

In first line (counting from the right):—

- Ammunition Column, No. 1 Divisional Troops.
- 6th Brigade Field Hospital.
- 4th Brigade Field Hospital.
- Pontoon Troop, Royal Engineers.
- 5th Brigade Field Hospital.
- 2nd Brigade Field Hospital.
- Ammunition Column, No. 2 Divisional Troops.

In second line (counting from the right):—

- Baggage of 6th Brigade.
- Baggage of 4th Brigade.
- Baggage of 5th Brigade.
- Baggage of 2nd Brigade.

In third line (counting from the right):—

- Baggage of Mounted Brigade.
- Baggage of No. 1 Divisional Troops.
- Baggage of No. 2 Divisional Troops.

In the fourth and fifth lines (counting from the right):—

- Supply Columns, in the same order as the Baggage Columns in second and third lines.

Lieutenant-Colonel J. Reeves, Royal Irish Fusiliers, will command the whole of the above details.

10. The position of the General Officer Commanding will be near the 4·7-inch guns.

The Commanding Royal Engineer will send two sections 17th Company, Royal Engineers, with the 5th Brigade, and one section and headquarters with the 2nd Brigade.

11. Each Infantry soldier will carry 150 rounds on his person, the ammunition now carried in the ox wagons of regimental transport being distributed. Infantry greatcoats will be carried in two ox wagons of regimental transport, if Brigadiers so wish; other stores will not be placed in these wagons.

12. The General Officer Commanding 6th Brigade will detail a half battalion as Baggage Guard. The two Naval guns now in position immediately south of Divisional Head-quarter Camp will move at 5 A.M. to the position now occupied by the 4·7-inch guns.

By order,

B. HAMILTON, Colonel,  
Assistant Adjutant-General,  
South Natal Field Force.

From the General Commanding-in-Chief the Forces in South Africa to the Secretary of State for War.

SIR, *Frere Camp, December 21, 1899.*

I HAVE the honour to forward you the enclosed Despatch from Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen on the operations at Modder River.

I have, &c.,

REDVERS BULLER,  
General.

From the Lieutenant-General Commanding the 1st Division to the Chief Staff Officer.

*Modder River,*

SIR, *December 1, 1899.*

I HAVE the honour to report to you that on my arrival at Witkop on November 27 I proceeded to reconnoitre the Modder River, and, from the information I had received, came to the conclusion that the entire force of the enemy had assembled at Spytfontein, and that I should not meet with any determined resistance on the Modder.

I, therefore, decided the next morning, under cover of my Artillery, and protected by my Cavalry and Mounted Infantry, to throw up proper protection for my railway, leaving the Northamptonshire Regiment, 300 Engineers, the Naval Brigade, and three guns. I intended next

day to have taken my force, with five days' rations, via Jacobsdal, Modder River, to some dams east of Spytfontein, and to have thence delivered my attack.

On the morning of 28th November information reached me through a native that Modder River village was strongly occupied, and I therefore did not feel justified in running any risk regarding the railway, and decided to establish myself on Modder River before proceeding any further.\*

I proceeded at 4 A.M. with the mounted troops, the guns coming on so soon as sufficiently protected by the Infantry. In the village itself we could not see any signs of men, guns, or wagons, but to the east of the village we found the enemy in strong force, and aggressive.

I had arranged with the Officer Commanding Royal Artillery to prepare the Infantry attack with both batteries from the right flank, and the Infantry Division being still some miles distant, I gave them two distinct points to march on, which allowed of the brigades keeping in extended order and covering a very wide front.

As will be seen in the report of the Officer Commanding Royal Artillery, the guns were soon engaged with the enemy on our right flank, the 9th Lancers and Mounted Infantry co-operating with the guns in protecting this flank. The enemy brought three guns into action under perfect cover, and fired with great accuracy. Our guns, 75th and 18th Batteries, eventually disabled one gun, and with a stronger force of the Cavalry it might have been possible for me to have secured it.

The enemy appeared to be retiring, and there were no signs that the village was held in strength. We all believed the force in our front was fighting a retiring action, and had no idea 8,000 Boers had been brought from Spytfontein to oppose us.

In no case is it a position to be turned by a wide detour, and I felt sure my right course was to keep my two brigades in touch, widely extended, and trust to their gaining the opposite bank, as was done. Any other course must be attended with great risk when opposite 8,000 horsemen with a river to assist them. In any case the Modder village is not a position I could turn by making a wide detour.

The Guards Brigade had orders to develop their attack first, which they did with the 1st Battalion Scots Guards on the right, with orders to swing their right well round in order to take the enemy in flank, the 2nd Battalion Coldstreams and the 3rd Battalion Grenadiers making the frontal attack, the former on the left to keep touch with the 9th Brigade. The 1st Battalion Coldstreams in reserve in the right rear.

At 8.10 A.M. a sudden and very heavy fire announced that the enemy held the river in great strength, and perfectly concealed. Many casualties now occurred, and the Scots Guards Maxim detachment were completely wiped out. The two companies pushed on until they suffered again heavily from enfilade fire, Colonel Paget's horse, hit in five places, being killed. At 8.10 A.M. the 1st Battalion Coldstreams extended, and swinging the right round, prolonged the line of the Scots Guards to the right. The Riet River prevented any further advance. The troops then lay down, being fairly under cover in that position. Two companies Scots Guards fell back by order of the Brigadier to a reservoir, to secure the right flank, which I think was quite secured,

\* All my information was to the effect that the Modder and Riet Rivers were fordable anywhere, information which proved quite incorrect.