 Mounted Infantry, King's  
African Rifles.
- TSAVO. 65 Rifles, King's African Rifles (Lieutenant  
Hardingham),  
with 25 Rifles, King's African Rifles, some 20 miles  
up Tavo River.
- OTOTO ANDEI. 1 Company, King's African Rifles.

3. Reliable reports had shown that there  
was a large concentration of German troops in the neighbour-  
hood of Koshi. On the 4th September, Lieutenant Hardingham  
reported a force of the enemy, estimated at 1 Battalion, 2  
Screw Guns, and 2 Machine Guns, as having been seen moving  
down the Tavo River, 20 miles West of Tavo Station.

On receipt of this report, 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Companies, 29th Punjab, and the 12 Pounder Gun, were moved to Tsavo; and on the 5th September, at 7-30 a.m., 2 Companies, 29th Punjab, and 45 King's African Rifles, left Tsavo to support Lieutenant Hardingham, leaving 1 Gun (12 Pounder), 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Company, 29th Punjab, and 100 King's African Rifles at Tsavo. Lieutenant Davis, from Nakuru, and 1 Company, King's African Rifles, were ordered to move at 5-15 a.m. on the 5th, and to come in on the 6th. At 8-20 a.m. a report was received that Lieutenant Hardingham was in touch with the enemy, 15 miles West of Tsavo at 10 a.m. on the 5th. Captain Saunders, with 2 Officers, 2 Companies, and 107 native troops, left Burā at 2 p.m. At 5 p.m. a message was received from Lieutenant Hardingham (at 12 miles West of Tsavo) that he was retiring before the enemy. On the 5th September, at midnight on the 5th-6th, a message was received from Captain Skinner, commanding the 20th Company, 29th Punjab, sent at 6-30 p.m., that the enemy were on the high hill between him and Tsavo. Major James directed us to leave the enemy Eastwards, to the position of the ridge West of Tsavo Station, and 5 miles from the River.

5. "A" Company, King's African Rifles, under Lieutenant Foster, had left Nakuru by Train at 3 p.m. on the 5th; and on its arrival at Tsavo, Major James, taking it, and 1 Company, 29th Punjab, started to the Tsavo at 5 a.m. on the 6th, and occupied the position, 5 miles East, at 10-45 a.m. At 10-50 p.m. Major James heard firing about 1,000 yards in front. At 11-45 p.m. he received two messages from Captain Skinner, both despatched at 11-45 p.m. The first said that he had lost touch with the enemy; and the second, that the enemy were reported to be in the bush; and that Captain Pottinger, and 1 Company, 29th Punjab, and Lieutenant Phillips, with the 4<sup>th</sup> King's African Rifles, had been sent to intercept them.



7. Lieutenant Oldfield had been sent on with Scouts, to establish communication with Captain Skinner; and he and his men became absorbed in the firing line. Owing to the thickness of the bush, Major James was unable to see the positions of our own troops, or of the enemy.

8. At 1-20 p.m., wounded began to come in. At 2 p.m., a report from Lieutenant Foster said that he was going with his whole Company to take up a position on the hill to the North-West. At 2-45 p.m., a message was received from Lieutenant Phillips' detachment, that they had just been ordered into the firing line at 2 p.m. The 12 Pounder Gun was reported to be in position North of Signal Hill at 2 p.m. Lieutenant Foster reported at 2-40 p.m. that there was firing on a low hill South-West of his position.

9. Captain Skinner's detachment reported that our troops were in possession of the enemy's position; Major James collected all the men he could, and advanced at 3 p.m., and set the rest of the force, retreating. As the men had no food, he withdrew to leave for the night, leaving a picquet on Signal Hill.

10. From Captain Skinner's report, it appears that, at 1-15 p.m., the 2nd Double Company, 78th Punjab, located the enemy, and advanced against his position. When within 400 yards, the enemy's dispositions were seen, and Captain Pottinger was sent, with 2 Sections, to take the highest hill on their right; which was not held, and commanded the rest of the position. Captain Pottinger, himself, led the way, but, when nearing the enemy's right, he found he had only 10 men with him; the rest having lost touch in the thick bush. He sent back Naick Gul Mahomed to bring up the rest, and proceeding on, himself, took in flank, and silenced, 2 Machine Guns which were firing on the left front of our frontal attack. This was at a range of 200 yards; but, as he was in danger of being out-flanked, he fell back about 100 yards. Here Naick Gul Mahomed brought Subadar Sher Baz, and the rest of his party, to join him. He then advanced, and

opened fire on the Machine Guns a second time. Maick Gul Nahomed fell, severely wounded, and Subadar Sher Baz was wounded, when gallantly attempting to drag him under cover. Captain Pottinger attempted to rescue the Subadar, but the latter was killed by a shot in the head.

11. Captain Pottinger then withdrew about 200 yards, and, after half an hour, having lost all touch with the rest of the force, again advanced to search for the wounded. He found that the Subadar's body had been rifled, and he was fired on when his party were removing ~~Maick Gul Nahomed's~~ Maick Gul Nahomed's body. They started for Tsavo at 4 p.m., and got in at 2 a.m. the next morning.

12. Captain Pottinger specially brought to notice the bravery and faithfulness of the late Subadar Sher Baz, who died while bravely attempting to save a comrade; and of No. 4050 Maick Gul Nahomed, 20th Punjabis, who, throughout the action, had shown great resource and pluck, and was twice severely wounded.

13. On the night of the 5th orders were given for Lieutenant Foster, and "A" Company, King's African Rifles, to start at dawn, and regain touch with the enemy. Lieutenants Phillips and Hardingham, with 80 King's African Rifles, to support him. No sign of the enemy was seen on the 7th or 8th, by the Tsavo force.

14. The enemy made a forced march on the night of the 6th-7th, and got away before the Bura Column reached the Tsavo Road.

15. I attach a List of our casualties, and a List of the enemy's casualties, as far as can be discovered.

16. I consider the action was a creditable one to all engaged, considering the novel nature of the country in which it was fought. The scrub is very thick there bush, and renders it impossible to observe what is going on, even at a ( ) yards distance.

17. The undermentioned specially distinguished

- distinguished than
- Captain Pottinger, 20th Punjabis.
- Lieutenant Hardingham, King's African Rifles.
- Subadar Sher Baz and 20th Punjabis.
- Naick Gul Mahomed.
- Serjeant George Williams, King's African Rifles.

18. From the report, it will be seen that Captain Pottinger led his Double Company with skill and determination, and performed a gallant act in attempting to rescue Subadar Sher Baz.

19. To Lieutenant Hardingham, the greatest credit is due, for the way in which he gained information of, and maintained touch with, the enemy. During the action itself, he courageously reconnoitred the enemy's position, getting to within 100 yards of it; and, throughout, showed great coolness and judgment. I recommend both these Officers for the Distinguished Service Order.

20. Subadar Sher Baz (killed), and Naick Gul Mahomed (twice severely wounded), of the 20th Punjabis, showed great bravery. I consider they should receive the Indian Order of Merit.

21. No. 1925, Serjeant George William, 3rd Battalion, King's African Rifles, showed great courage and enterprise on the night of the 5th-6th September. He twice at great personal risk, crept up to the German position; and brought back accurate information of the enemy's dispositions and strength. I recommend him for the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

I have the honour to be  
Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant,

*E. Howard.*

Brigadier General,  
Commanding Forces.

Copy forwarded to the Chief of the General Staff, Simla, with  
reference to his telegram No. W. 3851 dated the 18th

September 1914.

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(14) J. M. Stewart

Brigadier General.  
Commanding Troops.

Sir H. D. ... M. James K.C. S.E.  
Glenches  
Cambridge Park  
T. Wickham

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Mr. King

Should please see

of Chief Secretary, ...

6/2/14

except the action of Sept 6<sup>th</sup>  
6. We are not publishing any  
E.A. despatches or papers of  
when we do the one copy of  
Capt P's mention will be  
included at present the  
despatch is wrong & I cannot  
comment on it.

[One more paper before extracts  
- "not for publication" ]

at once was 11/4/14  
12/21/14

S. D. ...

Sir H. Evans M. James K.C. & Co.

Yorkshire

Cambridge Park

Thirskham

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Mr. Kemp

Dear Mr. Kemp

I refer to the letter of the 21st of Oct. Secretary, <sup>1914</sup>

6211

concerning the action of Sept 6<sup>th</sup> We are not publishing any

E.A. leaflet, or part of it

When we do the one <sup>(no doubt)</sup> I

left P's mention will be

included as well as the

debilitated as well & I cannot

comment on it

[The word paper to be extracts

- "not for publication"]

at once W.A.S. 11/2/14

to York

12/25/14

Sedona