

THE FIRST AND SECOND BATTALIONS OF THE SECOND REGIMENT (NYASALAND) OF THE KING'S
AFRICAN RIFLES AT KIBATA, GERMAN EAST AFRICA

December 1916 to January 1917

The formation of the 2nd Regiment of the King's African Rifles

When the Great War commenced in August 1914 "A", "B", "C" and "E" Companies of the 1st (Nyasaland, now Malawi) Regiment of the King's African Rifles (KAR) were deployed on border duty in British East Africa (BEA, now Kenya). These four companies remained in BEA and were constantly involved in operations against parties of German raiders who were attempting to demolish sections of the Uganda Railway.

On 1st April 1916 the four companies contained 51 British officers and 353 Askari. On that day at Nairobi, BEA all the companies were re-designated as the 2nd Regiment of the KAR. On 12th April a draft of 1,115 Non-Commissioned Officers and men from Nyasaland joined the new regiment. During May the authorities decided to split the regiment into two battalions, the 1st and 2nd Battalions which were designated as 1st/2nd (1/2) KAR and 2nd/2nd (2/2) KAR. 1/2 KAR was primarily composed of Yao Askari whilst 2/2 KAR was manned predominantly by Atonga and Angoni Askari.

Initial movements of the two battalions

1/2 KAR, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel L.H. Soames (East Kent Regiment), left Nairobi on 4th August 1916 and was railed to Korogwe in German East Africa (GEA, now Tanzania). The unit strength was 21 British officers, 2 British Warrant Officers and 511 African ranks, a training detachment having been left at Mbagathi under Major G.J. Giffard (West Surrey Regiment). Eight horses were also on the strength of the battalion. 1/2 KAR then marched down the line of communication to Morogoro on the German Central Railway that ran from Dar Es Salaam to Lake Tanganyika. The battalion had no contact with the enemy and returned to Korogwe. On 4th October it embarked at Tanga on *HMT Ingoma* for Kilwa Kivinje, a newly developed British base on the GEA coast south of Dar Es Salaam. Disembarkation was completed on 7th October at the deep-water anchorage of Kilwa Kisiwani, and the battalion marched the 30 kilometres to Kilwa Kivinje where it arrived the following day.

2/2 KAR, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H.S. Filsell (Warwickshire Regiment), continued training at Mbgathi, Nairobi, until 31st August when it also entrained for Korogwe. The unit strength was 29 British officers and 670 Askari. From Korogwe the battalion followed the route of 1/2 KAR but only as far as Handeni; from there it was ordered back to Korogwe. On 22nd September 1916 the main body of 2/2 KAR embarked at Tanga aboard *HMT Edavana*, the battalion porters and stores being loaded onto *HMT Clan Macphee*. Seven days later the unit disembarked at Kilwa Kisiwani, having been delayed in Dar Es Salaam harbour; disembarkation of the men took four hours to complete.

The first operations of 2/2 KAR

Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and the main strength of his Schutztruppe (GEA army) were north of Kilwa, fighting in the area of the Rufiji River and also collecting crops from the adjacent arable areas. However small detachments of German troops were in the Kilwa area and they made frequent contact with the British forces, who were building up to Divisional strength. 2/2 KAR was immediately employed on marching to support the 2nd Bn The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (2 LNL) which was being attacked at a river crossing near Matandu.

Major Julius von Boemcken was attacking both the Matandu ford and the nearby Kipungu Hill that was also defended by 2 LNL. The German units involved were Nos 4 and 18 Field Companies, the Tanga Landsturm Company (European settler reservists) and "O" Company which consisted of local levies. After more than two years in East Africa the Loyal North Lancashire machine gunners were effective, and their firepower kept von Boemcken's 200 men and 4 machine guns away from the British trenches; 2/2 KAR was not needed in the fight.

Von Boemken withdrew a short distance but German detachments continued harassing the British, and 2/2 KAR advanced to Njinjo. On 8th October a group of 2/2 KAR Askari deployed to picquet the water supply at Njinjo captured the German District Commissioner of Kilwa, Hans Eggbrecht, who had with him 4 European soldiers, 7 Askari, 1 Goan clerk, 77 porters and 7 servants. Later on that day two enemy Askari carrying 2,000 rupees were also seized.

On the following day a German courier was captured and his message from a Lieutenant Holz to Eggbrecht informed the latter that Holz would be arriving soon with 60 men. Lieutenant G.S. Goldsworthy of 2/2 KAR

intercepted the German arrivals, killing Holtz and two other Europeans and 12 Askari. Two European and 17 Askari prisoners were taken, along with Holz's machine gun. Twelve of the prisoners had been wounded. During the fighting Goldsworthy lost 2 men killed and 4 wounded. This had been a successful contact for the young Nyasaland Askari who had not been in action previously. Lieutenant George Stuart Goldsworthy later received a **Military Cross**.

Low-level patrolling and ambushing continued, and on 29th October a patrol of a detachment commanded by Captain L.E. Laurence killed 3 German Europeans and 5 Askari, and took two prisoners without suffering any casualties to the patrol. For his *Gallantry and devotion to duty* in this action the patrol commander 429 Sergeant Karanga, 2/2 KAR, received an **African Distinguished Conduct Medal**.

2/2 KAR continued these minor operations through November and into December, and the experience gained helped to ready the battalion for serious combat. Other units operating nearby were the 40th Pathans, the Gold Coast Regiment and the 8th Field Battery. This artillery unit, known as the Calcutta Battery, had six ox-drawn 12-pounder guns and was manned by Volunteers from India. On 4th December a draft of 3 officers, 97 rank and file and 3 machine guns arrived from Nairobi, just before 2/2 KAR was warned-off for an advance to Kibata where serious fighting was expected.

The initial deployment of 1/2 KAR

As soon as it had arrived at Kilwa Kivinje 1/2 KAR was ordered to march to Kibata with the 129th Baluchis. The latter unit's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel H. Hulseberg DSO, led the column which contained about 900 men, 250 of them being Baluchis. Kibata was located in the centre of a ring of hills lying three days march north-west of Kilwa. The Germans had built a substantial stone fort at Kibata, and the British theatre commander, the South African General J. Smuts, planned to seize Kibata and prevent von Lettow and his Schutztruppe from withdrawing southwards.

Since he had arrived in East Africa in early 1916 General Smuts, a professional politician converted into a wartime soldier, had been trying to out-manoeuvre and destroy the Schutztruppe, but he had not yet succeeded; East Africa was not like the Boer War battlefields where General Smuts' irregular tactics had often prevailed. In the meantime

General Smuts' lack of interest in logistics had led to most of his fighting soldiers becoming undernourished and debilitated through lack of adequate rations and other supplies. In contrast von Lettow, an experienced professional soldier, organised sound logistics programmes before he sought combat. The German commander was aware of how difficult the terrain was around Kibata and he initially welcomed his enemy's interest in the area, as he knew that the ground would suck-in more and more British troops to defend ridgelines and crests.

On 11th October, the second day of the advance, 1/2 KAR was leading the column just beyond the Matandu ford when contact was made with an entrenched enemy position at Kimbarambara. Six German whites and 70 Askari with one machine gun and a small field gun were in the trenches. "A" and "C" Companies of 1/2 KAR attacked, supported by "B" Company on the right flank. The German position was on a steep and often thickly-bushed hill but the KAR Askari did not falter, both companies penetrating the enemy trenchline. The Germans retreated, leaving behind a dead Askari plus two other Askari and two Europeans who were captured. 1/2 KAR lost one Askari killed and another wounded, and the battalion justifiably felt pleased about its first combat operation.

On the following day the Baluchis took the lead and fought a similar action at Nyambondo, with a similar result. On 14th October Kibata was reached and the empty fort seized; von Boemcken had decided to secure the important German supply depot at Liwale to the south-west, rather than defend Kibata fort. This fort had been initially designed as a base from which rebellious tribesmen armed with spears and bows could be subdued, and the British were to find that the building could not be defended against modern long-range artillery because a ring of higher ground surrounded the location.

1/2 KAR garrison Kibata

The Baluchis were withdrawn to Kilwa and Lieutenant Colonel Soames commanded the defence of Kibata until 24th October when he also returned to Kilwa, Major Giffard taking over the command. The battalion picquetted the high hills and extensively patrolled the thickly forested region, capturing prisoners and obtaining information. Then for reasons unknown Major Giffard was ordered to leave two platoons and a machine gun at Kibata whilst he marched the remainder of his battalion ten kilometres to Kitambi. This order was carried out on 28th October, but

then the Germans saw an opportunity to inflict a defeat on the small British garrison, and sent 400 troops under Captain Hans Schulz to seize Kibata.

When news of the enemy move arrived at the British headquarters at Kilwa, Lieutenant Colonel Giffard was relieved at Kitambe by 100 sepoy from the 129th Baluchis, and 1/2 KAR marched quickly back across the hills to Kibata. After some heavy machine gun exchanges Schulz's troops were forced back from the area of the fort on 8th November, and 1/2 KAR dug itself in. The next morning British patrols discovered that the enemy had withdrawn; von Lettow realised that more companies had to be withdrawn from their Rufiji River positions to the north before an attack on Kibata could be mounted. Communications with Kilwa were established via signals posts on Red Hill to the south-east and on Ssongo Ssongo island off the coast. Lieutenant Colonel Hulseburg returned with 200 Baluchis on 17th November and he took over command of Kibata from Major Giffard.

Lieutenant Ludwig Alfred Eckstein, 1/2 KAR, died of wounds on 23rd November 1916; the unit War History links his death with the Kibata operations but does not provide details. Previously he had served in the East Africa Ordnance Department and the East Africa Mechanical Transport Corps.

The German attacks start at Kibata

Lieutenant Colonel Hulseburg saw that Picquet Hill to the north-west of the fort was the vital ground, and the bush was stripped off the hill and two strong redoubts were constructed near the summit. 1/2 KAR continued to patrol and skirmish in the outlying region and information was brought in that indicated an imminent German attack. Unconfirmed rumours amongst the local villagers suggested that heavy artillery was being dragged up the hills by German labour gangs; a German 4-inch gun required a gang of 600 Africans to move the weapon and its ammunition.

On 6th December enemy troops advanced on Kibata, driving in the 1/2 KAR outposts on Ambush Hill and at Coconut Village. The Baluchis were manning the Picquet Hill redoubts and holding 100 sepoy as a reserve, along with a KAR company. On the next day at 0630 hours the 1/2 KAR positions at Palm Village and Single Palm Village were attacked from the east, but these turned out to be diversions to occupy the defence whilst the main attack was mounted against Picquet Hill.

The German guns then came into action against the two redoubts, obviously hoping to blast the Baluchi defenders off Picquet Hill. A 4.1-inch gun recovered from the sunken cruiser *Konigsberg*, a 4.1-inch howitzer and a lighter field gun targeted the redoubts all morning. The German artillery commander was naval Lieutenant Hans Apel from the *Konigsberg's* crew. Enemy machine guns raked the British positions. More than 100 shells hit in or around No 2 Redoubt which was less than 40 metres by 20 metres in area, causing heavy loss to the Baluchis; but these sepoys had fought in France during 1914 and 1915 and the survivors could take the punishment. During the afternoon the guns engaged targets elsewhere, but at 1730 hours they resumed bombarding Picquet Hill. Thirty minutes later enemy field companies attacked but were repulsed, the German Askari just failing to commit themselves totally to the attack. However one company dug itself in on the western slope of Picquet Hill. This enemy position was named the Lodgement.

A 1/2 KAR detachment under the command of Captain Alan Caldicott (10th Battalion The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment) was sent up onto Picquet Hill to strengthen the defence during the attack. The KAR Askari assisted in repulsing the enemy but Captain Caldicott was shot dead. After last light "C" Company 1/2 KAR under Captain R.C. Hardingham MC (Middlesex Regiment) took over Picquet Hill. The surviving Baluch defenders evacuated their wounded and withdrew to recover. "C" Company had planned to make a night attack against the Lodgement but this was called off when it was seen that the young Askari had been badly shaken by the intensity of the German artillery fire.

Next morning, 8th December, after intermittent shelling during the night the Germans attacked No 2 Redoubt from the Lodgement. Heavy rain fell onto the battlefield whilst effective enemy artillery and machine gun fire was delivered from Ambush Hill. The KAR Askari wavered before responding to their fire orders and defending their positions. However some of the enemy got up to the redoubt's outer obstacles, and at Captain Hardingham's request 60 Baluchis reinforced Picquet Hill, but before the sepoys arrived the Germans had been beaten back. Simultaneously the Germans attacked Plain Hill and Big Hut Hill, attempting to prevent those locations from supporting the Picquet Hill defences. Lieutenant C.T. Soames of 1/2 KAR was wounded during these diversionary attacks. Meanwhile the enemy artillery pounded the fort, knocking chunks out of the walls.

For *Gallantry and devotion to duty* displayed at Kibata between 7th and 8th December 1916 the **African Distinguished Conduct Medal** was awarded to three Askari of 1/2 KAR: 547 Sergeant Saliwa; 255 Sergeant Mjasa; and 244 Corporal Mchemba.

Captain Robert Cecil Hardingham MC, Middlesex Regiment and 1/2 KAR, later received a **Bar** to his **Military Cross**.

The arrival of 2/2 KAR

After a 58-kilometer forced march, completed in 34 hours of pouring rain and routed over a series of razor-backed ridges, reinforcements reached Kibata. 2/2 KAR arrived at 0200 hours on the 9th December accompanied by a section of two guns of the 27th (Bengal) Mountain Battery. The 10-pounder guns, named "screw guns" because the barrel could be unscrewed into two pieces for ease of transport, and their ammunition came in on the backs of mules. The Indian gunners came into action on Village Hill and 2/2 KAR reinforced Picquet Hill with 60 Askari and a machine gun. The remainder of 2/2 KAR camped in between Mango Hill and the fort in what was named Happy Valley. However this was not an idyllic campsite as German artillery observers soon called down fire and the battalion made a hasty move to Fort Hill; (for the next eight months during kit inspections missing items of Askari personal kit were claimed as having been lost during this hasty move!).

Lieutenant Colonel Filsell of 2/2 KAR took over command at Kibata and he ordered an attack on the Lodgement timed for 2200 hours on 9th December. Meanwhile the Indian mountain gunners fired shrapnel over the Lodgement. The attack was led by Captain C.S. Browning of the Baluchis who assaulted with his company of sepoy and two platoons of 1/2 KAR. The attackers ran through heavy enemy fire to the Lodgement defences where Captain Browning was shot dead. The German defenders were then reinforced from a feature to the west named the Hump, and they mounted a violent counter-attack, forcing the British troops to withdraw to No 2 Redoubt.

During the withdrawal from the Lodgement a 1/2 KAR machine gun was dropped and left in no-man's-land; later that night Machine Gun Corporal Juma and Machine Gun Private Ali of 1/2 KAR bravely crept out and recovered the gun. All the ammunition and spare parts were recovered a few days later. In the early hours of 10th December the Baluchis and Askari on Picquet Hill were relieved by men from their respective units.

For *Gallantry and devotion to duty* displayed between 7th and 9th December 1916, 1325 Private Chiwoyo, 1/2 KAR, received an **African Distinguished Conduct Medal**.

The German artillery continuously engaged all the British positions around Kibata on the 10th December, and on the following day a small field gun was covertly brought up to within 550 metres of No 1 Redoubt. When this gun opened fire it scored a direct hit on the position. Lieutenant O.M.B. Bryant, 2/2 KAR, and one of his machine gun teams were wiped out; Lieutenant Goldsworthy was wounded. Lieutenant Laurence with No 3 Company 2/2 KAR supported by a section of the battalion machine guns under Lieutenant H.C. Findlay reinforced Picquet Hill. Oliver Mackenzie Beadon Bryant had previously served in the East African Regiment.

On 12th December German machine guns fired heavily on British positions east of the fort and onto the hospital. The Senior Medical Officer, Captain Arthur Norman Dickson, Indian Medical Service, had to run into the open waving a Red Cross flag to halt the enemy fire. Captain Dickson later received a **Military Cross**. During the following day a 4.1-inch howitzer was used against No 1 Redoubt, but the damage caused was not serious. The mountain gunners replied when they could but the heavier German guns were well out of range of the 10-pounders.

The in-coming enemy fire caused daily casualties, including Lieutenant A.A. Barclay, 2/2 KAR, who was slightly wounded on 12th December. Up until 12th December at Kibata the British casualty figures had been:

1/2 KAR had lost 1 officer and 9 Askari killed, and 1 officer, 27 Askari and 2 porters wounded.

2/2 KAR had lost 1 officer and 7 Askari killed, 2 officers and 16 Askari wounded, 1 Askari was missing believed killed, and 5 porters had been killed and 9 others wounded.

129 Baluchis had lost 1 British officer, 1 Indian officer and 10 sepoy killed; 42 sepoy were wounded and 7 sepoy were missing.

The **Section 27th (Bengal) Mountain Battery** had lost 5 gunners wounded and 10 mules killed.

'A' Section 139 Indian Field Ambulance had 1 sepoy and 2 porters wounded.

Two **Intelligence Scouts** had also been wounded.

Very rudimentary medical support was provided by unit Medical Officers and "A" Section 139th Indian Field Ambulance. There was a complete lack of equipment, and bandages were so scarce that sometimes they were only changed weekly. Operations including amputations were carried out using a door as a table. Evacuation was extremely difficult and painful, and the opinion at Kibata was that it was better to be killed than to take a bad wound. Hunger was a factor affecting the morale and stability of the wounded, as supply convoys of porters and mules were arriving with ammunition as the priority loads, and so all ranks were on short rations during the fighting.

Trench warfare

By now the Askari and sepoy in and around Kibata were well dug-in. The recent recruits became used to the shelling and they quickly adapted to trench warfare. The distance between British and German trenches varied from 70 metres to 370 metres. Trench periscopes were used and saps dug to cover movements towards the Lodgement. Snipers on both sides had telescopic sights, the Germans having the advantage because they occupied much of the higher ground. Heavy rain fell necessitating constant trench repairs and revetting, the rain and the mud making working conditions difficult.

After dark on 13 December Brigadier General H. de C. O'Grady (52nd Sikhs) arrived with his headquarters staff to take command at Kibata. The Loyal North Lancashire Machine Gun Company also arrived under the command of Major R.E. Berkeley, (Loyal North Lancashires). His eight .303-inch Maxim guns were deployed tactically in four sections each containing two guns. Major A.J.T. Farfan, Royal Garrison Artillery, marched in with another section of his 27th (Bengal) Mountain Battery. The defensive firepower at Kibata had been greatly increased. 1/2 KAR took over all positions on Picquet Hill on 14th December.

However German attention was now concentrated towards the south-west of Kibata where another British advance was forming up. The Gold Coast Regiment, supported by the 40th Pathans, mounted a fierce attack on the German positions along the ridgeline west of Kibata. The Gold Coasters and Pathans took ground and then held it in savage fighting that left a third of the British troops killed or wounded. Nearly 50% of the officers in these two units became casualties.

Capturing the Lodgement

Although the German infantry and some guns were heavily involved in fighting the Gold Coasters, artillery fire still hit the KAR and Baluchi positions at Kibata on 15th December. The Indian mountain gunners responded by bombarding the Lodgement whilst the Baluchis prepared a night attack, using Mills hand grenades for the first time in East Africa. At 2300 hours Major H.V. Lewis led his Baluchi assault team towards the Lodgement. The sky was dark but moonlight was expected to appear 15 minutes later.

Ten young barefoot Mahsud pioneer bombers carefully and quietly took the lead and threw their grenades into the Lodgement. Under this cover the other Baluchi troops tore out of the ground the sharpened bamboo stakes that protected the enemy trenches. Heavy British machine gun fire hit the Lodgement and the mountain gunners put shrapnel above the Hump. With lanes made through the defences the bayonet attack then surged in. Enemy artillery responded by battering No 2 Redoubt and severely shaking the 1/2 KAR Askari defending it, but that was not going to stop the Baluchis who bayoneted the enemy soldiers that they found in the Lodgement trenches. The Germans fell back and the Lodgement was occupied by "A" Company 1/2 KAR supported by a section of Loyal North Lancashire machine gunners. Major Lewis of the Baluchis later received the **Distinguished Service Order** whilst his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Hulseburg DSO, received a **Bar** to that award.

Lieutenant Harold Charles de Courcey Evans DCM, the 1/2 KAR machine gun officer, had been commanding No 2 Redoubt and he received a **Military Cross**:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He took command of a platoon which was without an officer, and by his fine example of courage and determination rallied the men at a critical time. He has rendered invaluable service as a machine-gun officer.

Harold Evans had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry displayed at the battle at Latema-Reata Nek, BEA, on 11th March 1916 when he was serving as a machine gunner with the 2nd Battalion The Rhodesia Regiment.

Stalemate

German shelling of the Lodgement on 16th December wounded Lieutenant T. Anderson, 1/2 KAR, and Lieutenant N. MacDonald of the Loyal North Lancashires. The first-named officer survived but Norman MacDonald later died of wounds on Christmas Day. On the following day the Baluchis came back up onto Picquet Hill to take it over from 1/2 KAR, who had held it during the heaviest shelling of the Kibata action. The Askari now went into reserve.

The 1st Battalion of the 3rd (BEA) King's African Rifles (1/3 KAR) marched into Kibata on 18th December, and the recently recruited Askari in that battalion began their battle inoculation as the enemy artillery fire continued. On that day 2/2 KAR deployed to capture Observation Hill supported by a 1/3 KAR company, but this attack was aborted when the 1/3 KAR company, hoping to get behind the enemy, ran into difficult ground and enemy fire. The company commander, Captain Gordon Sheffield Stirling (Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders), was mortally wounded; he received a posthumous **Military Cross**.

On 20th December 2/2 KAR left Kibata to operate in country further to the west. Now both sides maintained their positions in and around Kibata, but neither side was strong enough to successfully assault the other's main defences. The British kept the Union flag flying on Kibata fort and the German gunners tried to knock it down, succeeding on one occasion. Brigadier O'Grady and his Brigade Major, Major J.G. Cadell (45th Sikhs), climbed back up the walls under enemy fire and restored the flag. Later the Brigadier became a **Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire (CIE)** and the Brigade Major received a **Distinguished Service Order**.

Christmas Day saw a British BE2c aeroplane of 26 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, appear from its base at Kilwa to drop a large parcel of 6,000 cigarettes outside Kibata fort. The plane was piloted by Lieutenant The Honourable Bernard H.E. Howard, and his observer who dropped the parcel was the future author Lieutenant Leo Walmsley. After first assuming that the BE2c was bombing them by mistake the Kibata defenders were extremely cheered, as they had been out of 'smokes' for a fortnight.

On New Year's Eve 1916 Brigadier O'Grady and Major Giffard patrolled eastwards to Mbirikia Hill. They could not bypass a strong enemy picquet near the summit, but the reconnaissance information obtained was useful for future operations. The next day Lieutenant de C. Evans DCM located and successfully silenced an enemy machine gun that had been causing

casualties for three weeks amongst parties of defenders moving to draw water.

Lieutenant Philip Ralph Heaton DCM, 1/2 KAR, died on 4th January of illness. He had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for gallantry displayed whilst serving with the East African Mounted Rifles at Longido, GEA, on 3rd November 1915.

On 1st January 1917 the two 5-inch howitzers of the 14th Howitzer Battery had arrived at Kibata. A massive labour effort had been put in to making a passable road over which the howitzers could be moved. A Royal Navy 12-pounder gun had been supporting the Kibata defences from Kitambi, but this gun created so much smoke when it fired that immediate German counter-battery fire was returned. The 12-pounder was moved back to the coast and the gun crew became a Royal Navy Lewis light machine gun detachment.

The German withdrawal from Kibata

British patrols reported that the enemy was thinning-out his positions, and on the 6th January Brigadier O'Grady's Headquarters ordered a general advance. That afternoon Major Giffard with "A" and "B" Companies 1/2 KAR was led by Lieutenant C.V. Gray of "A" Company along a previously-reconnoitred bush path up to the summit of Mbirikia Hill. No contact was made with the enemy. At 0700 hours the following morning, supported by the 5-inch howitzers, 2 mountain guns and 4 of the Loyal North Lancashires' machine guns, "A" Company attacked and captured an enemy redoubt on Platform Hill. As they advanced the Askari threw smoke bombs that successfully marked their positions, enabling the artillery forward observation officers to avoid hitting 1/2 KAR.

The Loyal North Lancashire machine gunners then switched their fire onto Observation Hill. After re-organising, "A" Company attacked and captured this position, the German defenders falling away before them. At 0940 hours German counter attacks came in east and west of Observation Hill but the British defensive and supporting fire broke up these attacks. Once again Lieutenant de C. Evans DCM silenced an enemy machine gun.

Concurrently Captain Hardingham MC advanced on and captured Coconut Village; with him were "C" Company 1/2 KAR, 150 Baluchi sepoy, 2 mountain guns and the remaining 4 of the Loyal North Lancashire's machine guns. Coconut Village was occupied without resistance and

Captain Hardingham's force joined Major Giffard. This combined force then advanced towards Kommando Berg hill, with "C" Company in the lead. When "C" Company approached to within 900 metres of the hill the Germans opened heavy rifle and machine gun fire, but the mountain guns and Loyal North Lancashire machine guns engaged the enemy whilst 1/2 KAR dug itself in for the night. German heavy guns shelled the area and caused casualties amongst the porters, who were rarely given the tools or opportunities to dig themselves in. At noon on the following day 1/2 KAR attacked and seized Kommando Berg hill against light opposition, the Germans having withdrawn.

Lieutenant Charles Vivian Gray of 1/2 KAR, and formerly of the East African Mounted Rifles, Ross' Scouts and the Intelligence Department, was next month awarded a **Military Cross**.

Following up the German withdrawal

As the Germans withdrew to Mwengei where their heavy guns were located, the Baluchis followed them up; "A" and "B" Companies 1/2 KAR and Lieutenant de C. Evans' machine guns provided support. The enemy mounted a very stubborn rear-guard action, but a determined Baluchi attack captured a 4.1-inch German gun. The "A" and "B" Company Askari and the machine gunners were involved in patrolling against the withdrawing enemy up to the Rufiji River. The successful British defence of Kibata had now ended.

Conclusion

1/2 and 2/2 KAR, both new battalions, had experienced their baptisms of fire on the road to Kibata, and then had seen tough action in the trenches around the Fort. However the Kibata fighting was a truly all-arms effort, the sepoy of the 129th Baluchis often sharing defensive positions with the Askari and attacking alongside them, whilst the Sikh mountain gunners, Indian medical personnel, British howitzer gunners, Loyal North Lancashire machine gunners, African porters and road labour gangs, and a volunteer Royal Flying Corps crew all provided necessary support.

Nobody won at Kibata. The Germans failed to take it, but General Smuts failed to trap his adversary, as the Germans side-stepped Kibata when they later withdrew south from the Rufiji. The Kibata fighting distracted

the British away from the German crop-collection programme as perhaps Colonel von Lettow-Vorbeck had hoped it would, and allowed Liwale to remain as an important Schutztruppe supply base when that location should have been seized by a British attack.

The long war of attrition in the disease-ridden heat and dust of the East African bush dragged on, but not for General Smuts who moved on to a very senior post in London. The often half-starved and debilitated British Askari, sepoy and surviving European personnel tightened their belts, scraped the mud off their boots and followed the Schutztruppe's tactical withdrawal.

Commemorations

The total 2 KAR casualty figures at Kibata were:

1/2 KAR: 2 officers, 17 Askari and 1 porter killed, 1 officer died; 2 officers, 46 Askari and 16 porters wounded; 1 Askari missing.

2/2 KAR: 1 officer, 7 Askari and 3 porters killed; 2 officers, 16 Askari and 9 porters wounded; 1 Askari missing believed killed.

The KAR officers were first buried at Kibata, usually at night to avoid enemy artillery attention, then transferred to Kilwa Kivinje military cemetery, and later re-interred in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Dar Es Salaam War Cemetery, Tanzania. The dead Askari lie in unmarked graves in the Tanzanian bush, near to where they fell. They are commemorated by the spectacular bronze Dar Es Salaam African Memorial.

Further KAR awards

As well as the awards already mentioned, The King's Birthday Honours List of June 1917 contained these 1/2 KAR awards without citations:

Distinguished Service Order: Captain (Acting Lieutenant Colonel) G.J. Giffard, 1/2 KAR.

Military Cross: Lieutenants L.G. Murray and D.F. Seth Smith.

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- *So Many Loves* by Leo Walmsley.
- *Shells & Bright Stones. A biography of Leo Walmsley* edited by Nona Stead.
- *The African DCM* compiled by John Arnold.
- *East African General Routine Orders* (WO123/288).
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