

delvlei. I also ordered Colonel Hacket Pain with the garrison of Witnek to Slabbert's and Retief's Nek.

30. At 7 A.M. on the 25th July, taking with me the 81st Battery Royal Field Artillery and Rimington's Guides, and effecting a junction with the troops under Major-Generals Clements and Paget beyond Slabbert's Nek, I pushed on with them for 9 miles in the direction of Fouriesburg, upon which place the Boers had retired on the previous day, executing a reconnaissance with my mounted troops to within 3 miles of the town.

I was not anxious to press too closely on the enemy's rear, so as not to drive him out towards Naauwport Nek and Golden Gate till General MacDonald had blocked those exits.

31. The following day, the 26th, I entered Fouriesburg with my mounted troops and found that the town had already been occupied by a portion of Sir Leslie Rundle's Division, headed by Driscoll's Scouts, after a forced march from Commando Nek of 25 miles.

The enemy had retired from the town in the direction of Naauwport Nek and Golden Gate, where I trusted that they would be anticipated by Major-Generals MacDonald and Bruce Hamilton, whose casualties on this day in an action fought outside the former pass amounted to one man killed, two officers and ten men wounded.

To strengthen the force at his disposal, I now ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Donne, on being relieved by Lieutenant-Colonel Pain's troops (the Worcestershire Regiment, half Battalion Wiltshire Regiment, four guns), now set free from Witnek by our occupation of Fouriesburg, to push on with his two battalions and guns from Retief's Nek, and effect a junction with the Highland Brigade towards Naauwport Nek; I also strengthened Donne by two squadrons Scottish Yeomanry under Lieutenant-Colonel Burn from Fouriesburg.

This he did, and on the 27th Major-General MacDonald informed me that having left Lieutenant-Colonel Hughes Hallett with the Seaforth Highlanders, 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, and one 5-inch gun opposite to Naauwport, he was moving on with the remainder of his force to establish Major-General Bruce Hamilton, towards Golden Gate.

32. On the morning of the 28th July, I followed up the enemy beyond Fouriesburg with the troops now at the disposal of Lieutenant-General Sir L. Rundle and Major-Generals Paget and Clements; the latter Officer commanding my advanced guard, being soon engaged with the Boers, who fought a tenacious rear guard action throughout the day in the vicinity of Slaapkranz Ridge, which was only occupied by the Scots Guards under Major Romilly, D.S.O., after midnight.

33. Our casualties during the day amounted to 4 men killed, 3 Officers and 27 men wounded.

34. I established my head-quarters for the night at Schoonzicht Farm, where at 7.15 A.M. on the morning of the 29th, I received a written request from General Prinsloo for a four days' armistice. This request I refused to accede to, demanding unconditional surrender, a demand which, backed as it was by a further advance towards the enemy during the day, led at 4.30 P.M., to a promise of compliance for the following morning.

35. During the 29th Major-General Bruce Hamilton was engaged with the enemy in the vicinity of Stephanus Draai's Farm (Erste Geluk),

his casualties being one officer killed, one officer and 22 men wounded.

36. At 9 A.M. on 30th July, Generals Prinsloo and Crowther surrendered personally, their surrender being followed during the day by that of the Ficksburg and Ladybrand Commandos; 879 men with one 9-pr. Krupp gun, under Commandants De Villiers and Ferreira.

37. On 31st July, the Senekal and Winburg Commandos (Commandants Van der Merwe and Rautenbach) with a total strength of 354 came in to Slaapkranz, and the same day Major-General Bruce Hamilton reported that 1,298 men with one Armstrong gun (under Commandants Crowder, Duploy, Potgieter, and Joubert) had surrendered to him near Erste Geluk.

On 1st August I ordered General MacDonald to pursue General Olivier in the direction of Loskop, and he occupied Harrismith on 4th August. Since then he has been recalled to Bethlehem, Sir Leslie Rundle being instructed to move on Harrismith as directed by the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief.

38. Although the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief has kindly expressed his satisfaction at the final result gained by Hunter's force, which it truthfully deserves and highly appreciates, I, as its commander, am sensible that in two points I have failed to carry out my orders, in that, firstly General C. De Wet, accompanied by Mr. Steyn, formerly President of the Orange Free State, and a force of men and guns, escaped on 15th July from Brandwater Basin, and secondly, General Olivier from outside Golden Gate on 30th July, with a force of men and guns, escaped towards Vrede. As regards this second case I regard it as a dishonourable breach of faith on the part of General Olivier, for which I hold General Olivier personally responsible. He admitted that he knew that Commandant-General Prinsloo had included him in the unconditional surrender.

39. My operations extended over a vast area. The country is a perfect network of mountains and precipices. I had no information from local forces, except from Basutoland. As I neared Fouriesburg this information proved very valuable, but so long as I was outside the Brandwater Basin I could learn practically nothing to point to the dispositions and numbers of the enemy or their plans.

Our maps are worse than useless; they are a positive danger and delusion. The constant cutting of our telegraph wires upset communication with my distant Generals. The feeding a large force away from the railway, and protecting convoys to and fro constituted an ever present anxiety, and depleted the fighting strength of the investing troops. Cloudy weather and grass fires limited the use of heliographs.

These were my difficulties. I do not claim that they furnish a sufficient excuse for the failure to block the whole hostile force inside the Wittebergen.

40. As I have enlarged on my difficulties I also gratefully acknowledge that to meet them the Commander-in-Chief gave me command of as fine a fighting force as ever stood to arms. I had a good staff and was backed up throughout by all ranks of the force. In spite of hardships there was no crime; no grumbling. Officers and men are stout-hearted, cheerful, and full of fight. I have only one fault to find and that is the callous indifference of many Officers and men to the danger of grass fires, and the necessity of at once putting them out.

41. As regards the tactical employment of the