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**The Cape Corps:  
South Africa's Coloured Soldiers in the First World War**

by

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**201219871**

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supervised by

**Professor Louis Grundlingh**

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To van Aarde, to Abbot, to Adams, to Daniels, to Desmore, to the Difford brothers, to  
Hendricks, to Hoy, to Jordan, to Morris, to Schoor, to Strydom, to Vipan,  
and to the eight thousand other men of the Cape Corps who fought in the First World War.

We will remember you.



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# Acknowledgements

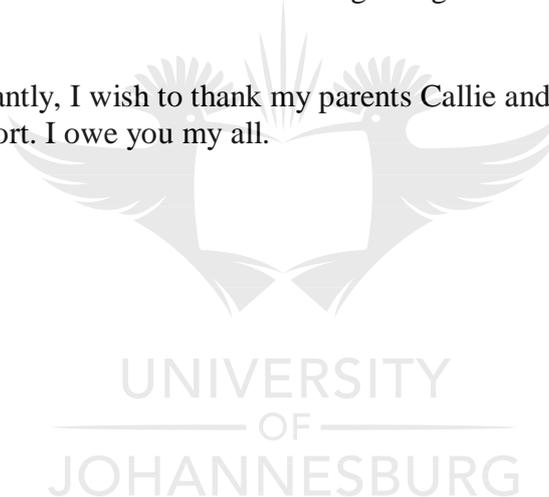
This Masters work owes much to Professor Louis Grundlingh. Like an industrial grade diamond file, he is responsible for a great deal of its polish. It has been an honour and a privilege Prof, to have worked with you on this project.

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To my little brother, Julian: Thanks for the hours of gaming and complaining. Strive always for greatness.

Finally and most importantly, I wish to thank my parents Callie and Leonie for their unending patience and moral support. I owe you my all.



## Abstract

The Cape Corps was a unit of Coloured soldiers raised in the Union of South Africa as an Imperial Service Contingent during the First World War. Birthed under difficult political circumstances, the Corps was ultimately an Imperial project animated by Governor-General Buxton and other liberal whites, and it came about despite the reluctance of Jan Smuts and others within both the South African and National Parties. Despite this reluctance, Coloureds and the APO responded to the outbreak of the First World War with persistent calls to be allowed to fight and this dissertation has argued that Coloured men in particular considered the war as an opportunity to stake a claim in the masculine citizenship of the Union. This masculine aspiration in fact underpins a major theme of this dissertation, namely that Cape Corps soldiers- both Coloured enlisted and white officers- pulled together to form a powerful group identity in order to accomplish this goal. Dimensions and methods of recruiting were considered, as was the process of training and indoctrination that manufactured a cohesive regiment of soldiers out of diverse individual men. Two chapters are devoted to the Corps' experiences on campaign, with the first considering the broad cause of the Corps' serious encounters with tropical disease in East Africa before unpacking the resulting experiences of its men's suffering and difficulty. This suffering was endured because the Corps was determined to demonstrate their value in military encounters, the focus of a chapter that investigates the experiences of these men as they fought in major armed engagements on the war's East African and Palestinian fronts. This dissertation ends with a discussion of the Corps' awkward relationship with white military authorities and argues that, despite this, bonds of loyalty and kinship between Cape Corps veterans both Coloured and white remained both important and valuable to those who had served in the regiment.

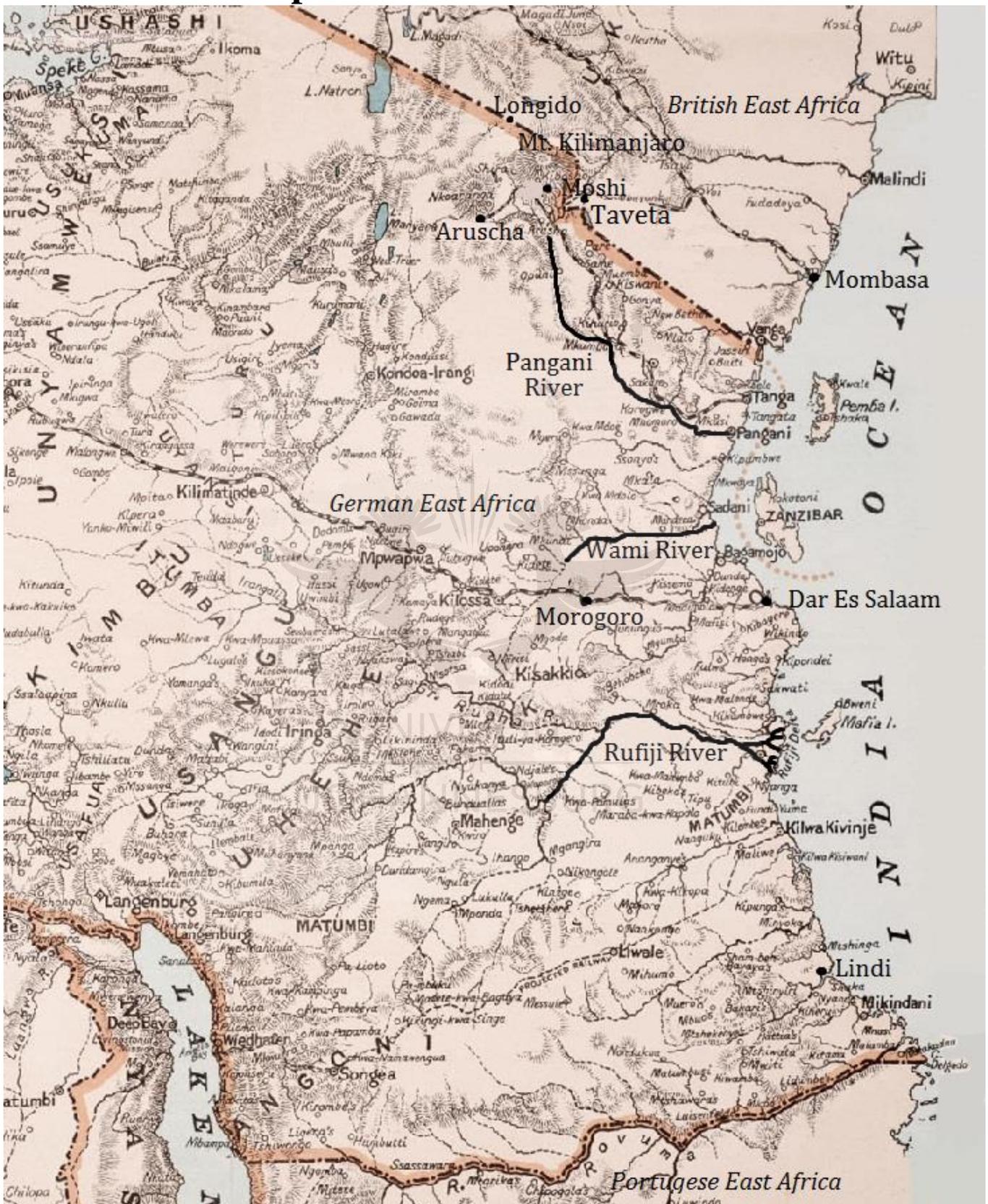
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# Map of German East Africa<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the original: Stanford Geographical Establishment, London. 1916. "Sketch Map of German East Africa and Surrounding Territories" in *The National Review*. Available online: <http://static.torontopubliclibrary.ca/da/images/MC/912-6-s44.jpg>

# Introduction

On October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1915, the then Director of War Recruiting for the Union Defence Force, Colonel Charles Crewe, formally approved the formation of the Cape Corps.<sup>2</sup> On that day, the staffs manning the Cape Corps Recruiting Committee's outposts at the mission stations of Saron and Mamre were overwhelmed by the numbers of rural Coloured<sup>3</sup> labourers that volunteered in those districts to fight on behalf of the British Empire during the First World War.<sup>4</sup> Whilst less enthusiastic responses to recruiting were initially observed elsewhere, the number of Coloured men that volunteered was such that the size of the Cape Corps was increased twice: from single battalion to full regiment, and then again to a unique eight-company establishment before the UDF authorities relented and permitted the formation of a second battalion.<sup>5</sup> An "experiment" in race relations, the Corps was manned by white officers and Coloured enlisted and as consequence of the politically charged race politics of the day was raised nominally as a British Imperial Service Contingent rather than as a component of the Union's own Defence Force.<sup>6</sup>

The First Battalion of the Cape Corps would go on to fight in the German East Africa campaign under the commands of General Jan Christiaan Smuts and General Jacob Louis van Deventer, before being employed in the final stages of the Palestinian campaign under Field Marshall Edmund Allenby.<sup>7</sup> Formed in early 1917, the Second Battalion of the Cape Corps never shook a reputation for military indiscipline and despite a successful deployment to Nyasaland under General Edward Northey, was effectively disbanded in early 1918 after which its best troops and officers were folded into the First Battalion.<sup>8</sup> Its demobilisation delayed by the Egyptian Revolution, the full First Battalion would only return to the Union in October of 1919.<sup>9</sup> Despite a strong record of service under exceptionally trying conditions, the Cape Corps was not transformed into a reservist unit of the Active Citizen Force and with the close of the First World War the Union defaulted to pre-war conventions on armed service being restricted to white Europeans.<sup>10</sup> The aim of this dissertation is to provide a narrative arc of the Corps- and more importantly its men- with strong emphasis on the period spanning from early calls for its creation in 1914 to its demobilisation in 1919.

The Cape Corps was certainly not the only colonial unit of its kind, and consequently this dissertation can be located broadly in the growing field of study regarding the involvement of Europe's overseas territories and colonies in the First World War.<sup>11</sup> Apart from raw materials

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<sup>2</sup> Difford, ID. 1920. *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps 1915-1919*, Chronological Summary, unnumbered pages.

<sup>3</sup> These terms used below are solely in their historical context as constructed labels for ethnicity or race.

"African" is used as a synonym for the historic "Native", whilst "white" refers to historic "Europeans". "Black" refers to people described by whites or themselves as African, Coloured, Malay or otherwise and is synonymic with "non-white". "Coloured" refers to people of "mixed" heritage, that is to say people historically defined as being the offspring of- or descended from- a "mixed" European and "black" pairing. This approach is directly borrowed from: Beckford-Smith, V. 2016. *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.1. An in-depth discussion on Coloured identity follows below, see Chapter One, P. 22.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter Two, P.41.

<sup>5</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, Chronological Summary, unnumbered pages.

<sup>6</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, Foreword, unnumbered pages.

<sup>7</sup> Difford, I.D. 1920. *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps 1915-1919*, Chronological Summary, unnumbered pages.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter Four, p.69-75 and Chapter Five, p.104-105.

<sup>9</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, Chronological Summary, unnumbered pages.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter Five, p.108-109.

<sup>11</sup> See for example *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, edited by Das, S. 2013.

and cash, British, French and German imperial holdings throughout the world provided extensive resources in the form of fighting men. The French- who had a long history of using indigenous soldiers from their overseas colonies dating back to at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century- employed Algerian, Moroccan, Congolese and Senegalese soldiers directly in the desperate battle for metropolitan France.<sup>12</sup> In East Africa, the Germans had raised a force of 11 000 Askari recruited from the Wahehe and Angoni tribal groups, and as a strictly disciplined and highly trained force under the command of Colonel Paul Emil Von Lettow-Vorbeck they posed a major threat to British East Africa and northern Rhodesia at the outbreak of war.<sup>13</sup> The British in turn appealed directly to its white Dominions and the Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans each contributed substantially in the form of various expeditionary groups. The British also turned to their Indian Raj, and fielded nearly one million soldiers of the British Indian Army, who campaigned hard in the Middle East but also in Africa and even the Western Front.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the Germans, who had fielded Askari as early as 1889, the British had been reluctant to arm black Africans and the Kings African Rifles were only founded in British East Africa in 1908- primarily as a counterweight to the German move.<sup>15</sup>

In the Union of South Africa, suggestions to raise a similar black unit were met by strong objections from all quarters of the white political class.<sup>16</sup> The Union, possessing independence in its domestic politics as a Dominion, created the South African Native Labour Corps instead. As Albert Grundlingh has argued, Prime Minister Louis Botha and the white electorate as a whole did not seek to legitimise black political organisations through armed sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> Neither did they seek to arm and train black men, who were the frequent cause of substantial white anxiety in newly developing urban centres throughout South Africa and who were additionally seen as being perennially at risk of revolting as in the 1906 Bambatha rebellion.<sup>18</sup> Coloureds, however, were more acceptable to the Botha government and the South African Party thanks to what Mohammed Adhikari has termed their “intermediate” racial status and were able to effectively leverage Imperial sympathies that would ultimately allow them to fight.<sup>19</sup>

Coloured political movements would not be able to do so again in the Second World War, and in its aftermath the historiographical development of Cape Corps narratives was substantially stunted.<sup>20</sup> With the rise of the National Party and Apartheid in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it can be argued that the sort of political and institutional pressures David Katz has argued that led to “a case of arrested development”<sup>21</sup> in South African military historiographies could be applied especially to the Cape Corps. Katz notes that the National

<sup>12</sup>See Fogarty, RS. 2008. *Race and war in France: colonial subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

<sup>13</sup> See Moyd, M. 2008. "Askari and Askari Myth" in *Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and its Colonies*. Poddar, P et al (eds). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>14</sup> See Metcalf BD, and Metcalf TR. 2006. “Civil Society, Colonial Restraints, 1885-1919” in *A Concise History of India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>15</sup> See Page, M. 2011. *King's African Rifles: A History*. United Kingdom: Pen and Sword.

<sup>16</sup> See Grundlingh, A. 2012. *War and Society Participation and Remembrance: South African black and coloured troops in the First World War*. Stellenbosch University Press: Stellenbosch.

<sup>17</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.21-24.

<sup>18</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.21-24.

<sup>19</sup> Adhikari, M. 2005. *Not White Enough, not Black Enough: racial identity in the South African Coloured Community*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books. P.11.

<sup>20</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.142-148.

<sup>21</sup> See Katz, DB. 2012. “A Case of Arrested Development: The Historiography Relating to South Africa’s Participation in the Second World War” in *Scientia Militaria*. Vol 40, No. 3.

Party was keen to downplay both the role of South Africa as a British Dominion and of non-whites in South African military history<sup>22</sup>- and as consequence the Cape Corps has received less thorough attention than contemporary white regiments.

## Historiography

What *has* been written forms an ideal point of departure for this dissertation. Leaving aside the semi-official histories of the Corps produced by Difford<sup>23</sup> and Desmore<sup>24</sup> in 1920 as primary sources discussed below, the Cape Corps Regimental Association- of which Difford was Chairman<sup>25</sup>- remained active and attempted to keep the memory of the unit alive but produced no published works. Between 1958 and 1986, only two works bore passing mention to the Cape Corps at all, those being *The SA Field Artillery in German East Africa and Palestine 1915-1919*<sup>26</sup> and *The Durban Light Infantry Volume 1: 1854-1934* by A.G. Martin.<sup>27</sup> Both works are notably connected to the South African War Museum in Saxonwold, being produced and published with its assistance. Martin's account of what was then the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Battalion in East Africa is remarkable in that it explores and encounters many of the same themes of suffering and difficulty there as Difford's work and serves as an excellent companion source for that campaign.

Martin also notably mentions the gap in the historiography covering the Cape Corps, but the Corps would not be written about again in detail until 1986, with the production of Albert Grundlingh's PHD thesis.<sup>28</sup> Grundlingh, writing in response to the overwhelming gap in the historiography of black experiences of the First World War, produced a work that considered both the South African Native Labour Corps and the Cape Corps. Grundlingh's work, subsequently updated<sup>29</sup>, lays a vital foundation in regards to the socio-political background of the Corps' formation and its confrontations with racist anti-Coloured rioters in Kimberley over December of 1917. This dissertation seeks to build on these foundations by adding contextual information to Grundlingh's work and by "filling in" considerable detail on the Corps' experiences on campaign in both East Africa and Palestine. It simultaneously seeks to approach content already covered by Grundlingh's work whilst utilising different frames of theoretical analysis and also to answer the compelling research question that Grundlingh raised in regards to the heavy disease casualties suffered by the Cape Corps.<sup>30</sup> In particular, Grundlingh's work suggests that another major aspect of the Corps' creation may have laid in Smuts' belief in contemporary theories of biological determinism. Given that Smuts in particular believed that Zulus had innate resistances to malaria<sup>31</sup>, the idea that he based a number of strategic decisions which directly impacted the Corps on this faulty belief bears

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<sup>22</sup> Katz, *A Case of Arrested Development*, P.2.

<sup>23</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*

<sup>24</sup> Desmore, AJB. 1920. *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps thro' Central Africa*.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter Five, P.119.

<sup>26</sup> Adler, FB, Lorch, AE, and Curson, HH. 1958. *The SA Field Artillery in German East Africa and Palestine 1915-1919*. Van Schaik: Pretoria.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, AG. 1969. *The Durban Light Infantry Volume 1: 1854-1934*.

<sup>28</sup> Republished in English as Grundlingh, AM. 1986. *Fighting their own war: South African Blacks in the First World War*. Johannesburg.

<sup>29</sup> Grundlingh, A. 2012. *War and Society Participation and Remembrance: South African black and coloured troops in the First World War*. Stellenbosch University Press: Stellenbosch.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter One, P.32 and Chapter Three, P.66.

<sup>31</sup> JC Smuts to JX Merriman, 27 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.409.

testing, particularly given that such notions were present in medical debates in the Union at the time.<sup>32</sup>

Another valuable, if short, work is that of ex-SADF officer Ian Gleeson: *The Unknown Force: Black, Indian and Coloured Soldiers Through Two World Wars*.<sup>33</sup> Gleeson's work makes a determined effort to commemorate broader non-white participation in South Africa's major wars of the twentieth century and includes three chapters of some 51 pages on the Cape Corps in particular. Although produced by a military officer, it differs substantially from Difford's account and places a far larger emphasis on a 'face of battle' description of events. It also includes a few brief investigations into the lives of individual Cape Corps soldiers such as Sergeant HW Abrahams, Company Sergeant-Majors C Calvert and AJ Hendricks, and Sergeants IW Arendse, M February and PD Schoor, which does much to humanise the Corps in the admittedly brief chapters of Gleeson's broad work.

Beyond works on the Cape Corps specifically, the theme of Coloured loyalism during both World Wars has been the focus of a large body of work, with Saul Dubow<sup>34</sup>, David Killingray<sup>35</sup>, Anne Rush<sup>36</sup>, Hillary Sapire<sup>37</sup> and Chris Saunders<sup>38</sup> all contributing notable articles. In addition to *Springboks on the Somme*<sup>39</sup>, an excellent overview of the experiences of South African troops in the First World War, Bill Nasson has also contributed an article which significantly touches on the Cape Corps and will be referenced throughout the earlier chapters of this dissertation.<sup>40</sup>

## A historiographical gap to address

As the above illustrates, the major gap this study seeks to address is one of historiography. A vast literature exists on the First World War; this however overwhelmingly concentrates on the European aspects of the conflict- particularly the Western Front.<sup>41</sup> Histories which have looked at the colonial dimensions to the war effort are a smaller but growing sub-field of First

<sup>32</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.141; See also: Packard, R. 1987. "Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2. P.201.

<sup>33</sup> Gleeson, I. 1994. *The Unknown Force: Black, Indian and Coloured Soldiers Through Two World Wars*.

<sup>34</sup> Dubow, S. 2009. "How British was the British World? The Case of South Africa" in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 37, No. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Killingray, D. 2008. "A Good West Indian, a Good African, and, in Short, a Good Britisher: Black and British in a Colour-Conscious Empire, 1760-1950" in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, No. 3.

<sup>36</sup> Rush, A.S. 2002. "Imperial Identity in Colonial Minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-50" in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol 13, No.4.

<sup>37</sup> Sapire, H. 2001. "African Loyalism and its Discontents: The Royal Tour of South Africa, 1947" in *The History Journal*, Vol. 54, No.1.

<sup>38</sup> Saunders, C. 2006. "Britishness in South Africa" in *Humanities Research*, Vol. 8, No. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Nasson, B. 2007. *Springboks on the Somme*. Penguin Books: Johannesburg.

<sup>40</sup> Nasson, B. 2004. "Why They Fought: Black Cape Colonists and Imperial Wars, 1899-1918", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1.

<sup>41</sup> The First World War in Europe has seen extensive coverage from numerous professional historians. This short list is a small sample of the British historiography alone. Sir Max Hastings extensively covered the political context of the outbreak of the war in: Hastings, M. 2013. *Catastrophe 1914. Europe Goes To War*. Knopf: New York. John Keegan applied anthropological and social history approaches to warfare in general and to the First World War specifically in numerous works such as: Keegan, J. 2000. *The First World War*. Hutchinson: London; Keegan, J. 1993. *A History of Warfare*. Random House: London; Keegan, J. 1976. *The Face of Battle*. London: Jonathan Cape. Of these, *A History of Warfare* won the Duff Cooper Prize. Winston Churchill's biographer Martin Gilbert wrote an extensive single volume history on the war in Gilbert, M. 2004. *The First World War. A Complete History*. Holt Paperbacks, whilst Peter Hart, a historian based in the British Imperial War Museum and visiting fellow at Oxford has published Hart, P. 2013. *The Great War. A Combat History of the First World War*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

World War study that is increasingly tackling the topic of experiences and memory outside of Europe.<sup>42</sup> In this spirit, this study is intended to fill a gap in the existing historiography on the Cape Corps. In the 98 years since the unit was disbanded, only two dedicated histories have been published on the Corps- both in 1920.<sup>43</sup> Sparse mention was made of the Corps between 1958 and 1986, with only two histories mentioning it at all.<sup>44</sup> Since 1986, two works have dedicated chapters to the Corps, but only in partial detail, in addition to an article.<sup>45</sup> Out of this entire historiography, only a handful of works has been the product of a dedicated academic historian. The time is ripe for a modern social history based on the extraordinary and difficult experiences of these South Africans.

## Sources and methodology

Beyond these works, this dissertation will rely on five sets of primary sources, starting with both semi-official histories. The first, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps 1915-1919* was written in 1919 and 1920 by the regimental quartermaster, Captain Ivor Difford.<sup>46</sup> Produced with the blessing of its former officers, Difford's work is an invaluable and detailed source for any historical study of the Corps. It serves as both a firsthand account of the Corps' activities in the Union, East Africa and the Middle East, and as an unofficial war diary. Difford's work is undoubtedly important and contains numerous interesting and humanising accounts of the travails of his soldiers on campaign. An early chapter by AE Perkins, the chairman of the Cape Corps Recruiting Committee, is valuable in shedding light on the recruiting process, particularly in regards to living stipends provided to Cape Corps families<sup>47</sup>, whilst a Foreword written by John X Merriman handily illustrates Merriman's connections with the Corps.<sup>48</sup>

The second of the contemporary histories, *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps Thro' Africa*, was produced by an ex 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Sergeant, Abe Desmore.<sup>49</sup> A fascinating look into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps' voyage to the battlefield in Nyasaland and northern Portugese East Africa, *Thro' Africa* is a much narrower narrative in comparison to Difford's work in both its scope and the length of its chronology. Like Difford, its content is mostly of a Rankean nature and although several compelling threads are revealed like comments about the Cape Corps' composition, they are not unpacked to the satisfaction of approaches to social histories developed since. This is understandable, as neither Desmore nor Difford were dedicated academic historians. As Difford candidly admits in the foreword of his book, his work was "for the veterans of the Corps"<sup>50</sup> and was not written with academic rigour in mind. As a career soldier writing what was effectively a battalion memoir neither he nor Desmore ever endeavoured to. Despite these issues, Desmore and Difford- Difford in particular- are incredibly useful as comprehensive institutional histories that are packed with dense layers of information.

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<sup>42</sup> See for example: Das, *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*.

<sup>43</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps* and Desmore, *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps*

<sup>44</sup> Adler, Lorch, and Curson, *The SA Field Artillery* and Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*.

<sup>45</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*; Grundlingh, *War and Society*; and Nasson, "Why They Fought."

<sup>46</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, Chronological Summary, unnumbered pages.

<sup>47</sup> Perkins, AE. 1920. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps" in Difford, ID. *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*.

<sup>48</sup> Merriman, JX. 1920. "Foreword" in Difford, ID. *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps 1915-1919*.

<sup>49</sup> Desmore, *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps thro' Central Africa*.

<sup>50</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, Introduction, unnumbered pages.

The first of the raw, unpublished sources this dissertation will refer to is a collection of papers collected by Difford throughout his post-Cape Corps life.<sup>51</sup> Stored at the South African National Military Museum in Saxonwold, Johannesburg, these documents encompass what at first appears to have been a sentimental scrap-book of Difford's experiences overseas. From there, however, the collection was expanded considerably by its owner to encompass a more thorough picture of the Cape Corps as a unit, and it includes extensive private and personal correspondence of Difford with both ex-enlisted and ex-officers. It is particularly in the latter, represented in personal recollections of campaigning and of major battles, that powerful personal accounts can be drawn. Another powerful article is represented in the correspondences between Difford and the wife of his brother Archibald who was widowed when "young Archie" was killed in the battle of Square Hill as a Cape Corps lieutenant.

The second major set of primary sources referenced is contained in the Union War Histories section of the Department of Defence Archives, located in Irene, Pretoria.<sup>52</sup> Although used by Grundlingh in his previous works, the sources on the Cape Corps there benefit from an extensive survey and this dissertation primarily contributes to work already done by examining documents pertaining to the formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. Correspondences there between such figures as General JC Smuts and the Secretary of Defence, Bedford, as well as between figures such as Sir Meiring Beck and Prime Minister Louis Botha, provide excellent insight into both the politics and processes in which the mobilisation of the Cape Corps occurred.

The Smuts and Buxton papers housed at the South African National Archives in Pretoria form the third major source of primary material.<sup>53</sup> Buxton, as this dissertation will argue, served as a major Imperial role-player in the Cape Corps' formation and as consequence a number of his papers and correspondences provide interesting contexts to the Cape Corps narrative. Smuts played an even larger role in the Cape Corps story, particularly as commander in chief of the East African Campaign from early 1916 to his departure a year later. National Archive papers on Smuts' campaign provide invaluable insight into his opinions regarding the Cape Corps, whilst correspondences collected by Smuts biographer WK Hancock are vital in constructing a contextual framework for the General.<sup>54</sup> Of particular interest are his correspondences with John X. Merriman, another vital Cape Corps ally, and his exchanges with numerous writers during the East African campaign.

A fourth primary source is located in the British National Archives but thankfully has been digitised and made available online by Dr Anne Samson.<sup>55</sup> The 1918 report by Dr WW Pike on medical and sanitary conditions in East Africa makes for vital reading in combination with individual case files and existing narratives on the immense suffering and difficulties encountered in East Africa as a consequence of dysentery and malaria. It is a vital piece of

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<sup>51</sup> South African National Museum of Military History (Hereafter SANMMH). Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF.

<sup>52</sup> Department of Defence Archives (Hereafter, DODA). For a full list of sources and boxes drawn from these archives, see the sources list.

<sup>53</sup> South African National Archives Pretoria (Hereafter SANAP) and South African National Archives Pietermaritzburg (Hereafter SANAPMB). For a full list of sources and boxes drawn from these archives, see the sources list.

<sup>54</sup> *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*. Hancock & Van Der Poel (Eds). 1966. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

<sup>55</sup> British National Archives (Hereafter BNA). WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

contextualising evidence for arguments presented in Chapter Three, and serves to bookend an element of Smuts' leadership- or lack thereof- that led to considerable difficulty on the part of the Cape Corps. Here, this dissertation again contributes with readings of previously unused Department of Defence Archive materials, as the individual case files mentioned above are sourced from the DOD to construct narratives of treatment regimens for individual soldiers. Beyond medical records, personnel files too have been used to illustrate individual military careers which stretch from attestation and enlistment to demobilisation, or death in the field.

As the above has already suggested, the primary methodological framework of this study will be that of a social history approach.<sup>56</sup> It is based on three broad levels of historical enquiry: the political; the socio-cultural; and then ultimately the personal. On a practical level, this first involves a broad contextualisation of the war and its events from the perspective of hard political and military history, which interacts then with the second level of analysis: the socio-cultural. Once the military and political decision was made to form and use a Coloured unit, the study can then move into the personal experiences of Coloured men on the ground in a way which draws broadly from the Thompsonian school of social history<sup>57</sup>; that is to say this study will attempt in particular to construct narratives of the experiences of the human actors and agents in these historical events. Sources will be criticised and interrogated as per good historical method<sup>58</sup>, although not all sources need to be proven as accurate to be useful. Perspectives, subtext and silences, as the postmodern school argues, can tell us as much about people as the textual and factual.<sup>59</sup>

Given the uniquely military subject matter of the Corps, this study will draw substantial inspiration from the works of John Keegan. Keegan applied a uniquely revisionist lens to military history from the human, social history perspective of its major actors and of the soldier "on the ground" in *The Face of Battle* and subsequent works.<sup>60</sup> What this dissertation is *not*, is a thorough survey of what the individual elements of the Cape Corps were involved with on campaign, with the individual minutiae of administrative moves adding little to its overall narrative. It is also *not* a hard military history of the Corps battlefield activities in the vein of works such as those by David Katz<sup>61</sup>, as it lacks both the theoretical grounding in military science for such an endeavour and the development of the necessary contextualising archival evidence to be read in contrast and "against the grain" of Cape Corps narratives. Such thorough military analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See: Thompson, E. 1963. *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Victor Gollancz and Cooper, F. 1995. "Work, Class and Empire: An African Historian's Retrospective on E. P. Thompson", in *Social History*, Vol. 20, No. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, E. 1963. *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Victor Gollancz.

<sup>58</sup> The "quellenkritik" of Rankean method, see: Black, J and MacRaid, DM. 2007. *Studying History*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>59</sup> Ralph-Trouillot, M. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press.

<sup>60</sup> See: Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. This well-regarded work is one of the first to fuse oral histories and anthropological approaches to studies of war with more Rankean, "top down" accounts into a cohesive whole, drawing from the social history tradition. More recent works which have employed this approach include Anthony Beevor's highly acclaimed Second World War history on Stalingrad: Beevor, A. 2007. *Stalingrad*. London: Penguin Books and Hart, P. 2013. *The Great War. A Combat History of the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>61</sup> Katz, DB. 2017. "A clash of military doctrine: Brigadier-General Wilfrid Malleon and the South Africans at Salaita Hill, February 1916" in *Historia*, Vol. 62, No. 1.

<sup>62</sup> That being said, where military considerations play a role in the narrative, this thesis will seek to include them as comprehensively as possible within this specialised scope.

Beyond this socio-cultural approach to the military topic of the Corps, it rapidly becomes apparent that the theme of gender and masculine identity played a major part in the motivations and experiences of Cape Corps men. Consequently, this dissertation will seek to incorporate the theoretical work of Raewyn Connell heavily into its narrative, paying particular heed to her theories on masculine hegemony.<sup>63</sup> This dissertation will argue that much of the Corps' actions were motivated by a desire to demonstrate Coloured masculinity and to tap into the sort of masculine respectability that military service afforded them.

## Chapter overview and chronology

This gendered approach to the Cape Corps narrative forms the backbone of this dissertation and is applied as a major frame of analysis throughout the majority of its narrative. Beginning with Chapter One, the broad social and political context of the events leading up to the formation of the Cape Corps is considered, with particular reference being made to the works of Mohammed Adhikari<sup>64</sup> and Gavin Lewis<sup>65</sup> as subject experts in the field of Coloured identity and politics. From this starting point, Natasha Erlank's argument that anti-colonial, nativist nationalisms in the Union and elsewhere were often couched in language that aimed to gain, or re-gain, masculine prestige<sup>66</sup> is applied to the then dominant Coloured African Political Organisation. Reference is made to Bill Nasson<sup>67</sup> and Albert Grundlingh's<sup>68</sup> work on Coloured involvement in the First World War, and the chapter concludes with an argument that British "Imperial" pressure played a major role in persuading Smuts to finally accede to the creation of the Cape Corps in late 1915. This accession provided a unique military opportunity for Coloured men to demonstrate their masculine respectability which, it was hoped by some, would entitle them to greater political capital and social recognition in the future.

Chapter Two follows on both chronologically and thematically, and features an in-depth discussion of the overall mobilisation of the Cape Corps. It is divided into two halves that share thematically similar structures. The first is concerned with the processes and structures that were produced by the Botha government to harness the immense tide of Coloured loyalism that yielded thousands more military recruits than the Cape Corps ever had the capacity to absorb. It is here that DOD archival sources begin to become readily apparent in the narrative, as do the first of the accounts contained within Difford's collection. Discussions on the socio-economic conditions of Cape Corps' enlisted are contained within this first half, which reveals a substantial difference between urban and rural Coloureds as far as the disruption of "breadwinning" is concerned. The first half also contains a brief sketch of the Cape Corps white officers and their origins within the Union's colonial and military elite. The second half of the chapter is dedicated again to processes and structures, which this time revolved around the transformation of the "raw material" of the Cape Corps' civilian recruits and officers into a disciplined and regimented military organisation. This process, non-pejoratively called "indoctrination" by modern military trainers, involved long term

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<sup>63</sup> Connell, RW. 1995. *Masculinities*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

<sup>64</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*.

<sup>65</sup> Lewis, G. 1987. *Between the Wire and the Wall*. New York: St Martin's Press.

<sup>66</sup> Erlank, N. 2003. "Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912-1950" in *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 29.

<sup>67</sup> Nasson, "Why they fought."

<sup>68</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*.

psychological changes that involved folding the Cape Corps identity into the sense of self.<sup>69</sup> This inherently masculine process involved the internalisation of a strong military culture and a very real *esprit de corps* characterised by strong bonds of mutual loyalty and respect. This chapter makes heavy reference to the works of Nasson and Grundlingh already mentioned, as well as those of Robert Morrell<sup>70</sup>, whose study of white settlers in Natal is vital for background context as far as the definition of Connell's "masculine hegemon" is concerned.

Chapter Three is set geographically within East Africa and is concerned primarily with the Cape Corps' encounters with disease there. Masculine theory as baseline analysis is temporarily suspended for the first half of this chapter. The dissertation instead turns its attentions to the causes, course and consequence for the severe failure of the British expedition under Smuts to account for tropical diseases in East Africa; despite the fact that treatment regimens for its major killers- malaria and dysentery- were already well established by then. Smuts' engagement with debates on race and sanitation- or lack thereof- is discussed, as is the general organisational and logistical conduct of the medical aspects of campaign with reference to the Pike Report. It then details the conditions under which the Cape Corps was kept on in East Africa despite the evacuation of white troops, and answers a research question posed by Albert Grundlingh on exactly why this decision was made.<sup>71</sup> The second half of the chapter deals with the Cape Corps' initial experiences in East Africa and the ensuing suffering of soldiers who had to contend with pressing malnourishment, trying tropical conditions, and the microbial ravages of a host of "campaign sicknesses." This chapter cites the works of Randal Packard<sup>72</sup>, Anne Samson<sup>73</sup>, Edward Paice<sup>74</sup>, and AG Martin<sup>75</sup>, whose underappreciated history of the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Battalion provides an excellent companion piece and source of contrast to the Cape Corps.

With Chapter Four, this dissertation returns to its masculine frame of analysis and concentrates primarily on the experiences of the Cape Corps, serving first as "lines of communications" troops in East Africa before being employed in the front line during heavy fighting in East Africa and Palestine. For Cape Corps troops themselves, being used as what essentially amounted to armed labourers was a highly frustrating experience. Nevertheless, it was here that the Corps first made a reputation as a professional force and had it not been for the general shortage of manpower in East Africa, it is likely that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Cape Corps would have been raised as a unit of Pioneers rather than as infantry. How this proposal unravelled is investigated with reference to the relevant DOD archival material in this chapter before attention is turned towards the Corps' experiences on the battlefield. Here, the pressures of months of patrolling and campaigning culminated in the Corps' participation in the battles of Lindi in late 1917, and Square Hill in 1918. Relying heavily accounts from Cape Corps veterans, the resulting battle narratives of the chapter emphasise the difficulty and danger of the conflict on the one hand, and the masculine pride with which it was

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<sup>69</sup> This chapter and dissertation heavily relies on Herbert Kelman's pioneering psychological study: Kelman, H. C. 1958. "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Morrell, R. 2001. *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in the Colonial Natal*. Pretoria: University of South Africa Press.

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter One, P.32 and Chapter Three, P.66.

<sup>72</sup> Packard, R. 2016. "Indexing Immunity to Malaria in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s" in *Anthropology South Africa*, Vol. 39, No.2; and Packard, "Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies."

<sup>73</sup> Samson, A. 2006. *Britain, South Africa and the East African Campaign, 1914-1918: The Union Comes of Age*, London : Tauris Academic Studies.

<sup>74</sup> Paice, E. 2010. *Tip and Run: The Untold Tragedy of the Great War in Africa*. Hatchette: UK.

<sup>75</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*.

remembered by its participants on the other. Heavily inspired by John Keegan's *The Face of Battle* and histories like it<sup>76</sup>, this chapter concludes by illustrating how the shared experiences of battle and loss completed the formation of an incredibly powerful group identity first discussed in Chapter Two.

The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation shifts attention from the Cape Corps on campaign to the elements of the Cape Corps that remained based in the Union during the war. Working from the riots in Kimberley in late 1917 that Albert Grundlingh<sup>77</sup> has covered in excellent detail as a starting point, the chapter contextualises this event with an exploration of both what preceded and followed from it. As both the move of the Corps depot from Cape Town to Kimberley -before, and the disbandment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion -after, illustrates, the Cape Corps suffered from a poor relationship with not just some white civilians but also senior figures in the military authorities such as Brigadier-General Alfred Cavendish. Often accused of gross military indiscipline, this chapter seeks to determine how a regiment that was often spoken of in glowing terms overseas came to be in such an awkward relationship with the rest of the UDF and tests just how "guilty" they may have been in the face of racial double standards for behaviour. Despite this, the Cape Corps officers defended their men in many official capacities and beyond demobilisation this dissertation argues that the bonds of loyalty forged on the battlefield between the white and Coloured men of the Cape Corps continued to weigh on their lives in the years and decades to follow after.



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<sup>76</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad* and Hart, *The Great War*.

<sup>77</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.140-148.

# Chapter One: The Opportunity of War

When tensions between the Great Powers of Europe boiled over in August of 1914, it unleashed a war of enormous scale and scope. Whilst not the first intercontinental war<sup>78</sup>, the resulting conflict now known as the First World War was the first to occur in an age of growing globalisation. Colonialisation had spread the tendrils of European nation-states across the world, and with those tendrils the industrial revolution. Technological development at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century- like the steam engine and telegraph- had compressed space and time and facilitated rapid communication at great distances. These technologies had aided and accompanied the formation of colonial states which were vastly different from those that had come before, utterly transforming places like India and the four disparate provinces that would become the Union of South Africa in 1910. When it became clear that the war would not be “over by Christmas” in 1914, the British and French turned to colonial possessions for material and manpower support. In doing so, metropolitan Europe involved these states in ways which were fundamentally different to the form of colonial involvements in conflicts of the past. Where, for example, life had been fairly “business as usual” in the Cape during the Crimean War of 1853, the involvement of the Union in the First World War some seventy years later provoked an entirely different sort of national reaction.<sup>79</sup> For the first time in history, a global “total war” was being fought, requiring vast inputs of manpower and resources. This required the organisational oversight of the state and the participation of societies far more broadly than ever before. Industries, transportation systems, schools and the press were all now becoming involved in war activities whilst thousands of men were being drawn into the armed forces.

In South Africa, this mass mobilisation of the state and those who fought for it was a far from simple affair, carrying with it numerous complications buried within the greater social structure of South African society. These complications were manifested in numerous ways, of which perhaps the most salient were issues of race and loyalty. Whereas white society was divided in its loyalties to the British Empire, Africans and Coloureds on the whole enthusiastically declared their support for the British metropole.<sup>80</sup> Engaged in a form of what Bill Nasson has termed “mortgaged anti-colonialism”, South African blacks frequently appealed to British authorities to protect them from excesses of settler colonialism, to varying degrees of success.<sup>81</sup> In particular, Coloureds who benefited from the Cape Franchise were especially inclined to be supportive of the British Empire, as exemplified best by the African Political Organisation. Under the charismatic leadership of Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, the APO issued hundreds of statements in support of the British at the outbreak of war and used its party mouthpiece, the *African Political Organisation* newspaper to similar effect.<sup>82</sup> The APO enthusiastically offered the services of Coloured men to the armed forces and was particularly vociferous in its attempts to secure a shift in the Botha government’s position that would have allowed the formation of a Coloured military formation, a change that was finally enacted in late 1915 with the (re)formation of the Cape Corps.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> That dubious honour belonging to the Nine Years War fought in Europe, the Americas and Asia between 1688 and 1697.

<sup>79</sup> See for example Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*. P.30-107.

<sup>80</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>82</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.138.

<sup>83</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.140.

Why the APO and its Coloured constituents were so steadfastly adamant in their calls for military service is one of the questions this chapter seeks to answer, particularly through reference to the inherently masculine identity politics associated with the formation of the Cape Corps. Indeed, as Natasha Erlank has argued, masculinity played a powerful role in the growing anti-colonial nationalist discourses of the contemporary period. Stripped of recognition of their masculine social identity, Erlank argues that much of African nationalist politics in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is focused on both overt and implicit calls for socio-political recognition and reassertion of male identities.<sup>84</sup> The same can certainly be said of Coloured political organisations which aspired to gain access to the sort of fully paid up citizenship afforded to white males. This citizenship was wrapped up in deeply held notions of militarised masculinity and as this chapter will argue, it was hoped by many Coloureds that through emulating and accessing that same masculine identity they would be afforded the same sort of political recognition and social respectability afforded to white soldiers. These hopes were bound together with views of race that dominated Coloured life, which will form another major axis of discussion for this chapter, for race and masculinity were inextricably linked together in the socio-cultural milieu of the day.<sup>85</sup>

The primary analytical lens of this chapter will thus be constructed from the theoretical framework of Connell's *Masculinities*.<sup>86</sup> Connell argued for five main points on masculinities across history, namely that:

- A. Masculinities, like all identities, are constructed and reconstructed.
- B. Masculinities are by nature relational, occurring in societies. They are created and recreated in the nature of relationships between people.
- C. Power differentials are thus unavoidable, with dominant strains of masculinity created along the lines of Gramscian hegemonies.
- D. Masculinities however are never stable or homogenous, with individual agency permitting contestation and the creation of alternate masculinities amongst individuals or subaltern groups.
- E. Masculinities are also by nature somewhat fragile identities, requiring adherence to specific characteristics to be rendered valid by those constructing them. This aspect of masculinity, namely the need for recognition, is what drives much of masculine behaviour.

From the above, much can be drawn from the narrative of the struggle to form the Cape Corps. Aspirations to masculine recognition certainly drove its creation as this chapter will argue, but what then? The point may seem obvious, but military life in the early twentieth century was replete with masculine identities. Much of these same identities and relational systems of power and authority were transplanted over to military life from the civilian world. In particular, the Corps' command by white officers constituted a holographic projection of the same class and racial power structures the Corps was all too familiar with. Those power relations were hardened then through military training and indoctrination which transformed them from civilians to soldiers, a transformation which is the major focus of this dissertation's second chapter. These efforts ultimately *did* bear a sort of limited fruit, with Coloured Cape Corps soldiers gaining recognition and admiration both from their own

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<sup>84</sup> Erlank, "Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse," P. 653-656.

<sup>85</sup> See for example the discussion below and Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P. 69.

<sup>86</sup> Connell, *Masculinities* in Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.10.

officers and to a more limited degree to from other military sources. Ultimately, however, the political ambitions and hopes pinned to Coloured military service would come to naught.<sup>87</sup>

Returning to the theme of transformation from civilian to soldier, it is useful then to consider first the broader socio-political context of the Union and masculine Coloured identity within it as a point of departure.

## **Union political structure and Coloured Identity Politics**

The Union of South Africa was founded in 1910 from four polities: the two former British colonies of the Cape and Natal, and the two former Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. As a Dominion of the British Empire, the Union was strongly tied to the British metropole both politically and economically. The *de jure* head of state was the Governor-General, an official appointed by London whose primary purpose was to serve as a symbolic reminder of the Union's position within the greater British Empire. Although Governor-Generals overwhelmingly deferred to the elected Prime Minister and his appointed cabinet in line with *responsible government*, Governor-Generals could and did exercise important powers in both World Wars under the South Africa Act, which gave them prerogative discretion in matters of defence and international diplomacy. Governor General Buxton, who came into office in September 1914, and the former Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, John X Merriman, exercised substantial influence over the Botha government and had close ties in particular to the Minister of Defence, Jan Smuts. As we shall see, all three of these men were substantially involved in the creation of the Cape Corps.

Smuts himself is perhaps one of the most central figures on the government side of the equation. As a central author of the 1913 Defence Act and Minister of Mines, Defence and Finance, Smuts was also Botha's most trusted lieutenant and served as Deputy Prime Minister. A Cambridge trained barrister, Smuts had fought with the Boers in the South African War and after had been heavily involved in the creation of the Het Volk political party which went on to win the first Union elections in 1910. Thereafter renamed the South African Party, Smuts walked a political tightrope for most of his career after Barry Hertzog defected from the SAP in 1913 to form the Afrikaner-dominated National Party. A proponent of racial segregation himself, Smuts often evaded liberal criticism of his policies by pointing to the NP. In the early 1920s, for example, Smuts told APO figures that he personally opposed the Colour bar but could not oppose it lest the NP take parliament. As Gavin Lewis contends, "Such hypocritical evasiveness typified Smuts' relations with Coloured leaders throughout his long political career."<sup>88</sup>

Coloured political representation was, in turn, typified by the African Political Organisation. Emerging out of a series of prior attempts to create Coloured political movements, the APO was formed in 1903 by JW Tobin in the Cape to better advocate for black political rights more broadly and later, the welfare of Coloureds specifically.<sup>89</sup> Tobin however was replaced as leader in 1905 by Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, a man who would come to dominate Coloured politics until his death in 1940. The son of greengrocers and the descendant of self-emancipated slaves, Abdurahman had been fortunate enough to receive a secondary education before qualifying as a medical doctor in Glasgow in 1893.<sup>90</sup> Elected to the Cape

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<sup>87</sup> This theme will be revisited in Chapter Five, see P.117.

<sup>88</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.89.

<sup>89</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.7-15.

<sup>90</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.69.

Town City Council in 1904 and the Cape Provincial Council in 1914 (the first black person to be elected to either of those posts), Mohammed Adhikari nevertheless contends that like most of the Coloured petite bourgeoisie, Abdurahman retained close ties to the general Coloured community.<sup>91</sup> For example, despite the publication of two-thirds of the *African Political Organisation* (the APO's newspaper) in English, Abdurahman in person conversed in vernacular Afrikaans with political supporters or patients at his practice. His immense popularity with the Coloured community and reputation as a "champion of the poor" helped ensure that the APO would remain the dominant Coloured political party until the late 1930s, despite the fact that party membership was dominated by a small Coloured middle class.<sup>92</sup>

Coloureds themselves existed in an awkward social space, with the very definition of what "Coloured" was itself proving initially elusive to racially minded governments. In a 1904 census, British authorities attempted to precisely define diffusive ethnic groups within the Cape colony and the "Coloured" category included no less than six sub-categories which included Bastards and Cape Malays.<sup>93</sup> Some Khoisan were categorised as Natives initially but as they were not Bantu-speaking were subsequently included in the Coloured group. After Union, the sub-categorisation of the Coloured community had been dropped as the SAP government unified racial classification in time for the 1911 census, which recorded 525 603 or 8.8% "Mixed and Coloured" people out of an overall population of nearly six million.<sup>94</sup> After, as Adhikari argues, identity for Coloured people- both internally- and externally assigned- has remained somewhat consistent over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His historical definition within *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough* is particularly *en pointe*:

"The Coloured people were descended largely from Cape slaves, the indigenous Khoisan population, and other black people who had been assimilated into Cape colonial society by the late nineteenth century. Since they are also partly descended from European settlers, Coloureds are popularly regarded as being of "mixed race" and have held the intermediate status in the South African racial hierarchy, distinct from the historically dominant white minority and the numerically preponderant African population."<sup>95</sup>

This identity had been a salient feature of life for what would become Coloured people since the turn of the nineteenth century. Evolving from what Stanley Trapido has termed "Hottentot Nationalism"<sup>96</sup>, Coloured identity and the politics associated with it were means by which citizens of the British Cape Colony could stake a claim to the sorts of socio-political goods ordinarily reserved for the likes of 'civilised' and 'respectable' citizens (read whites) of the Cape.<sup>97</sup> This is exemplified in the APO and Abdurahman primary concerns during the early years of the organisation, namely the protection and expansion of the Coloured voting franchise and the issue of education for Coloured children. Abdurahman fiercely contested

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<sup>91</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.69.

<sup>92</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.70.

<sup>93</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.3.

<sup>94</sup> Christopher, AJ. 2011. "The Union of South Africa censuses 1911-1960: an incomplete record" in *Historia*, Vol 56 and Beinart, W. 2001. *Twentieth Century South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.353. Historical designations are taken from Christopher, and whilst the 1911 census did not specifically accommodate for Indians and other Asians, Beinart has calculated for them allowing for an accurate reckoning of Coloured citizens.

<sup>95</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.2.

<sup>96</sup> Trapido, S. 1992. "The Emergence of Liberalism and the Making of 'Hottentot Nationalism' 1815-1834" in *Collected Seminar Papers on the Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries*.

<sup>97</sup> Trapido, "Hottentot Nationalism", P. 35.

the underfunding of Coloured schools in 1905, and was a member of the South African Native and Coloured People's Delegation to Britain. The delegation attended the 1909 South African Convention and with liberal allies like John Merriman argued ultimately unsuccessfully in favour of extending the non-racial Cape Franchise to the northern parts of the Union.<sup>98</sup> The *cause célèbre* of the British liberal tradition in the Cape, the 1904 voters roll there counted 14 836 Coloureds, or 3,7% of the total Coloured population.<sup>99</sup> The 1892 Cape Franchise and Ballot Act, however, coupled with growing economic pressure had disproportionately disenfranchised what had been a growing Coloured and African voter bloc and placed increasing pressure on the APO.<sup>100</sup>

By then, Coloured identity had become increasingly acute and important as the mineral revolution of the 1870s heightened the salience of race in political discourse. In an effort to distinguish themselves from Bantu-speaking Africans, Coloured individuals and groups sought to assimilate into white society as best they could or barring that, to protect their interests as best as possible. This was accomplished by represented themselves as having adopted 'civilised' Western cultural norms and through reference to partial descent from white ancestors.<sup>101</sup> As Adhikari argues, 'assimilation' in fact was a strong aspirational component of Coloured identity. Coloured people strongly desired to be judged on the basis of their individual merit, not on the ethno-racial labels which so characterised colonial European thinking at the turn of the twentieth century. It was widely hoped and believed - especially by the Coloured elite which made up some 5% of the Coloured population- that by embracing the ways of "Civilisation"<sup>102</sup> the Coloured community would in time be accepted within the European milieu. For a time, the tradition of Cape liberalism kept this hope alive despite lingering white racism.<sup>103</sup>

For the majority, however, the combination of Coloured people's marginality to the centres of socio-political discourse and their intermediate status between whites and 'true' black Africans was the source of considerable frustration.<sup>104</sup> The vast majority- some 95%- of Coloured people were not the educated artisans, shopkeepers, journalists, lawyers and doctors of the Coloured elite but instead formed a proletariat concentrated overwhelmingly in the Cape colony who earned their living as farm-hands, miners and manual labourers.<sup>105</sup> Whereas their intermediate racial status could be beneficial, by drawing preferential treatment from Cape authorities for example, it was often a double-edged sword which served to draw attention to their heritage. At its worst, this attention was mixed with notions of eugenicism where the mixing of "pure races" resulted in physically weak and morally unreliable offspring which served as uncomfortable reminders of inter-racial reproductive pairings. As the products of miscegenation, it was contended by many that, in the moral and racial terms of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Coloured people were conceived in sin.<sup>106</sup> The attitudes of government officials towards Coloureds was certainly reflective of this older streak of thought, with Cecil John Rhodes' position on race for example being well documented. And whilst by no means as virulently racist as Rhodes, Jan Smuts was certainly racial in his outlook, cautioning against the miscegenation of South African society lest one day "little

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<sup>98</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.29.

<sup>99</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.21.

<sup>100</sup> Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa*, P.78.

<sup>101</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Read: Western bourgeois culture

<sup>103</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.8-10.

<sup>104</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.11.

<sup>105</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.12.

<sup>106</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.24-27.

brown children play in the ruins of the Union Buildings.”<sup>107</sup> Life for a Coloured person at the turn of the twentieth century then, was dominated the supposed shame of their mixed heritage, and by constantly striving to prove to Europeans that they were not only respectable morally but worthy of a ‘seat at the table’.<sup>108</sup>

## **Denied Masculinities, Denied Citizenship and the Opportunity of War**

The works referenced above provide an invaluable framework for a discussion on identity politics which ultimately produced the Cape Corps. However, as Natasha Erlank has argued, purely political approaches to early anti-colonial nationalisms misses a substantial dimension of what animated their discourses at the turn of the century- the substantial role of gender and masculinity.<sup>109</sup> Although most nationalist writings of the period- the APO being no exception- used gender-neutral language, the reality is that nationalist organisations were primarily the realms of men- at least in the day to day public operations of these organisations.<sup>110</sup> The APO was no different, with its founding being attended solely by men, and with the vast majority of its 20 000 members in 1911 consisting of men.<sup>111</sup> Political activity was seen by governing elites to be the realm of men, with the Cape franchise only being open to male voters until the 1930s. The accession of white women to the vote was not out of consideration for the suffragist cause, but as a means to again ensure that Coloureds and Africans remained contained at the fringes of political power. Even before this manoeuvre by the Nationalist Party, Coloured men were never an empowered political voting bloc, with less than 4% (14 836 men in total) of the Coloured population recorded on the Cape’s voter’s roll in 1904. Contrast this with 119 906 white voters, which constituted 20,7% of the white population.<sup>112</sup> The socio-political dimensions of white masculine hegemony are clearly defined by this metric, with white male voters outnumbering Coloureds male voters by more than eight to one.

This disproportion was no accident given the systematic development of a dominant white male masculinity. Although multi-faceted and cleft between two main Afrikaner and English sub-types, white masculine identity in the Union had several overarching characteristics. “On the frontiers,” Robert Morrell writes, “settlers (with guns) were virtually a law unto themselves.”<sup>113</sup> Although the frontier had disappeared by the establishment of Union, profound cultural and ideological elements of frontier living remained a powerful element in white male culture. Rural Afrikaners were similar to New Zealanders described by Jock Phillips in that they were “rough, loose and anti-establishment”<sup>114</sup>. In the same vein, English settlers in Natal (and also the Eastern Cape) developed a particularly militarised form of masculinity and citizenship in response to their isolation as “white islands in a sea of blacks.”<sup>115</sup> In the face of a changing economy and state, uneven change in white masculinities

<sup>107</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.17.

<sup>108</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P.15.

<sup>109</sup> Erlank, “Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse”, P.653-656.

<sup>110</sup> Erlank, “Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse,” P. 653-656. This of course does mean that women were not substantially involved in Nationalist movements, as Erlank then argues later.

<sup>111</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 26. Lewis too notes the substantial support provided to the APO by female figures like Zainunnissa (Cissie) Gool and by the APO Women’s League. The public expression of female political activity took time to develop however and is beyond the temporal scope of this work.

<sup>112</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 21.

<sup>113</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.14.

<sup>114</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.14.

<sup>115</sup> White male citizenry was in fact heavily militarised even in comparison to Europeans and Americans. English school boys were taught the fundamentals of rifle shooting in a school-based cadets system, which Morrell credits for instilling a fundamental militarism in young Natalian men in particular. See Morrell, *From*

were being affected but as of 1910, to say that white masculinity still hinged on martial virtues such as “perseverance, aggression, toughness, precision, competence, obedience and the protection of ‘white brothers and sisters’”<sup>116</sup> held true across even the broad political chasm between Afrikaner and English men. These same white men held an absolute form of hegemonic masculinity over Coloureds, Africans and Indians, which was used to systematically exclude them from economic prosperity<sup>117</sup> as well as political power as we have seen above.

For the subaltern man, life in the Union could be a profoundly emasculating experience. As Goolam Vahed writes on indentured Indian labour in Natal, Indian labourers were frequently described as “less robust, timid, wily, dishonest, obsequious, litigious, insincere, roguish [and] cowardly” by their colonial overseers.<sup>118</sup> Forced to refer to their employers as *sahib*, Indian men were frequently punished by whipping and were treated as disobedient children.<sup>119</sup> For Coloureds, a long historical precedent of similar sorts of subordination stretched back centuries, with the theme repeating itself powerfully for example in Patricia van der Spuy’s history of Galant van der Kaap’s 1825 Rebellion.<sup>120</sup> Deprived of conjugal rights to his wife Betje and a slave concubine Pamela, Galant led a rebellion of fellow slaves and Khoisan labourers, first against his Dutch owner and then against the greater Cape Colony. Humiliated and emasculated for most of his life, the death of one of his children led Galant to murder his master and reassert his male authority by ironically using the opportunity to beat Betje.<sup>121</sup> Some 80 years after Galant’s rebellion, life had certainly improved for Coloureds compared to the grim years of slavery, but conditions were still harsh and Coloured men still poor. Coloureds working on rural farms especially still had to contend with occasional physical punishments and the “baas-boy” relationship.<sup>122</sup> On top of this, the recession following the South African War disproportionately affected Coloureds in the Cape, whose relative prosperity fell between 1905 and 1910.<sup>123</sup> As Natasha Erlank has

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*Boys to Gentlemen*, P.152. Afrikaners, in turn, had stealthily resurrected the Commando system in the form of Rifle Associations. Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.49. The link between military service and citizenship goes further, with President Steyn writing to Jan Smuts in 1911, to urge him to make Commando (or Citizen Force) service mandatory for every man on the voter’s rolls in the Free State and Transvaal. He felt certain this would dissuade Jews and Cornish miners from seeking the vote. How this would be applied in the Cape and to non-white voters was not raised. Steyn to Smuts, 27 January 1911 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*.

<sup>116</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.14.

<sup>117</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 64-67.

<sup>118</sup> Vahed, G. 2005. “Indentured Masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1860-1910” in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to present*. Ouzgane, L & Morrell, R (Eds). Palgrave Macmillan: New York. P.243.

<sup>119</sup> Vahed, “Indentured Masculinity in Colonial Natal”, P.243. Broad similarities can be drawn between Indian and Coloured experiences, with Indians occupying the same sort of racial intermediacy as Coloureds in the Union, and enduring much of the same stereotypes as discussed below. Substantial political links and shared ideology existed between the Indian National Congress and the APO as well.

<sup>120</sup> Van der Spuy, P. 1996. “Making Himself Master: Galant’s Rebellion Revisited” in *South African Historical Journal* No 1 Vol 28.

<sup>121</sup> Van der Spuy, “Making Himself Master”, P.11-25.

<sup>122</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 64-67.

<sup>123</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 64-67. The number of Coloureds employed in middle class positions like greengrocery and teaching remained stagnant or even fell slightly in those years, in contrast to an expanding white middle class.

argued, a failure to provide for their families was highly emasculating for African men more broadly and the same can certainly be said of Coloureds spread across the Union.<sup>124</sup>

APO elites like John Tobin and Abdullah Abdurahman lamented responses to this which included alcoholism<sup>125</sup> and “licentious” sexual behaviour and directed substantial efforts towards ‘improving’ and ‘civilising’ their own people in line with white expectations of propriety.<sup>126</sup> Racist whites in turn developed what Arthur Saint-Aubin has termed a “grammar of black masculinity” to reinforce and reproduce in pseudoscientific terms their believed superiority in intelligence.<sup>127</sup> Coloured physiognomy was linked to weakness, with “pure” races being created by God and the Coloureds by Jan van Riebeeck, as one cruel joke went.<sup>128</sup> The supposed mixing of attributes from the natural races was seen as a departure from natural order, and with it Coloured men were believed to lack that most central of manly attributes, physical strength.<sup>129</sup> Frustrated Coloured men certainly made their positions known at APO political meetings and in the face of rising radicalism, Tobin- then still the head of the APO- urged constituents at a meeting in 1905 to avoid violence and radicalism. “Your votes are your guns!” he told the meeting, extolling a still firmly held elite belief in the political system, through which change could be enacted.<sup>130</sup>

Within it, certainly, the Coloured man had numerous allies. White male hegemonic power was not uniform, and in the western Cape in particular liberal traditions linked to the British metropole ran deep. The founding of the APO had been attended by two white Unionists, JW Jagger and T Searle<sup>131</sup>, but beyond this the APO had an even more powerful ally: John X Merriman. An SAP MP after the 1910 election, Merriman tended to view Coloured politicians as strategic allies which could help swing specific Cape constituencies towards his party. Though sympathetic to the Coloured cause, he was also an unapologetic Imperialist and was dismissive of nativist nationalism.<sup>132</sup> When Gopal Gokhale, the Secretary General of the Indian National Congress, visited the Union to discuss the anti-Indian Immigration Acts then being tabled, Merriman was impressed with Gokhale himself, “not a Baboo but a high caste Mahratta, who were, as you know, a fighting race that gave us many a twister.”<sup>133</sup> Merriman was less enthused by Gokhale’s thoughts on independence- “Not very comforting talk to an Englishman!”- and interestingly, had chosen to meet Gokhale in person only after his earlier meetings that day had concluded. Merriman’s reason? “I naturally did not attend any of his functions,” Merriman wrote to Smuts, “As I did not wish to be mixed up with Abdurahman nor Alexander who both seem to have their axes to grind on that particular stone.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Erlank, “Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse,” P. 657-659.

<sup>125</sup> A phenomenon in which the “dop” system certainly played a role.

<sup>126</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 23-25

<sup>127</sup> Saint-Aubin, A.F. 2005. “A Grammar of Black Masculinity: a Body of Science” in in *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to present*. Ouzgane, L & Morrell, R (Eds). New York.: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>128</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P. 24-27.

<sup>129</sup> Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P. 24-27.

<sup>130</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 26.

<sup>131</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 12.

<sup>132</sup> Merriman, for example, wrote the foreword to Difford’s history of the Cape Corps.

<sup>133</sup> Merriman to Smuts, 25 October 1912 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*, P.112. Merriman’s characterisation of Gokhale as one of the British Empire’s “martial races” points to the racial views even liberals held.

<sup>134</sup> Merriman to Smuts, 24 October 1913. in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*, P.112. The political consequences of this are to be discussed below.

The letter is illustrative of the ambiguous and often contradictory relationship between British liberals and black elites then beginning to aspire towards greater independence and recognition. On the one hand, admiration was expressed for ‘civilised’ men like Gokhale. However, on the other native political mobilisation to deal with what Bill Nasson has termed the excesses of settler colonialism drew deep concerns.<sup>135</sup> Liberals ultimately still believed in the ‘civilising mission’ of British imperial colonialism, and because most Coloured men were not yet fully ‘civilised’ by Western metrics, it was their duty to educate and steward their charges.<sup>136</sup> Yet, events in Europe were proving problematic. Merriman himself contended that when asked by a Coloured cab driver about the actions of European powers towards Turkey, political instability in metropolitan Europe was making things “Awkward for the dominant races.”<sup>137</sup> Indeed, as Albert Grundlingh has argued, the outbreak of war in Europe did much to undermine the white argument that they were more civilised and that their civilisation was founded upon a morality superior to those of blacks.<sup>138</sup>

Whilst this was indeed the content of some black discussion regarding the events in Europe in late 1914, the reality was that black nationalist movements such as the APO and the South African Native National Congress wasted no time issuing effusive outpourings of patriotic support for the British metropole.<sup>139</sup> Both immediately offered to raise troops for what was described as a life or death struggle for the fate of the British Empire and its civilising mission itself, with the APO pre-emptively gathering a list of some 10 000 names for the hoped-for formation of a Coloured military unit.<sup>140</sup> The country-wide branches of the APO were mobilised, with speeches and pro-British rallies held at town halls and public spaces across the Union. In Cape Town, Kimberley, Port Elizabeth, Graaf Reinet, Johannesburg, Pretoria and thirty towns in the Cape countryside, the outbreak of war was met with “pro-war cables, petitions, addresses, and press declarations” from Coloured people, as orchestrated by the APO.<sup>141</sup> Donations to a war fund were solicited at these events, as readership of the *APO* newspaper soared. The paper’s editorialising in turn was characterised by constant statements of loyalty to the Crown and withering criticisms of German militarism.<sup>142</sup> On the surface level at least, patriotic fervour was widespread and intense for the Coloured community in late 1914 and would remain so until the conclusion of the war.

As Bill Nasson contends, this patriotism was in fact largely genuine for most Coloureds, and was characterised in particular part by a kind of anti-colonialism where the British Empire was seen as the guarantor of Coloured liberty and citizenship, *not* the Union.<sup>143</sup> Where British liberalism had freed the slaves and resulted in the Cape Franchise, settlers and Afrikaners in particular were still associated with oppression. As late as the South African War, for example, Coloureds had still volunteered for military service fearing that a British defeat would result in a return to slavery or to slave-like working conditions for their race.<sup>144</sup> Albert Grundlingh argues that the APO’s support of the British Empire in the First World War was heavily couched in this fear: if Britain were defeated and supplanted by Germany as the world’s dominant power, the ability of the South African Party to remain in power would

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<sup>135</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>136</sup> An extremely pertinent example is to follow, see Perkins as an example in the following chapter, P. 42

<sup>137</sup> Merriman to Smuts, 13 October 1913 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*, P.112.

<sup>138</sup> See Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.57-58.

<sup>139</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.137

<sup>140</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 85.

<sup>141</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.138.

<sup>142</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 85.

<sup>143</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 55.

<sup>144</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 60.

certainly be imperilled and a political party far less sympathetic to Coloured interests could be installed.<sup>145</sup> As flawed as “British” liberty had been, it was preferable to a return to older social systems.<sup>146</sup> Secondly, Grundlingh has argued that the APO hoped that war service would provide a catalyst for change in racial relations. Indeed, it was hoped that the depictions of white-skinned Germans in the press as base and vile would in turn allow Coloured people to show their virtue and to prove that morality had nothing to do with the colour of a person’s skin.<sup>147</sup>

Layered beneath these politics of hope, the gendered dimensions of Coloured intentions to fight cannot be ignored. Through military service not only could Coloureds show their worth as a “race”, but Coloured males could prove their worth as individuals and men. Recall then the dominant influence that white masculinity exercised over the relational politics of the day. As a form of hegemonic masculinity, white men in particular valued military service as both a public, patriotic and moral service to the community as a whole, *and* as an affirmation of the self as a member of the superior gender.<sup>148</sup> These two elements operated in symbiosis, with *men* being granted acceptance and affirmation for doing their duty, and *duty* being expected of all men.<sup>149</sup> Masculine acknowledgement was thus an internally constructed loop, granted from one group of men to another. Through military service, Coloured men hoped to tap into the affirmation and respect it was hoped this would afford to them in a society dominated by notions of respectability. War service thus represented to Coloured men an opportunity for the affirmation of their masculine selves in a society where they had historically been part of a partly emasculated subaltern class. This helps explain why Coloured men volunteered in large numbers to fight in the First World War<sup>150</sup>, and also why great frustration was felt at the initial reluctance by the Union government to take up their offer.

## White reluctance and capitulation

The offer by the APO to raise 10 000 men for service at the outbreak of the war was met by an immediate refusal from the Botha government and its Minister of Defence, Smuts. A central architect of the 1912 Union Defence Act, Smuts had consulted at length with a variety of figures during its writing, including the former President of the Orange Free State, FS Steyn.<sup>151</sup> Its debate in parliament had been acrimonious at times. Some Afrikaners still harboured bitterness towards the British for their defeat in the South African War, and resented being incorporated into the Empire’s military structure as part of the Union Defence Force. Other speakers feared that the mobilisation and deployment of white troops overseas for Imperial adventures would prompt native risings, such as the 1906 Bambatha rebellion.<sup>152</sup>

In order to combat such exactly such an event and to maintain the existing domestic racial order, the UDF was in turn organised with a heavy emphasis on internal security.<sup>153</sup> Under Article Seven of the Defence Act, combatant roles within the UDF was restricted to whites,

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<sup>145</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.138.

<sup>146</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.138.

<sup>147</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P. 138.

<sup>148</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

<sup>149</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

<sup>150</sup> Some 25 000 men were attested for the Cape Corps alone. See Perkins. “Recruitment of the Cape Corps” in *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*. P. 26-27.

<sup>151</sup> Steyn to Smuts, 27 January 1911 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*.

<sup>152</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.23.

<sup>153</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.23. Another concern being radical white workers

and further legislation was crafted to restrict the ownership of firearms to whites only with the Cape province alone exempt from this stipulation.<sup>154</sup> Whites saw this monopoly on force in starkly militarised terms, when an MP noted that the proliferation of arms and the expertise to use them would to blacks “only be a menace”.<sup>155</sup> White control could be eroded too by insidious means, with the same MP noting that it would be “an immoral thing to in South Africa to place black and white troops on the same footing.”<sup>156</sup> He presumably meant that elevating black servicemen to the same positions of respectability of their white peers that the very moral fabric of male white hegemony would be eroded. The gendered terms of this racial attitude are evident, for example, when Nationalist MP JB Wessels asked parliament whether they could ever bear a Coloured man telling a white man: “I am now your equal- and the equal of your wives and children.”<sup>157</sup> Arguments like these evidently held water and it was in reference to Article Seven of the Defence Act that the government refused offers by the APO and by other black nationalists like Walter Rabusana in late 1914 to mobilise men.<sup>158</sup> Despite the concerted efforts of the APO to cast themselves firmly in the loyalist mould, it is clear that Coloureds were distrusted by a number of MPs and during the war the UDF kept close watch on some rural Coloureds suspected of disloyalty.<sup>159</sup>

Ironically, the departure of some 6000 British troops for Europe in September 1914 prompted an uprising- not of frustrated blacks, but of former Boer officers and around 10 000 supporters. Lacking the support of the bulwark of Afrikaner nationalism, Barry Hertzog’s National Party, the 1914 rebellion was doomed from the start.<sup>160</sup> It however underlines the great divide in white politics and served to consume a great deal of the government- and Smuts’- attention. The APO and Abdurahman in the meanwhile had wasted no time in attempting to capitalise on the Rebellion, with the party’s newspaper railing vociferously on “enemies within”, singling out the rebels as disloyal traitors in contrast to Coloureds who had remained loyal to the Empire and to the Union.<sup>161</sup> When the APO again attempted to get Coloureds into the war by offering to raise a unit of anti-rebel Coloured volunteers, the government quietly dismissed the suggestion, no doubt noting the political implications of arming Coloured troops for use against white Afrikaners.<sup>162</sup>

As late as March 1915, stern-faced Nationalists like MP Piet Grobler had *still* warned parliament that the rebellion and the Union’s involvement in the war had weakened white strength to invite a black uprising.<sup>163</sup> Smuts and Botha could not afford to ignore Grobler’s pistol-packing theatrics or the rest of the Nationalist Party, lest they side with the rebels. As a result, the invasion of German South West Africa was launched with the APO’s pleas ignored for the time being. Frustrated Coloured men with the means to do so reacted by travelling to Europe and joining British units there at their own expense.<sup>164</sup> Others Coloureds joined Africans and Indians in the 33 000 strong semi-militarised auxiliary labour corps which accompanied the 45 000 white troops invading German South West Africa. There, far away

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<sup>154</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.20.

<sup>155</sup> Hansard, Speech by T Smuts, 8 March 1911.

<sup>156</sup> Hansard, Speech by T Smuts, 8 March 1911.

<sup>157</sup> Hansard, Speech by JB Wessels, 8 March 1911.

<sup>158</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.44.

<sup>159</sup> See DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/34421. Box 323. Elliot, FA to Defence Headquarters. 3 February, 1917. “Letter: Alleged unrest amongst Hottentots in Namaqualand”, discussed in Chapter 5, P.119.

<sup>160</sup> Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.94-99.

<sup>161</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>162</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>163</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.44.

<sup>164</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.139.

from the prying eyes of white society, some Coloureds scouts were discreetly armed.<sup>165</sup> Undeniably, however, the APO's broader aspirations towards official acceptance, recognition and armament had been stymied- at least temporarily.

With the UDF busily engaged with either the invasion or the rounding up of the last rebels, APO attempts to form a Coloured military unit had entered a frustrated holding pattern for the moment. Inspired by press reports of Indian gallantry in the British lines at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March of 1915, the *APO* newspaper laid into Botha when he returned the Union later that year, accusing him "Of declining the offer [of raising a Coloured infantry regiment] out of weak deference to an irrational prejudice- the dislike of his burghers to see any Coloured men, however civilised, participate in a war between whites."<sup>166</sup> It was not Botha's mind that required changing however, as Smuts was beginning to assume an ever greater role within the government as Botha's health began to decline.<sup>167</sup>

For his part, Smuts remained focused on white politics with a notable emphasis on unifying the white electorate. As Anne Samson argues, both Smuts and Botha sought ambitious territorial enlargements for the Union and hoped that the war would grant them a chance to incorporate German South West Africa, the Bechuanaland-, Basutoland- and Swaziland- protectorates, portions of Southern Rhodesia, and through a territory swap, portions of Portugese South East Africa including the highly sought after Delgoa Bay into a greater Union of South Africa.<sup>168</sup> Smuts hoped this massive gain through unified war service would be instrumental in healing the political cleft between Afrikaner nationalists on one side, and his own SAP/Unionist coalition on the other.<sup>169</sup> With such grand strategic thinking occupying his mind, Smuts' in turn responded to domestic racial issues as annoying distractions at best, and considered them destabilising wastes of resources at worst.<sup>170</sup>

In much the same vein as Merriman, Smuts' belief in the civilising mission of white imperialism rendered him somewhat hostile to the efforts of black nationalists- particularly so given his already mentioned aspirations towards white unity and advancement. One pertinent example is the irritated disdain Smuts displayed towards earlier Indian political mobilisation against the Immigration Act of 1913. After a series of frustrated letters exchanged with Botha, Smuts remarked with relief in a letter dated August 21, 1914 that Gandhi "the saint has finally left our shores".<sup>171</sup> A strong link existed between the early Indian National Congress and the APO. Despite being distinct ethnically and geographically, both formations were hinged on strong anti-colonialism which transcended such differences, and Dr. Abdurahman's involvement with the anti-colonial Indian cause certainly did not endear him to Smuts. One of Abdurahman's first political achievements was to lead a deputation at the request of the British Indian League in 1903 to oppose restrictions to Indian immigration to the Cape, and when Gopal Gokhale visited the Union in 1912, Abdurahman was a keen speaker at his conventions.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.188.

<sup>166</sup> *APO*, 24 July 1915, "General Botha's return."

<sup>167</sup> Hancock, WK. 1962. *Smuts I: The Sanguine Years 1870-1919*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.421.

<sup>168</sup> Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.94-99.

<sup>169</sup> Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.94-99.

<sup>170</sup> See examples below, P.31-32.

<sup>171</sup> Botha to Smuts , 23 December 1913 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*. P.151 and Smuts to Robertson, 21 August 1914 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*. P.190

<sup>172</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 27.

Beyond this, Abdurahman was a Muslim. The Cape's large Muslim community, then almost uniformly referred to as Malays, had been a small but influential voting bloc in Cape politics, especially during the politically formative years of Smuts' early career in the Cape.<sup>173</sup> As Bill Nasson argues, the Cape's Muslims had shown strong ties to the Turkish Empire, then the world's only major independent Islamic polity. The outbreak of war had provoked an awkward situation for some and a degree of political suspicion from Smuts, but Abdurahman and the Cape Muslim community's loyalty to the British had remained steadfast.<sup>174</sup> Such a reductionist view of the APO was also a drastic misreading of its cosmopolitan makeup, reflective of course of the fact that a large majority of Coloureds were in fact Christians.<sup>175</sup>

The APO circumvented this intransigence by leveraging the support of key white allies. The mayor of Cape Town, Harry Hands wrote throughout the war to the UDF's director of war recruiting Colonel Charles Crewe to reassure him of Coloured loyalty. In one dated 1917, Hands noted that Coloured recruiting drives were "Performances attended by many and reported that on all occasions opportunities were seized to gain recruits and to put forward the cause of the allies for civilisation and humanity."<sup>176</sup> Other allies included Walter Stanford- a noted liberal and former administrator of Native Affairs for the Cape Colony- and the new Governor General Lord Sydney Buxton- who began to increasingly assert his influence in the Union government and on Smuts in particular.<sup>177</sup> The appeals and vouching of these men seems to have begun to gain traction on Smuts as he returned victorious from German South West Africa.

Another major factor was that the war situation had also changed. Letters were exchanged between Merriman, Buxton and the British Colonial Secretary Lewis Harcourt urging Smuts to involve the Union in the flagging British war effort against German East Africa. In May, Smuts responded by returning to the Union to begin planning the movement of Union troops to that theatre.<sup>178</sup> Unlike SWA which had primarily been the effort of the UDF alone, however, the East African operation would entail the substantial involvement of Commonwealth forces from India, British East Africa, Nigeria and the Gold Coast.<sup>179</sup> Importantly, the entire invasion was placed under the initial command of the British General Sir Horace Smith-Dorien, and there are hints that his urging and the urging of Merriman and others that played a major factor in Smuts finally acceding to calls to raise a Coloured unit of soldiers. In a telegram dated January 24<sup>th</sup> 1916, General Smith-Dorien intimated to Smuts that he had been told by the Director of War Recruiting, Colonel Charles Crewe that a second battalion of 'Cape Boys' could be raised given the overwhelming response to recruiting efforts.<sup>180</sup> "Will [sic] gladly accept this second Battalion", Smith-Dorien, then still the commander for the East African campaign, wrote, adding, "If you concur, please let me know the approximate date Battalion would be likely to leave South Africa."<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 9-10.

<sup>174</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.55.

<sup>175</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.10.

<sup>176</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.140

<sup>177</sup> See for example a telegram from Buxton to Smuts asking him how the Cape Corps was being employed in German East Africa. SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.16. Smuts to Buxton. 24 March, 1916.

<sup>178</sup> Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.94-99.

<sup>179</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.262-265.

<sup>180</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.4. Smith-Dorien to Smuts. 24 January, 1916.

<sup>181</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.4. Smith-Dorien to Smuts. 24 January, 1916.

The use of the emasculating appellation “Cape Boys” aside<sup>182</sup>, Smith-Dorien’s telegram was indicative of the fact that British authorities knew already that East Africa was unsuitable for campaigning by whites and that the invasion of what is now Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi would consume a large amount of manpower.<sup>183</sup> Smuts, in turn, found himself short of fighting men by June of 1915, as large numbers of rurally based Afrikaners and English Natalians needed to return to their farms.<sup>184</sup> The European front could be ignored no longer, with 5700 of the most ardent pro-British volunteers being shipped off in that same month to fight eventually in France, with their campaign including the infamous Battle of Delville Wood. In total, the mobilised force of the UDF fell from 45 000 to under 25 000 in July.<sup>185</sup> The Coloured option then represented one pool of untapped manpower to Smuts, but as Difford contends and the Cape Corps’ supply shortages in the early stages of its life confirm, the Defence Ministry did not anticipate being able to raise more than a battalion’s worth of men.<sup>186</sup> Smuts it seems did not expect a large surge of Coloured volunteers, and when it became evident that he had underestimated Coloured keenness, he illustrated lukewarm opinions of their prospects as soldiers. In response to Smith-Dorien’s surprise at the number of recruits forthcoming, Smuts was succinct: “I am extremely doubtful about an extra battalion of Cape Boys. It will take time and expense to collect and train them, their military value is quite uncertain, and public opinion in Union is adverse to this form of recruiting.”<sup>187</sup> Whether ‘public opinion’ in this case was inclusive of his own feelings, is unclear but heavily implied.

Albert Grundlingh in turn has suggested that another major aspect of the Corps’ creation may have laid Smuts’ belief in contemporary theories of biological determinism. Given that Smuts in particular believed that Zulus had innate resistances to malaria<sup>188</sup>, the idea that he based a number of strategic decisions which directly impacted the Corps on this faulty belief bears testing, particularly given that such notions were present in medical debates in the Union at the time.<sup>189</sup> The theme of disease and the Corps’ experiences with it is a major theme to unpack, to which Chapter three will largely be dedicated.

Beyond these considerations, Smuts’ correspondences after he took charge of the German East Africa campaign suggest that manpower and political pressure were far larger considerations in the Cape Corps formation.<sup>190</sup> When Buxton enquired by telegram in early 1916 how the Corps was fairing, for example, Smuts replied that due to their lack of military value, they were being employed as line of communications troops away from the front-line, with the bulk of fighting left to white and Indian units.<sup>191</sup> Their worth dismissed in a single telegraphed line, it is clear then that Smuts would have instead preferred another unit of whites.

Regardless of Smuts’ personal reluctance, a tipping point had been passed and in September 1915 the Botha government elected to permit the re-formation of the Cape Corps, a

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<sup>182</sup> A point to be discussed in Chapter Two, P.44.

<sup>183</sup> Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.17.

<sup>184</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.366.

<sup>185</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.366.

<sup>186</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P. 33.

<sup>187</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.5. Smuts to Smith-Dorien. No date.

<sup>188</sup> JC Smuts to JX Merriman, 27 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P. 409.

<sup>189</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.141; See also: Packard, “Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies”, P.201.

<sup>190</sup> Smith Dorien had fallen ill to pneumonia and was unable to assume this responsibility.

<sup>191</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.18. Smuts to Buxton. 30 March, 1916.

historically British unit of Coloured soldiers dating back to 1820.<sup>192</sup> The following month, a SAP/Unionist/Labour wartime coalition won the 1915 election, earning Smuts far greater political breathing room. To a placated parliament, Smuts publically justified his decision via the historic precedent of using Coloured soldiers in the frontier wars of the Cape against native Africans. Smuts argued by drawing on the imagery of an Imperial expedition that the Cape Corps would be employed in a similar vein of service in East Africa.<sup>193</sup> In the same breath, he assured parliamentarians that the Cape Corps would *not* be a part of the Union Defence Force and would serve instead as a British Imperial Service Contingent.<sup>194</sup> As such, the Corps would be paid for and trained by the Imperial authorities. This would be in line with the type of service extended to West Indian battalions and to a lesser extent the King's African Rifles and British Indian Army who served as *auxiliaries* separate but in theory equal to the white British Army.<sup>195</sup> This distinction meant differing pay and ultimately meant that Coloureds, with a few exceptions, would not fight alongside white South Africans. Smuts had after-all hoped that war service would create a unified white electorate<sup>196</sup>, and whilst there is no clear evidence that this was a deliberate attempt to exclude Coloureds from that sort of martial nation-building, both of Smuts' telegrams referenced above make it clear that he did was only reluctantly shackled with the Cape Corps in East Africa.



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<sup>192</sup> Perkins, EA. 1920. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps" in *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*. P. 18.

<sup>193</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P. 140.

<sup>194</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P. 140.

<sup>195</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P. 29-31

<sup>196</sup> Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.99.

## Chapter Two: Rifles, Recruitment and Respectability: The Cape Corps is mobilised

The scope of the First World War had caught all of its combatants by surprise. As early as February of 1915, for example, the British Empire had begun to run out of soldiers. Consisting as it had of a mere six divisions- all professional- the terrible cost of six months of fighting in Europe had by then all but bled the British Army white.<sup>197</sup> As a stop-gap measure reinforcements were hastily called in from across the vast geographic expanse of the Empire, with the British Indian Army in particular rendering important service at the battle of Neuve Chapelle that March. In Britain itself, Lord Kitchener spearheaded the longer term response: an enormous recruiting effort which mobilised millions of working class men long after the public's initial enthusiasm for war had waned. In two years this undertaking would transform the British Army from a small, elite formation to a massive organisation which made its presence felt in nearly every Imperial household. Originally kept deliberately small and professional on the basis of cost, wartime contingencies had thus forced the British authorities to mobilise its broader society who were then rushed to the front as the hastily trained members of "Kitchener's New Army."<sup>198</sup> In the same vein, even though the authorities were hostile to their formation in the first place, the Cape Corps can be considered to be broadly part of this "second-wave" of First World War British Empire soldiers. Like most members of Kitchener's New Army, the overwhelming majority of Cape Corps soldiers had never handled a rifle before and were instead members of what Cape Corpsman Abe Desmore called "the labouring class of South Africa."<sup>199</sup>

It is this transformation from working class man to soldier over a very short time period then that this chapter pays particular attention to. Of particular interest is the period between the decision to form the Cape Corps in September 1915 and its departure from the Union as a battalion for German East Africa on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1916. In a little over five months, a recruiting committee had been established, over a thousand Coloured men gathered, white officers for the Corps gazetted, and the unit trained; break-neck speed by modern standards. Two interesting axes of discussion can be derived from this chronology.

The first pertains to the recruitment of the Cape Corps. Upon the opening of recruitment in 1915, a flood of Coloured volunteers sought to serve in the Corps, with 25 000 ultimately being attested- a number far higher than the Corps' capacity to absorb, given that it was initially thought that only a single battalion of 500 men would be kept sustainably staffed by Coloured recruitment. Although the war had opened other avenues of employment such as the Coloured Labour Corps and the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corps<sup>200</sup>, service in the infantry was by far the most prestigious and sought after position. Masculinity played a central role in this Coloured response, with Coloured men determined not only to show their patriotism to the British cause to be included in it as an instrument of manly recognition. Apart from this powerful motivating factor, dimensions of pay and the urban-rural divide within Coloured society itself will also be examined.

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<sup>197</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe*, P.495.

<sup>198</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe*, P.495.

<sup>199</sup> Desmore, *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps thro' Central Africa*. P.7.

<sup>200</sup> Both of these labour services were alternatives to Corps service and both often recruited alongside the Cape Corps. The Cape Auxilliary Horse Transport Corps served in France, and shared its Union Depot with the Cape Corps, see Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.304.

The second axis of this chapter follows chronologically on the first: the process of indoctrination and training that new members of the Cape Corps were subjected to following recruitment. Here, Connell's model operates extremely well as a rough guideline for the production and reproduction of masculinities within the Corps. This chapter will argue that, in particular, *implicit* power structures within broader South African society were made explicit by the leadership structure of the Corps, with Coloured men being led by white officers and with Coloured elites making up the majority of intermediate NCO positions. Secondly, it will show that unlike many other such relationships, the close proximity of the Corps white officers to their men and the relative meritocracy of military service resulted in a remarkably good relationship between the two groups. Thirdly, it will argue that as a result of their transformative training, Coloured patriotism was rewarded with acknowledgement and the physical totems of respectability- rifles and uniforms- which signified their acceptance- however imperfect- into the British war effort. Marching to board the *SS Armadale Castle* as they did on February the 9<sup>th</sup>, 1916, few however could imagine the physical and psychological price that this recognition would extract.<sup>201</sup>

## Recruitment and enlistment

With the decision to re-form the Cape Corps arrived at by the Botha government on September 20<sup>th</sup> 1915, Smuts' deputy in charge of war recruiting, Colonel Charles Crewe telegraphed the Mayor of Cape Town, Harry Hands. Crewe requested that Hands, Senator Walter Stanford, Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman, a Colonel TJ Ingelsby, and the man that would become the secretary for the Cape Corps War Recruiting Committee, a Mr Alfred Eames-Perkins meet him to discuss the formation of "a Cape Coloured regiment."<sup>202</sup> As Eames-Perkins recalls, the meeting established from the outset that many whites both within and without the Union government were displeased with the formation of the Cape Corps. Eager as their group was- Abdurahman in particular- Crewe made pains to emphasise that the Corps would be viewed as an *experiment* by the Union authorities. The long term connotations of this phrasing were evidently set aside and when the meeting ended, the nucleus of the Cape Corps War Recruiting Committee departed to begin its work.<sup>203</sup>

Within a few weeks, the Committee had swollen in numbers considerably, and now consisted of four main elements. The first major component was Abdurahman, his brother and other luminaries of the APO. In the Committee, the APO transitioned handily from positions of informal support external to official channels, to now organising recruiting gatherings which utilised the APO's existing network of branches and systems of political mobilisation.<sup>204</sup> Given that the APO had already organised a list of ten thousand potential volunteers prior to the decision to even form the Corps, it is clear that the organisation was both well prepared for recruiting drives on the one hand, and that a large Coloured audience was eager and anticipatory of the chance to enlist on the other.<sup>205</sup>

The APO in turn was readily assisted by highly placed white liberals in the recruiting Committee, which includes Hands and Walter Stanford. Through them, the Committee had

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<sup>201</sup> This will form the focus of the Third and Fourth chapters of this dissertation, see for example P.78 and P.104.

<sup>202</sup> Perkins,AE. 1920. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps" in Difford, ID. *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*. P. 22.

<sup>203</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps". P. 23.

<sup>204</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 85.

<sup>205</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P. 85.

little trouble securing venues for events, and through them the Cape Corps was also granted a degree of proximal respectability in the high society of the Cape. Senator Stanford, for example, drew several white patrons to the APO war fund and later the Cape Corps Gifts and Comforts Committee which helped fund much of the Cape Corps auxiliary costs.<sup>206</sup> For his efforts and his visibility, Stanford was named the Honorary Colonel of the Cape Corps and for much of the war would remain its main spokesperson and public facade- at least to 'respectable' white society.<sup>207</sup>

The third main arm of the committee consisted of missionaries and clergy like Reverend G Robson, Canon SW Lavis, and Reverend WL Clementson. As Bill Nasson argues, the reactions of South African churches to the outbreak of war ranged from outright jingoism, through to pacifism and even outright revulsion. In the Anglican and Methodist communities of the Cape, particularly those of the mission stations, however, the war was qualified in the terms of a struggle of good versus evil, of German "barbarism" versus supposed British "civilisation".<sup>208</sup> The inclusion then of clergy within the Cape Corps recruiting committee is not a ready surprise, particularly given the historic relationship between Coloureds and liberal church organisations like the London Missionary Society and the ideological predisposition of some churches towards the conflict. These clergy, in concert with the APO, provided the Recruiting Committee access to rural Coloured communities near mission stations like Saron and Mamre- places that, as we shall see, provided a disproportionate share of recruits in the initial weeks of the recruiting process.<sup>209</sup> Acting in concert with liberal politicians, clergy also provided Cape Corps events a further degree of respectability, as Reverend FM Gow did when he presided over the Cape Corps' first memorial service in 1919.<sup>210</sup>

The last component of the Committee consisted of former British military men like Colonel TJ Ingelsby, Colonel RS Solomon and Lt Colonel J Devine. Organised by the likes of Stanford and Senator Jacobus Graaf- men that Botha and Smuts thoroughly trusted- these recruiters were the public face of a very direct form of government power, and it is through these men that the Corps was formally formed. Senator Graaf, for example, was tasked directly with recruiting for the Cape Corps when he was contacted by Bedford, the Secretary for Defence, about raising a second Cape Corps Battalion in late 1916. "General Botha is very anxious that Sir Meiring Beck," the letter reads, "should consult with you about the subject of raising an additional Cape Coloured Battalion."<sup>211</sup> After due discussion, Graaf and Beck telegraphed Botha's office directly and having "interviewed Smartt Graaf Colonels Stanford and Hodson we agree recruiting can go ahead immediately [sic]."<sup>212</sup> The same council recommended that the new battalion be raised as part of the existing Cape Corps, with the currently existing battalion becoming the First Battalion of the Cape Corps and the new Battalion being termed the Second. This was to avoid political speculation of what this new formation would signify and would allow a direct association to be forged with the good reputations of "old officers like Morris and Hoy in whom coloured [sic] men have

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<sup>206</sup> See for example Cape Argus, 10 October 1917, "Rest House for Coloured Troops Opening This Morning By General Cavendish", an event Stanford arranged in his then-capacity as the UDF's Director of War recruiting. Other costs included gifts such as coffee, tobacco and sweets. Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.322.

<sup>207</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps". P. 20.

<sup>208</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.54-57.

<sup>209</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps". P. 22.

<sup>210</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. "Memorial Service Booklet, October 26, 1919."

<sup>211</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, Bedford to Graaf. 1 December, 1916. "Letter: General Botha is very anxious."

<sup>212</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Beck and Graaf to Prime Minister. No date. "Telegram: Have interviewed Smartt David Graaf Colonels Standford and Hodson..."

confidence.”<sup>213</sup> Referring back to the creation of the First Battalion, it was suggested that “men like Captain Phillips [from] Namaqualand and Coetzee MLA... who have influence with coloured men in their districts” be used in recruiting and that, if successful, they be offered commissions in the new Cape Corps.<sup>214</sup> A meeting with Cape grain growers followed, who expressed concerns that their labour would be disrupted during harvesting season, and the farming classes along with Beck suggested that the recruiters instead look towards urban Coloureds in Cape Town instead.<sup>215</sup> Smartt telegraphed Pretoria to disagree, arguing that even with disruptions “every body [sic] must be prepared to suffer inconvenience,” and that in his opinion political considerations should not have interfered in recruiting the “largest possible number of suitable men anywhere offering” services and that “all magtes<sup>216</sup> [sic] should be empowered enrol suitable men.”<sup>217</sup> The Cape Corps recruiting committee was subsequently able to secure their co-operation based on governmental assurances that black Africans would be sourced to replace Coloured labourers.<sup>218</sup>

## Coloured Responses

Some military recruiters had already noted the potential of Coloureds as soldiers, with the District Staff Officer of Calvinia writing to the Defence ministry to suggest the recruitment of a “squadron or two of BASTARDS or CAPE BOYS [sic] for service in East Africa.”<sup>219</sup> Noting that not only were their moral qualities “excellent,” the Staff Officer then contended that they were “very hardy, good shots and horsemen, and eyesight good [sic].” He further intimated that they were keen to join the armed forces and did not anticipate difficulty in raising a few hundred, in contrast to the very poor recruiting results in his district prior.<sup>220</sup> In response, Colonel Hughes, another Assistant Secretary to Smuts, replied succinctly: “In view of the strong opposition General Smuts has in the past made to any suggestion that Cape Boys be used along with European troops, I think it would be useless forwarding to him the suggestion.”<sup>221</sup>

As argued earlier, Coloured armament was seen with profound suspicion. While some 3000 Coloured men had served as garrison infantry in the Cape in the South African War, the level of military preparedness in Coloured society was kept deliberately low by the Union authorities. Firearms were restricted legally to only white ownership in the Transvaal, Free State and Natal, and whilst guns were available to Coloureds in the Cape in theory, only around five percent of the Cape Corps’ new recruits were, in Difford’s words, “Familiar with

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<sup>213</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Beck and Graaf to Prime Minister. No date. “Telegram: Have interviewed Smartt David Graaf Colonels Stanford and Hodson...” Morris and Hoy being the commanding officers of the First Cape Corps Battalion, see below

<sup>214</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Beck and Graaf to Prime Minister. No date. “Telegram: Have interviewed Smartt David Graaf Colonels Stanford and Hodson...”

<sup>215</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Beck to Prime Minister. No date. “Telegram: Have interviewed representatives leading Western dists they approve in principle but suggest...”

<sup>216</sup> Afrikaans: powers

<sup>217</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Smartt to Prime Minister. 16 December, 1916. “Telegram: Thanks telegram 23rd...”

<sup>218</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Bedford to Smartt. 23 December, 1916. “Letter: Your telegram 21<sup>st</sup>...”

<sup>219</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP 31047. Box 298. Deputy Adjutant General to Hughes. 9 August, 1916. “Letter: A suggestion has been made....”

<sup>220</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP 31047. Box 298. Deputy Adjutant General to Hughes. 9 August, 1916. “Letter: A suggestion has been made....”

<sup>221</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP 31047. Box 298. Hughes to Adjutant General. 16th August, 1916. “Letter: In reply to your letter of the 9<sup>th</sup>....”

a rifle or the steps of drill”.<sup>222</sup> Those that were, were likely members of Cape Town’s Coloured elite, rural farmhands like those from Calvinia, or as Bill Nasson contends, former Coloured servicemen who volunteered for the Corps.<sup>223</sup>

After recruitment had been duly authorised and got underway, the officers responsible for recruiting were issued with careful instructions on who precisely could be enlisted. “Bastards crossed with Hottentots and Europeans may be enrolled for Cape Corps,” Colonel Burgess wrote to the District Staff Officer of Calvinia, “but aboriginal natives must be excluded.”<sup>224</sup> How the Calvinia DSO was supposed to determine the difference between these groups was not specified. What was made exactly clear in the Cape Corps Conditions of Service documents were minimum physical requirements: a minimum height of 5 feet, 3 inches and a minimum chest measurement of 33,5 inches.<sup>225</sup> Age was restricted to brackets between 20 and 30 years, and recruits would be examined by a medical board twice- once at the recruiting station and once at the mobilisation camp.<sup>226</sup> District staff officers were asked to recruit only “men who are physically fit in every way.” Further conditions outlined were issues of pay and separation allowance, discussed below.<sup>227</sup>

Once committed, recruiters found Coloured ears to be extremely receptive. As Nasson notes, the Coloured community had shown a pro-Empire patriotism comparable to the most ardent English South Africans.<sup>228</sup> Unlike the English, however, Coloured patriotic sentiment had found no outlet despite an ongoing barrage of *APO* and other press editorials as well as pro-Empire speeches and recruiting drives. Thus, when the Recruiting Committee began targeting Coloureds in particular across the Union with the full accompaniments of spectacle and fanfare associated with such events, the reaction was overwhelming. As Grundlingh argues, in smaller towns like Worcester and Oudtshoorn where there were few other sources of entertainment, the use of bands, street parades and patriotic speeches delivered at public gatherings captured the public (Coloured) imagination on a large scale.<sup>229</sup> As a result, an enormous amount of hype was generated and when recruiting opened on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1915, Perkins reported that the Cape Town City Hall was packed to capacity with eager Coloured men and their families.<sup>230</sup>

Elsewhere, recruiting offices at Worcester, Kimberley, Johannesburg and the mission stations of Saron and Mamre obtained their entire quotas within a single day or, in some cases, mere hours.<sup>231</sup> Enthusiasm at the mission stations was so high that they obtained double their quotas of acceptable recruits on the first day and recruits from those two mission stations

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<sup>222</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P. 30. The Cape’s firearms laws remained in place until Union firearm laws were harmonised in 1934, and in the Cape alone could black Africans and Coloureds purchase guns. See for example the lack of race in the law as described by Tennant, H. 1884. *Chronological table and index of the statute law of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, including British Kaffraria and Griqualand West (prior to their annexation), 1714-1883*. Juta: Cape Town. P.478-489.

<sup>223</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>224</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP 31047. Box 298. Burgess, CR to District Staff Officer, Calvinia. April 2, 1917. “Bastards crossed with Hottentots and Europeans may be enrolled....”

<sup>225</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. “Cape Corps Conditions of Service”. No date.

<sup>226</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. “Cape Corps Conditions of Service”. No date.

<sup>227</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. “Cape Corps Conditions of Service”. No date.

<sup>228</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P. 59.

<sup>229</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.141.

<sup>230</sup> Perkins. “Recruitment of the Cape Corps”. P.22.

<sup>231</sup> Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps”, P.22. Sixty recruits were required from Worcester, thirty from Johannesburg, fifty from Kimberley, and sixty each from Saron and Mamre.

alone eventually filled fully half of the battalion's initial strength of 500 men.<sup>232</sup> Abdurahman and the APO were elated with this response, which surprised even Stanford and Perkins, and the authorities rapidly sought to increase the size of the first Cape Corps unit to a full war-time regimental establishment. Enthusiasm and recruitment rates remained high after the initial recruiting surge- especially in rural stations recruiting stations- and the Cape Corps attested 1457 men in the period between 27 February, 1916 and 27 April, 1916 alone. These surplus recruits were then placed on the waiting list for call-up, and as the war bore on, recruitment and enlistment remained so strong that in July of that year the Cape Corps was doubled in size again, organised as a unique octuple-company regiment of 2000 men. With enough Coloured volunteers available to fill out a second and even third battalion- the equivalent of a Brigade- but with political pressures from the NP acting against such an arrangement- Botha and Bedford moved to quietly form a second Battalion in late 1916.<sup>233</sup> In all some 8000 men wound up serving in the First and Second Battalions of the Cape Corps. This accounted for just under a third of those accepted by the recruiting committee and placed on a waiting list of some 25 000 names.<sup>234</sup> Interestingly, Coloured recruiting remained high and continuous throughout the war, in a contrast to declining enthusiasm amongst white South Africans in its later stages.<sup>235</sup>

In Cape Town's City Hall, however, the first day of recruiting was met with a decidedly different outcome. Perkins, as well as the most senior British officer in the Union, Major-General CW Thompson were both present.<sup>236</sup> Thompson, as a *British* officer, was in theory the overall commander of the Cape Corps, and as it was decided that the Corps would be trained and equipped by the Imperial authorities it was ultimately his responsibility to ensure their readiness in time for the arrival of General Smith-Dorien. His presence was thus highly symbolic, but also practical as an attempt to gauge Coloured enthusiasm for service. Perkins' initial delight at Cape Town's response, however, soon turned into profound disappointment. The city's quota of 100 men was quickly met. However as the terms of their service was made clear to them, the volunteers' enthusiasm rapidly waned.<sup>237</sup> Capetonian Coloureds complained about poor rates of pay, but even more devastating to the recruiter's chances numbers was a cost-saving measure decided on by the UDF ministry of defence: it would not pay a dependants allowance. As a result, at the heart of the liberal Cape, the Recruiting Committee was horrified to learn that only 22 men had decided to enrol on the first day. Similar complaints had been registered in Port Elizabeth, and the recruiting committee at once mobilised to correct the problem.<sup>238</sup> Abdurahman and the APO responded by directly petitioning Lord Buxton for external funding, and for a few days it seemed as if the Corps' dependant support would be paid for directly out of the Governor General's Fund. Embarrassed, or more likely sensing the political astuteness of the move, Smuts relented and made war ministry funds available. Recruiting in Cape Town in particular rapidly picked up as a result.<sup>239</sup>

Why did this enormous gap in responses between rural and urban Coloured men exist? A first clue is evident in the geo-social structure of the Union in general and the Cape in particular.

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<sup>232</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.22.

<sup>233</sup> See Chapter Four, P.84.

<sup>234</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps" in *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*. P. 26.

<sup>235</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.425.

<sup>236</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.22.

<sup>237</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.22.

<sup>238</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.22.

<sup>239</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.22.

As Adhikari and Lewis both show, Cape Town was overwhelmingly the home of a small Coloured elite which constituted the upper 5% of Coloured earning capability.<sup>240</sup> Consisting of a thin crust of doctors, lawyers and clergymen at the very top with greengrocers, teachers, and skilled artisans beneath, “big Coloureds” in Cape Town stood to lose much of their earning potential in comparison to the labouring class of Coloureds drawn from the rest of the country. For the seasonal farm workers clustered around the towns and mission stations of the rural Cape, however, even Imperial Service Contingent rates appeared attractive- *particularly* considering their stability.<sup>241</sup> In a similar vein, Coloured mine workers in Kimberley and Johannesburg, under threat of a radicalised and increasingly militant white working class, would have found the Cape Corps to be an attractive alternative even when Privates were paid only 1 shilling per day.<sup>242</sup> A further potential bonus to single men in particular was the elimination of most costs of living, with the Corps furnishing food, board and uniform. Without such costs, some Cape Corps men who had been promoted to Sergeants and had served for long enough had, by 1919, accumulated up to triple figures in back-pay- a very substantial sum of money in pounds for the period.<sup>243</sup>

As Grundlingh suggests, other factors might have been at work. APO representations to eager Coloured ears may have been misconstrued, either as promises of direct enfranchisement of Cape Corps soldiers or as reimbursement for service in the form of land.<sup>244</sup> Individual recruiters, eager to provide large bodies of volunteers to the Corps, may have been slow to dispel such rumours, some of which filtered back to John Merriman.<sup>245</sup> Such representations were certainly never the official line from the Recruiting Committee, and as Perkins is silent on the matter (his perspective being limited to Cape Town), it is likely that such misrepresentations were restricted to rural areas beyond his oversight and more tellingly, of the oversight of Abdurahman and the APO’s higher ranks.<sup>246</sup>

More was at stake than merely earning potential, however. Urban Coloured men could potentially overlook low pay in the face of patriotic duty and the prestige offered by service in the Corps. They could not, however, shirk away from their roles within households as breadwinners and thus it was arguably the lack of a dependant’s allowance which best explains the poor response in Cape Town. Whilst the cash-strapped British War Office did offer to reimburse the Union government for the creation of the Corps, initially costs would be borne by the Union defence ministry.<sup>247</sup> Smuts, already intent on running a lean government in terms of spending when previously serving as finance minister, thus set out strict terms of service which narrowed the age range of potential Corps soldiers and restricted volunteers to those without dependents.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.12; Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P. 8-10.

<sup>241</sup> Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.12.

<sup>242</sup> Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps,” P. 20. Promoted to the highest rank possible, Sergeant, a Corpsman could make 2 shillings and 4 pence per diem. Compare this to the wages of white Privates who were paid 3 shillings 6 pence per day in East Africa. Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P. 281. One pound in 1917 was equal to 20 shillings or 240 pence, and adjusted for inflation is worth approximately 120 pounds in 2017.

<sup>243</sup> Difford, ID. *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*. P. 254.

<sup>244</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.143.

<sup>245</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.141.

<sup>246</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.143.

<sup>247</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps*, P. 33.

<sup>248</sup> See for example Smuts to Merriman, 25 July 1911 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*. P.69. As Finance Minister, Smuts had been parsimonious with state spending to such an extent that he refused the creation of several ministries under his portfolio in order to both minimise costs and centralise his own power.

The episode provides several useful and interesting points of departure for analysis. It is interesting, for example, how the lack of dependant support failed to dissuade rural Coloured men. These men certainly had families to support as well but because their work was informal and irregular, there *was no breadwinning system* for military service to readily disrupt. Poor rural households would not lose an income- because they had little to lose- and as a result rural Coloured men stood to gain rather than lose financially.

This is not to say that having their men volunteer for the Cape Corps did not induce hardships for rural families, particularly initially. After husbands, partners or lovers departed for the Simon's Town encampment, funds were rapidly depleted in the weeks and months immediately afterwards. Before money could be sent home, alternative work for women and older children found, and particularly, the dependant's allowance organised, an initial awkward period resulted in some thirty families falling into outright destitution. As Perkins recalls vividly:

“A batch of from thirty-five to forty coloured women, some with babies at the breast, others leading ragged and bare-footed children by the hand- little things that the soldier of the Cape Corps had left behind him to be cared for by the country whose freedom he was helping to keep intact- came to the recruiting station one slack morning. Sergeant-Major Reynard was pounced upon in the vestibule of the City Hall. He stood their fury and anger like the good old soldier that he is until explanations were possible.”<sup>249</sup>

To tide this particular group over, Perkins and the rest of the Recruiting Committee arranged temporary allowances for them financed by the Governor-General's Fund until their promised allowances could be organised.<sup>250</sup>

In the same breath, Perkins also relayed- scandalised- the tale of one Private John Jacobs. Jacobs had taken the opportunity provided by the Corps to disengage himself of his complications in his domestic life by vanishing into the battalion. Furious, yet “business-like in the brevity of her letter directed to the Honourable Secretary of the Recruiting Committee,”<sup>251</sup> Jacobs' wife wrote the following to Perkins:

“Hon. Sir,  
I married John Jacobs a week ago. He has gone back. We have ten Children. Please let me know how I stand.

Yours truly,.....”<sup>252</sup>

The veracity of this account aside, Perkins response illustrates how even for liberal English, respectability demanded that men in the Cape Corps serve as breadwinners and to their households even while at war.

Beyond the issue of the dependant's allowance, recruitment also forms the basis for a discussion on the external and physical dimensions of masculinity, particularly as far as the classification of bodies is concerned. With far more volunteers than there were slots available, Cape Corps recruiters had the opportunity to pick men which best fit their metric of

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<sup>249</sup> Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps”, P.27.

<sup>250</sup> Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps”, P.27.

<sup>251</sup> Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps”, P.28.

<sup>252</sup> Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps”, P.28.

desirable characteristics. Of these, physicality was valued above all else by the Union Defence Force as Suryakanthie Chetty has effectively argued.<sup>253</sup> This point is elaborated on by Robert Morrell when he describes the attributes of a good (white) soldier in the UDF: soldiering men should ideally have possessed a large, muscular physique and with it the power and endurance to do perform demanding and arduous tasks in trying conditions.<sup>254</sup> The white recruiters of the Cape Corps thus tended to pick the biggest and strongest volunteers they could find, with Perkins noting patronisingly that the Corps' recruits were often "fine specimens of brawny manhood. So splendidly developed were many of them that it might have been a parade of prize fighters."<sup>255</sup> Beyond this, certain skills were also valued and as a result skilled labourers and artisans like stone-cutters, builders and carpenters were recruited into the Corps in large numbers. Finally, it was thought that educated, urban Coloureds could serve as natural leaders and intermediaries between the enlisted and their white officers as Non Commissioned Officers.<sup>256</sup> As a result, the general level of literacy amongst Coloured NCOs was quite high and it is no coincidence that the majority of surviving accounts of the Corps from Coloured veterans themselves were produced by NCOs.

Those who were rejected outright by recruiting stations on 'medical grounds' could find the experience to be painful and emasculating. One, a "Coloured boy at Clanwilliam, 19 years of age" was two inches below the regulation height.<sup>257</sup> In response, he wrote a ten page letter to the Recruiting Committee begging in a mix of English and Dutch to be permitted to join the Corps as a bugler. "God will bless you," he concluded, if the committee changed its decision.<sup>258</sup> UDF authorities, had, in fact, noted that they had rejected a number of promising recruits on basis of height and after due consultation decided to accept shorter men, provided they were "well built" otherwise.<sup>259</sup> Intriguingly, similarities can be found with the British Army, where Hastings notes that distinct differences in height were noticeable between under-nourished working class men and their well-fed officers.<sup>260</sup> Other factors were also noted, with older men had also been rejected under the strict recruitment conditions until the District Staff Officer of Calvinia again wrote to the Defence headquarters to request that the age limit be raised to 40. "The best men can be obtained at these ages," he remarked and subsequently the limit was raised to 35 years of age.<sup>261</sup> Despite this, relaxation of selection criteria, the vast majority of applicants were refused, with Perkins recalling that with every delivery of post there were letters from rejectees who grumbled that the "medical officer either did not know his job or had mistaken their case."<sup>262</sup>

The cause for their bitter disappointment lies perhaps most pertinently in the reasons most Cape Corps volunteers had to enlist. Certainly, by the time the possibility of recruitment and

<sup>253</sup> Chetty, S. 2005. "All the News that's Fit to Print: The Print Media and the Second World War and its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War's Participants" in *South African Historical Journal* Vol 54. Although Chetty's piece is on the Second World War, the UDF's cultural obsession with physical prowess dates back to its foundation.

<sup>254</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

<sup>255</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.24.

<sup>256</sup> Thompson, CW. 1915. "Report on the Cape Corps by Major-General Charles W. Thompson, C.B., D.S.O., G.O.C. South African Military Command" in Difford, ID. *The Story of the 1st Cape Corps 1915-1919*. P.38.

<sup>257</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P. 26-27.

<sup>258</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P. 26-27.

<sup>259</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP 31047. Box 298. District Staff Officer, Calvinia to Defence Ministry. 17th August, 1916. "Telegram: Have good many Applicants...."

<sup>260</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe*, P. 210.

<sup>261</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP 31047. Box 298. District Staff Officer, Calvinia to Defence Ministry. 22nd August, 1916. "Telegram: Strongly recommend that age..."

<sup>262</sup> Perkins, "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P. 26-27.

military service actually had come to fruition a powerful group-dynamic had come into play. What Bill Nasson called “peer group cohesion and pressure, the reflexes of masculine identity, and the compulsions of male bonding” formed a self-supporting trifecta which appealed powerfully to Coloured men.<sup>263</sup> The Cape Corps provided for them a place to belong, where their masculinity was accepted and affirmed within its boundaries. To those external critics, like the white South African soldier who told T Strydom upon his arrival in East Africa the Corps “would only serve as a breakfast” to their enemies, the Corps in turn provided them an opportunity to prove them wrong.<sup>264</sup> “Well, we proved the falsity of his words,” Strydom wrote in annoyance, “For not only did we show ourselves more than a breakfast to the enemy but we actually put them on the run!”<sup>265</sup> The use of collective nouns by Strydom and others is indicative of the existence of a powerful group identity which emerged within the solidarity of the Corps. Membership had allowed Corps soldiers, in the words of A Kammies “To march proud and with our heads held high”.<sup>266</sup>

Masculine identity had also played a critical role in the depth of an enthusiastic Coloured response to recruiting efforts, with the outbreak of war and the option of military service providing Coloured men a unique opportunity to assert their masculinities.<sup>267</sup> A distinction must be made here with regards to the exact form of Coloured recruiting: the Cape Corps was an entirely volunteer force. Volunteers in such military organisations, as Ronald Krebs notes, are often motivated by a desire to “prove something”, either to themselves, their families, peer-groups, or society as a whole.<sup>268</sup> In this light in particular, the masculine affirmation afforded to soldiers in the First World War helps explain the immense desirability of recruitment into the organisation. If Coloured men sought pay, the satisfaction of “adventurous instincts” and “the urge to flee burdensome domestic complications”<sup>269</sup> alone, other less hazardous alternatives emerged during the war through the Cape Coloured Labour Battalion and the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corps.

Masculine notions of identity and this group dynamic had, of course, existed in one way or another before the Corps as the political mobilisation of Coloureds via the APO implies. To repeat a point made earlier, Bill Nasson has argued that this same Coloured community showed a large degree of loyalty to the British Empire.<sup>270</sup> As we have seen, the Cape Corps uniform was profoundly sought after, for through it and the military service it represented to their metropolitan protector and patron, Coloured men could leverage from English society in particular a modicum of respect. As they boarded trains for the Simons Town camp being established for the Corps in late 1915, patriotism- or at least a surface level appearance of patriotism- was an inescapable facet of these men’s experience, for it was the first price paid to earn that same respect. The second was a transformation of recruits from their civilian selves into soldierly Cape Corps soldiers.

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<sup>263</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P.64.

<sup>264</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”.

<sup>265</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”.

<sup>266</sup> Grundling, *War and Society*, P.149.

<sup>267</sup> As argued at length in Chapter One.

<sup>268</sup> Krebs, R.R. 2009. “The Citizen-Soldier Tradition in the United States: Has Its Demise Been Greatly Exaggerated?” in *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol 36 No 1. Although Krebs focuses primarily on American soldiers, a great deal of his argument can be generalised across the world.

<sup>269</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P.63-64.

<sup>270</sup> Nasson, “Why they fought”, P.64.

## Officers

In the weeks before the enlistment of rank and file Cape Corps soldiers began, the UDF began to gather its other component, namely the nascent battalion's officer cadre. Leveraged from primarily English UDF professional formations, the decision to place white officers in charge of Coloured troops was patterned in much the same vein as the British Indian Army and other colonial military units being raised across the British Empire at the time. This structure was implemented as a means of leveraging local military manpower without compromising colonial power structures.<sup>271</sup> Officers, after all, received legal authority and an immense level of respectability in British society through their commissions into the colonial state.<sup>272</sup> In the same vein, to maintain the relationship between ruler and ruled, it thus became necessary to bar Coloureds from the ranks of the commissioned officer's cadre which led the Corps. Coloureds could only rise to the non-commissioned position of Sergeant and thus would be subject to the authority of even the most junior white second lieutenant.<sup>273</sup> This is indicative of the fact that only through this recreation of white male hegemony in the stark, explicit and legal terms of military discipline would the authorities tolerate the arming and training of Coloureds. As late as 1906, British officers and authorities were still so confident of this system of control in fact that the appellation of "Cape Boys" was still being applied to Coloured soldiers in British service. General Horace Smith-Dorien, as mentioned earlier, was still using the term when he telegraphed Smuts about raising a second Cape Corps battalion in late 1915<sup>274</sup>, and when a second Cape Corps Battalion was mooted by Undersecretary of Defence Bedford, its proposed commander, Major JH Dobson was at pains to cross out "Proposed Second Cape Boys Battalion" and write "Cape Corps (Pioneer) Battalion" instead.<sup>275</sup>

The Coloured reaction to this nickname was understandably negative given the gendered dimensions of recruitment already discussed. In response, the new commander of the Corps, Lt. Colonel George Abbot Morris directly petitioned the Cape press and the appellation was rapidly dropped in most official correspondences.<sup>276</sup> Morris, the son of a Transkeian Magistrate, had served as a Major in the Natal Mounted Carabineers and along with his Second in Command, Major Charles Hoy, can be seen as a typical member of the Corps' officer's cadre.<sup>277</sup> As Robert Morrell illustrates, the Natalian military units of the UDF were bound by strong notions of masculine honour and hierarchical teamwork.<sup>278</sup> To Morris and Hoy's credit, both men were ready and able to defend their Coloured enlisted from prejudicial behaviours directed towards them. Hoy, for example, cancelled his leave after two years on campaign to defend the Corps in an inquiry on their role in race riots in Kimberley in 1917. Morris, in turn, wrote in frustration to the Chief of the General Staff on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Noting that the Corps had required a special breed of officer, Morris remarked "I would point out that in a Coloured Regiment such as mine, the Officer question is the most important and unless I have Officers who are keen and who will work with these men, the

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<sup>271</sup> See for example Metcalf and Metcalf, "Revolt, the modern state, and colonized subjects, 1848-1885" in *A Concise History of India*. 2006. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

<sup>272</sup> Metcalf and Metcalf, "Revolt, the modern state, and colonized subjects, 1848-1885."

<sup>273</sup> See for example, similar logic which prevented Indian *sepoys* from rising beyond the rank of *havildar*/Sergeant. Dalrymple, W. 2006. "The Sword of the Lord of Fury" in *The Last Mughal*. London: Bloomsbury.

<sup>274</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.4. Smith-Dorien to Smuts. 24 January, 1916.

<sup>275</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. "Cape Boys Pioneer Battallion". No date.

<sup>276</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.56.

<sup>277</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P. 29.

<sup>278</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

Regiment will become a total failure.”<sup>279</sup> One candidate had in his opinion been “totally unsuited to command Coloured men” and he called on the authorities “to stop any of this class of Officer being sent to me in future.”<sup>280</sup>

In time, this attitude would encourage a strong bond of mutual respect between the enlisted and their officers. “Strong faith we had in that officer,” T Strydom wrote in regards to Major Hoy in late 1916.<sup>281</sup> Tellingly, Strydom refers to Hoy in that particular context as “The Canadian Boy”, both in a subversion of expected deference to his officer -and a white one at that- and as a term of endearment.<sup>282</sup> Within the ‘tribe’ of the Corps, the use of the term “boys” was couched in mutual respect and common experience and thus lacked the patronising context that its use would normally have implied. Although Difford and other white officers paid particular care to not refer to their soldiers in this way in order to protect the hierarchical respect for rank, slip ups inevitably occurred. Strydom recalls the strong esprit de corps felt when a white lieutenant shouted “*Let’s get them boys!*” in battle at Lindi in 1917.<sup>283</sup>

Such tribalism would take time to develop, however, with a substantial cleft initially visible between officers and enlisted. Captain Ivor Difford, for example, had been born in Glastonbury in the United Kingdom in 1873. Difford had been educated at the Diocesan Boys College in Cape Town and as such was well positioned for a life as part of the colonial elite, working for a time in the Civil Service before turning his attention to commerce in the 1890s.<sup>284</sup> He had served as Lieutenant in the South African War and on the outbreak of hostilities again in 1914 was remobilised as a Captain. Difford’s experience in mining logistics on the Witwatersrand made him a logical choice as a supply officer and following the successful invasion of German South West Africa, he was assigned to the Cape Corps alongside his younger brother Archibald.<sup>285</sup> Just recently gazetted as lieutenant, “Archie” had, like his older brother, been a keen cricketer and had played for the Western Province Cricket Club. As his obituary reads, Archie had also played rugby, performed very well academically and was broadly characterised as having been a “fine gentleman.”<sup>286</sup> Both Diffords thus conform exceptionally well to the sort of white masculine ruling class Robert Morrell describes in his portrait of Natalian settler masculinity in *From Boys To Gentlemen*. Although some small regional differences are apparent between the two groups, Natalians like Morris and Capetonians like Difford had much in common, particularly in the class based social spheres of Cape Town’s officers clubs. In the ‘respectable’ company there, officers were

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<sup>279</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Morris, GA to Chief of the General Staff. 15 April, 1918. “Letter: With reference to your letter AG 347/18830.”

<sup>280</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Morris, GA to Chief of the General Staff. 15 April, 1918. “Letter: With reference to your letter AG 347/18830.”

<sup>281</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”.

<sup>282</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”.

<sup>283</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”.

<sup>284</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Ivor Dennis Difford Biography”. No date.

<sup>285</sup> “SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Ivor Dennis Difford Biography”. No date.

<sup>286</sup> “SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) “Archibald Newcome Difford Obituary”, 1919, Diocesan College Magazine in Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. South African National Museum of Military History.

wined and dined in substantial luxury, immune from the geo-social segregation imposed on the rest of the Corps.<sup>287</sup>

Another salient difference between white officers and NCOs brought in to train the fledgling Corps and the Coloured recruits beneath them was the degree to which white masculinity had been militarised. Most of the English officers of the Corps in particular had been exposed from an early age to military culture at Victorian boys schools, where the paramilitary Cadet system fostered a respect for hierarchical rank structures, as well as what Morrell calls “a love of guns and the idea of war.”<sup>288</sup> White men were thus readily absorbed into military service, a deliberate feature of white socio-political organisation which geared the UDF, as Bill Nasson argues, towards inward suppression of native rebellions.<sup>289</sup> Upon recruitment, the Coloured enlisted of the Cape Corps would find themselves immersed in this lifestyle and would have only a scant few months in which to transform themselves into soldiers.

## Training

The recruitment goal for the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Cape Corps was officially met on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 1915, when the last of some 1022 Coloured men were enlisted and arrived at the Corps’ depot at the Simonstown naval station.<sup>290</sup> Reactions from Coloured enlisted to the state and location of the camp are not forthcoming but for the Battalion Quartermaster, Captain Ivor Difford, the camp was far from ideal. “No more an unsuitable site could have been selected,” he complained.<sup>291</sup> Situated above the Noah’s Ark gun battery, the camp lay on a rough and stony slope which made for a strenuous climb between the different ends of the ground. Worse, as it was exposed to south-easterly gales for four or five days out of the week, the bell tents which housed officers and enlisted were frequently blown down. Whilst corrugated iron and wood structures were sufficient enough to provide an administrative office, mess hall, medical hut, armoury, supply room and a pair of lecture halls, the wind often drove small pebbles and dust into the side of these structures with such force that conversation inside had to be conducted at a bellow.<sup>292</sup>

The poor state of the camp- which also suffered a shortage of everything from rifles to bootlaces- is attributed by Difford to the last-minute nature of the Corps’ doubling in size. Difford and Morris wrote to complain to Defence Headquarters, and although matters eventually improved, Difford’s recollection of the events is laced with frustration, with him recalling that “somewhere in Pretoria, someone had forgotten to inform the Quartermaster General’s branch of the increased establishment”.<sup>293</sup> That Smuts was reluctant to allocate wartime liquidity to the Corps is another possibility, coupled with his sensitivity to “public opinion in Union... adverse to this form of recruiting”.<sup>294</sup> This position certainly helps

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<sup>287</sup> Perkins, for example describes the final farewell and “good luck” dinners hosted for the Corps by a number of exclusive Capetonian country clubs. Perkins, “Recruitment of the Cape Corps,” P. 25. Difford’s collection is also filled with menus kept from such events, with one Boxing Day menu containing “Fried Fillets of Rock Salmon, Escalopes of Veal Napolitane, Turkey Croquettes, Roast Lamb and Mint Sauce, Gateau Chantilly and Glace au Melon”. SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) . Menu, 26 December 1917 in Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. South African National Museum of Military History.

<sup>288</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

<sup>289</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.54-57.

<sup>290</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.29.

<sup>291</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.29.

<sup>292</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.29.

<sup>293</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.33.

<sup>294</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.5. Smuts to Smith-Dorien. No date.

explain why the Corps was headquartered so far away from the main UDF encampments at Wynberg- the Cape Corps was an *Imperial Service Contingent* after all, and *not* a portion of the regular UDF.<sup>295</sup>

These initial problems aside, for the vast majority of recruits the first months of service in the Corps involved being submerged into the military culture of white English colonials. What followed was a process of what is today referred to as- non-pejoratively- by military trainers as a process of indoctrination; namely the process of transforming a disparate group of individuals into a cohesive whole that shares a collective identity and that has internalised that identity and the rules and dimensions of the group. As Herbert Kelman notes on his classic study of the process, this consists of three main steps: *compliance*, *identification* and *internalisation*.<sup>296</sup> Compliance generally refers to the process whereby disparate individuals are made to fit physical requirements of uniformity, and are also subjected to a set of rules such as the obeying of orders issued by officers. Identification is the second part of the process, whereby an individual begins to feel that they have gained membership within the group and can, simply put, identify themselves as belonging to it. The third stage, that of internalisation, refers to longer term psychological changes whereby the individual can not only identify themselves as a member of a group but begins to integrate that group identity into their sense of self.

Cape Corps training began with the first step of this process by instituting a uniform appearance on its recruits. Naturally, all Cape Corps soldiers were required to wear the latest version of the British Army's khaki uniform; the Corps' version identical to those of a British unit on colonial service with the exception being the issue of their own striking black riding boots rather than the British combination of shorter brown boots and puttees.<sup>297</sup> Strict grooming and bathing standards were further enforced, with recruits being issued shaving and washing kits as part of their standard gear that was valued as souvenirs even after demobilisation.<sup>298</sup> Here, the themes of group identity formation and respectability repeat themselves, particularly with someone like Perkins remarking in February 1916 that: "The transformation was so complete. Straight, and smart and smiling, with boots, buttons, and equipment polished to a turn, they were a fine workmanlike body of healthy men, and for cheerfulness, dignity of bearing, and soldierly appearance the Officers in Charge would not have been easy to beat in any regiment."<sup>299</sup> Many had arrived at the town hall months earlier "ill-clad and anything but smart"<sup>300</sup> and uniforms had done much in Perkin's eyes to transform them into respectable military men.

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<sup>295</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.29.

<sup>296</sup> Kelman, H. C. 1958. "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," in *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 2.

<sup>297</sup> See for example the photo below

<sup>298</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.254

<sup>299</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.25.

<sup>300</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.25.



Cape Corps soldiers in Alexandria, 1918<sup>301</sup>

Uniforms, of course, were the most superficial of changes. Far more importantly, members of the Cape Corps were being transformed into soldiers, and as soldiers, they were expected to respond immediately and effectively to the literally legally-binding<sup>302</sup> orders of their officers as a cohesively bound together whole. One of the fundamental ways in which this was taught was the practice of drilling, whereby large formations of men were trained to respond at a snap to the commands of an officer by marching as a synchronised whole.<sup>303</sup> Drill marching had substantial symbolic significance for the Cape Corps in two main ways. The first links to the process of identification: it was on the drill field that the unit was assembled together and it was through drill that the first threads of an *esprit de corps* were pulled together.<sup>304</sup> Enlisted men created a bond through their shared experience of military induction, whilst officers like Difford in turn began to respect the potential of their charges. Secondly, as semi-public displays of masculinity, drilling was a sign that the Cape Corps had been begrudgingly admitted a degree of public legitimacy and respectability that had almost entirely been restricted to white units prior by the military authorities. Coloured citizens would certainly been exposed to British and later UDF units marching in formation at public events throughout the Union, and given the opportunity to do the same the Cape Corps flung itself into the process with remarkable passion. Difford, for example, noted that it was not unusual for Corps soldiers to practice their drill even on time off and the Corps developed a reputation for the sharpness of their marching.<sup>305</sup>

Beyond the basic rudiments of military discipline and drill, basic training also involved developing the actual skills of fighting. The enlisted faced a strenuous day starting at 5AM. After a quick morning parade, lessons on rudimentary bayonet fighting followed, as well as trips to the Woltemade rifle range where an abridged three-week rifle marksmanship course was taught.<sup>306</sup> Such training included assembly and disassembly of their Lee-Enfield rifles and the correct use of its sights to hit targets up to 400 yards (360 meters) away.<sup>307</sup> As Bill Nasson notes, white South Africans were famed for their abilities with a rifle- so much so that it became an integral part of UDF military culture.<sup>308</sup> As such, skilled shooting became a matter of masculine pride and although specifics are not recorded in Difford or elsewhere, some hints to the quality of their training is discernible in the British Army's Musketry Regulations of 1909, which afforded each individual soldier some 240 rounds of ammunition

<sup>301</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68). Photo of Cape Corps troops in Alexandria, No date.

<sup>302</sup> See for example the oath taken on enlistment, for example DODA. Personnel Files. John van Aarde, Cape Corps, Number 1615. See also the conditions of the Army Act in DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. "Cape Corps Conditions of Service". No date.

<sup>303</sup> Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, P.18.

<sup>304</sup> This theme- the formation of a unit identity- permeates the entirety of Difford's chapter on the formation of the Corps.

<sup>305</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.32.

<sup>306</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.32.

<sup>307</sup> General Staff, War Office. 1914. *Musketry Regulations 1909 (Reprinted with Amendments 1914)*. Naval and Military Press: London.

<sup>308</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.352.

for yearly practice.<sup>309</sup> Assuming that so many shots were fired in the three weeks available, it is possible that a raw recruit could become somewhat well practised in basic marksmanship skills. As Difford noted frankly: “The Corps’ shooting as a whole [after three weeks of initial training] could be judged as adequate if not spectacular. As they were not blessed with the Cadets their progress had nonetheless been good and in time the men produced a number of crack shots.”<sup>310</sup>

In addition to rifles, the Corps would also be armed with a number of older Maxim machine guns. Drawing from a carefully selected pool of newly trained Cape Corps riflemen that had shown themselves to be particularly technically minded, the Corps’ Machine Gun Half Company was founded and would, by the time they arrived in East Africa, consist of 77 men manning twelve machine guns.<sup>311</sup> Continually re-trained throughout the war on Rexer, Vickers and Lewis guns as they became available, the Machine Gun Half Company represented in many ways the Corps’ cutting edge in the First World War’s technologies of firepower and would go on to play a vital role in East Africa.<sup>312</sup> Riflemen, too, were frequently retrained and upon arrival in Egypt in 1918 for example, the entire Cape Corps spent weeks learning trench fighting techniques developed on the Western Front that included surprise night attacks with the bayonet and the use of hand-grenade “bombing”.<sup>313</sup> The Corps’ officers too were retrained in new methods, with many for example subjected to an initial period of intensive re-training, transitioning as they were from mostly mounted cavalry backgrounds to a foot infantry unit. In December of 1915 and January of 1916, officers attended class at Wynberg from 7am to 5pm, alternating days spent there with duties and training at the Noah’s Ark camp.<sup>314</sup> Difford, the keen cricketer, recalled ruefully that “there was little time for sports and games.”<sup>315</sup>

As these lessons were being taught, absorbed and internalised, the Corps’ training staff began to identify those within the Corps who possessed qualities of leadership. Certainly, the Corps had, as a group, surprised their trainers in late 1915 with the speed at which they absorbed their lessons. Consisting of a cadre of UDF Non Commissioned Officers led by Sergeant Major John Windrum, the Corps’ military trainers found that the general age, experience, physical fitness and maturity of the volunteers made them ready candidates for soldiers- as the District Staff Officer for Calvinia had initially argued above.<sup>316</sup> With the soldiering ability of the Corps itself less in doubt by those in charge of their training, the first batch of three Coloured sergeants was appointed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1915 with forty more NCOs being promoted before the end of the year.<sup>317</sup> This was all to Brigadier General Crewe’s relief, with the experienced enlisted soldiers of the NCO corps serving after-all, as the popular saying went, “As the backbone of the British army.”<sup>318</sup> Experienced white NCOs, representative of an important type of soldiering human capital, did not have to be spent on the Corps.

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<sup>309</sup> General Staff, *Musketry Regulations 1909*.

<sup>310</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.288-298.

<sup>311</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.288-298.

<sup>312</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.288-298.

<sup>313</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.237-262.

<sup>314</sup> Thompson, “Report on the Cape Corps”, P.43

<sup>315</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.40.

<sup>316</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.38

<sup>317</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.38

<sup>318</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.38

This in turn allowed Coloureds to fill that gap and to serve roles as both intermediaries between themselves and their white officers, and as leaders in their own right. Corporals, for example, oversaw a section of eight to ten men who shared a bell tent, whilst platoon sergeants were responsible for the execution of a lieutenant's orders after they had been given to a formation which of sixty enlisted men. The extra pay afforded to higher ranks and the prestige of those positions meant that NCO slots were highly sought after ranks that were ordinarily filled by older, more experienced men. Corporal Strydom for example, was 24 at the time of his recruitment<sup>319</sup>, with two of his Company Sergeant Majors, C Calvert and AJ Hendricks both being 28. Hendricks, a carpenter from Kimberley, regularly oversaw younger men in the shop he worked in and is thus illustrative of the reproduction within the Corps of the sort of masculine hierarchy typical in broader society.<sup>320</sup>

The Corps, however, did also provide through its relative meritocracy an opportunity for younger men to subvert usual expectations of generationalism. Private PD Schoor, a baker from Cape Town, for example, was only 20 at the time of joining the Corps.<sup>321</sup> He did not stay a private long, however, and was eventually promoted to sergeant in 1916. For his bravery in battle, Schoor would be repeatedly cited by Difford as an exceptional soldier and would eventually be awarded with a Distinguished Military Medal, earning renown both within the Corps and without despite his relative youth.<sup>322</sup>

Further opportunities awaited Coloured NCOs. It was assumed that a contingent of whites would have to remain with the Corps in some of the more technically more demanding positions to serve as "Regimental Sergeant Majors, Regimental Quartermaster Sergeants, Company Sergeant Majors, Platoon Sergeants, Orderly Room Sergeants, Medical Sergeants and so on."<sup>323</sup> However as Difford notes with satisfaction, within a year only the Corps' Regimental Sergeant Major, James Windrum, remained on to serve the Reserve Half Battalion which was to remain in the Union.<sup>324</sup> For Coloured men denied for the most part socially respectable expressions of their masculinity, such a promotion would no doubt have been a profound experience and acknowledgement of their value.

On the whole, the processes described above, coupled with the internalisation of the Cape Corps identity appears to have produced a fierce pride in those that wore the Cape Corps uniform. In contrast to Perkins, a civilian interested in respectability, Difford himself seems to show a more soldierly understanding of what their uniforms meant to his men as totems of group identity: when, for example, the Corps was confronted by white street thugs in Kimberley in 1917 after a long campaign in East Africa he wrote that Corps soldiers wore "the Kings' Uniform, and were not adverse to showing that they were proud of it" even in the face of jeering and racist provocation.<sup>325</sup> The "swelling pride" felt by G February and A Kammies, for example, seems to have tempered a profound sense of defiance in Corps soldiers, particularly in resistance to incidents of racism from both thugs and from other troops, with T Strydom's "breakfast" testimony above serving as a pertinent example.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)."

<sup>320</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.95.

<sup>321</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.96.

<sup>322</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.83.

<sup>323</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.38

<sup>324</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.38

<sup>325</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.169.

<sup>326</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)."

Equally, membership in the Cape Corps seems to have affected its white officers. Difford and others like him certainly appear impressed by the quality of the men that they trained with in late 1915. After some two years of campaigning, where enlisted and officers had suffered and in many cases died together<sup>327</sup>, the evidence suggests that Cape Corps officers had begun to fully internalise that identity. As Grundlingh notes, the Corps' officers stood behind their men and were as outraged by incidents in Kimberley and elsewhere as their enlisted were.<sup>328</sup> If the Corps' uniform, with its distinctive cap badge, served to distinguish friend from foe on the battlefield, so too did it help foster a powerful group identity which would persist long after the conflict in East Africa, Palestine, and indeed the streets of Kimberley had ended. Lt Col Morris, visiting Cape Town in 1923, recalls the moment of pride he felt when his train halted in Wynberg. There, "a trio of ex Corps soldiers, having recognised me, stopped immediately what they were doing, and, in their working clothes, stood to attention and saluted." Morris returned the salute immediately, and spent most of the day conversing "with my old Corps soldiers."<sup>329</sup> Difford, in turn became the Chairman of the Cape Corps Regimental association and remained a highly active advocate for ex-Corps soldiers until his death in 1949. This was all tied up with professional risks that came with being associated with an "experimental" Coloured unit. As this dissertation illustrates in Chapter Five, at least one officer's military career was ended somewhat unfairly as consequence.<sup>330</sup>

Professional risk aside, what awaited the Corps was also a substantial degree of real physical risk to life and limb, coupled with immense physical exertion and serious suffering brought about by disease. A memorandum distributed to Smuts dated April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1916, for example, describes in grim detail the changed nature of the battlefield brought about by the mechanisation and industrialisation of war. One officer on the Western front described how "a dozen well sited German machine guns outshot my entire battalion of men, killing 42 and wounding over ninety in an hour. We never got within distance for rifle shot on their trenches."<sup>331</sup> The description is eerily similar to the Cape Corps' experiences at the battles of Lindi and Square Hill, where the Corps encountered heavy machine gun fire directed at them by Germans and Askari in the case of the former, and by Turkish defenders in the case of the latter. Another example in the report bemoaned the fighting qualities of the Turks at Gallipoli, who had constructed stout trenches and had taken to shelling the Allies at random intervals. "[We] lost 17 men out of one platoon of 21 men from an HE shell... It pitched in amongst them and killed 6 and wounded 11."<sup>332</sup> Paralysed into stalemate brought about machine-guns and artillery fire, a third officer warned that trench warfare often "degenerated" from the "fair fight" of battalions of riflemen duelling above ground to "what the Huns call *rattenkrieg*- a rat's war- conducted at night with knives, fists and improvised cudgels in dugouts and trenches as we try to kill each other with hand grenades."<sup>333</sup> The accounts above are, again, reminiscent of what would befall the Cape Corps at Square Hill, albeit fought in broad daylight. Warfare in German East Africa, in turn, would add new risks that that the allied leadership were not yet fully cognisant of, namely the threat of tropical

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<sup>327</sup> See for example the coordination of machine gun crews at Lindi in Chapter 4, P. 93.

<sup>328</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.147.

<sup>329</sup> Perkins. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps", P.25.

<sup>330</sup> See the case of Major Robertson in Chapter 5, P.114.

<sup>331</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.75. Kirkpatrick, GM. "Memorandum issued to Army Headquarters, India. April 3, 1916 by Lt General Geo. M. Kirkpatrick."

<sup>332</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.75. Kirkpatrick, GM. "Memorandum issued to Army Headquarters, India. April 3, 1916 by Lt General Geo. M. Kirkpatrick."

<sup>333</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.75. Kirkpatrick, GM. "Memorandum issued to Army Headquarters, India. April 3, 1916 by Lt General Geo. M. Kirkpatrick."

disease and the immense burden that it would place on their campaign. As consequence, the Cape Corps would suffer severely as a result of malaria and dysentery.

These risks, collectively, form a serious backdrop to the ultimate point of training: the transformation of Coloured civilian men into Cape Corps soldiers that were folded in with- and loyal to- their white officers. As we have seen, this process of training and indoctrination did produce a unit with a strong sense of duty and identity in what was- to its white trainers- a remarkably short period of time. Given the pressures of the war situation and British imperial concerns, however, it became imperative to get the Cape Corps ready for service in German East Africa quickly. To determine how ready they truly were- by the metrics of the white military authorities- was a key priority.

## **Field exercises and final preparation**

With little less than a month to spare, what would become the First Battalion of the Cape Corps was assembled for the first time as a Battalion in mid-January on the Wynberg parade grounds. Several important dignitaries were present, with a number of members of the Corps' recruiting committee accompanying their benefactor, Lord Buxton. The commander of British forces in South Africa, General Thompson, was also in attendance as well as the Brigadier Crewe.<sup>334</sup> Crewe made much of the fact that he was impressed by the sharpness of the Corps' drilling and how far they had come in such a short time, to the pleased and eager ears of some of those on the Recruiting Committee.<sup>335</sup> Crewe's shrewd comments for the benefit of those like Perkins aside, the true purpose of his presence, along with Thompson, was to gauge the readiness of the Corps for East Africa in a series of field exercises that were to be held later that month.<sup>336</sup>

The Corps's first and only field exercise lasted five days. In it, the Corps practised marching in large formations and launching semi-realistic mock attacks for the first time. This sort of training had been regular exercises for professional white troops and was sorely needed to prepare soldiers for the anarchy of a real battlefield. Lt Colonel Morris was well aware of the overall rawness of his men and had been desperate to organise a second round of such exercises before the February 9<sup>th</sup> deadline- to no avail.<sup>337</sup> The Corps, like many units of Kitchener's "New Army" would have to receive its training in theatre- a fact which led to many of its officers expressing private fears over its readiness. The all professional British Regulars, who had signed on to four year contracts and who had been regarded as some of the best-trained soldiers in the world in late 1914<sup>338</sup>, had been all but wiped out in six months of fighting. "The First Battalion of the Cape Corps," Difford remarked in contrast, "Had been in existence for barely three months as it launched mock attacks up and down the Peninsula between Simonstown and Cape Point."<sup>339</sup> Difford's point, made to deliberately highlight the difference between the Cape Corps and other professional units, was to illustrate that despite this, the unit still conducted itself with pride.

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<sup>334</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.35.

<sup>335</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.35. General Horace Smith-Dorrien was supposed to have attended one of these parades- perhaps explaining his interest in the creation of a second battalion for the Corps. He fell ill and was replaced by Smuts, returning to England before he could see the Corps however.

<sup>336</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.40.

<sup>337</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.35.

<sup>338</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe*. P.495.

<sup>339</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.35.

These exercises were viewed only by a small number of officers and a handful of white troops who happened to be on the field at the same time. In contrast to the “manoeuvres” of only fifteen years earlier, which were often public showcases attended by hundreds of people as social events, military exercises had in the First World War become secretive affairs. Given concerns over German espionage, Smuts had ordered that all “military preparations” be closed to public viewing.<sup>340</sup> Curious onlookers and family members of the Corps were shepherded away, as Thompson scrutinised their military performance and prepared a report on the situation for the new commander of the East African operation, Smuts.

“Through their classes [the Cape Corps] have attained a fair degree of efficiency,” Thompson began, “and considering the limited time at their disposal [they] may be pronounced as good”.<sup>341</sup> The Pioneers, that is to say specialist soldier-builders responsible for erecting pontoon bridges over rivers and breaching other obstacles, were particularly skilled as Thompson noted. “The term especially applies to the Pioneers, most of whom in civil life were artisans, etc., and so readily assimilated the training given by the 47th Company Royal Engineers”.<sup>342</sup> Thompson was not all positive in his assessment however, and was especially critical of the newly tabbed NCOs of the regiment. “The weak point in the regiment is the coloured N.C.O.,” he continued. “Three months ago they were recruits the same as the other men, and they were chosen for their stripes according to their standing in civil life and according to their ability to read and write.”<sup>343</sup> Thompson’s account forms an interesting counterpoint to the narrative presented by Difford, who as a member of the Cape Corps was no doubt keen to present his men in the best light and who also likely had the benefit of hindsight to gauge the quality of the Cape Corps’ NCOs after they had time to prove themselves. For Thompson- reviewing the Cape Corps as it stood in early 1916- the contrast between long-term professional NCOs of the British and possibly British Indian Army would have been notable. As consequence, he remarked that “By military standards”, the Corps’ NCOs had not yet exerted themselves confidently as leaders and that they had not displayed sufficient proficiency in their military skills yet to distinguish themselves from the mere privates they were purported to lead. Given time, training, and a “successful bleeding”, however, Thompson concluded that the Corps could “find itself.”<sup>344</sup>

## The Corps Departs

Thompson’s report likely played a direct role in Smuts’ perceptions of the Cape Corps. Given his already lukewarm appreciation for Coloureds in armed service, Smuts would go on to utilise the Cape Corps in “lines of communications” work for months in East Africa given their “dubious military value.”<sup>345</sup> All of this, however, was still unknown to the Corps and its officers. After the conclusion of the Corps’ field exercises the Battalion was granted a brief period of rest before departing for East Africa. Blocks of leave were granted to married men such the Cape Corps officer Lieutenant Frank Hallier, whose wedding on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January to a Miss Whiteside had been attended by the officer’s cadre of the Corps.<sup>346</sup> Such expedited marriages, prompted by the urgency of the war, were commonplace occurrences and the Corps’ it seems was little different. Captain Difford’s younger brother, Archie, who had been

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<sup>340</sup> See Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.164 and Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.40.

<sup>341</sup> Thompson, “Report on the Cape Corps”, P.43

<sup>342</sup> Thompson, “Report on the Cape Corps”, P.43.

<sup>343</sup> Thompson, “Report on the Cape Corps”, P.43.

<sup>344</sup> Thompson, “Report on the Cape Corps”, P.43.

<sup>345</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.18.Smuts to Buxton. 11 April, 1916.

<sup>346</sup> Thompson, “Report on the Cape Corps”, P.43.

commissioned into the Corps as a lieutenant, almost certainly took advantage of leave to visit his wife and young daughter, and the vast majority of officers cycled out of the Corps' depot in the week before their set departure date on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February.

Of the enlisted men and Coloured NCOs, Difford is silent but it is certain that the brief forty-eight hour liberties they spent with their wives and children were filled with the same sorts of mixed emotion- fear, anxiety and excitement- that was typically described by white soldiers on leave before deployment to battle.<sup>347</sup> To Difford's delight, some of the officers were able to at last play a few games of cricket, with "Lieutenant Dudley Pearse scoring 145 in a game for the Western Province Cricket Club".<sup>348</sup> The ranks of the unmarried enlisted, in the meanwhile, were entertained through concerts and shows organised by the Cape Corps Gifts and Comforts Committee.<sup>349</sup> By the 6<sup>th</sup>, the final preparations for the Corps to leave were underway and every man had returned to the Noah's Ark camp. A second, far smaller camp was erected near the Woltemaade rifle range under the command of Captain CE Stevens, to which two hundred half trained new recruits were transferred. The Woltemaade camp would serve as the Corps' headquarters in South Africa, where Stevens and Sergeant-Major Windrum would continue to train recruits as replacements for any casualties that would be inevitably incurred in East Africa. Morris' standing orders to Stevens was to forward drafts of men of "not less than fifty at a time, as soon as the men became qualified and efficient."<sup>350</sup>

After a morning parade on the 9<sup>th</sup>, the Corps marched by platoon to the Simonstown train station, where special provision had been made for its transport directly to the Cape Town city docks in three trainloads. The scene awaiting the Corps there "beggared description" Difford recalled, with the coloured community of the Cape peninsula having gathered there to give the Corps a spirited send-off.<sup>351</sup> In the crowd gathered was Sir Walter Stanford, who had been appointed the honorary Colonel of the Cape Corps, as well as the Mayor Sir Harry Hands and AE Perkins of the Corps recruiting committee. The latter described the "true South African summer's afternoon" in enthusiastic if clichéd terms: mothers "strained with tears of pride in her eyes to get a glimpse of her son", "many a young Coloured woman, who had a very particular interest in her newly-made soldier friend, moved in the crowd in the hope of a last farewell."<sup>352</sup> A military band played as the Corps began to gather and although Perkins is notably silent on the matter, Dr Abdurahman and the other elites of the APO were no doubt present and watched the proceedings with equal parts pride and hope. Hope, that is, that whatever victories the Corps might achieve on the battlefield would be echoed and magnified to the benefit of Coloureds in the Union. After a loud rendition of God Save the King, the Corps then began to embark aboard His Majesty's Troopship the *Armadale Castle*.<sup>353</sup> It departed the docks at 5pm, and set sail for the British East African port of Kilindini carrying on board 32 white officers and 1022 Coloured soldiers.<sup>354</sup> They were bound for a difficult and arduous campaign in the most trying of circumstances, all on quest to prove themselves to the world.

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<sup>347</sup> Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.279.

<sup>348</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.40.

<sup>349</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.40.

<sup>350</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.41.

<sup>351</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.41.

<sup>352</sup> Perkins, EA. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps" P.25.

<sup>353</sup> Perkins, EA. "Recruitment of the Cape Corps" P.25.

<sup>354</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, Chronological Summary, unnumbered pages.

## Chapter Three: A Portrait of Misery: Disease, death and the Cape Corps in East Africa

Malaria, as a disease, is prevalent across much of the world with ranges from tropical Africa and Asia to southern and even central Europe. It is caused by blood-borne parasites of the *plasmodium* genus, and of the five species which cause disease in humans- *vivax*, *ovale*, *malariae*, *knowlesi* and *falciparum*- it is particularly dangerous *falciparum* which is most prolific in Africa.<sup>355</sup> Spread by the anopheles mosquito, malaria causes fevers and debilitating weakness in its early stages. In severe cases, organs such as the kidneys begin to fail and when malaria crosses the blood-brain barrier, death is highly likely unless drastic medical intervention occurs.<sup>356</sup> Malaria epidemics across Africa's history have been devastating, with a single outbreak in Zululand and Swaziland in 1932 which killed 10 000 Africans serving as a pertinent example of the lethality of the disease.<sup>357</sup>

Another blood borne parasitical disease, *trypanosoma brucei*, has a number of striking similarities to malaria. Also known as African trypanosomiasis or sleeping sickness, it is transmitted via the tsetse fly and like malaria it also results in fevers and progressive organ failure which can spread to the brain with often lethal results.<sup>358</sup> The two diseases differ on two crucial points however. With malaria's vector- the mosquito- being hardier and far wider spread than the tsetse, sleeping sickness is confined only to parts of central Africa- namely stretches of modern Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda the Congo and Uganda.<sup>359</sup> The second point is that, whilst *plasmodium falciparum* is confined only to humans, *brucei* and other trypanosomes infect cattle, horses and wildlife also. With exposure over millions of years, wildlife native to Africa has developed immunities to sleeping sickness which is not shared broadly by most cattle or any varieties of horse, which are in fact particularly vulnerable to the disease.<sup>360</sup>

Over the *longue durée*, the net effect of these diseases as components of African environments has been telling. In *Environment and Empire*, William Beinart and Lotte Hughes argue that these blood-borne parasites- endemic to much of tropical Africa- have played an extensive role in the course of human civilisation in those regions. The unavailability of domesticated draught animals, for example, restricted, for the most part, the sort of intense poly-agriculture that was possible in medieval, Renaissance and industrialised Europe to much smaller regions, and more specific contexts.<sup>361</sup> Further, sleeping sickness likely played a part in restricting horse-born Islamic conquests of African polities to the drier north.<sup>362</sup>

Native African responses, whilst often couched in a language of the supernatural and in terms of witchcraft, did not preclude more instrumental responses to disease outbreaks that would

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<sup>355</sup> Neumayr, A and Hatz, C. 2011. *Infectious Diseases: A Geographic Guide*. Chen L, Petersen E & Schlagenhauf P (eds). Wiley-Blackwell: Sussex. P.64-83.

<sup>356</sup> Das et al. 2012. "Malaria in India: The Center for the Study of Complex Malaria in India" in *Acta Tropica* Vol. 121, No. 3, P. 267-273.

<sup>357</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>358</sup> Beinart, W and Hughes, L. 2007. *Environment and Empire*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

<sup>359</sup> Neumayr and Hatz, *Infectious Diseases: A Geographic Guide*, P.64-83.

<sup>360</sup> Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. P.184-199.

<sup>361</sup> Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. P.184-199.

<sup>362</sup> Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. P.184-199.

be familiar to colonial-period medical officials such as the destruction of bush- which deprive vector insects of habitat- and the clearing away of wildlife.<sup>363</sup> In Tanzania in particular, this approach led to the emergence of a belt of coastal settlements which, whilst still ravaged by malaria, remained viable and produced vibrant trading cultures.<sup>364</sup> In southern Africa too, settlement and grazing micro-patterns were adjusted to deal with tropical diseases in places like modern day KwaZulu-Natal. There, even in areas that would later be designated as malaria-ridden by the Union government, settlements were constructed on high ground far away from river-valleys that hosted malaria's vector, the *anopheles* mosquito.<sup>365</sup> Herds of livestock- and their human tenders- were moved away from areas that were known to be particularly dangerous during the wet seasons. Overall this strategy bore a degree of success for a long time before European colonialism began to change the dynamics of African societies within these geographical areas.<sup>366</sup>

A last point to remember is that exposure to diseases like sleeping sickness and malaria *did* indeed produce degrees of acquired immunity- but often at terrible cost. Childhood exposure to malaria remained- and remains to this day- a cause of high child mortality.<sup>367</sup> Even amongst healthy adults, malarial and trypanosomic infections are serious illnesses with a high risk of death, and whilst the infection can be survived, any resulting immunity is relatively short lived if a survivor is not re-exposed to the disease frequently.<sup>368</sup> As Randall Packard argues, immunity of native Africans to malaria was often ragged and unevenly distributed amongst Africans who lived in malaria areas- whose primary strategies concentrated on *avoidance* of the disease and its vectors.<sup>369</sup>

This chapter will firstly argue that the emergence of the colonial state in Tanzania and South Africa began to dramatically alter this state of biological equilibrium established between Africans and the natural hazards of certain regions of tropical Africa. Once considered the "white man's grave", tropical regions of Africa had proven difficult for the various European colonial to subdue powers prior to the 1880s.<sup>370</sup> Technological developments in industry, coupled with scientific breakthroughs in medicine, however, had begun to change this. In 1880, French army officer Charles Laveran postulated that malaria was caused by blood-borne parasites, a hypothesis that was proved in 1897 by the British scientist Robert Ross, who was able to demonstrate the causative link between the malarial disease and parasites discovered in the gut of mosquito samples.<sup>371</sup> This discovery of both the disease's cause and vector prompted a revolution in malarial control. The disease- that is to say the infection of a person- itself could be treated through the use of quinine, a bitter alkaloid derived from the bark of the cinchona tree.<sup>372</sup> In the meanwhile, mosquitoes could be exterminated through the spraying of pesticides, prevented from gaining access to people via the provision of mosquito nets, and deprived of breeding habitats through the draining of stagnant bodies of water near

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<sup>363</sup> Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. P.184-199.

<sup>364</sup> Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. P.184-199.

<sup>365</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>366</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>367</sup> Doolan, D; Dobano C; Baird, JK. 2009. "Acquired Immunity to Malaria" in *Clinical Microbiology Reviews* Vol. 22, No. 1. P.13-36.

<sup>368</sup> Doolan, Dobano and Baird, "Acquired Immunity to Malaria," P.19.

<sup>369</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>370</sup> See for example Curtin,PD. 1990. "The End of the White Man's Grave? Nineteenth-Century Morality in West Africa" in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 21, No. 1. P. 63-88.

<sup>371</sup> Cox, FEG. 2010. "History of the discovery of the malaria parasites and their vectors" in *Parasites & Vectors*. Vol.3 No. 5.

<sup>372</sup> Curtin, "The End of the White Man's Grave?," P.67

human settlements.<sup>373</sup> In conjunction with each other, these four strategies came to represent the standard “attack plan” for the Union’s colonial sanitarians concerned with the control of malaria, the unpacking of which will be the first focus point of this chapter.<sup>374</sup>

Despite apparent successes in peacetime, however, this regime was fundamentally flawed in substantial ways. Attitudes amongst colonial officials towards *inherent* racial resistances toward malaria were present throughout the system, and when the Union-led expeditionary force invaded German East Africa in 1916, it became rapidly evident that local conditions had been poorly understood. When the primary logistical tools of the UDF’s invasion force—the mule and ox—began dying by the thousands on every day of the campaign due to the ravages of sleeping sickness, it became very difficult to supply the quantities of quinine necessary to sustain field hospitals attending a front line force of 50 000 troops.<sup>375</sup> Ravaged by disease and with the campaign in jeopardy of bogging down, white troops were evacuated en masse from Tanzania starting that July, whilst Indian, African and the Coloured troops of the Cape Corps were kept on.<sup>376</sup>

It is this experience of disease in the East African campaign by the Cape Corps that the second half of this chapter will concentrate on; namely the consequences of misapprehensions of tropical diseases and of warnings unheeded by the senior commander of the East African expedition: General Jan Smuts himself.

## **Jan Smuts, Disease Control and Medical Governance in South Africa, c.1904-1915**

In this chapter, Smuts retains a central role in the Cape Corps’ story for as Commander in Chief of the British campaign in German East Africa, he both held authority over the large and complex medical organisation of the expedition *and* was ultimately responsible for the campaign’s planning and execution. Unprepared for the local disease conditions within German East Africa, Smuts’ force of 50 000 men had by December of 1916 suffered 16 000 disease casualties of which 6000 were fatal.<sup>377</sup> Included in this sum was a significant number of Cape Corps troops as well as soldiers of the British Indian Army. In order to determine why the campaign had gone so badly wrong in this respect, it is worthwhile to contextualise what had preceded it in terms of Smuts’ experiences with medical governance in the Union. The debates this sort of governance engendered provide some clues to the development of his opinions in the years leading up to the campaign and also illuminate the sort of institutional beliefs that some influential figures within the South African medical fraternity held in regards to race and disease.

As for governmental structures themselves, the Union of South Africa did not come into being in 1910 with a unified Health Ministry. It had instead, as a union of four British administered colonies, inherited four separate but similar sets of medical authorities that were regulated under the broad umbrella of the British Medical Association.<sup>378</sup> As Anne Digby

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<sup>373</sup> Curtin, “The End of the White Man’s Grave?,” P.67

<sup>374</sup> Packard, “Indexing Immunity to Malaria”, P.124-127.

<sup>375</sup> See Paice, *Tip and Run*, P.290. In the first months of the East African campaign, for example, 30 000 heads of oxen were lost.

<sup>376</sup> Difford, *The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps*, P.72.

<sup>377</sup> See Hancock, WK. 1962. *Smuts I: The Sanguine Years 1870-1919*. P.421.

<sup>378</sup> See Van Heyningen, EB. 1989. “Agents of Empire: The Medical Profession in the Cape Colony, 1880-1910” in *Medical History* Vol.33. P.450-471.

writes, the Cape and Natal colonies had been long been administered by various district surgeons under the purview of a colonial Chief Medical Officer. The Transvaal and Free State were, in turn, brought under the British model by the Milner administration in 1904<sup>379</sup>- but not without a prolonged period of political contestation from the likes of white Afrikaners who resented and mistrusted central government control as Thembisa Waetjen's work on narcotic regulation effectively illustrates.<sup>380</sup>

Smuts, in turn, had with the election of the Het Volk party in Transvaal in 1906 become Prime Minister Louis Botha's Colonial Secretary. Largely preoccupied with management of gold mining capital on the Witwatersrand at that time<sup>381</sup>, Smuts did get involved with narcotic regulation during this period. In co-operation with mining and sanitation authorities, Smuts outlawed the use of opium in Transvaal whilst at the same time seeking to bring about more comprehensive regulation of patent medicines throughout the rest of the colony between 1906 and 1910.<sup>382</sup> Frustrated by rural Afrikaners who resisted Smuts' attempts to regulate their access to "Dutch" medicines, the incident is nevertheless illustrative of Smuts' devotion to a "progressivist" ethos underpinned by socio-scientific approaches to social engineering for the benefit of a white electorate.<sup>383</sup>

With the shift to Union in 1910 from the looser commonwealth of South African colonies that had preceded it, Smuts- Botha's most trusted confidant- was given the simultaneous roles of Minister of Mines, the Interior, Finance and Defence. As WK Hancock argues and the bulk of Smuts' correspondence suggests, the majority of his time and attention was consumed in the 1910-1914 period by the drafting of the Union Defence Act and a preoccupation with deteriorating relations between the Union government and white mine labourers.<sup>384</sup> At around this time, the development of serious outbreaks of tuberculosis and pneumonia amongst migrant African labourers in the mining compounds of the Witwatersrand was drawing substantial medical interest, with Johannesburg's medical authorities examining the cause of these outbreaks at the urging of inspectors from the Department of Mines and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association.<sup>385</sup>

The Tuberculosis Commission commissioned by the WNLA represented a slight shift in the priorities of the Union's medical authorities- and those of the colonies that preceded them. Either had hitherto generally tended to see white and African health as separate issues *unless* there was a risk of epidemics spreading from African populations to Europeans that prompted colonial Medical Officers to intervene; as they did when bubonic plague threatened to break out in the Cape in 1904.<sup>386</sup> Whilst the Commission was still motivated by the protection of

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<sup>379</sup> Digby, A. 2007. "Medicine, Race and the General Good: The Career of Thomas N G Te Water (1857-1926), South African Doctor and Medical Politician" in *Medical History* Vol.51. P.37-58.

<sup>380</sup> See Waetjen, T. 2016. "Poppies and Gold: Opium and Law-making on the Witwatersrand, 1904-10" in *Journal of African History*. Vol. 57, No. 3. P.391-416.

<sup>381</sup> Hancock, *Smuts I*, P.421.

<sup>382</sup> Waetjen, "Poppies and Gold", P.403-414.

<sup>383</sup> Waetjen, "Poppies and Gold", P.403-414.

<sup>384</sup> See for example Steyn to Smuts, 27 January 1911 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*- part of their exchange in regards to the Defence Act, and a letter from Charles Crewe to Smuts where he expresses his support to Smuts in the face of the second Witwatersrand strike led by white "syndicalists". Crewe to Smuts, 21 January 1914 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*. P.158.

<sup>385</sup> Packard, "Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies", P.200.

<sup>386</sup> Van Heyningen, "Agents of Empire", P.470.

whites<sup>387</sup>, another priority for it, as Randall Packard argues, was the protection of African labour supplies and of the migrant labour system as a whole.

Mine doctors and more specifically, mine managers, were quick to use the Commission's 1912 report as justification for underspending on the conditions of miners. Further, the TB report itself resisted a suggestion by Colonel William Gorgas, a member of the United States Army Medical Corps<sup>388</sup>, to disperse mine workers to huts from the mine barracks, where they could live more comfortably and healthily with their families.<sup>389</sup> The most telling of the Commission's conclusions, however, was illustrative of a growing shift in 'expert' medical opinion towards a cause inherent in native African physiology. It read:

"There appears to be good reason for believing that... the mere change from Kraal life to the environment of the labor center adversely effects the health of the average raw native. How much this is due to change in climate conditions, aggregation, often in overcrowded compounds, alterations in dress and diet, restrictions on freedom, unaccustomed physical strain, or *exposure to organisms harmless to ordinary individuals, but pathogenic to the uninured raw native*, is difficult to say (emphasis added by Packard)."<sup>390</sup>

How engaged Smuts was with this debate is unclear. To start, there is little indication- based on Smuts' correspondences with John Merriman and Lionel Phillips during his tenure as Colonial Secretary and later as Minister of Mines- that Smuts was much involved with- and/or interested in- the issue of mine sanitation. In animated correspondences with Merriman, the topics of labour and race do emerge particularly in the 1905-1912 period- but involve primarily around a joint condemnation of Milnerian policies regarding the use of Chinese labour on the Witwatersrand mines and Merriman's mooted plan for a "white Rand" to combat the poor white issue.<sup>391</sup> Native Africans and Coloureds are primarily discussion points regarding the Cape Franchise, with Merriman illustrating a particularly strong dislike for Abdullah Abdurahman.<sup>392</sup> Similarly, correspondence with Phillips is mostly concerned with white politics and the development of the economy- and makes no mentions of even labour on the mines.<sup>393</sup> Smuts' biographer, Hancock, notes that despite an initially combative relationship with mining capitalists like Phillips and Sir George Farrar, following Het Volk's Transvaal victory in 1906, Smuts had struck up a "frank and cordial" relationship with Phillips and the Chamber of Mines; a relationship Smuts was keen to underscore as being built upon the Chamber's reasoning being built upon a "sound substratum of fact."<sup>394</sup> Whether this relationship influenced Smuts' thinking on race and disease is not readily evident based on these sources. His thinking on malaria, however, is far clearer as this work will illustrate below.

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<sup>387</sup> See Digby, "Medicine, Race and the General Good", P.50-58.

<sup>388</sup> And later Surgeon-General of the United States. Gorgas again figures in the narrative, see below.

<sup>389</sup> This was rejected on supposed medical grounds- native Africans would have no inducement to return home for recuperative breaks between periods spent on the mines- the subtext of white reluctance to incorporate Africans into industrialising cities is not difficult to extrapolate. Packard, "Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies", P.201.

<sup>390</sup> Packard, "Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies", P.202.

<sup>391</sup> See for example Merriman to Smuts, 22 May 1907 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*, or Merriman to Smuts, 28 April 1907 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*.

<sup>392</sup> Merriman to Smuts, 22 May 1907 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*.

<sup>393</sup> See for example Phillips to Smuts, 26 May 1907 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II* or Phillips to Smuts, 14 August 1908 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*.

<sup>394</sup> Hancock, *Smuts I*, P.237.

## Smuts, malaria, sleeping sickness and the German East African Campaign

Striking similarities become visible when comparing the early Union's management of malaria with its management of tuberculosis<sup>395</sup>. Afflicting only a relatively small portion of South African geography, native Africans as mentioned earlier were nevertheless forced to contend with malaria and did so primarily through avoidance strategies.<sup>396</sup> White settlers- particularly north-ranging Boers in the midst of the Great Trek- had begun encountering malaria as early as the 1850s.<sup>397</sup> Whilst fatalities due to the disease were not uncommon and epidemics could be severe, South African conditions- lacking a lethal cocktail of yellow fever and other tropical diseases like trypanosomiasis- could hardly be described as a "white man's grave" in the same way that tropical Africa and the Panamanian isthmus could.<sup>398</sup> Commercial production of sugar and citrus in Natal, and of citrus in northern Transvaal, thus proceeded apace and eventually expanded thanks to greater rail connectivity on the one hand and the improved health conditions brought about by Ross' discovery of the malaria parasite in 1897 on the other.<sup>399</sup>

Scientific research followed Ross' breakthrough, with one study published in 1901 by Drs S.R. Christophers and J.W.W. Stephens providing the scientific basis for what colonial authorities had long known- that peoples living in malaria regions generally tended to develop immunities to the parasite.<sup>400</sup> This finding was widely circulated amongst colonial health officials in what would become the Union but was reduced oftentimes to gross oversimplifications that, like theories on TB, failed to account for the nature of first exposures to the disease.<sup>401</sup> Christophers and Stevens, for example, noted the price Africans citizens of Freetown had paid for their relatively high levels of immunity, namely that of high childhood mortality that accompanied growing up in Sierra Leone and their consequent exposure to the parasite as children.<sup>402</sup> It can be argued that Africans entered the workforce - and thus the regulatory eye of colonial institutions and sanitary authorities- as immune adults,

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<sup>395</sup> Although rejected by a substantial portion of the scientific and medical community in the early 1900s, other sanitationists such as Dr Sigfried Annecke continued to see race as the deciding physiological factor for malarial infections as late as the 1930s. Tasked with helping control malaria around the railway hub of Komatipoort, Annecke justified the South African Railway corporation not spending money on quinine for Africans and the provisioning of mosquito nets and the spraying of African houses by pointing towards supposed African immunity. At the same time, Annecke came to the same conclusion that Dr William Strahan, the British Chief Medical Officer for Lagos in 1900, did; namely that even immune African adults could serve as hosts for the disease. But whilst Strahan advocated for the treatment of Africans and the sanitation of their environments, Annecke instead suggested the removal of all Africans from Komatipoort to a nearby Location where they would not be able to infect European inhabitants of the railway town. In the same way that the Tuberculosis Committee had argued that Africans were inherently vulnerable to tuberculosis and pneumonia, Annecke argued that Africans were inherently immune to malaria- and both concluded that the relevant authorities- mine management and the South African Railways- were justified in leaving Africans to their biological fate. Furthermore, both saw Africans as vectors for disease and both argued for segregation on "sanitary" grounds despite dissident opinions. See Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.124-127 and Packard, "Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies", P.193.

<sup>396</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>397</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>398</sup> Curtin, "The End of the White Man's Grave?," P.67

<sup>399</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.122.

<sup>400</sup> A copy was forwarded to the Transvaal government, see: SANAP. CO, Volume 175. Christophers SR, Stephens JWW. 1900. *Malaria Committee of Royal Society: Reports to, by Dr Stephens and Dr Christophers.*

<sup>401</sup> Packard, "Indexing Immunity to Malaria", P.117.

<sup>402</sup> SANAP. CO, Volume 175. Christophers SR, Stephens JWW. 1900. *Malaria Committee of Royal Society: Reports to, by Dr Stephens and Dr Christophers.* The report suggested that African children acted as vectors but that immune adults did not, and thus was in favour of urban segregation along Indian 'hill station' lines.

and that this reinforced European notions that African immunities were *inherent* and not *acquired* by depriving Europeans of the knowledge of the cost to exposure malaria had wrought. In contrast, African labourers that were exposed to tuberculosis for the first time on mines tended to have no immunities to the un-encountered disease and suffered greatly as a result- yet further entrenching growing notions of Darwinian racialism amongst European medical authorities.<sup>403</sup>

These attitudes and the studies that surrounded them were the product of a longer history of European interaction with diseases in their colonial empires. As Carl Nightingale argues effectively in *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities*, British racial theories of disease expressed in South African contexts in the late 1890s and early 1900s owe a great deal of their provenance to the British experience in India and the West Indies.<sup>404</sup> There, what Maynard Swanson would term “sanitation syndrome” when applied to the context of the Cape<sup>405</sup> emerged as an instrumental and cultural response to the ravages of tropical diseases that Europeans were otherwise at a loss to deal with.<sup>406</sup> Miasmatic theories of disease and a fear of “bad air”- a literal understanding of *mal aria*- resulted in the British Raj being administered from the safety of the hill stations of Khajjiar and Simla from the 1850s on.<sup>407</sup> Scientific research by the likes of Pasteur, Koch and Ross had- by the turn of the century- dispelled much of miasmatic theory but ideas of environment and “temperateness” remained influential in two ways.<sup>408</sup> The first was the correct assumption that temperature and humidity played a role in the habitat of disease causing micro-organisms and their vectors. The second dealt with how “temperateness” related to human bodies.<sup>409</sup>

This idea was that humans, through either a period of ‘acclimatization’ or through evolutionary adaptation, achieved a form of physiological optimisation for their environments and climates.<sup>410</sup> Whilst it is true that humans do evolve physical traits in this way over the course of thousands of years, in regards to disease medical authors tended to vastly overstate the importance of ‘inherited’ factors- the discovery of genetic science still decades away- versus environmental considerations such as exposure to microbes and resulting protection provided by the human immune system.<sup>411</sup> Concurrent with the “microbial revolution” of the late 1800s, this line of thinking dovetails with the rise of scientific racism in Western thought with South Africa serving- as Saul Dubow argues in *Scientific Racism in South Africa*<sup>412</sup>- as a particular hotbed of debate.

Many doctors, however, dissented from this opinion with one such dissident being Dr Samuel Evans. The former military governor of Johannesburg during the Anglo-Boer War, in 1909 Evans became the chairman for Crown Mines Limited.<sup>413</sup> As chair, Evans paid close attention

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<sup>403</sup> Packard, “Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies”, P.197-204.

<sup>404</sup> Nightingale, C.H. “Race and the London-Calcutta Connection” in *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities*. 2012. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. P.81-83.

<sup>405</sup> Swanson, MW. 1977. “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in Cape Colony, 1900- 1909” in *The Journal of African History*. Vol. 18, No.3. P.387-410

<sup>406</sup> Nightingale, *Segregation*, P.81-83.

<sup>407</sup> Nightingale, *Segregation*, P.81-92.

<sup>408</sup> Digby, “Medicine, Race and the General Good”, P.54-57.

<sup>409</sup> Packard, “Tuberculosis and the development of Industrial Health Policies”, P.197-204.

<sup>410</sup> Nightingale, *Segregation*, P.81-92.

<sup>411</sup> A pertinent example of the mechanism being described in Doolan, Dobano and Baird, “Acquired Immunity to Malaria”, P.13-36.

<sup>412</sup> Dubow, S. 1995. *Scientific Racism in South Africa*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

<sup>413</sup> Evans would later play a key role in the foundation of the South African Institute for Medical Research.

to issues of disease on his mines and consulted closely with Colonel William Gorgas- the American whose suggestions the Tuberculosis Committee had largely rejected. Authoring a pamphlet published in 1914 titled *Health Conditions on the Isthmus of Panama*<sup>414</sup>, Evans characterised the region as “one of the hottest, wettest and most feverish regions in existence.”<sup>415</sup> “The Isthmus,” he continued, “has long been a white man’s grave”, with French attempts to build a canal resulting in 22 189 fatalities between 1881 and 1889- a rate of 240 deaths per 1000 employees every year.<sup>416</sup> Interestingly, many of the same health problems endemic to Panama- malaria, typhoid, dysentery and pneumonia- were to plague the German East African expedition. As Evans notes, “Under the French practically all manual labour was performed by negroes,” whilst “Death within three months was almost certain for white labourers on the canal works.”<sup>417</sup> Forced to quit at huge expense, the French mission was overtaken by an American one, with Colonel Gorgas serving as its chief medical officer.

The resulting change was dramatic, with Gorgas’ reform leading to a plunge in death rates to less than 38.98 workers per 1000 per year in 1906 and to 6.37 by 1912.<sup>418</sup> Gorgas’s practices, then, can be argued as being what in modern medical parlance is called “best practice” in regards to the treatment of these diseases.<sup>419</sup> With a clear headed appreciation for the data presented to him, Gorgas was able to institute wide ranging changes to the sanitary regime on the Isthmus, which included tackling malaria through quinine, netting and spraying as well as the prevention of enteric fevers through protecting food supplies and making latrines fly-proof.<sup>420</sup>

Evans noted that the resulting “Improvement of health conditions is not confined to any particular race or to any particular disease. As a matter of fact, it is most marked in two wholly unexpected directions:--

- 1) With negroes who are supposed to be largely immune from tropical diseases, and
- 2) In the case of pneumonia, which is not ordinarily considered as being a tropical disease or insect borne (Emphasis added).”<sup>421</sup>

Evans’ further notes that in the days of the French canal companies, “the death rate amongst negro workers was much heavier than amongst European employees” and that “the principal cause of death was pneumonia”- two results which flew in the face of commonly accepted medical wisdom of the period.<sup>422</sup> The first challenged the notion that unexposed Africans or those of African descent were naturally immune to tropical diseases- they were not and died of malaria at the same rates unexposed Europeans did. The second challenged the idea that

<sup>414</sup> Wits Historical Papers (Hereafter WHP). A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>415</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>416</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>417</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>418</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>419</sup> With Evans noting, in addition to the discovery of the malarial vector, that three other discoveries contributed to Gorgas’ success:

- 1) The US Army’s discovery of yellow fever in mosquitoes in 1900
- 2) Bubonic plague being definitively linked with its vectors of lice and rats in 1898
- 3) Flies being shown to be vectors for typhoid in 1900

<sup>420</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>421</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>422</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

pneumonia was a 'cold weather' disease, and that "temperateness" and a lack of acclimatisation was to blame for pneumonia and tuberculosis outbreaks.<sup>423</sup>

Evans harshly criticised the French, whose management had oftentimes dismissed the simple provision of mosquito netting as extravagant and unnecessary. At the same time, his pamphlet serves as a counterpoint to the Tuberculosis commission, to which he wryly remarked that: "Professional men are slow to accept these results and act on them, with managers at the Rand Mines/Eckstein groups of companies owing their reluctance, no doubt, to the fact that mine doctors are not convinced that flies are a serious danger to health."<sup>424</sup> Both of these considerations would come into play in German East Africa, with the Pike Report noting that a shortage of netting and fly control had contributed to the relatively poor "sanitation" situation of the GEA campaign.<sup>425</sup> Compiled by Dr WW Pike at the behest of the British War Office after a South African officer had complained of the heavy manpower losses the GEA expedition had suffered, the Pike Report was critical of the British expedition for failing to implement much of what Gorgas had done in Panama- in particular his measures to control malaria and dysentery.<sup>426</sup>

Moving closer to the commencement of the campaign, Evans had written to Smuts on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 1915- as the planning and mobilisation for East Africa was still underway- to advise him on its conduct.<sup>427</sup> Visited by a David Forbes, DSC, who had farmed in East Africa, Evans noted that "I have become quite taken in by his position and attach his notes for your interest." Forbes warned that East Africa was poor terrain for horses due to tsetse fly, whilst Evans continued by attaching meteorological data provided by the Union Observatory.<sup>428</sup> There is no record of Smuts ever replying to Evans' letter in the Wits Historical Papers, and Evans' input hardly constituted comprehensive medical advice, but it is nevertheless curious that a proponent of Gorgas' practices had attempted to contact Smuts prior to South African involvement in German East Africa. Given the outcome of the German East African campaign's encounter with tropical disease, it is unlikely that Smuts ever read Evans' thoughts on Panama, or if he did, whether he paid them much heed.

As for Smuts' planning for the campaign itself in early 1916, there are certainly indications that he was well aware of the hazards of malaria that were awaiting the Allied expeditionary force. Smuts had analysed a pair of meteorological reports that made pains to highlight that the Tanzanian rainy seasons were most intense between November and December in the first instance and between March and May in the second.<sup>429</sup> However, there seems to be little indication of planning for sleeping sickness or for general issues of "sanitation" from Smuts himself who was consumed with the military planning of the campaign instead.

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<sup>423</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conditions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>424</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conditions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>425</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>426</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>427</sup> WHP. A619, D7. S Evans to JC Smuts. 9 December 1915.

<sup>428</sup> WHP. A619, D7. S Evans to JC Smuts. 9 December 1915.

<sup>429</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.10. The Chief Political Officer to The Brigadier General, General Headquarters. 27 March, 1916. "Memo: The enclosed meteorological return may be of interest to the CinC" and SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.19. CW Harding. 10 February, 1916. "Memorandum: Rainfall in Certain Parts of East Africa"

As Anne Samson and others have argued, Smuts' experience as the leader of a Boer commando in the Second Anglo-Boer War played a major role in the way in which he conducted the German East Africa campaign.<sup>430</sup> As the leader of a Boer raiding force of some 500 men, Smuts was able to put far larger British forces on the back foot in the Cape thanks to the mounted mobility of his troops.<sup>431</sup> Over a decade later, Smuts hoped to employ similar strategies to those which had proved highly successful in the South African campaign in German South West Africa. Smuts envisioned the use of his own mounted cavalry to surround and outmanoeuvre Von Lettow-Vorbeck's men in German East Africa and as such became famous for leading "from the front".<sup>432</sup> Though highly popular with most of his men and officers for this leadership style<sup>433</sup>, this also meant that Smuts left much of the campaign's enormous administrative and organisational tasks to his general staff. In medical terms, this meant the coordination on an ad-hoc basis of no less than four disparate medical corps: the Indian Medical Services, the East African Medical Services, the Royal Army Medical Corps and the South African Medical Corps.<sup>434</sup> As a leftover of the earlier British efforts in East Africa, the majority of the campaign's logistics was organised through the British Indian Army and as Edward Paice amply demonstrates, the resulting logistics apparatus was difficult to coordinate across Britain, stretches of Africa, India and the Union.<sup>435</sup> Despite this, Smuts still assembled three divisions of troops and 30 000 heads of oxen with which to supply them and launched the first of his offensives in early 1916.<sup>436</sup>

These attacks cleared away the German and Askari forces from the Kilimanjaro region and left Smuts in a buoyant mood as his forces entered German East Africa. However, a letter in late March to his wife Issie ended on a dour note when he worried that "We have a hard time ahead and I fear much sickness, especially fever, among our young burghers."<sup>437</sup> On the back of further hard-fought success, Smuts wrote to Issie in middle June that the Allied force had cleared the Pangani river-valley, a stretch that "books and doctors have told us... that the region is a deadly region in regards fever and tsetse fly. On the contrary, our health is still very good and no fly has been seen and there is always more than enough water."<sup>438</sup>

Two weeks later, Smuts' optimism had begun to wane when he himself was affected by a severe fever of 104 degrees Fahrenheit and was forced to admit that it was "hard work keeping everyone alive in this country."<sup>439</sup> Crossing the "terrible" Uluguru mountains had strained his logistics services to their limit operating in the remote "gramadoelas"<sup>440</sup> of central Tanzania<sup>441</sup> and even though his pioneers and engineers successfully repaired bridges and blown up railways left in the wake of the retreating Germans and Askari, Smuts' growing frustration was palpable in the face of the severe "wastage" of both cavalry horses and

<sup>430</sup> See Samson, *The Union comes of Age* and Katz, "A clash of military doctrine."

<sup>431</sup> Katz, "A clash of military doctrine," P.19-47.

<sup>432</sup> See Katz, "A clash of military doctrine," P.19-47 for a discussion on Smuts' manoeuvre warfare and Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.241 for accounts of Smuts being close to the front lines

<sup>433</sup> See Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.241 and Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.49-79.

<sup>434</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>435</sup> Paice, "The Suicidal System of Supply" in *Tip and Run*, P.289-298.

<sup>436</sup> Paice, "The Suicidal System of Supply" in *Tip and Run*, P.289-298. As mentioned earlier, by September the vast majority of these oxen had been killed by sleeping sickness.

<sup>437</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 26 March, 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.351

<sup>438</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 14 June, 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.383

<sup>439</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 1 July, 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.393.

<sup>440</sup> An Afrikaans word meaning "remote areas/wastes"

<sup>441</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 1 July 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.393.

logistics animals.<sup>442</sup> Himself suffering from shaking hands he attributed to prophylactic quinine, Smuts ordered the Allied expeditionary force to cross the Uluguru mountains and drive their opponents south of the Rufiji river in August.<sup>443</sup> Writing back to Issie, Smuts said to her that “You cannot imagine how dangerous the rains are in this country. An old missionary informs me that the 40 mile plain between Kissaki and the Rufiji River becomes one continuous sea of water in the rainy season [...] if the rain comes, how do we get food and what will become of us, cut off from the world on the Rufiji?... But now this 40 miles is an arid desert, so there is not enough water for the troops should they now go forward. We are having a terribly hard time.”<sup>444</sup>

The missionary’s warning proved to be accurate as the rains began to bog down the Allied advance and a general pause was called in mid October. Already by mid September, Smuts wrote to Issie noting that 700 of Brigadier-General Brits’ men alone were sick in Kissaki.<sup>445</sup> Writing to MC Gillet, Smuts reported that he had successfully pushed Von Lettow-Vorbeck and his army into the malaria-ravaged southern tip of German East Africa and that the campaign was as good as won following the seizure of Dar Es Salaam and the strategic rail-head at Morogoro. The prospects of landing a final blow on the German force, however, were “dismal” after the rainy season had set in and the Indian and white components of his force in particular were severely affected by fever and malaria.<sup>446</sup> Three days later, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, Smuts, writing to Merriman, was forced to admit a defeat of sorts and justified the withdrawal of his white troops by saying that Tanzania “was no place to bring a force of white men.”<sup>447</sup> Tellingly, and crucially for any discussion on what was to follow, Smuts noted that he should “have brought a force of 10 000 Zulus instead.”<sup>448</sup>

Taken as a whole, the above narrative of Smuts’ East African expedition makes for an interesting before-and-after analysis. Smuts’ contentions that “doctors and books”<sup>449</sup> had warned him of the Pangani valley, when coupled with his studies of the region’s meteorological data, points to at least a decent theoretical understanding of the medical challenges his forces would face. Theoretical knowledge aside, Smuts’ expressed anxiety earlier in the campaign is indicative of perhaps less complete practical knowledge and personal experience regarding tropical disease. Merriman’s comment to him in one letter in regards to the “tough going, as you know, we received at the hands of the Maharattas”<sup>450</sup> is indicative of the stories he no doubt had heard of the British experience in India. There, white troops had suffered terribly as a result of disease in early campaigns and had largely been superseded by the use of Indian Sepoys in British campaigns in India.<sup>451</sup>

The results of the campaign unfolding before his eyes also played a role, certainly, in the formation of his opinions. The African troops of the East African expedition- namely the East

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<sup>442</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 16 August 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.396.

<sup>443</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 31 August 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.398.

<sup>444</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 26 September 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.405.

<sup>445</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 26 September 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.405.

<sup>446</sup> JC Smuts to MC Gillet, 24 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.408.

<sup>447</sup> JC Smuts to JX Merriman, 27 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.409.

<sup>448</sup> JC Smuts to JX Merriman, 27 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.409.

<sup>449</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 14 June 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.383.

<sup>450</sup> Merriman to Smuts, 25 October 1912 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers III*. P.112.

<sup>451</sup> See for example Metcalf, BD and, TR. 2006. “The emergence of regional states and the East India Company” in *A Concise History of India*. 2006. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P.51-55. Lord Clive of India, for example, had begun his campaign in Bengal with 300 white soldiers. By the time he had completed the conquest of Bengal, four remained alive.

African soldiers of the Kings African Rifles, the Nigerians, the West African Rifles and the Gold Coast Regiment- definitely suffered from disease less than their white contemporaries.<sup>452</sup> As inhabitants of the stretch of tropical Africa to which malaria and trypanosomiasis are endemic, the adult men of these African units benefitted no doubt from higher rates of immunities to those diseases<sup>453</sup>, as well as to other fever causing sicknesses endemic to tropical Africa like yellow- and dengue- fever.<sup>454</sup> Less severe than either malaria or sleeping sickness, though still potentially fatal, both yellow and dengue are also spread by mosquitoes and would be difficult to differentiate from malaria by overworked military medical staff who lacked modern diagnostic tools- especially in the early stages of those diseases and on the front lines far away from medical facilities.<sup>455</sup> Combined with white leadership cadres for these African units that were far more experienced in tropical warfare and its attendant medical requirements<sup>456</sup>, it is likely that the visible rates of low infection amongst African soldiers played to pre-existing notions of race and disease in Smuts' mind and served to confirm his bias. As a result Smuts ordered on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, 1916, that the majority of white units were to be withdrawn and that only African, Indian and Coloured units would remain on.<sup>457</sup>

For the Cape Corps, then operating south of the Rufiji, the decision would have severe consequences in terms of disease casualties. Racial considerations certainly played a role in this decision as shown above, though as shown in his letter to Gillet, Smuts was certainly aware that some of his Indian troops- particularly Baluchis drawn from what is today western Pakistan- were suffering badly from disease.<sup>458</sup> Further, to answer a research question suggested in the work of Albert Grundlingh, as for whether notions of biological determinism played a role in the decision to keep the Cape Corps on East Africa<sup>459</sup>, it was already evident to Smuts and the UDF by the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 1916, that the Corps was not proving resistant to tropical disease. Smuts' telegram of that day, answering a query for a second Cape Corps Battalion, reads:

“Yes another Cape Corps Battalion will be useful, even though *they stand climate badly*- with many thousands of South Africans now returning and great sickness among Indians my numbers are running short- “ARAGON” took sixteen hundred back “ARCADIAN” with [General Coen] Brits two thousand and several more shipments.”[Emphasis added]<sup>460</sup>

As this implies, reserves of manpower had also played a major role in his decision, for though most white units were withdrawn, not all were. Some, like the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Battalion, stayed on and were only withdrawn after reaching a critical low point in their

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<sup>452</sup> See Paice, *Tip and Run*, P.65

<sup>453</sup> Certainly compared to white Union troops

<sup>454</sup> See for example Gubler, DJ. 2004. “The changing epidemiology of yellow fever and dengue, 1900 to 2003: full circle?” in *Comparative Immunology, Microbiology and Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 27, No.5. P.319-330.

<sup>455</sup> Gubler, “The changing epidemiology of yellow fever and dengue, 1900 to 2003”, P.319-330.

<sup>456</sup> Paice, *Tip and Run*, P.65

<sup>457</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.72. This decision was likely prompted by the advice of Major General Hoskins, see Samson, *The Union Comes of Age*, P.135-137.

<sup>458</sup> JC Smuts to MC Gillet, 24 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P. 408. Baluchis were overwhelmingly drawn from the deserts of modern western Pakistan and would have had practically zero exposure to *plasmodium falciparum*, compared to a unit from Delhi for example.

<sup>459</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.141.

<sup>460</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Krige to Bourne.15 November, 1916. “Telegram:DB95/1984/9199 14 175.” Krige was Smuts' adjutant.

manning capacity in February of 1917.<sup>461</sup> The Cape Corps, in turn, was still recruiting strongly, after all, and had only had 2000 positions to fill between its two Battalions.<sup>462</sup>

Political considerations too played a role, though primarily as a sop to Imperial concerns rather than the domestic APO. Buxton was apparently satisfied with Smuts' reply to his question delivered via telegraph in April about how the Cape Corps was doing and was content to leave the matter as is until the war was over.<sup>463</sup> The APO, however, was not pleased with the situation on the Rufiji and its Johannesburg office wrote to Buxton in December noting that: "... men, irrespective of caste, colour or creed are fighting for their King and Country and should know one and only one policy alone."<sup>464</sup> "The policy," they continued, "of assigning coloured troops to areas considered dangerous to white troops is contrary to the spirit of sacrifice and determination which many sections of Her Majesty's subjects have responded to the call of their King and Country."<sup>465</sup> By then Smuts, however, was already consumed with his new role in the Imperial War Cabinet and was preparing to hand over command to his successor, Major General Hoskins who was soon replaced by General JL Van Deventer.<sup>466</sup> Smuts' decision, having been made, meant the Corps remained *in situ* on the Rufiji until late March when they were withdrawn and allowed to recover their strength and receive new drafts of troops, before being committed in October of 1917 to the attack on Lindi in southern GEA.<sup>467</sup>

In a final analysis it becomes evident that Smuts was not prepared for the medical conduct of the East African campaign. Trained as a barrister at Cambridge, Smuts' formal education and his experience with soldiering and political governance in South Africa had not prepared him for the difficult biological conditions of tropical Africa that he ultimately wound up campaigning in. When coupled with a "commando" style of military leadership that eschewed leading from the rear echelons, Smuts left the organisation of both the expedition's medical services and its logistical tail in a suboptimal state to deal with the diseases his men would face. With 77% of the Cape Corps fatalities suffered in East Africa the result of sickness,<sup>468</sup> a figure that is roughly representative of the East African expedition as a whole,<sup>469</sup> it is clear that Smuts had been too passive in preparing for the GEA environment. By the time he realised his mistakes in late September, it was already too late and the only options left to him was the wholesale evacuation of the white troops of his electorate.<sup>470</sup> That Coloured and Indian troops were left to soldier on is telling.

A further problem in German East Africa lay in the structure of the Union government, where there was no centralised Health Ministry until late 1915 that was capable of gathering scientific information and directing research.<sup>471</sup> Natalian Chief Medical Officers, for

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<sup>461</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.287.

<sup>462</sup> The formation of the Second Cape Corps is discussed below, see P.83.

<sup>463</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.87. Bourne to Smuts. 10 April, 1916. "Telegram Regarding Enslin and Cape Corps."

<sup>464</sup> SANAP. GG. 597/9/263/1. APO Johannesburg to Buxton, 6 December 1916.

<sup>465</sup> SANAP. GG. 597/9/263/1. APO Johannesburg to Buxton, 6 December 1916.

<sup>466</sup> JC Smuts to MC Gillet, 24 October 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*.

<sup>467</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.72-78.

<sup>468</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.166.

<sup>469</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>470</sup> See JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 26 September 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P.405.

<sup>471</sup> The first Minister of Health was Sir Thomas Watt

example, were noting in 1908 that Gujarati Indians- supposedly immune to malaria- were suffering fatalities in their districts.<sup>472</sup> Whether Smuts, then Colonial Secretary in Transvaal, ever heard of these cases is unclear. Other incidents followed, with the the Durban Chamber of Commerce complaining in June of 1915 to the Minister of Native Affairs- Louis Botha- that their African labourers along the Zululand coast were suffering malaria fatalities.<sup>473</sup> There is no record that Botha, still busy with the GSWA campaign and preparing as he was for both GEA and the 1915 election, ever replied. Further, any advice that Smuts or other key officials may have received from the likes of the Tuberculosis Commission prior to 1915, for example, was likely to be compromised by biases discussed above. Taken together, it can be argued that these structural features of the early Union government worked together to deprive Smuts of the information necessary to make informed decisions regarding the medical conduct of his campaign.

As for whether a “best practice” approach to campaign medicine demanded by Pike was even possible, it is important to remember the general contexts of the East African campaign. The Germans and Askari were, after all, fighting a series of tough defensive battles versus the Allies which consumed a great deal of attention and resources, in both men and materiel.<sup>474</sup> Unlike Panama, which was a narrow Isthmus where the canal works remained largely stationary, the East African campaign was fought over a vast stretch of ground over which an enormous tonnage of supplies needed to be transported to sustain 50 000 men of the Allied forces alone.<sup>475</sup> With a constantly advancing front line, Allied logistical and transportation services would have been hard pressed to keep up deliveries of quinine and mosquito netting even without the Germans having blown up the railways and bridges as they retreated.<sup>476</sup> On untarred and unmetalled roads, the relatively few and relatively unsophisticated Ford, Dodge and Studebaker trucks of the motorised transport services struggled along, frequently getting stuck in mud or breaking down thanks to harsh conditions.<sup>477</sup>

The deciding factor in this narrative is ultimately the horses, oxen and mules upon which the South African regiments relied heavily for both transport and supply. Despite the shortcomings of the East African campaign’s medical organisation and its logistical system, it is unlikely that the military authorities would have endured such losses in manpower without taking corrective action *unless* they were prevented from doing so by the crippling losses of so many draught animals. Evidence suggests for example that whilst the UDF veterinary services were prepared for viral African Horse Sickness and immunised their animals accordingly,<sup>478</sup> that the UDF was not at all cognisant of the risk that sleeping sickness posed to their horses. Whilst trypanosomiasis *had* been identified as a threat, it was only seen as such in terms of human carriers and UDF medical activities focused entirely on preventing its spread from returning soldiers to the Union.<sup>479</sup> As consequence, tsetse fly and sleeping sickness would wreak havoc on draught animals and cavalry horses. Martin, in his history of 6SAI, recounts a pitiful scene of the 6SAI’s footsoldiers trooping out past the mounted

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<sup>472</sup> South African National Archives Pietermaritzburg (Hereafter SANAPMB). II. 1/144/1670/1906. Chief Medical Officer, Natal. “Particulars of Indians who have died from Malaria 1 January to 31 May 1906”.

<sup>473</sup> SANAP. GNLB. Vol 160. 407/14. Secretary Durban Chamber of Commerce to the Minister of Native Affairs. 21 June, 1915. “Letter regarding native fatalities in Zululand due to Malaria”.

<sup>474</sup> See Paice, “Tip and Run”; Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.30-107; Katz, “A clash of military doctrine.”

<sup>475</sup> Paice, “The Suicidal System of Supply” in *Tip and Run*, P.289-298.

<sup>476</sup> Paice, “The Suicidal System of Supply” in *Tip and Run*, P.289-298.

<sup>477</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.255.

<sup>478</sup> See DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/110. Vol 1 and Vol 2. Box 184. “Proposed Innoculation of Horses.”

<sup>479</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/110. Vol 1 and Vol 2. Box 184. “Sleeping Sickness.”

cavalrymen of the 8<sup>th</sup> South African Mounted Rifles. Emaciated and malnourished themselves, the carcasses of their horses littered the road outside of Msiha.<sup>480</sup>

With transport animals dying by the tens of thousands, the Allies were forced to recruit similar numbers of Africans native to the area as porters in the Carrier Corps. Displaced from the relative safety of their coastal villages, thousands of porters died due to tropical diseases they had deliberately avoided for hundreds of years.<sup>481</sup> The portage system itself was inevitably woefully inefficient, with ten kilograms of food rice being required to deliver one kilogram of supply to the front line.<sup>482</sup> As a result, units on the front were frequently on quarter rations, with deliveries of quinine or mosquito netting being non-existent and conditions thus being ideal for malaria infection.<sup>483</sup> With Gorgas'- and indeed colonial sanitationists in general- systemic solution to tropical disease being predicated upon the building up of infrastructure and the use of medicines delivered in bulk, the pressures of war in the Tanzanian highlands had resulted instead in the collapse of that system. As a result, infection and death rates spiralled.

The situation progressively improved as railway lines were repaired and rolling stock imported from India<sup>484</sup>, but it is evident that the then standard practice of dosing horses and mules with arsenic<sup>485</sup> was woefully inadequate versus trypanosomiasis and its tsetse fly vector. Tellingly, Evans' pamphlet on Panama had, in fact, called for the then fairly revolutionary idea of 'dipping' horses, mules and oxen as advocated by Joseph Baynes in Natal.<sup>486</sup> An invention of commercial farmers who sought to protect cows and sheep in Natal from insect spread disease by covering them in insecticidal repellent, the practice was expensive but effective.<sup>487</sup> If it had been applied en masse to logistical animals in German East Africa, the logistics situation could have been mitigated to a substantial extent and the 16 000 disease casualties that the expedition suffered between January and December of 1916 could well have been reduced.

## **Difficulty and death: The Cape Corps' encounters with disease in East Africa**

Issues of disease management were far beyond the scope of most- if not all- members of the Corps' concerns as they arrived in East Africa on February the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1916. Landing in an exotic locale after a week of sea travel, a degree of wonderment and excitement is evident in the writings of both the enlisted ranks and their commanding officers. Difford describes the bustling activity at Kilindini, whilst writing of the port of Lindi<sup>488</sup>, Corporal Strydom wrote that:

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<sup>480</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.255.

<sup>481</sup> Paice highlights the extent of the civilian disaster brought about by both the Allied Carrier Corps and widespread German use of porters in "The Suicidal System of Supply" in *Tip and Run*, P.289-298.

<sup>482</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.90-94.

<sup>483</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.90-94; Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.269.

<sup>484</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.72.

<sup>485</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.255.

<sup>486</sup> WHP. A619, A7. Evans S. 1914. *Health Conidtions on the Isthmus of Panama*.

<sup>487</sup> Mwatwara, W. 2014. "'Even the calves must dip': East Coast Fever, Africans and the Imposition of Dipping Tanks in Southern Rhodesia, c.1902–1930" in *South African Historical Journal*, Vol.66, No.2. P.320-348.

<sup>488</sup> South African National Museum of Military History (Hereafter SANMMH). Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.1. Strydom's account concentrates primarily on his deployment to Lindi in southern German East Africa but the vast majority of his experiences are applicable throughout the Cape Corp's deployment in East Africa.

“... from the boat we obtained a very splendid view of the little seaport town, lying under the shades of her stately coconut palms, with their branches disturbed by a slight breeze- swaying majestically to and fro, the gradually rising range of hills standing out in relief in the background. Numerous white specks were sidled all along the slopes of these hills, these specks being the tents of our soldiers in the rest-camps down there.”<sup>489</sup>

After being brought inland by motor-launch or row-boat, the Corps was entrained for Kajaido and the frontier with German East Africa. The journey, lasting about thirty hours, brought the Cape Corps into view of Kilimanjaro and provided the Corps with their first views of the “wonderful scenery and luxuriant foliage of East Africa.”<sup>490</sup> As with Smuts, Difford himself remarked of Kilimanjaro’s beauty, writing about the “magnificent snow-capped mountain which towers, the highest peak in the African Continent, 19,350 feet above sea level. For four or five months we were not to lose sight of this great leviathan whose sublimity and ineffable grandeur impressed itself upon one more and more indelibly with every passing day.”<sup>491</sup>

Romantic notions of peaceful “safari-ing”, as Strydom put it<sup>492</sup>, were rapidly shut away as the Corps arrived in Kajaido and were at once reminded of the military context of the campaign. Preparing to march “op in die land” and “deur die bos”<sup>493</sup>, the Corps soon found itself embroiled in the campaign to encircle German troops at Arusha, south of Kilimanjaro.<sup>494</sup> Marching through thick tropical jungle, the Corps struggled on through much of early March assisting ox-wagons along the road to Moshi. The tropical heat and humidity was repeatedly interrupted by bouts of heavy rain, which turned the roads to mud and provided a fertile breeding ground for mosquitoes.<sup>495</sup> Here, the Corps experienced some of its first encounters with native Africans who emerged from the hills hoping to barter with the British expeditionary force. Bleak-faced and desperate, the Africans offered to trade everything from tropical fruit to furniture looted from the plantations in the Kilimanjaro foothills.<sup>496</sup> Difford and Strydom both express sympathy with the lot of Tanzanian civilians, Strydom noting that “the real situation was brought home to our minds when we watched the native families along the way, with their emaciated faces expressing so much of what they had suffered from the hands of the enemy.”<sup>497</sup> Strydom’s patriotic conviction that the Germans were to blame for the state of native Tanzanians aside, the march to Moshi gradually engendered a slight dip in morale that was only alleviated when the Corps entered the town on the 19<sup>th</sup>, footsore but singing.<sup>498</sup>

The Corps’ difficult march to Moshi was only the preface of what would be a period of work lasting from late March to the first fortnight of June. As line of communications troops, the

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<sup>489</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.1.

<sup>490</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45.

<sup>491</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45.

<sup>492</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.2.

<sup>493</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.2.

<sup>494</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45-50.

<sup>495</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45-50.

<sup>496</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45-50.

<sup>497</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

<sup>498</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.51.

Corps was put to work building and repairing an extensive network of roads, bridges and railways which linked Taveta, Arusha, Moshi and Kondoa Irangi; in addition to manning a series of defensive blockhouses which protected the Moshi-Taveta road from raiding Askari.<sup>499</sup> The latter task was particularly difficult, with Difford noting that Major Bagshawe and his companies were tasked with guarding a “swamp, putrid and fever infested. The rains too, were now incessant.”<sup>500</sup>

The Corps found their new environment at once beautiful but also concerning. Sergeant Daniels found the dense jungle, with its darkness and poor visibility to be unnerving<sup>501</sup>, whilst Corporal Strydom in turn clearly enjoyed marching “Along the beautiful glens, green with verdance, we wended our way, with nothing but the beauty of nature all around.”<sup>502</sup> Strydom noted the ability of Tanzanian mud to soak through boots however, and expressed his surprise when he discovered how cold a wet night beneath the jungle canopy could be.<sup>503</sup> The latter was a widespread problem as Martin notes in his history of 6SAI, and a common problem was a shortage of great-cloaks and blankets for surprisingly cold nights.<sup>504</sup> This is again indicative that Union and indeed British troops as a whole were unprepared for the exact conditions encountered in German East Africa.<sup>505</sup>

Close encounters with native wildlife too proved to be the basis for mixed feelings, with Difford noting sightings of gemsbok, rhinoceri, giraffe and lions with an initial degree of excited positivity.<sup>506</sup> Strydom’s excitement for seeing these animals- by then restricted to narrow ranges in the Union itself- is evident in his writings, but is also tempered with a fear of large predators who could potentially prove dangerous<sup>507</sup>. Snakes like the boomslang and large puffadders which inhabited foot-paths were treated with weary respect, whilst fleas, flies and mosquitoes endemic to German East Africa’s forests were understandably the focus of considerable contempt.<sup>508</sup> Dismayed by the often difficult conditions they caused, Cape Corps soldiers had to learn to live with their presence as mosquito nets and insectides for pest control around their camps was seldom available.<sup>509</sup> One parasitic insect imported from South America into Africa, the jigger flea, proved to be a considerable pest. Female jigger fleas burrow into the folds of skin between the toe and the toenail, where they feed on blood vessels and expel eggs for a period before dying.<sup>510</sup> Painful swelling accompanies this and marching with boots on is exceedingly difficult. Corps soldiers in turn responded to these fleas by turning to native porters and guides for help, who proved expert in their removal via a heated pin.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.51-54.

<sup>500</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.54.

<sup>501</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa”.

<sup>502</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

<sup>503</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

<sup>504</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.269.

<sup>505</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.269.

<sup>506</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.50.

<sup>507</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

<sup>508</sup> See Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.227-234 and Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

<sup>509</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

<sup>510</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.234.

<sup>511</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

Fleas and flies, in turn, served as vectors for other diseases that began to affect the Corps as it stayed on in the Moschi area. Latrines were difficult to construct and maintain in such a way that they did not contaminate water supplies- particularly in new camps or when on the march- and from them flies began to spread “campaign diseases” that had plagued armies for thousands of years: cholera, typhoid, diphtheria and dysentery.<sup>512</sup> Despite careful efforts by military medical authorities to construct camps in East Africa to prevent such outbreaks, sporadic epidemics did occur, particularly of dysentery. For units and men on the front-line in particular, dysentery could be the source of severe hardship.<sup>513</sup> 6SAI, for example, had at one stage completely exhausted its supply of Epsom salts and as a result its troops had to endure cramping and debilitating diarrhoea without any treatment at all.<sup>514</sup> Particularly severe cases could lead to serious dehydration and the Corps suffered a number of deaths due to dysentery.<sup>515</sup> In response to this, “water discipline” was very strictly enforced even in the dry season and drinking from stagnant pools or even slow flowing rivers was forbidden.<sup>516</sup> Cape Corps soldiers like Sergeant Daniels or Corporal Strydom, caught out at times with little to drink beneath a hot sun or in battle, complained of the “rubbery taste” of water that had been stored in rubber bladders<sup>517</sup>; or of bitter, foamy water that had been purified with chlorine tablets.<sup>518</sup> Either, however, was content to accept bad-tasting water in lieu of the alternative.

More severe than even dysentery was the effect of the host of fevers encountered by the Cape Corps in East Africa. Ranging from the mild bacterial African tick bite fever, to viral yellow- and dengue- fevers, to severe parasitic infections of *plasmodium falciparum* and *trypanosome brucei*, these diseases could be difficult to distinguish from each other at first as they all shared the symptom of debilitatingly high body temperatures.<sup>519</sup> Sweating and suffering through weakness and headaches, an infected individual could recover after a few weeks of bed rest for less severe infections, as in the case of tick bite fever.<sup>520</sup> Malaria, in turn, could progress to organ failure, starting often as it did with the kidneys. In such cases, urine would turn black-red, and as Difford notes, the Cape Corps treated cases of “blackwater fever” very seriously, with sufferers being afforded priority evacuation to field hospitals.<sup>521</sup> Malaria proved to be a major threat, with Strydom recalling of his stint in Lindi:

“We kept pressing onward, ever onward, with the boys’ great phrase “op in die land”, by way of encouragement. Though sometimes it was more discouraging than otherwise, for in most

<sup>512</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>513</sup> BNA). WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>514</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.250.

<sup>515</sup> See for example the nominal roll in Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.349-452 for a comprehensive list

<sup>516</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.250.

<sup>517</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa”.

<sup>518</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.16.

<sup>519</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.58.

<sup>520</sup> See for example Jensenius et al. 2003. “African Tick Bite Fever” in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. Vol.3, No.9. P.557-564 for a summary of tick bite fever, its symptoms and prognosis.

<sup>521</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.58.

cases it was used if one of our number happened to drop out, maybe, through weariness but often through illness. For that ravaging disease “malaria” attacks you at any moment.”<sup>522</sup>

For fever-stricken men like those around Strydom, being affected by a disease that they could not see was evidently frustrating. Resistance was an act of masculine toughness, but even so, the effects of disease could be deleterious to morale. Frustrated and “sick of the country”, Strydom and the other members of the enlisted yearned for “holidays” in the “Morogoro mountains”- that is to say high escarpments and plateaus where well established camps had better supplies and were relatively mosquito free.<sup>523</sup> In malaria-stricken areas, particularly in the wet season, the costs for staying on were usually severe. Of the 163 fatalities suffered by the Cape Corps in East Africa, 127 were the result of “disease and accidents”- and of these a quick glance through the list of those killed provided by Difford show that the vast majority were casualties caused by malaria, with dysentery also a major killer. Although nowhere near the 31:1 ratio of disease to battle casualties cited by Martin<sup>524</sup>, it is worth noting by comparison that in all of the East African campaign, the Cape Corps suffered 36 men killed and 107 men wounded in battle.<sup>525</sup> Disease had also invalidated a great many members of the Cape Corps, with Difford for example indicating that on October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1916- after a period of general rest and replenishment- that some 346 members of the Cape Corps were sick and in field hospitals- and that of these approximately 60 were awaiting evacuation.<sup>526</sup>

These figures, from the Corps’ time in the “passably comfortable”<sup>527</sup> German barracks at Morogoro in late 1916, pale in comparison to the period that they spent as lines of communication troops in the Moshi region, or in the front lines during the Rufiji campaign. By April 1916, for example, Bagshawe’s companies in the Taveta blockhouses had been dramatically weakened. “Sick parades,” Difford recalls, “constituted fully half of the regiment’s strength. At least half of the battalion was sick in hospital or in the lines.”<sup>528</sup> The let-off of rains and the Corps’ moves to the front line in July via the Pangani valley began with an improvement of the situation, with only around 200 Corps soldiers being sick.<sup>529</sup> That number soon grew back to 500, and the Corps struggled to remain at fighting strength even with the arrival of 350 new recruits at the end of that month.<sup>530</sup> When the senior chaplain for the British forces, Bishop Furse consecrated a new graveyard in Moshi in June, the Cape Corps buried their first seven disease fatalities there.<sup>531</sup> Following a late-year period of rest at Morogoro, the disease situation was about to get much worse for the Cape Corps as it launched its part of the Rufiji river campaign in mid December of 1916 with just over a thousand healthy men.<sup>532</sup>

Rufiji was a campaign marked by severe logistical difficulties. Whilst the Corps had experienced ration shortages prior to the battles there, previous difficulties had neither lasted

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<sup>522</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.16.

<sup>523</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

<sup>524</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.251.

<sup>525</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.166.

<sup>526</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.142.

<sup>527</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.68.

<sup>528</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.54.

<sup>529</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.59-61.

<sup>530</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.59-61.

<sup>531</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.59.

<sup>532</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.79.

as long or had proved so severe. With pack animals dying in their thousands and motorised transport breaking down both due to mechanical failure and drivers becoming sick,<sup>533</sup> the Cape Corps and the other units of Beves' Second Brigade found themselves having to subsist on first half, then quarter rations.<sup>534</sup> "Christmas dinner consisted of bully beef and biscuits," Difford wrote, with even tins of bully beef becoming scarce by February<sup>535</sup>. Poor rations certainly affected morale, with food and rest being an important consolation for the ranks of the enlisted. "Only a Tommy," Strydom wrote, "Could really feel the enjoyment experienced when the day came to a close- but not when you have to do guard for the night- to have a mug of black coffee with some bully and biscuits, to satisfy his appetite before he lay himself down to rest for the night."<sup>536</sup> Going without either caused grumbling but could be endured, Strydom continues, as long as "there was a point to it all and we could fight the Germans."<sup>537</sup>

Morale aside, Difford argued afterwards that there was a strong link between the growing malnourishment of his men and their rates of illness in the malaria-stricken Rufiji region.<sup>538</sup> Martin and Difford both note that, in order to supplement their meagre diets, Union soldiers of all kinds frequently butchered any logistics draught animals that had died.<sup>539</sup> Wildlife was hunted in small amounts, and pieces of equipment or currency was traded with native Tanzanians for fruits like paw-paw or banana.<sup>540</sup> Such desperate measures, like eating spoiled meat from a day old carcass or eating unripened fruit, almost inevitably resulted in occasional stomach ailments which no doubt contributed to an already severe lack of medical supplies.<sup>541</sup> Uniforms too were beginning to disintegrate, with boots being a steady source of complaints by the Cape Corps. Given the difficulty Difford had experienced sourcing 1000 pairs of boots and enough adequate hats even in the Union in late 1915, it is not difficult to imagine how much more difficult supply problems were proving on the Rufiji.<sup>542</sup> The situation was not without its moments of levity, however, with the Corps' Christmas puddings finally arriving in February. "Glorious," the Corps' padre, Captain Alan Earp-Jones, is reported as having remarked.<sup>543</sup>

It was a small consolation for the Corps as a whole, who following the successful defence of the bridgehead on the opposite side of the Rufiji river, had come to occupy the high ground at Mpangas and Kibongo with the hope of limiting their exposure to malaria and mosquitoes as the rainy season set in at late January.<sup>544</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Morris led a small column in skirmishes that month, whilst the majority of the regiment huddled around fires, in an attempt to keep their clothes dry and mosquitoes at bay.<sup>545</sup> Disease casualties rapidly began to mount, with their neighbours in the brigade, 6SAI, being evacuated on February the 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>546</sup> By the end

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<sup>533</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.286.

<sup>534</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.284.

<sup>535</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.79.

<sup>536</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.4.

<sup>537</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.4.

<sup>538</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.70.

<sup>539</sup> See Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.213 and Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.83.

<sup>540</sup> See Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.269 and Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.83.

<sup>541</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.269

<sup>542</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence. GP 2, Vol 3. Box 899. Lt Col Morris to O.C. Ordnance. December 8, 1915.

<sup>543</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.92.

<sup>544</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.90-92.

<sup>545</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.90-92.

<sup>546</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.269. 6SAI had already been campaigning since late 1915 and had fought through the Kilimanjaro battles, the Pangani valley and across the Nguru and Uluguru mountains. By this

of that month, the Corps's then medical officer- Captain RP McNeil- had ordered some 75% of the Corps evacuated, and by March the 12<sup>th</sup>, Morris marched out of Rufiji for Morogoro with a "group of seventy half-starved men"- the only remains out of a force that had been over one thousand strong three months earlier.<sup>547</sup>

As discussed above, the general conduct, organisation and logistical strength of the British expedition's medical services was ill suited to deal with the length and breadth of the exposure of so many men to malaria and other tropical diseases at any one time. Rufiji in particular had taxed the Cape Corps medical services to breaking point, with Captain McNeil, of the South African Medical Corps, struggling to deal with literally hundreds of cases at any one time.<sup>548</sup> McNeil faced enormous problems in manpower alone, with only five Cape Corps sergeants to assist him, along with whatever details of stretcher-bearers could be arranged from local British camps or within the unit as it was being ravaged by malaria.<sup>549</sup>

Supplies of quinine, in turn, do not seem to have been issued to the Corps at the battalion level in any meaningful amounts.<sup>550</sup> Prophylactic- that is to say, preventative- use of quinine at the recommended dose of five grains a day was not widespread in East Africa until well into 1918<sup>551</sup>, and as a result the Cape Corps unsurprisingly suffered nearly universally from malarial infection at Rufiji. In contrast, 6SAI- the Corps' neighbours in Beves 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade during the Rufiji advance- had been well stocked with quinine for most of its campaign.<sup>552</sup> Uniquely for a unit in East Africa, its commander, Lt Colonel Molyneux, had paid for a battalion's worth of quinine stock out of his own pocket. As a result his men were far better protected than average and it is no coincidence that of all of the white units, 6SAI remained in action for the longest as a result of the protection against malaria this prophylaxis afforded them.<sup>553</sup> Without a similar recourse to their neighbours, the Corps could not even begin treatment of acute cases *in situ* and was reliant instead on referring disease casualties to nearby field hospitals for treatment- or even evacuation in the most severe cases.<sup>554</sup>

The journey many evacuees had to take out of Rufiji, a march of roughly 120km to Morogoro, was often fraught with danger and discomfort. With supplies running low, evacuees from the Cape Corps often had to make do with as little as a cup of rice for the journey- with the proviso that they may be able to top off their supply from south bound logistics convoys.<sup>555</sup> Headed by officers that were themselves often fever-ridden, Cape Corps columns consisted of 30-50 men, with the most healthy carrying the most severe cases northwards on stretchers- sometimes but not always with the assistance of Indian Medical Corps stretcher bearers or porters from the Carrier Corps. Progress unsurprisingly was often slow, with malnourished and diseased men struggling to march even a third of the 10-15

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stage, their own quinine supply, discussed below, had all been exhausted and the battalion began to take unsustainable disease losses.

<sup>547</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.92-98.

<sup>548</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.339. See also P.92-98.

<sup>549</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.339. See also P.92-98.

<sup>550</sup> No mention of quinine is found at all in Difford's history and no mention is made of it in the UDF folders on Cape Corps requirements, see DODA. Secretary of Defence. GP 2, Vol 3. Box 899.

<sup>551</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/222. Box 185. Surgeon General to Assistant Secretary for Defence. 15 February, 1918. "Proper use of quinine and mosquito nets."

<sup>552</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.248.

<sup>553</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.248.

<sup>554</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.92-98.

<sup>555</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.92-98.

miles a day expected of healthy troops.<sup>556</sup> Exhausted, demoralised and stricken with fever dreams and hallucinations, men that fell out of the columns and left the road were at serious risk of getting lost- with fatal consequences. Strydom recalls that men were terrified of becoming “‘Leeuw-kos’, as much as to say, that you’ll become the Lion’s prey, if you drop out.” “Well,” he continued, “you know stragglers we always had, as with every regiment, and what a job the rear guard had to urge these fellows on, often trying on them the motto, but in Dutch, of ‘nil desperandum’.”<sup>557</sup>

Upon arrival in Morogoro, patients were started on courses of quinine, with the worst off being evacuated to the Union for treatment there. Taken by rail to Dar Es Salaam, as Difford himself was in December of 1916, disease casualties were embarked on hospital ships that were carefully screened to prevent deserters from sneaking back into the Union aboard such vessels.<sup>558</sup> Relief at having made it that far was tempered with the fact that severe cases were not entirely safe yet, with Difford noting at least three cases of Cape Corps soldiers that died of their illnesses before making it back to the Union between March and July of 1917. Privates Roberts, Hamet and May were all buried at sea after having died of dysentery, pneumonia and dysentery respectively.<sup>559</sup> For the rest, however, arrival in field hospitals and evacuation led to dramatically increased odds of survival and spirits improved substantially as a result. During his voyage aboard the hospital ship *Oxfordshire* in December, for example, Difford and other Cape Corps soldiers aboard were present at a Boxing Day concert put on by various convalescent patients aboard the ship.<sup>560</sup>

With treatment finally being received for malaria, Cape Corps soldiers began long periods of recovery characterised by frequent bouts of recurring attacks. Doses of five grains- 320 milligrams- a day were standard practice until laboratory samples of a patient’s blood examined beneath a microscope showed no more malarial parasites to be present.<sup>561</sup> In East Africa, rumours and suspicions about quinine itself persisted- with it bearing a surface similarity in appearance to the arsenic logistics horses were being dosed with.<sup>562</sup> The drug was also prescribed with supposed severe side effects ranging from muscle twitches to impotence.<sup>563</sup> Whether these rumours had any effects on Cape Corps’s compliance with doctor’s orders regarding the consumption of the drug is hard to discern. However, given that their demobilisation was contingent on having a blood test be clear of malarial parasites, it is not a stretch to suggest that compliance with quinine treatment regimens were good.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.92-98.

<sup>557</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.4. Nil desperandum: “do not despair.”

<sup>558</sup> See for example the extremely precise and strict embarkation orders Difford received when travelling back to Dar Es Salaam. SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Captain Poe, 20 March, 1917. “Embarkation Order No.20.6.11.9 dated 20.3.17”.

<sup>559</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.142.

<sup>560</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. 26 December, 1917. “Concert Programme”.

<sup>561</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

<sup>562</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.19.

<sup>563</sup> See, for example, JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 31 August 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. P. 398 and Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.19. Neither are listed side-effects of quinine consumption.

<sup>564</sup> BNA. WO 141/31. WW Pike. 1918. *REPORT on MEDICAL AND SANITARY MATTERS in GERMAN EAST AFRICA 1917*. Compiled by Dr Anne Samson. Available online: <http://gweaa.com/medical-project/the-pike-report-on-german-east-africa/>

The effects of, and experiences of, such treatment regimens are well elaborated in the Union Defence Force's files detailing medical boards, councils which determined the health of individual soldiers and whether they could be returned to service or discharged. Two cases provide fascinating cross sections of individual soldiers affected by the Rufiji campaign. The first, Private Abraham Adams, a 21 year old labourer enlisted at Cape Town on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1916, arrived in East Africa just in time for the Rufiji offensive.<sup>565</sup> A record of his medical board, dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1917, notes that he "had nine (9) attacks of fever in East Africa. Was in Hospital 5 times. Was sent from East Africa to No:2 General Hospital Maitland. Was there five weeks. Last attack a week ago. He states he has had 2 months leave in June and July." The board recommended his discharge, noting that his "disability had not been aggravated by" either "(a) Intemperance" or "(b) Misconduct". Whilst malaria represented a temporary loss of earning capability of 15%, the board noted that with treatment and one month's worth of recuperative leave that he would be back to normal health soon and thus did not qualify for a pension.<sup>566</sup>

Private John van Aarde, a 28 year-old gardener from Salt River, in turn, was cleared for a return to active service on the December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1917.<sup>567</sup> Having been stricken by both dysentery and fever in Rufiji, van Aarde was evacuated from East Africa after seven severe bouts of malaria and arrived back in the Cape Corps' Convalescent Camp in Kimberley on May the 19<sup>th</sup>, 1917. After a 14 day stay, he was released- presumably back into service in the Cape Corps depot- before being readmitted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December. Cleared of malaria after this last attack, van Aarde returned to active duty and was not demobilised until the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, 1919.<sup>568</sup>

Van Aarde's return to active service illustrates a point that Difford makes great pains to illustrate in the official history, namely that of the powers of endurance the Corps displayed. Although the First, and later Second Battalion of the Cape Corps would be affected by disease and malaria for the continuation of their stay in East Africa, for many Cape Corps veterans the Rufiji campaign was the worst and most defining single portion of their experiences there. Difford, writing of events he had not experienced himself but had been told of in great detail by his fellow officers and the enlisted, summed up the early months of 1917 thusly:

"The past few months proved to be the most strenuous that the battalion experienced during their whole four years on active service. Much harder marching was in store for us a few months later in the chase after Naumann and Zingel, and we saw much heavier fighting in the Lindi area in the following November and in Palestine in September, 1918, but for general hardship and discomfort, semi-starvation and the ravages of disease, the Rufiji campaign stood alone. Indeed one questions if any of the millions who took up arms between 1914 and

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<sup>565</sup> DODA. Medical Board Files, WW1. File number 53394. 3 November, 1917. "Proceedings of a Medical Board of an Invalid: Private Adams, James. Cape Corps, Force number 2556."

<sup>566</sup> DODA. Medical Board Files, WW1. File number 53394. 3 November, 1917. "Proceedings of a Medical Board of an Invalid: Private Adams, James. Cape Corps, Force number 2556." See the other files on his case, numbered 61284, 45900 and 37091.

<sup>567</sup> DODA. Medical Board Files, WW1. File number 56142. 19 February, 1917. "Proceedings of a Medical Board of an Invalid: Private van Aarde, John. Cape Corps, Force number 1615." See the other files on his case, numbered 91089.

<sup>568</sup> DODA. Medical Board Files, WW1. File number 56142. 19 February, 1917. "Proceedings of a Medical Board of an Invalid: Private van Aarde, John. Cape Corps, Force number 1615."

1918 on behalf of the British Empire, endured much greater hardships than those who campaigned on the Rufiji River in 1916-17.”<sup>569</sup>

Difford’s conjecture that the Corps had perhaps endured the greatest hardships in the war aside, the above is illustrative of an attitude touched on before- namely that Cape Corps soldiers like Strydom viewed disease as a hardship to be endured. Whilst it is true that a substantial number of Corps soldiers, like Private Adams, did not return to East Africa after their demoralising and debilitating experiences there after being discharged by medical boards, the reverse is also true. As illustrated by van Aarde’s medical board results even those that had been severely affected by malaria could, after rehabilitation, be returned to the front-lines for service in theatres of war. Given the surplus of men generated by recruitment and also by medical treatment which turned casualties back into able-bodied Corps soldiers, these medical boards likely functioned as a type of de facto recruiting board which sought to screen all but the most physically able, skilled and motivated Corps soldiers from returning to the Battalions. Corps soldiers like Sergeants Daniels and Schoor, and Lance Corporals Strydom and Jordan all show in their writings a desire to fight despite the hardships and diseases they had faced.<sup>570</sup> This desire to fight, to test their mettle and show their toughness and worth as soldiers and men, as argued earlier, is a good point upon which to return to a lens of masculine theory for the analysis of the more militant aspects of the Cape Corps’ service in the First World War.



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<sup>569</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.94.

<sup>570</sup> See: SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”; SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa”; SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yakicibo Patrol 20-1-17”; SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps’ fight at Square Hill Sept.18 to 21, 1918”.

## Chapter Four: Pioneers and infantrymen; the Cape Corps labours and fights

When the Cape Corps arrived in East Africa in early 1916, General Jan Smuts' contention that they were of "dubious" military value relegated them to the role of "line of communications" troops.<sup>571</sup> Effectively reduced to armed labourers and guards for the East African expedition's logistics train, the Corps spent three months working in the Moshi, Arusha and Taveta area building roads and railways while the British expedition waited out the rainy season in the beginning of the year.<sup>572</sup> As grumbling and discontent spread through the lower ranks, the Cape Corps' "most useful work" began to be noticed by the East African commander. Short of Pioneer units, when it was suggested to him that a second Battalion of the Cape Corps could be raised in late 1916, Smuts acceded to the request and for a few weeks it seemed likely that a second Cape Corps battalion would be raised, this one designated from the outset as a unit of Pioneers.<sup>573</sup>

While this was happening, what would be retroactively termed the First Battalion Cape Corps was being pushed into the front-lines after a July re-organisation of the British expedition. Sporadic and spurious contact with German and Askari skirmishers in the early months of 1916 was replaced by a period characterised by dangerous patrolling in dense Tanzanian jungle and bush interrupted intermittently by artillery bombardments and the hazards of land-mines. This type of guerrilla warfare would be supplemented by late 1916 by the Cape Corps' first "big scrap" at the Rufiji River, followed in November of 1917 by the battle for Lindi in southern German East Africa.

Together with its final major battle in September of 1918 at Square Hill in Palestine, Rufiji, Lindi and Square Hill constitute the three major battles in which the Cape Corps was engaged during the First World War. Often impersonal affairs fought at a distance through the aid of the Maxim machine gun, Stokes bomb-thrower and Lee-Enfield rifle, these battles *did* at times become desperate encounters fought with bayonet, knife and fist. Moral standards from peace-time and for normal society were suspended on the battlefield in order to fight and kill the enemy, whilst in the same turn German, Askari and Turkish bullets and bombs resulted in serious injuries to be survived and deaths to be mourned.

This chapter focuses on Cape Corps experiences in East Africa and Palestine as their involvement in the war was steadily escalated from their initial employment as bridge-builders and railwaymen- the "handymen" of the British expedition- to the role of front-line soldiers heavily engaged in the fighting at Lindi and Square Hill. Its frame of analysis hinges on two twinned approaches. The first relies on Conellian approaches to masculine history, primarily as a framework to attempt to explain what propelled and motivated the men of the Cape Corps to engage in fighting that was at times as dangerous and ferocious as what was being encountered in the European theatres of the First World War. The second approach is patterned on that used by military historian John Keegan in his seminal work *The Face of*

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<sup>571</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.18. Smuts to Buxton. 11 April, 1916.

<sup>572</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.56

<sup>573</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Beck, M to Botha, L. 7 December, 1916. "Telegram: Your wire of the 5<sup>th</sup>....". See P. 83.

*Battle*<sup>574</sup>, where Keagan fused traditional histories of battle with first-hand accounts of soldiers to create a comprehensive narrative of soldier's experiences of fighting.<sup>575</sup>

These approaches are necessary responses to the nature of the first-hand accounts contained within the Difford Collection, whose authors heavily emphasised fighting and campaigning in their recollections- likely in response to Difford's solicitations for accounts of such. As this chapter will illustrate, narratives provided by Cape Corps soldiers like Strydom, Daniels and Hendricks contain two universal themes; namely that that fighting was difficult, dirty, physically demanding, and incredibly dangerous work, and that the Corps proved itself in battle and conducted itself with pride. This chapter will argue that, working in concert, these sources support narrative themes established in the first two chapters and suggest that for the Cape Corps, battles fought in East Africa were the culmination of aspirations to demonstrate their masculinity. Beyond this, as consequence of traumas suffered and battlefield dangers faced together, sections of the Cape Corps were bound together by experiences which resulted in true internalisation of the Cape Corps identity. Considered together, Cape Corps recollections of campaigning and heavy battles are indicative that, for individuals, these events were life-changing and as such this chapter seeks to comprehensively examine recollections contained within the Difford Collection. They underpin a compelling narrative of hardships that were, for the most part, endured with bravery and add considerable human depth to the Cape Corps' historiography.

## **The Cape Corps in Moshi, Taveta and Arusha**

Upon their arrival in Kilindini, Mombassa's major port, on February the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1916, the Cape Corps was assigned to Major-General JM Stewart's 1<sup>st</sup> East African Division, as part of its 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade under the command of Brigadier-General Sheppard.<sup>576</sup> Their immediate brigade neighbours included the 25<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers, the 129<sup>th</sup> Baluchis and the 29<sup>th</sup> Punjabis. Despite being "keen as mustard"<sup>577</sup>, the Cape Corp's desire to engage in fighting was disappointed bitterly when their first orders were received. They were to act as the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's rear-guard as it swept west around Kilimanjaro, with the division's Baluchi regiment taking the lead in seizing the heights at Ngare Nairobi.<sup>578</sup> Smuts' contention that the Corps was still very raw and of little military value had clearly influenced both Sheppard and Stewart and as the 1<sup>st</sup> East African Division entered German territory, the Cape Corps was last, following behind even the division's transport columns.<sup>579</sup> The main South African effort would, in turn, be directed against the bulk of the German forces to the East of Kilimanjaro.<sup>580</sup>

When Sheppard's column attempted to outflank the Ngare Nairobi position via the Ngare Nanjuki swamp, the Corps completed a march of approximately thirty miles to support this

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<sup>574</sup> Keagan, *The Face of Battle*.

<sup>575</sup> This chapter does *not* represent an attempt at a comprehensive military history of the battles of Lindi or of Square Hill, as its focus is far too narrow. The Cape Corps was but one unit engaged in these battles and a distinct historiographical gap still exists to fill in regards to their complexity both on the battlefield and as events where varied troops of the British Empire fought side by side including Welsh Fusiliers and numerous troops from the British Raj.

<sup>576</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45

<sup>577</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.1.

<sup>578</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45

<sup>579</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.45

<sup>580</sup> See for example Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.294.

maneuver. “This was a very trying march,” as Difford recalls, “as the transport was continually stopping for several minutes at a time... we had been on the move for sixteen hours with only a halt of two hours during the night. There was no water, but more than a sufficiency of sand and extreme heat.”<sup>581</sup> Encamped there for the night, the Cape Corps came under attack for the first time. Stray shots from an Askari raid rang through their camp, and in response bayonets were affixed and orders passed around to prepare to open fire. Though the raid was driven off by the Baluchis without the Corps needing to fight, Difford noted with pride that “the men behaved with exemplary coolness, taking up their positions in the trenches quietly and calmly.”<sup>582</sup>

By early March, Stewart’s division had swept aside the majority of German forces in the Moshi area and was marching hard to meet up with the rest of the expedition’s forces south of Kilimanjaro, in the Arusha and Moshi region. The Cape Corps followed on, receiving orders to assist one of the division’s baggage trains consisting of some 40 wagons and carts pulled along by oxen. As the March rains began to fall- reaching “some 20 inches in April!” as Smuts exclaimed<sup>583</sup>- the roads through the Kilimanjaro foothills became almost impassable with mud. The situation was much exacerbated by German demolition of metalled road-surfaces and bridges and one of the major reasons for the Corps’ slow progress was its role in getting logistics carts and wagons through flooding rivers and streams.<sup>584</sup> Thick with mud and with most of their clothing soaked through, grumbling was inevitable. As Corporal Strydom wrote:

“How the CO was praised during the day, when he granted us the usual 10 minutes halt after a 3 or 4 mile trek. But quite different were the remarks heard when the whistle sounded for the fall-in again, such as his (the CO) not considering our weariness and the weight of the packs we have to bear, whereas he carries practically nothing. These remarks were much more frequent when the day was hot and the trek long.”<sup>585</sup>

The Corps’ arrival in Moshi was but the beginning of a long period of labour for the unit that was to last until July. Headquartered in the military camp outside the town nicknamed “New” Moshi, the Corps was partially placed at the service of the expedition’s engineering and pioneer corps and partially detailed to guarding a chain of blockhouses between Moshi and Taveta.<sup>586</sup> Over the next few weeks, hundreds of Cape Corpsmen worked on resurfacing roads and repairing bridges which formed a network between the three major northern towns, the heart of British East Africa, and the front line. The Cape Corps’ work on the road to Kondo Irangi played a major part in keeping the corridor to General Van Deventer’s mounted brigade open as a major battle raged there, and their efforts were not unnoticed by men like the commander of the South African Pioneers, Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) JH Dobson.<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.47.

<sup>582</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.49. Difford and others make great pains to highlight how unbothered the Cape Corps acted under fire, see P.93.

<sup>583</sup> JC Smuts to SM Smuts, 26 March 1916 in *Selections from the Smuts Papers II*. Hancock & Van Der Poel (Eds). 1966. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. P. 351

<sup>584</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.49-51.

<sup>585</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.2.

<sup>586</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.53-56.

<sup>587</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

Dobson, a General Manager of the Johannesburg Tramways in civilian life<sup>588</sup>, would come into close contact with the Cape Corps again as they were employed repairing rail lines demolished by the retreating Germans.<sup>589</sup> In one instance, the Cape Corps assisted in repairing the railway line between Taveta and Kahe, which Difford notes was “a huge saving of time and labour, particularly as it was then the middle of the rainy season and transport difficulties had been immense.”<sup>590</sup> Motorised trucks could take three or four days by road to reach Kahe from Taveta, getting easily stuck in the swampy and boggy ground. Unable to support heavier trains at first, the Pioneer Corps improvised a light train from a 1912 Studebaker motor car and four light trolleys. Driven by Cape Corps Private IM Adams, the train regularly made daily return journeys between the towns.<sup>591</sup>

This type of work provoked substantial grumbling from the ranks of some of the enlisted. Corporal Strydom, writing at the conclusion of the fighting in Lindi in November 1917, wrote that: “Many were the rumors about the camp the next day.”<sup>592</sup> The mood turned sour and glum when one rumor suggested that “Our CO now considered a change in the programme, this meant a reversion to our earlier occupation, that is road making.”<sup>593</sup> For the enlisted of the Cape Corps- on deployment for 22 months by then- such a return to their earlier labouring role would have represented a substantial slide backwards from a hard fought campaign to earn recognition as frontline fighting men. Cape Corps soldiers had, after all, volunteered for an infantry battalion and the masculine opportunity that accompanied such war work; labouring as mere road-makers had been precisely the station that at least some had hoped to elevate themselves from. In the case of Lindi and Strydom, when Colonel Morris did appear and issued orders, the ugly rumors caused by camp malaise were dispelled at an instant. “How great was the joy,” Strydom recalled, “on the day, when our orders we got to pack-up, to retrace our steps, homeward bound.”<sup>594</sup>

Dobson and Difford, in turn, seem to have had different opinions of the Cape Corps’ labouring work. Difford, who seems to have taken up a more positive and proud position of the Corps’ time as lines of communication troops, sums up the March-July period thusly:

“Having assisted to make and repair this branch line, build blockhouses, repair bridges... [etc] the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps may justly claim to have performed *most useful work* in opening up communications from Kilindini to Moshi and, via Kahe, east towards the coast in the direction of Tanga, in which area our forces were now located until such time as weather conditions permitted the following up of the enemy southwards [...] The weather at this time was so bad that, but for this most opportune through rail communication, our forces in this area would have fared ill indeed, if they had in fact not actually starved.” (Emphasis added)<sup>595</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.70.

<sup>589</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.56.

<sup>590</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.56.

<sup>591</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.56.

<sup>592</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.21.

<sup>593</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.21.

<sup>594</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.21. The Cape Corps was returning back to the Union for a brief period of rest and re-organisation, and would be sent to Egypt in early 1918 as part of the Palestinian campaign.

<sup>595</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.56

Such feedback appears to have steadily gained traction with Smuts. Writing back to Secretary of Defence Bourne via his adjutant Krige in April 1916, Smuts had advised Bourne that the Cape Corps had been employed as Lines of Communication troops and repeated the line yet again that he had been “doubtful about their military value and would not ask for more than drafts to replace casualties.”<sup>596</sup> By mid-November that year, however, Smuts telegraphed home and conceded that “with many thousands of South Africans now returning and great sickness among Indians my numbers are running short.”<sup>597</sup> The telegraph, sent in response to yet another enquiry about raising more Coloured troops, was headed with a simple concession: “Yes another Cape Corps Battalion will be useful.”<sup>598</sup> The following day, on November the 16<sup>th</sup>, Smuts added that he thought, “additional Cape Corps Battalion(s) you are raising might at once be raised Pioneer Battalion under Engineer Officers and [when] trained either release 61<sup>st</sup> Indian Pioneers now with me and wanted abroad or proceed direct to Europe. If necessary Officers would be supplied from SA Pioneers.”<sup>599</sup>

Smuts had enquired as early as March of the senior Royal Engineer officer in East Africa, Brigadier-General Dealy, about a way to raise the numbers of pioneer units available to him—particularly as a means of repairing broken rail-way lines and otherwise improving lines of supply between the front lines and the East African Force’s supply bases in British East Africa.<sup>600</sup> The Cape Corps, engaged in precisely this kind of work, had in turn impressed the senior South African member of the East African Force’s engineering contingent, Major Dobson, whose consultations with Smuts likely played a persuasive role in changing his stance.<sup>601</sup> Smuts and Botha, in turn, used this opportunity to recast future iterations of the Cape Corps as Pioneers: that is to say *combat-capable* engineer-soldiers that were not generally expected to win battles but instead provide invaluable engineering and construction support.<sup>602</sup> This set the new battalion of the Cape Corps aside as different from the majority of other Union soldiering units that were either infantry, artillery or cavalry but nevertheless acknowledged them as armed fighting men.<sup>603</sup> In many ways, this stance is reflective of Smuts and others’ contentions regarding the role of different races in labour, with the Coloureds of the Cape Corps afforded a special, intermediate role as semi-skilled ‘artisans’ within the Pioneer battalions.<sup>604</sup> As Albert Grundlingh notes in *War and Society*, this contention fit in with contemporary ideas of “racial roles” in the Union, with contemporary sociologist Maurice Evans noting for example that “To plough, to dig, to hoe, to fetch and carry, to cook- all laborious and menial toil is the duty of the black man. The average white

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<sup>596</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.18. Smuts to Bourne. 11 April, 1916

<sup>597</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Krige to Bourne. 15 November, 1916. “Telegram: DB95/1984/9199 14 175”

<sup>598</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Krige to Bourne. 15 November, 1916. “Telegram: DB95/1984/9199 14 175”

<sup>599</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Krige to Bourne. 16 November, 1916. “Telegram: DB95/1984/9199 12 214”

<sup>600</sup> SANAP. A1. Vol 113. No.60. Dealy to Smuts. 22 March, 1916. “Strength of the Engineers with the Army in the Field.”

<sup>601</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

<sup>602</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

<sup>603</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Beck, M to Botha, L. 7 December, 1916. “Telegram: Your wire of the 5<sup>th</sup>...”

<sup>604</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

man would consider it degrading to be seen doing any of these things.”<sup>605</sup> Coloureds, to use Mohammed Adhikari’s model, were again being pushed into positions of intermediacy between the two poles.

Smuts’ change of heart prompted a flurry of activity back in the Union over the December period as recruitment efforts got underway in the Cape. Dobson was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, placed in charge of the new battalion, and began gathering the necessary officers with appropriate engineering backgrounds.<sup>606</sup> Smuts, in the meanwhile had enquired as to whether enough white NCOs could be spared for the new battalion. The undersecretary of defence, Bedford, replied that there was a shortage of such men and that it was probable that the new battalion would be raised along the same lines as the First Battalion- that is to say with Coloured NCOs.<sup>607</sup> The debate swung back and forth, with even a mixed NCO structure flouted briefly before it was decided that the Second Battalion would be staffed purely with white NCOs. Lieutenant Colonel Morris, hearing of this, wrote with annoyance to the Director of War Recruiting to criticise the move, noting that in the use of Coloured NCOs had “worked well” in his 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion and the decision would prove to be detrimental to the development of Coloured military skills as well as to morale in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion.<sup>608</sup> By then a *fait accompli*, Morris’ protestations did nothing to affect the outcome of the decision.

Other considerations and issues began to emerge. In contrast to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion- which was formally an infantry formation but had been used as a pioneer group- the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Cape Corps would be raised as an official Pioneer Battalion with its officer cadre made up specifically of army engineers. As such, questions were raised about whether the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion would be recognised as a full unit of the British Army’s Royal Engineers on the one hand, or as a unit of the UDF’s engineering corps on the other.<sup>609</sup> Either post would have conferred a substantial degree of prestige to the new unit, as well as improved rates of pay for both officers and the ranks of the enlisted. An issue first raised by Dobson, it was hastily decided that the rates of pay would be identical to that of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion for reasons of both “consistency and morale in either unit.”<sup>610</sup> As a formal Pioneer unit, it was expected that the new 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion would be equipped also with far more substantial construction equipment than the 1<sup>st</sup> had ever been issued with, along with explosives for cutting through rock.<sup>611</sup> Faced with these complications, the formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion stalled, prompting a frustrated Dobson to write to the then Director of War recruiting, Colonel Price, on the 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1917. The beginning of the letter read thusly:

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<sup>605</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.25

<sup>606</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

<sup>607</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18330. Box 42. Morris to The Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 10 March, 1917. “Letter on NCOs.”

<sup>608</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18330. Box 42. Morris to The Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 10 March, 1917. “Letter on NCOs.”

<sup>609</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

<sup>610</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.”

<sup>611</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Chief of Ordnance to Officer Commanding, Union Imperial Service Details. No date. “Telegram: Explosives, special Instruments and Tools re 2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battalion Cape Corps.”

“Sir,

Captain Barlow [Dobson’s adjutant and his second in command] and I have received numerous cables of enquiry from the Officers and men of the S.A. Pioneers and other Officers relative to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Cape Corps Pioneers. We have waited and not yet replied until something definite has been arranged, but as a matter of courtesy it is now felt that a reply should be sent at once.”<sup>612</sup>

Undersecretary of Defence Bedford responded on February the 22<sup>nd</sup>, asking the General Headquarters in East Africa to “Inform Pioneer companies Dodoma that raising 2<sup>nd</sup> Batn [sic] Pioneers Cacorps cancelled. Also inform Twist, Guinness, Dobson and Barlow received numerous cables, regret delay.”<sup>613</sup> The reasons for this cancellation were never explained but it is likely that Botha and the defence authorities, when realising the costs and complications of raising the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion as a Pioneer unit decided that a unit patterned on the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion would be preferable. Dobson remained in East Africa, whilst the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was raised instead as a regular infantry formation under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Flindt and his second in command, Major JW Robertson.<sup>614</sup> Retaining its white NCO structure and replacing Dobson- a man who can be reasonably gauged as having been somewhat sympathetic to Coloured interests- with Flindt would have serious consequences for the morale and discipline of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, and the unit would prove to be troublesome for the brief spell of its existence.<sup>615</sup>

## Patrolling through the Fog of War

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had, in the meanwhile, been engaged in dramatic shift in the nature of their East African experiences. With the appointment of Major-General Hoskins as the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> East African Division in June, the Cape Corps was ordered south with the rest of the division’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. Although still called on to perform “pioneer” duties from time to time, the East Africa Force’s gradually worsening personnel situation had propelled the Cape Corps into a definite front-line role alongside the 25<sup>th</sup> Royal Fusiliers, the 129<sup>th</sup> Punjabis and a battery of the South African Field Artillery.<sup>616</sup> Pushing south, the Corps experienced German shelling at Lukigara, before encamping at their new headquarters at German Bridge. June and July would prove to be a far more dangerous period for the Corps as far as the risk of combat was concerned, with German and Askari raids striking north in a bid to slow the East African Force’s advance on Morogoro.<sup>617</sup> Skirmishes and sniping were common and German rear-guard actions could at times be fierce and very hard fought. To counter these moves and to safeguard the major camp at German Bridge, the Cape Corps was sent out on patrols to secure the countryside as best as was possible.<sup>618</sup>

It was a difficult and often thankless task. Terrain in German East Africa varied from dry and fairly open bushland to dense and humid jungles. The environment around Massinga- south of German Bridge- was of the latter, broken up by occasional expanses of elephant grass that

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<sup>612</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Price. 20 February, 1917. “Letter: Captain Barlow and I have received....”

<sup>613</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Bedford to UNECA. 22 February, 1917. “Telegram: Inform Pioneer Companies Dodoma....”

<sup>614</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.67.

<sup>615</sup> See Chapter Five for a discussion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion’s difficulties, P.115.

<sup>616</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.59.

<sup>617</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.59.

<sup>618</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

could grow up to nine feet (three meters) in height.<sup>619</sup> In this environment, rapid communication between disparate groups of men scattered across the countryside was almost impossible, with heliograph signalling still being the dominant means of communication between battalions and even brigades.<sup>620</sup> Wireless transmitters at this stage still weighed hundreds of kilograms and were impractical as means of communication save for at the highest levels of army coordination, and whilst telephones were useful for major battles, it was impossible to lay wires enabling individual patrols to readily communicate with their home bases or other patrols.<sup>621</sup> In “close-in” environments where it was difficult to see past fifty meters, monkeys and other local wild-life provoked nervous reactions.<sup>622</sup> With it being difficult to discern British khaki from German khaki in the shadows of Tanzanian fig trees, what Von Clausewitz had called the “fog of war” could easily set in, with patrollers uncertain of where potential enemies were, and with friendly forces only reachable by runner.<sup>623</sup>

Although this disadvantage in situational awareness was gradually reduced through the use of local hunters and trackers employed as scouts by the British, German Askari were able to exploit the initial inexperience of the British expedition in jungle warfare to cut telephone wires, skirmish, snipe, and plant early generations of land-mine relatively at will for much of June and early July in the Cape Corps’ area of operations.<sup>624</sup>

The laying of land mines in particular provoked intense counter-patrolling by the Cape Corps. Sergeant PD Schoor recalls how “On the 18-7-16 I got the order to get myself and others ready to patrol the road from Massinga Lake under Lt Hossack- a distance of 8 miles. We left at 6pm that night and after hearing the all clear signal for the last time passed into the jungle. We heard rapid fire soon after and hurried off the road and waited until everything was quiet again.”<sup>625</sup> What followed next was a confusing series of events where Schoor’s patrol heard a series of explosions and distant gunfire. Convinced that the enemy was close, Lieutenant Hossack ordered the patrol to sweep towards their camp at Lukigara, hoping to trap the Askari between themselves and the camp’s picket line manned by Indian troops. “Sgt, said the Lieutenant,” Schoor wrote, “The Indians might find us so let me go forward and warn them of the patrol.”<sup>626</sup> Schoor accompanied Hossack forward, creeping slowly so as to not give away their position to any Askari caught in the trap. “Then he [Hossack] said to me ‘You see the [Indian] sentry?’ and I replied ‘Yessir.’”<sup>627</sup> In the dim light, it was difficult to distinguish the Indian guard from his surroundings, and neither man yet knew that a different, unseen Indian sentry had spotted them.

What happened next was a consequence of poor communication and the crippling effects of the fog of war, for the Corps patrol had not been informed that the Indian pickets had been on edge after a long period of skirmishing with Askari and that their strict orders not to fire unless an officer gave the command had been relaxed.<sup>628</sup> “At a distance of about 25 yards I

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<sup>619</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63 and Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.282.

<sup>620</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.49. The use of reflected sunlight was somewhat difficult beneath thick jungle canopy, with clearings few and far between and with clear lines of sight between them rare.

<sup>621</sup> See, for example, the use of telephone lines laid in the battle of Lindi. SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. “Experience of a CQMS in the Line”.

<sup>622</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.56.

<sup>623</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.275

<sup>624</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

<sup>625</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Massinga Patrol”

<sup>626</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Massinga Patrol”

<sup>627</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Massinga Patrol”

<sup>628</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

saw a flash and the next moment Lieutenant Hossack dropped dead. The shock was so great that for a moment I was unnerved and forgot to get down until I remembered where I was. I fell to the ground behind cover and with my hands I shouted ‘English! English!’ remembering the Indian pronunciation of the word. A bunch of Sepoys burst out of the bush, one still with a smoking rifle in his hand. Shocked and saddened, a circle of us gathered around and I had to explain what had happened.”<sup>629</sup> The Askari that Hossack’s patrol had been tracking escaped unharmed, and when the patrol returned to the Lukigara camp with Lieutenant Hossack’s body on a stretcher, it provoked a shocked and saddened reaction. Difford wrote that “This most unhappy incident was a great grief to the whole battalion, Jimmy Hosack being beloved by all ranks.”<sup>630</sup> That Hossack’s death, the Corps’ first in combat, had been caused by an allied soldier was a fact accepted for the most part with a grim stoicism by Difford. Schoor himself is silent on the matter.

The next patrol Schoor would recount would go better. Following the battles south of the Rufiji, Schoor recalled passing “mounds of guns” discarded in their camp by Askari and German prisoners as they were escorted north.<sup>631</sup> Following an intense thunderstorm on the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1917- “The ground shook and oh it was one of the worst nights I ever experienced in EA”- Schoor recalled a tense moment when his small scouting party encountered a large force of Askari near Yacicibo.<sup>632</sup> Spread out in a line, Schoor’s men were separated from each other by “about 10 yards.” After a pause to evaluate his options in light of his orders, Schoor’s men made contact with another scouting party led by the Corps’ Captain Robertson, who cautioned them to stay very quiet. “He made it quite plain that the Germans were close, and as we listened we could hear them talking in front of us. They couldn’t have known of our whereabouts because the noise they made was awful.”<sup>633</sup> Pulling back, the scouting party of three men got separated from Robertson again and “were about 3 minutes away from camp when we heard a big explosion. We all got hold of our rifles and stood still for about two minutes when one started to ask ‘what was it’”<sup>634</sup>, concluding eventually that it had been a mine or a demolition charge of some sort. Clutching their rifles nervously, the scouts returned to camp without Robertson. Schoor, fearing that the Captain’s party had been caught in the explosion, went back out to retrieve him and his men and though they were unharmed, Schoor’s actions earned him praise from his officers.<sup>635</sup>

These sorts of experiences enkindled a complex array of sentiments in regards to their enemies, the Askari and the German officers and NCOs that led them. Some rank and file Corps soldiers certainly seemed willing to accept what they had been told of the Germans upon recruitment, with Corporal Strydom for example being readily willing to apportion blame for the dreadful conditions of local Tanzanians to the Germans with patriotic conviction.<sup>636</sup> Already characterising them as enemies, Corps soldiers’s experiences in East Africa with German troops served to confirm their enemy’s status as not only political but

<sup>629</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Massinga Patrol”

<sup>630</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.63.

<sup>631</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yacicibo Patrol 20-1-17”

<sup>632</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yacicibo Patrol 20-1-17”

<sup>633</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yacicibo Patrol 20-1-17”

<sup>634</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yacicibo Patrol 20-1-17”

<sup>635</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yacicibo Patrol 20-1-17”

Although it is Schoor himself that states this, there are other references to his general valour, with Difford noting that after fighting well and bravely at Rufiji that: “Later on Schoor got the D.C.M. for this and other good work.” Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.89.

<sup>636</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

*moral* foes, deserving of personally felt contempt. One way in which this was manifested, for example, is the intense suspicion of German forces many Corps soldiers developed after months of frustrating and genuinely dangerous campaigning. Sergeants Daniels and Hendricks, for example, both feared being captured by the Askari and being bayoneted to death, with rumors to the effect that Askari did not capture non-whites and non-officers seeming to have a degree of traction in the ranks.<sup>637</sup> Corporal Strydom, in turn, recalls the intense suspicion felt when the Cape Corps encountered surrendering Germans after the battle of Lindi. Shrouded by smoke from fires set by other retreating Askari, Strydom and his men suspected a trap until the final moments when the surrender turned out to be genuine.<sup>638</sup>

“I can even now picture that bulgy German officer,” Strydom wrote, “with one of his British prisoners of war, [an] officer, at his side, marching up to our Colonel to offer the surrender.”<sup>639</sup> Strydom reluctantly conceded that the twelve British prisoners of war they had liberated had been well treated, with one having been given life-saving medical treatment by his captors. Such experiences, in turn, seems to have tempered Cape Corps feelings to an extent, and although many in the Corps were more than willing to have a go at the “Hun raiders”<sup>640</sup>, the Corps itself does not seem to have been infected with the sort of visceral hate of the enemy that was the product of brutal trench warfare elsewhere.<sup>641</sup> Instead, as Strydom’s accounts suggest, in East Africa much of the Cape Corps’ anger seems to have been the product of their membership of the Corps masculine “tribe”, the membership of which individuals had earned during their induction phase in training. With the Germans and Askari showing themselves to be serious threats to their group as a whole, the personal reactions and the “personalisation” of the war for many Cape Corps soldiers constituted a survival mechanism meant to encourage action to protect that group. In the Kelman model discussed in Chapter Two, identification was giving way to a truly internalised identity under these pressures. With its moral restraints normally applicable during peace-time, particularly the prohibition against killing, were relaxed and the Cape Corps responded to the threat of violence with violence of their own.<sup>642</sup>

This sentiment- provoked by frustrating guerrilla warfare- worked in combination with a desire to prove themselves through fighting. The Corps, having long been frustrated by their use as rearguard Lines of Communications troops began to show an intense desire amongst their to meet the German and Askari troops in a decisive battle.<sup>643</sup> As the German forces were steadily pushed south, the Cape Corps was engaged in an escalating series of skirmishes which culminated in a major battle south of the Rufiji river in early 1917, followed by the Corps’ final major engagement in East Africa, fought at Lindi in November of that year. Although the First Battalion played a major role in crossing the Rufiji river and then again in defeating the counter-attack which followed, only fragmentary first-hand accounts of the

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<sup>637</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa”; SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. “Experience of a CQMS in the Line”.

<sup>638</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.20.

<sup>639</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.20.

<sup>640</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.101.

<sup>641</sup> See for example Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.262

<sup>642</sup> See for example Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.236. Cape Corps cases are illustrated below, particularly in the cases of Corporals Strydom and Jordan.

<sup>643</sup> These themes are heavily present in Strydom and Daniels accounts of the preface of the battle of Lindi and in Jordan’s account of the battle of Square Hill.

battle itself are preserved in the Difford collection.<sup>644</sup> Lindi, in contrast, is well documented and Cape Corps accounts of that battle provide for an illuminating narrative of exactly the sort of costs and hazards associated with meeting an enemy in battle that some members of the Corps were so desirous of. Entrained first from Morogoro to Dar Es Salaam, and shipped from there to Lindi harbour, the First Battalion “Advanced on Mkungu from Lindi on the heels of the enemy” as Sergeant Daniels recalled.<sup>645</sup> “The order to attack sent a ripple of anticipated animation through the men, and the boys moved in splendid order. Everyone was keen to have a smack at the enemy.”<sup>646</sup>

## Battle is met at Lindi

For many men in the Cape Corps, such head-on conflict was exactly what they had volunteered for in the first place and was the culmination of a long campaign- not only in a military sense but also in the sense of the socio-political as a means of demonstrating their masculinity and thus right to respectability.<sup>647</sup> Broadly speaking, for white South Africans, armed combat had at the time been construed as a conflict of willpower, endurance and moral fortitude.<sup>648</sup> Fighting was a trial to be *endured* through “vasbyt” and the myriad masculine virtues of grit, determination and tactical cunning; in *enduring* men could earn respect for the qualities of their moral fibre and courage even if the battle was ultimately lost.<sup>649</sup> The Cape Corps’ very existence had been opposed since the days of the drafting of the Union’s Defence Act, before the First World War had even created a need and a niche for Coloured fighting men to fill. Opposed by white nationalists of various stripes who had feared the arming of Coloureds and doubted by the man that would soon become the Union’s second Prime Minister, battle had given the Coloureds in the ranks of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion’s enlisted a chance to silence their doubters and to show their worth as men.<sup>650</sup> The theme of being keen, in the days and weeks leading up to the battles of Lindi and Square Hill, to “prove their mettle” is visible in practically all surviving first-hand accounts of the battle.<sup>651</sup> This, in combination with other accounts is indicative that the Corps as a whole was highly motivated as it marched to Mkungu on November the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1917 beside battalions of the Nigerian Regiment and the King’s African Rifles (KAR).<sup>652</sup>

Such determination was mixed with inevitable nerves and fears. Upon arrival in Lindi days earlier, for example, Corporal Strydom had enquired of members of the KAR what the Germans and Askari were like to face in battle. “We never learned much from K.A.R.’s or the other native regiments except the usual reply of ‘Jarmani mningi sana, ooko, mbali sana,’ meaning to say that the Germans are many and far from here.”<sup>653</sup> With skirmishes still

<sup>644</sup> See for example SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Yacicibo Patrol 20-1-17”

<sup>645</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa.”

<sup>646</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa.”

<sup>647</sup> As argued in Chapter One, P.28.

<sup>648</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

<sup>649</sup> Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.352.

<sup>650</sup> As this dissertation has argued in Chapters One, P.28 and Two, P.50.

<sup>651</sup> See for example Strydom, who uses this exact line: SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.10.

<sup>652</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.143.

<sup>653</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.1.

ongoing within earshot of the bay, Strydom and the others could hear the sounds of battle and see its products in the form of wounded being brought back via ambulance or river-steamer.<sup>654</sup> Apart from enquiries about their enemies, the Corps soldiers did not ask much else. “Here, the ordinary reader might wonder why we did not enquire after their wounds. Well it is seldom if ever a tommy enquires after that,”<sup>655</sup> suggesting a masculine deference to the virtues of endurance and toughness suffered in silence. Shortly thereafter, Major Hoy addressed the battalion and Strydom and his men were informed that they “were in for ‘some’ fighting on this occasion, as he plainly told us that it would be of quite a different character from what we had undergone previously.”<sup>656</sup> Marching closer to the front, “deep musings on home and its comforts” would be interrupted “by shouts from the rear of ‘divide the road’, ‘keep to the left’ etc, this is to allow the traffic to pass which generally consisted of lorries with supplies, ambulances and despatch riders.”<sup>657</sup> Overhead, aircraft- “die voël wat groot eiers lê” circled and spotted for the East Africa Force’s artillery, which was unleashing a heavy bombardment of the German defensive lines.<sup>658</sup> Strydom’s first view of the battlefield at Mkungu was dominated by his impressions of the German positions being pockmarked by the “black flecks of smoke” created by exploding artillery shells and the clouds of dust these blasts had thrown up.<sup>659</sup>

The battles at Lindi would, ultimately, be decided by on the large scale by military factors beyond the control of the Cape Corps. Von Lettow-Vorbeck’s forces had, by then, been heavily depleted and the “Lindi” Force boasted a substantial overall advantage in both numbers and weapons over the Germans and Askari.<sup>660</sup> Despite this, German forces led by one of Von Lettow-Vorbeck’s most capable commanders, a Major named Kraut, were able to manoeuvre on the Lindi Force’s four columns and inflict serious losses on them over the battle.<sup>661</sup> It was Kraut’s companies that the Cape Corps met at Mkungu, and the ensuing battle was very hard fought over the next five days.<sup>662</sup> Characterised as a colossal conflict of wills by both the Cape Corps enlisted and its officers, the outcome was decided in part by their staying power and ability to endure the difficult and demoralising conditions of the battlefield- conditions that First World War weapons and warfare could make extremely trying indeed.

<sup>654</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.1.

<sup>655</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.1.

<sup>656</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.2.

<sup>657</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.3.

<sup>658</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.5.

<sup>659</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.9.

<sup>660</sup> “Lindi Force” consisted of four Columns, brigade sized units, of approximately 3000 infantrymen, or three Battalions each. Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.143. Von Lettow Vorbeck’s troops numbered some 300 whites and 3000 Askari and were armed with 56 machine guns and 6 artillery pieces. Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, Pg.76

<sup>661</sup> Kraut had fought against other South Africans before on numerous occasions, like at Salaita and Nguru. At the latter battle he had earned 6SAI’s respect, principally through isolating individual slow and uncoordinated British brigades and attacking them singly. See Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.275 and Katz, “A clash of military doctrine.”

<sup>662</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.147.

Sergeant Daniels was a member of the lead Cape Corps elements that pushed up to the German positions at Mkungu, the same positions Strydom had seen being shelled earlier.<sup>663</sup> Advancing through dark jungle, with poor visibility, Daniels and his men suddenly found themselves exposed at the edge of a treeline. Daniels' account of the ensuing ambush is cool and professional, and it notes that "Our leading platoon came on top of an advance enemy fort who responded to us with machine and rifle fire in rapid order."<sup>664</sup> Inadvertently stumbling into the main German trenches, the entire ridge before Daniels lit up with flashes from machine guns and rifles. Falling to the ground, Daniels and his platoon ditched their twelve pound equipment packs and retreated, going missing in the general din and chaos of the battle which rapidly broke out around them. The rest of the Cape Corps pushed up onto the German positions and responded with machine gun and rifle fire, digging themselves into the ridge overlooking Daniels' position and using whatever natural protection was available.<sup>665</sup> Occupied from the front and to their immediate west, the Corps' A and B companies soon found themselves pressed in from the north and found themselves caught in what Strydom called a "horse-shoe" trap which developed into a serious fire-fight, as the Germans and Askari mounted a determined rear-slope defence which trapped the Corps in place with interlocking fields of machine gun fire, punctuated by bayonet attacks.<sup>666</sup>

The battle, for the most part, was fought at an impersonal distance. The Corps' riflemen shot at distant figures and at enemies reduced- psychologically- to mere uniforms.<sup>667</sup> Occasionally, a shot that struck home might cause someone on the opposite side to crumple or cry out wordlessly as if in pain. In return, their enemies tried hard to kill them, with Strydom recalling the "whizz-bang" cracks of rifle bullets passing close by overhead or the puffs of dirt thrown up by their impacts in the dirt nearby.<sup>668</sup> "Jealous of our biscuit tins," Strydom notes wryly, the German and Askari's retaliatory fire cracked through a nearby tree and provoked a swarm of bees to pour out of it. The Corps soldiers and the officer Strydom is sure the Germans tried to kill moved away from the bees after being stung and continued fighting.<sup>669</sup>

Strydom himself operated one of the Corps' twelve Maxim machine guns, a device capable of fearsome destruction. Firing at a rate of some six hundred rounds a minute- and producing as much fire as an entire platoon of riflemen- Strydom noted that when turning "the fireworks display" of its muzzle flash and tracer rounds against an enemy that it was as much a psychological weapon as a physical one.<sup>670</sup> For the Corps at Lindi, their machine guns were critical in both dissuading Askari charges and keeping German soldiers from manoeuvring their own machine guns into positions better suited to firing at the Corps.<sup>671</sup> The machine gun

<sup>663</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. "My short narrative of Lindi East Africa."

<sup>664</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. "My short narrative of Lindi East Africa."

<sup>665</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. "My short narrative of Lindi East Africa."

<sup>666</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.9.

<sup>667</sup> See examples of this sort of battlefield psychology in Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.280.

<sup>668</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.14.

<sup>669</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.17.

<sup>670</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.6.

<sup>671</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.292.

teams, consisting of gunners, their assistants, team leaders and several ammunition runners- had to possess not only excellent manual dexterity but an ability to communicate and coordinate over the roar of battle and their own weapon in the most trying of conditions.<sup>672</sup> Operating a machine gun thus fit in with the sort of male teamwork Robert Morrell described as being a central aspect of settler masculinity, in addition to the raw physicality required that Strydom emphasised. “Manhandling the Maxims” into position- each weighing 23 kilogrammes when combined with its tripod- Strydom notes was an arduous task, and as the fighting became prolonged the gunners had to be rotated out several times.<sup>673</sup> The weapons themselves consumed inordinate amounts of ammunition and cooling water and keeping it “fed” via 20 foot long canvas ammunition belts was a gruelling task in the heat of the day and the danger of the battle.<sup>674</sup> In one hour-long engagement earlier in 1916, for example, 6SAI had fired 12 776 shots, an amount of ammunition that would have weighed approximately 364 kilograms.<sup>675</sup> The Cape Corps’ struggle with Kraut would last three days and consume many times that number of bullets, all of which would have to have been physically carried to the guns by the members of the Machine Gun Half Company and the Cape Corps’ logistics tail.<sup>676</sup>

Artillery bombardments and shell bursts added to the distinctly impersonal nature of the fighting, with the German forces firing their few artillery pieces at the Corps repeatedly over the course of the battle- from distances where the German guns were rarely, if ever seen.<sup>677</sup> Corps soldiers like Strydom were dismissive of the risk this caused to them, noting that “The enemy’s heavy guns, now comprised of a few 18 pounders, which were employed against us more frequently and more freely, [did] little damage except making huge holes in the soil.”<sup>678</sup> Absent the physical confrontation of a “manly” head to head battle, Strydom’s belief is echoed elsewhere, with 6SAI troops for example recalling that they had been shielded by the jungle growth around them which absorbed the blast and splinters thrown off by the shell-bursts.<sup>679</sup> As “unsporting” and “unmanly” as artillery bombardment was, Difford contradicts Strydom’s contentions that the shell-bursts on their positions were ineffective and notes that many, if not most of the Corps’ casualties were caused by shell splinters.<sup>680</sup> In retaliation, Lindi Force shelled the German positions with their own guns and the Cape Corps itself began lobbing mortar bombs from its own set of four Stokes bomb-throwers.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.236. Keegan’s description is apt: “The machine-gunner is best thought of, in short, as a sort of machine-minder, whose principal task was to feed ammunition belts into the breech, something which could be done while the gun was in full operation, top up the fluid in the cooling jacket, and traverse the gun from left to right and back again within the limits set by its firing platform.”

<sup>673</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.7.

<sup>674</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.10.

<sup>675</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.239. Assuming the use of Mark VII .303 cartridges, which weigh approximately 28 grammes each.

<sup>676</sup> The Corps had consumed essentially its entire supply of first-line ammunition in a half day’s worth of fighting, see Strydom below.

<sup>677</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.149.

<sup>678</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.17.

<sup>679</sup> Martin, *The Durban Light Infantry*, P.239

<sup>680</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.149.

<sup>681</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.147.

Strydom's recollection is strewn with references to the specific sort of courage which is often used to describe the Cape Corps in Difford's history and elsewhere; namely of cool-headedness in the face of danger, bordering perhaps on the complete dismissal of fear.<sup>682</sup> In his account, for example, Strydom went as far as to describe a fist-fight which broke out between two Corps soldiers over even as fighting raged around them over "some disagreement. Each had a scrap with the other with utter disregard for the enemy's fire."<sup>683</sup> Reading into subtext here suggests that Strydom was at great pains to paint the Corps as being absent of the sort of moral weakness that fear and other manifestations of "poor moral fibre" suggested, whilst at the same time emphasising rugged aggression and physicality.

Sergeant Daniel's account of what happened to him and his men after the ambush that had opened the battle earlier, in turn, serves as a powerful contrast. Daniels and his platoon had remained trapped in no-man's land and had suffered badly in the first minutes of the fighting with the leading machine gun team consisting of Lieutenant Ivor Guest and three Cape Corps troops having been killed in the opening stages of the firefight. One of the men killed with Guest had been one of the Corps' most experienced Corporals, Frederick Schroeder, a man that had just been awarded the Military Medal for his actions in the chase after the Nauman and Zingel columns. His and the others' deaths had a profound effect on Daniels, who had himself been wounded in the foot by a rifle bullet. Daniels' stoic professionalism from earlier gave way to "pain and despair" as he gathered three others with him and sought refuge in the bush as the battle raged around them.<sup>684</sup> With their kit bags abandoned or discarded and out of reach, each man had only their ammunition webbing and rifles with them, as well as a single canteen, whilst nearby, Guest's abandoned machine gun remained "no man's property."<sup>685</sup> "Disoriented and uncertain as to how the battle was unfolding, we did not know which way to go and find our Regiment," Daniels recalls.<sup>686</sup> "Lost in the bush, we had not a drop of water." "Low morale gave way to despair," Daniels wrote, as the day wore on and turned to night.<sup>687</sup>

Even Strydom's narrative began to show signs of serious stress as Kraut's troops pushed in hard on the Cape Corps on the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup>, with the Corps' machine gun teams in particular being targeted by snipers or German machine guns.<sup>688</sup> Three times on that afternoon entire Cape Corps gun teams were killed and wounded, with Lieutenant Guest already having been killed in the morning. Later, another of the Machine Gun Company's senior leaders, Lieutenant Botha was injured, with place his place taken by a Lieutenant from the Stokes mortar section, Charles Abbot.<sup>689</sup> Later that afternoon, the machine gunners prepared to repel an Askari bayonet charge. Just before it was launched, a flurry of shots incapacitated another gun crew manning an exposed Maxim. With the Corps position at risk of being over-run, Abbot raced to operate the exposed weapon. The 43 year old was killed

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<sup>682</sup> See for example Difford's account of the first the Corps was fired on: Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.49

<sup>683</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.11.

<sup>684</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. "My short narrative of Lindi East Africa."

<sup>685</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.147.

<sup>686</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. "My short narrative of Lindi East Africa."

<sup>687</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. "My short narrative of Lindi East Africa."

<sup>688</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.292.

<sup>689</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.147.

instantly, and for a while it seemed as if the line might break.<sup>690</sup> Strydom, the other machine-gunners and the Corps' riflemen fought on determinedly though, and after a two-hour long firefight the Corps' position was saved- if just.<sup>691</sup>

“Matters appeared very gloomy by 6pm,” Strydom recalls.<sup>692</sup> By “the close of the day, through someone’s blunder I daresay, we got our ammunition column cut off. And there we were, practically threatened by two forces with the machine guns producing such a great volume of fire as still more endangering the position. One particular platoon only had five rounds left in their [rifle] magazines and there they lay with fixed bayonet, awaiting any minute to be overpowered by the enemy.”<sup>693</sup> Strydom concludes ruefully that “If the enemy had known our true position, they could have crushed us there and then.”<sup>694</sup> With morale failing and with night falling, Major Hoy made his way to the forward positions and encouraged his men to fight on. For Strydom, it had the desired effect. “Strong faith we had in that officer,” he recalls.<sup>695</sup> “And his calls made us realise that it was unsoldierly to give up hope.”<sup>696</sup> Strydom’s commentary is illustrative of just how far the Corps had progressed in its identity, with white officers not only suffering the effects of malaria alongside their men but, at Lindi, fighting and dying alongside them also. Hoy’s rallying cry appears to have had the desired effect, and the the Cape Corp’s riflemen spent the night launching raids on the German lines with hand grenades “to disturb the enemy’s slumber.” These raids also disrupted any night attacks that the Germans and Askari might have been organising all in a bid by the Corps to buy time to re-organise and re-supply their own main line.<sup>697</sup>

The rear echelons, in the meanwhile, were the scenes of frantic activity as the Cape Corps’ medical officer and the Battalion’s medical sergeants worked furiously in Lindi Force’s field hospitals to help the wounded being brought back by stretcher bearers and porters.<sup>698</sup> 123 Corps soldiers would ultimately become casualties in the battle for Lindi, and although the specifics are difficult to discern without a full survey of the medical records it is likely that Corps battle casualties fit the general pattern described by Keegan in *The Face of Battle*.<sup>699</sup> Wounds in the First World War were primarily caused by two sources, high velocity splinters thrown off of bursting artillery shells, and high velocity bullets fired by both rifles and machine guns.<sup>700</sup> These causes primarily injured the parts of the body most likely to be exposed out of cover, such as the extremities, upper chest and head.<sup>701</sup> The latter was

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<sup>690</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.149.

<sup>691</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.149.

<sup>692</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.12.

<sup>693</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.12.

<sup>694</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.12.

<sup>695</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.15.

<sup>696</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.15.

<sup>697</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.18.

<sup>698</sup> Their activities are not directly referred to by Difford but Hendricks makes reference to battle evacuations in his account: SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. “Experience of a CQMS in the Line”.

<sup>699</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.160.

<sup>700</sup> Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.259

<sup>701</sup> Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.259.

particularly vulnerable at Lindi, as the Corps had been issued with pith helmets ideal for hot tropical campaigning instead of the steel Brodie helmets of the Western Front.<sup>702</sup> Rifle caliber bullet wounds in particular were very serious indeed, and were for the most part lethal if inflicted to the upper chest or head.<sup>703</sup> Of the Cape Corps' 123 casualties at Lindi, 16 died on the battlefield, 90 survived their wounds and 9 died in hospital.<sup>704</sup>

Cape Corps Company Quartermaster Sergeant AJ Hendricks recalls the struggle of helping these columns of wounded and stretcher-bearers make their way back from the fighting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, "Including Lt Botha who two men helped carry."<sup>705</sup> Hendricks, one of Difford's direct subordinates, then helped organise supplies of rations and water, as well as ammunition, to run up to the rest of the battalion- still heavily engaged as the sun was setting.<sup>706</sup> Gathering up one other NCO and three Privates, Hendricks then rounded up some 75 porters- a difficult task given the fighting going on and the civilian porters' reluctance to approach the battle. Picking up their loads- including a hot meal of meat stew that Difford had ordered prepared- Hendricks' party set off after others Difford had already dispatched. Hendricks found himself in "an awkward position, as we didn't know where our men were and couldn't follow the telephone lines" that had been laid between Hoy's forward headquarters and the rear echelons.<sup>707</sup> "On our return, we found that the enemy had worked over to the left flank held by the KAR," when suddenly the logistics column found itself under German and Askari machine gun fire.<sup>708</sup> After diving for cover, the five Corps soldiers saw that their porters had routed and disappeared into the bush behind them. After making contact with the rest of the Cape Corps in the dusk, Hendricks and his four other companions split up to find and rally their porters, eventually bringing their packs into the front line camp.<sup>709</sup> Writing of his efforts at Lindi, Hendricks was plain that he did not consider his actions "a record of distinguished bravery" but rather it was "just to show that although we gained no honours, the Quartermaster's Staff also did their share..."<sup>710</sup> Hendricks' modesty is indicative that he did not consider his tasks to be as glorious as hazardous front-line fighting.

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<sup>702</sup> See the brief discussion on uniform in Chapter Two, P.95.

<sup>703</sup> Battlefield surgery and evacuation, in turn, was still rudimentary at this time and evacuations of critically wounded men within the "golden hour" would have been next to impossible. As a consequence, most very badly injured soldiers died before reaching the field hospitals, whilst those with lighter wounds such as shallow fragmentation wounds to the arms and chest faced far better prognoses generally. After reaching field hospitals and receiving life-saving surgeries there, the wounded then faced a new battle- one fought against bacterial infection and potentially lethal sepsis. Despite careful treatment of wounds with antiseptic bandages and other methods, in the age before antibiotics, gangrene could easily set in and standard treatment of affected limbs was emergency amputation. Wounds to the head and chest, in turn, were exceptionally hard to manage and in these cases sepsis was a major killer. See for example Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.259-276.

<sup>704</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.160.

<sup>705</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. "Experience of a CQMS in the Line".

<sup>706</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. "Experience of a CQMS in the Line".

<sup>707</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. "Experience of a CQMS in the Line".

<sup>708</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. "Experience of a CQMS in the Line".

<sup>709</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. "Experience of a CQMS in the Line". Earning the praise of both the KAR and Major Hoy for his actions at Lindi, Hendricks was later awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for rescuing wounded at Square Hill. Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.221.

<sup>710</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. "Experience of a CQMS in the Line".

Nevertheless, it is equally evident that Hendricks believed his work to be worth a claim to battlefield respectability.

For Strydom and the others at the front, the efforts of Hendricks and the others of the logistics tail brought about relief as they “Somehow or other... eventually procured a few thousand rounds from one of the other regiments. And what valuable service they rendered in carrying ammunition and distributing it amongst the men.”<sup>711</sup> Hot food in general raised morale, as well as the ability to refill their canteens. “Ja, nou kan ek wee hou!” Strydom recalls was the general consensus amongst the ranks.<sup>712</sup> Darkness, however, brought with it extreme risk for Hendricks, as both the KAR and Cape Corps had received orders to fire on interlopers without issuing identifying challenges.<sup>713</sup>

With the break of dawn on the 7<sup>th</sup>, the Cape Corps held their ground as the Nigerians put in a supporting attack on their right flank. Although costly, it improved the Cape Corps’ position immensely and Lindi Force could begin to bring its Kashmiri battery of field guns forward to directly bombard the German positions.<sup>714</sup> Kraut began to withdraw that night, leaving a rear-guard to protect his withdrawal, and on the next day the Cape Corps launched a bayonet attack to over-run the position for good. Although Strydom contends that they “fought like wolves,” the Cape Corps did not readily need to engage in hand to hand fighting and few Germans or Askari were bayoneted.<sup>715</sup> Faced with a sudden inversion of distance between themselves and their enemies, few Askari were willing to fight to the death at close quarters and most chose to flee.<sup>716</sup> White Germans, in turn, exhausted and demoralised after three years of campaigning, surrendered en masse and up to 1600 were eventually captured in the Lindi pocket.<sup>717</sup> Difford noted that in particular, “C Company pressed on with great gallantry doing heavy execution, and Lieutenant Heaton’s platoon captured a machine gun and accounted for the whole of its crew.”<sup>718</sup> Daniels, to the relief of himself the men with him, was discovered by a company of Nigerian troops who were able to return him to the Corps, where he received treatment for the gunshot to his foot.<sup>719</sup>

With German resistance broken at Mkungu and elsewhere, the battle for Lindi was effectively decided and the Cape Corps was rotated out of the front of the column, with the KAR taking

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<sup>711</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.15.

<sup>712</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.10.

<sup>713</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. “Experience of a CQMS in the Line”.

<sup>714</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.153.

<sup>715</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.16.

<sup>716</sup> See for example George Patton’s famous remark: “Few men are killed by bayonets, but many are scared by them. Having the bayonet fixed makes our men want to close. Only the threat to close will defeat a determined enemy.” Patton, GS. 1943. *Tactical and Technical Trends*, No. 30.

<sup>717</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.151. Most were stricken with disease by then and captured in Lindi’s hospitals.

<sup>718</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.151. Difford remarked proudly that “This gun may be seen to-day in the vestibule of the City Hall, Cape Town,” another physical totem of the Corps’ military record and claims to respectability.

<sup>719</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, TA. No date. “My short narrative of Lindi East Africa.” No mention is made of the fate of his foot, but presumably it was saved as Daniels makes no mention of its amputation. He was ultimately demobilised on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 1919, along with the rest of the Cape Corps, a fact that confirms he was able to remain in military service. Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.349.

the lead thereafter and the Corps following up in support.<sup>720</sup> Skirmishing and sniping continued to cause casualties however as Von Lettow-Vorbeck's rearguard fought ably to permit him and a small contingent of men to escape, and the battle would continue on until November the 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>721</sup> It was on this day that Strydom witnessed the German surrender at Nambwindingas, "A great day for our brigade, for it was on that day that over 1700 of Von Lettow's forces surrendered to us."<sup>722</sup> The news of the surrender prompted initial jubilation and relief, with the men of the Corps lighting fires in their camp to cook and relax for the first time since landing at Lindi harbour. The surrender of "thirty Europeans and seventy-eight Enemy Askari" to the Corps on the next day improved morale, but soon the rigours of camp life and boredom began to take hold and rumours to the effect that the Corps would again be employed in road building began to spread.<sup>723</sup> Malaria still seriously afflicted many members of the Corps, and despite having landed at Lindi with 1200 men, over half had been evacuated before the end of the battle- an average rate of 100 per week.<sup>724</sup>

Despite being inspected by General Van Deventer, praised for their fighting prowess and thanked for their service<sup>725</sup>, victory had not been a panacea for the Corps and for some their happiness and relief was tempered by a certain glum melancholy.<sup>726</sup> Burial parties had to deal with the dead, both the "number of bodies, European and Askari, being seen during our advance next day, when the enemy's retreat was so precipitate that they had no time to bury their dead", and their own casualties.<sup>727</sup> Funerals were presided over by military chaplains of several denominations, though it is unclear if Lieutenant Abbot, who specified himself as an Anglican in his enlistment forms, was buried by an Anglican pastor.<sup>728</sup> Next of kin required notification also, with Abbot's wife Florence May receiving the bad news via telegram the day after his death.<sup>729</sup> Like most officers, Abbot had left his will in the care of his lawyer but a simple summary is preserved in his military records. It is indicative of the responsibility Abbot felt as a breadwinner and husband beyond his death, and reads simply:

"Kiromo  
G.E.A.

In the event of  
my death I give  
the whole of my  
property and effects  
to my wife.

(Sgd) Chas.F.Abbot

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<sup>720</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.151-154.

<sup>721</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.151-154.

<sup>722</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.20.

<sup>723</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.20. See Chapter Three, P.82 for a discussion on the types of rumors circulated

<sup>724</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.164.

<sup>725</sup> Difford makes a very brief mention of Van Deventer's visit: Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.151.

<sup>726</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)". P.20.

<sup>727</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.151.

<sup>728</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. Charles Frederick Abbot, Number T3384.

<sup>729</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. Charles Frederick Abbot, Number T3384.

Lt.  
Cape Corps  
6 May 1917.<sup>730</sup>

With their dead buried, the Corps made their way steadily back to Lindi. “But the road seemed harder now than before,” Strydom wrote.<sup>731</sup> After a “monotonous” journey, Strydom and his fellows arrived back in Lindi with “His Majesty’s Troopship lying in the bay waiting to take us across to Dar es Salaam and from thence, we understood, to the sunny south.”<sup>732</sup> The effects of the battle on its survivors was palpable, with Sergeant Daniels, writing years later in retrospect, noting of Lindi “I fully believe as long as I live that those two nights will be indelible on my mind forever.”<sup>733</sup>

## The Battles of Square Hill: Mythology and Loss

After returning to the Union and bearing the brunt of racist anti-Coloured rioting in Kimberly early in 1918, the Cape Corps underwent a period of rest, reorganisation and retraining.<sup>734</sup> With the majority of white troops deployed to German East Africa in 1916 by now largely demobilised, the Union’s major remaining military commitment was the 1<sup>st</sup> South African Infantry Brigade which was continuing to fight in Western European trenches.<sup>735</sup> Although the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions were considered for a European deployment, the Cape Corps was ultimately sent elsewhere. Military authorities feared the “moral” consequences of Coloured men interacting with white women in France, and some whites in France had complained of Coloured men that had either travelled to Britain on their own coin to enlist there or that had enlisted in regular UDF units and passed for Europeans.<sup>736</sup> Unwilling to countenance an awkward political battle over the point, and with complaints already directed towards the Governor-General regarding supposed indiscipline of the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corps in France, the UDF deployed the Corps instead to Egypt and the Palestinian front.<sup>737</sup> By now shedding men at a prodigious rate due to disease discharges, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion departed for the Suez canal on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, 1918 with 1000 enlisted.<sup>738</sup> With Morris having been wounded at Lindi leading the Lindi Force’s 4<sup>th</sup> column, Major Hoy was temporarily promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and placed in command of the Battalion.<sup>739</sup>

Arriving in Kanatra on April the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Corps found itself being integrated into a vast army gathered from across the British Empire. Despite many white troops in theatre being drawn off in March of 1918 and sent to Europe as reinforcements to deal with the German Spring Offensive of that year, by September the British Imperial forces in the Middle East numbered

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<sup>730</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. Charles Frederick Abbot, Number T3384.

<sup>731</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.20.

<sup>732</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.21.

<sup>733</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Daniels, A. No date. “My Short Narrative of Lindi, East Africa Nov 1917”.

<sup>734</sup> See Grundlingh, *War and Society* and Chapter 5, P.107 for an in-depth discussion.

<sup>735</sup> See Nasson, *Springboks on the Somme*, P.366-370.

<sup>736</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Dobson, JH to Director War Recruiting. 24 January, 1917. “2<sup>nd</sup> (Pioneer) Battn Cape Corps.” Price’s notes scribbled onto the letter include a question relating to Coloured men and white women in Europe.

<sup>737</sup> See SANAP. GG. Vol.677. 93/292. No.9. “Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Companies in France: complaint re. lack of control over coloured members of”

<sup>738</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.172.

<sup>739</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.172.

almost half a million men and consisted of combatants from nearly every British holding in the world.<sup>740</sup> Transported from Kanatra to El Arish- a pleasant camp in the shade of palm trees a mere 300 feet from the Mediterranean- the Corps continued to train as 500 men and four officers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion arrived and were folded into the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion after the decision was made to disband their unit.<sup>741</sup> The Corps, a British Imperial Service Contingent in name but a *UDF* battalion in organisation and tactical handling, found integrating themselves into an army led by British officers to be difficult. The handling of the Corps' machine guns in particular was a sticking point that would have bloody consequences later, with the Corps' Machine Gun Half Company being balked at in particular by British officers.<sup>742</sup> Directed where they were needed by Hoy at the battle of Lindi, the machine guns had saved the Corps from being overrun there. British military doctrine, however, demanded a more rigid system of control of the machine gun units from more senior officers from above, acting instead as units of pseudo-artillery. At the insistence of the military authorities in Egypt, the Cape Corps machine gunners were retrained as members of the Machine Gun Corps and "divorced" from the Corps.<sup>743</sup>

Brought low by outbreaks of Spanish Influenza, the Corps and indeed most of General Edmund Allenby's Egyptforce spent April, May and June training at around 70% strength. Departing on July 15<sup>th</sup> for the front, the Corps arrived at Rham Alla on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July.<sup>744</sup> There, the Corps was made part of Major-General SF Mott's 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welsh) Division and folded into the 160<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Brigadier-General VNL Pearson along the 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry, the 21<sup>st</sup> Punjabis and the 160<sup>th</sup> Light Trench Mortar Battery.<sup>745</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup> Indian battalion featured several faces familiar to the Corps, who had served alongside them in a neighbouring Column at Lindi.<sup>746</sup> Opposite them, arranged in the hills north of Jerusalem, was a Turkish army roughly half the size of their force that had been digging itself into position for months.<sup>747</sup> As its flu casualties began to return to the line, the Corps spent July and August rehearsing a carefully prepared plan to seize the heights before them, pinning Turkish troops in the hills east of Jerusalem while Allenby's cavalry would wheel round the west and surround the majority of the Turkish troops in a classic military encirclement.<sup>748</sup>

Preparing for the battle, the Cape Corps found themselves facing an enemy that was a distinctly unknown quantity, in contrast to the Germans and Askari that they had come to have considerable experience with in East Africa. The environment too gave them far less concealment and cover, with dense Tanzanian bush and jungle substituted for with exposed

<sup>740</sup> Kemal, C. 2010. "The Last Battle of the Ottoman State on the Palestine Front" in *Modern Turkish History* (Atatürk Yolu). No. 45. P.59.

<sup>741</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.172. Difford notes that: El Arish village was some two miles inland. The army were located on the sea board on a frontage of four or five miles. The climate was magnificent and the sea-bathing unequalled. The water was so warm that it did not bring out malaria as cold sea water always did, and our two months at El Arish effected a wonderful all-round improvement in health. The "snap" and vigour so absolutely essential, but which had been impossible in East Africa, soon returned, and henceforward was a marked feature of the battalion's work." See Chapter 5 for a discussion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps, P.115.

<sup>742</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.293.

<sup>743</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.190-195. See Katz, "A clash of military doctrine," for another example of British operational and doctrinal inflexibility leading to unnecessary casualties in the battle of Salaita in East Africa.

<sup>744</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.190.

<sup>745</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.188.

<sup>746</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.188.

<sup>747</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, Pg.86.

<sup>748</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, Pg.86.

Palestinian scrubland dominated by high ridges and hills and shot through with dry river beds or *wadis*.<sup>749</sup> The return of Lieutenant-Colonel Morris raised morale, and he, together with Major Hoy carefully studied their targets, a series of hills in sequence nicknamed Dhib and Square with a final feature to the north named Kh Jibeit in Arabic. With the Corps tasked with capturing Dhib hill, the battalion carefully planned down to the platoon level. The attack was rehearsed in minute detail and relied on perfect timing, with Hoy's plan submitted to Pearson relying on a rapid bayonet attack after a surprise artillery bombardment.<sup>750</sup>

Difford notes, however, that their reconnaissance had missed the most strongly fortified of the enemy's positions further back at Kh Jibeit, where "Large caves on the far side of the hill afforded splendid protection against our shell fire."<sup>751</sup> It was an oversight that rigid British military doctrine could ill compensate for, and thanks to their reorganisation into the British mould, neither could the Cape Corps. Determined to get their machine guns and crews back, Hoy and Morris both urged their commanders to have the Cape Corps gunners re-attached to the Corps before the attack was launched on September the 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>752</sup> Despite promises that they would, the Cape Corps Machine Gun Company was instead placed under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Partridge of the 53rd Battalion Machine Gun Corps. Placed in the divisional reserves at Rham Alla by the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, most of the Corps' machine gunners would not fire a single shot over the course of the battles fought 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of September.<sup>753</sup>

Lance Corporal Moses Jordan describes the battalion's preparations on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup>. "We were, indeed, thoroughly 'salted'- as one of our officers put it," and after a long period of training and preparation the Corps had been well prepared- as individual riflemen at least- for the battles ahead.<sup>754</sup> Mounting bayonets at their biouvac beneath a feature known as Cheshire Hill, the Corps had "put on [their] war-paint" and marched to their start-points.<sup>755</sup> At "About eight o'clock [that night], we crossed into No Man's Land. This was beautiful wide glen, down which a clear stream was meandering."<sup>756</sup> On its opposite side was the first of their brigade's targets, at Wye Hill, beyond which lay the Cape Corps' target at Dhib Hill. The Indians began the attack, and despite heavy casualties, managed to secure Wye.<sup>757</sup> This allowed the Corps press on past them to capture Dhib Hill with very little resistance from the surprised and demoralised Turkish outpost there. "It was then about one o'clock. This was as far as we were supposed to have gone, but some clever person found out that the next position was stronger. So we were detailed to take it."<sup>758</sup>

Despite the apparent strength of the Turkish positions at Square Hill, which included a German-made 77mm field gun, the speed and efficiency of the night attack had completely

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<sup>749</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, Pg.86.

<sup>750</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.214.

<sup>751</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>752</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.296.

<sup>753</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.296.

<sup>754</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. "A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)".

<sup>755</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. "A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)".

<sup>756</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. "A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)".

<sup>757</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.87.

<sup>758</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. "A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)".

shaken both their organisation and morale.<sup>759</sup> “At four we moved off,” Jordan continues, “And after meeting with a little opposition we secured Square Hill.”<sup>760</sup> A Cape Corps Lewis gun team captured the 77mm field gun, and in all the Corps would take some 200 prisoners in an extremely well executed night attack that, in the words of Archibald Wavell, “reflected great credit... on the skill and discipline of the troops.”<sup>761</sup> As the Indians and Welsh attempted to push up beside the Corps, the Turks launched an abortive counter-attack in the early morning that was beaten off with little loss. Up to that point, the Corps had only lost one man killed and one wounded, and this part of the attack is remembered by Difford and Jordan as having been a singular success.<sup>762</sup>

With the break of dawn, however, the Corps was confronted with Kh Jibeit before them. Well fortified with trenches and machine guns, it was the main Turkish defensive position for the line, in contrast to the outposts that the Corps and its brigade neighbours had seized in the night. Its strength came as a surprise to both Morris and Hoy.<sup>763</sup> Writing of the battle some 76 years later, military historian and ex South African General Ian Gleeson noted that “The logical course of action [for South African officers] would have been to continue the advance on either flank to isolate the position and force a withdrawal.”<sup>764</sup> Pearson and the other commanders of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division, however, would have a different idea. After a close reconnaissance of the position on foot, Morris, Hoy and another Corps Major, William Cowell, conferred with Brigadier Pearson before being ordered to launch a frontal attack. Despite indications that they protested this order and plan and knew full well that it was a foolish mistake, little direct evidence survives of individual criticism of Pearson or his orders.<sup>765</sup> Instead, Morris, Hoy and Cowell returned to the Corps and began preparations for another night attack. For Corps soldiers on the front-line, in turn, the day had been difficult. “All day on the 19<sup>th</sup>, it was pandemonium,” Jordan recalled,<sup>766</sup> as all the while the Turks reinforced their position and fired on Jordan and his compatriots, while “Bullets whined and shells whistled over our heads.”<sup>767</sup> Orders began to circulate that afternoon that the Corps would attack Kh Jibeit, a position that the Corps themselves had ominously come to nickname Gallows Hill.<sup>768</sup>

The plan rapidly began to unravel. Hoping to attack at 03.00 on the 20<sup>th</sup>, message runners had gotten lost in the unfamiliar environs and trenches of Square Hill. The 400 men of the attacking force were only assembled and ready to go “over the top” at 05.00- as the sun was rising- and as a result the late attack had dramatically increased their exposure to Turkish machine gunners waiting for them to cross the open ground between their lines and Kh

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<sup>759</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.210.

<sup>760</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)”.

<sup>761</sup> A Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns*, in Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.90.

<sup>762</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.210.

<sup>763</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>764</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.89.

<sup>765</sup> Difford, for example, makes no criticism of this plan but notes the degree of fatalism in the men of the Corps beforehand, when they shook hands with those who were not going in as part of the attack. Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>766</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)”.

<sup>767</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)”.

<sup>768</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)”.

Jibeit.<sup>769</sup> The Corps had also advanced further than most of their supporting artillery could reach, and the 53<sup>rd</sup> Division had managed to only haul a handful of 60 pounders up to fire on the Turkish trenches. The relatively lightweight shells of these howitzers made little impression on the Turkish embankments, and to add to the looming disaster, the bombardment had been late and not as intense as had been hoped.<sup>770</sup> In dread of what was about to come, the commanding officers shook hands with each other and wished everyone good luck.<sup>771</sup> Cowell would lead the attack, with Captain Davids acting as his second in command.<sup>772</sup> Amongst the eight officers in the trenches that morning was Archie Difford, Captain Ivor Difford's younger brother; and his schoolmate Cecil Vipan.<sup>773</sup> Beside them waited Sergeant Peter Schoor and Sergeant Adolf Hendricks- both veterans of East Africa discussed above- and Lance Corporal Moses Jordan.

The attack, Jordan recalls, "advanced with great style", but began to go wrong almost immediately.<sup>774</sup> Casualties were heavy on the approach, but despite this, C company managed to reach the first spur of Kh Jibeit and there they stormed the first line of Turkish trenches. Throwing hand grenades first, the Corps soldiers followed the explosions by leaping into the trenches and there encountered some determined Turkish defenders who fought with bayonets, knives, fists and rocks.<sup>775</sup> After driving them off or killing them, the Corps soldiers used a thin lull in the fighting to collect prisoners and wounded before a fierce Turkish counter-attack was launched. Major Cowell was mortally wounded, and as Harris tried to tend to him he too was killed instantly.<sup>776</sup> With the company disintegrating around them, the exact circumstances of what happened next are unclear, with Difford's account noting only that "About the same time Lieutenants Difford and Vipan were also killed."<sup>777</sup>

Morris, noting the disaster that had befallen C Company, personally led an attack to their left flank in the hope of relieving the pressure on them. A and B companies, Jordan recalls, "had no artillery 'preparation' at all and had to depend for the safety of their advance on our Lewis and Machine guns only."<sup>778</sup> The handful of divisional machine guns that had been brought up by Pearson were, however, too far away to meaningfully keep the Turks' heads down and the light Lewis guns that the Corps' Maxims had been substituted with were capable of only a fraction of the sustained fire that the heavier Vickers guns could bring to bear.<sup>779</sup> Despite a

<sup>769</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.90.

<sup>770</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.89.

<sup>771</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216. It is not clear whether the officer/enlisted gap in regards to socialisation was breached but it is possible that NCOs and officers displayed at least a recognition of each other.

<sup>772</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>773</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Diocesan College Newsletter. "Obituary: Archibald Newcombe Difford"; SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Diocesan College Newsletter. "Obituary: Cecil Arthur Vipan".

<sup>774</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. "A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)".

<sup>775</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>776</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>777</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.216.

<sup>778</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. "A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)".

<sup>779</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.212-214. Difford notes that: "Besides our company Lewis guns in the front line we had also two Vickers machine guns there and two others (four altogether) on Dhib Hill, all covering the approaches to our position on Square Hill. Lieutenant Woods, M.C., in command of the reserve Lewis guns, also had his guns forward ready for emergency." The Corps, in total, fielded 16 Lewis guns- in theory an improvement on the firepower they had previously had at their disposal in the twelve Maxims at Lindi. The Lewis was a "light" 13 kilogram machine gun that was fed from pan drum magazines that held 47 or

“forward move that was most orderly, and in pressing home their attack [where] they did splendid bayonet-work”, the second relieving attack also stalled and Morris himself was wounded twice.<sup>780</sup> With the majority of his attackers strewn across the hillside before him by midday, Major Hoy was faced with the grim task of extricating the battalion from the battlefield after its failed attack as he took over command from Morris.<sup>781</sup>

Six of the eight officers that had begun the assault were already dead.<sup>782</sup> As a consequence, it fell to individual NCOs like Hendricks to rally the enlisted. Again, as at Lindi, Hendricks displayed a cool head, with the supply sergeant spending the afternoon organising groups of stretcher-bearers to accompany him into No Man’s Land to fetch wounded.<sup>783</sup> Other NCOs would be cited for bravery and cool-headed leadership too, including Sergeants Hutchinson and Jansen, and Corporals Hutchinson and Ruiters.<sup>784</sup> As the afternoon wore on, the Corps soldiers that could be reached were steadily extracted from the side of Gallows Hill, with an RAF aircraft used to drop messages, canteens and cans of ammunition for those trapped too far forward to help.<sup>785</sup> The last stragglers would only be recovered after the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Battalion finally broke through and managed to take Kh Jibeit for the cost of 73 casualties. With Nazareth and Nablus beyond captured by the 21<sup>st</sup> of September, the Corps did not know it yet but had fired its last shots in anger.<sup>786</sup> Kept in a line that was rapidly quietening down, the following days gave the Corps time to fully process what had transpired

51 Corps soldiers would ultimately die in what would become known as the Battle of Square Hill, with over a hundred being injured to some degree.<sup>787</sup> In contrast to Lindi, a battle that the Corps had fairly definitively won despite the near disaster of Kraut’s initial ambush, Square Hill elicited an entirely different sort of reaction. Heavily mythologised and commemorated in official accounts, it is curious that in contrast to Lindi only one firsthand account of the battle was collected by Difford, namely that of Moses Jordan.<sup>788</sup> Despite being present at the battle, neither Hendricks nor Schoor sent Difford accounts of Square Hill.<sup>789</sup> Perhaps most tellingly, Corporal Strydom- a man who had written the most comprehensive first-hand account of Lindi existing, some 22 pages long- provided Difford with no record of his time in Palestine.<sup>790</sup> As a machine-gunner, he had missed Square Hill

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97 rounds; and was better suited for being carried by assault teams. Although capable of substituting for a Maxim for a short while, it was inadequate for extended periods of firing as soldiers tended to expend ammunition and then lacked the extensive help and manpower of the Machine Gun Half Company’s 77 men to re-quip themselves. In contrast, provided with enough water, ammunition and spare barrels, a “dug in” Vickers or Maxim gun could fire almost indefinitely and was by far the better option for extended gunfights like at Lindi. In addition, the Corps had been able to employ the Maxims right in the front line at Lindi, unlike the support fire they received from over 700 yards away at Kh Jibeit. See Keegan, *The Face of Battle*. P.236 and Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.292.

<sup>780</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)”.

<sup>781</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.217.

<sup>782</sup> A seventh would die of his wounds. Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.219

<sup>783</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.221.

<sup>784</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.90.

<sup>785</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.218.

<sup>786</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.90.

<sup>787</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.219.

<sup>788</sup> Namely: SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Jordan, M. No date. “A Brief Account of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps fight at Square Hill (Sept.18 to 21, 1918)”.

<sup>789</sup> See SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Hendricks, A. No date. “Experience of a CQMS in the Line”; SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Schoor, PD. No date. “Massinga Patrol”

<sup>790</sup> See SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”.

but a complete omission of his time there- almost twenty months all told- is a strange exclusion.

Two possibilities potentially explain this silence in the Difford collection. The first is that Cape Corps soldiers themselves were reluctant to produce accounts of the losses suffered at Square Hill and the ambiguous nature of their brigade's eventual victory, at least in the immediate aftermath of the First World War when Difford was most active in compiling Cape Corps materials.<sup>791</sup> Although other accounts did eventually emerge in later timeframes<sup>792</sup>, there is no way to definitively test this hypothesis unless a thorough survey of potential accounts is developed amongst, for example, the descendants of ex Corps soldiers. A second explanation which is more readily tested and illustrated is that Difford himself did not specifically elicit accounts of Square Hill as he might have done for Lindi. Both explanations work in tandem to illustrate a trauma that the battle inflicted, if not on Cape Corps soldiers on a whole then certainly on the elder Difford brother and his family; for whilst the Difford collection is thin on first-hand accounts of Square Hill itself, it contains five letters regarding Archie Difford's death.<sup>793</sup>

A topic "not generally enquired of by tommies,"<sup>794</sup> as Strydom put it, the involvement of official sources in regard to the death of soldiers is largely restricted to the sort of "battlefield wills" written by Lieutenant Abbot as above, and short letters of condolence written by the Governor-General for the surviving next of kin.<sup>795</sup> Difford's correspondences, in turn, are illustrative of the kinds of profound emotional pain that the death of his brother and those young men like him caused their survivors. One letter, dated December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1918, is particularly poignant.

"My dear Ivor," Katie Difford- Archie's widow- began. "I have not written to you because I have been waiting for your letters to arrive. The first one came last week- though I had the first lot of my unopened letters to Archie on the 11<sup>th</sup> November. The day Peace was declared. The Peace which he loved so much- the peace that was to bring him back to me. What am I to do without him Ivor? All the long years of our life- now there seems nothing to live for. I don't know how to be brave- I try so hard because he wanted me to be. But I cannot; cannot be. It is so hard and I am so miserable."<sup>796</sup>

Archie left behind not only his wife, but an infant son he had not yet met and a young daughter named Mary. "His letters are so full of Mary too. The last time he mentioned her he said 'Poor Little Mary. How I love her. Give her a great big kiss and tell her Daddy sent it,'" Katie recalled ruefully.<sup>797</sup> After an argument about whether he would join Ivor, Katie relented, for "honour and family and adventure had compelled him to join you. I know you are proud of him. We all are... but his sacrifice was so great- he had much to live for."<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> This is unfortunately only a hypothesis, as there is no indication when the above first-hand accounts were written and collected.

<sup>792</sup> See, for example, A Kammies in Grundlingh, *War and Society*. P.140.

<sup>793</sup> Of which the longest is SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. K Difford to ID Difford. 30 December, 1918.

<sup>794</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. "A Description of a 'Stunt' in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)".

<sup>795</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. Charles Frederick Abbot, Number T3384.

<sup>796</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. K Difford to ID Difford. 30 December, 1918.

<sup>797</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. K Difford to ID Difford. 30 December, 1918.

<sup>798</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. K Difford to ID Difford. 30 December, 1918.

Katie's letter ends on a sombre, sad note. "I know how you have always cared for him and looked after him and advised him. You will miss him like I will. All your life."<sup>799</sup>

Katie's prediction likely played a role in bonding Difford to the Cape Corps for the rest of his life, a bond that explains not only his production of its history but his continued advocacy in the affairs of its veterans and of the broader Coloured community; a theme to be explored in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Difford was not alone in this regard, as the testimonies of Cape Corps soldiers engaged in fighting at the battles of Lindi and Square Hill attest. When coupled with the difficulties encountered on campaign- malaria, dysentery, poor nutrition and so on- the arguments above lend credence to the notion that shared experiences of battlefield danger forged real and lasting bonds of loyalty between Cape Corps veterans. Officers such as Charles Abbot and Archibald Difford had been killed fighting alongside the ranks of enlisted like Strydom, Daniels, Jordan and Hendricks; whilst others like Lt Colonel Morris and Major Hoy won the lasting respect of their troops for leading from the front despite the great personal danger involved. Hoy and Hendricks- Major and enlisted Sergeant- were both united in their cause at Square Hill, namely the rescue of their fellows and friends, and as the sources suggest, Cape Corps troops recalled the difficult, dirty and dangerous work of fighting with masculine pride. Campaigning, it can be argued, resulted in the culmination of group identity formation first referred to in Chapter Two, for in sharing the experiences of fighting and dying together on the battlefield, Cape Corps veterans- both officer and enlisted- internalised the Cape Corps into their selves in a way that would continue to shape their identities for years and decades to come.



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<sup>799</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. K Difford to ID Difford. 30 December, 1918.

## Chapter Five: Discipline, Détente and Demobilisation

A strong recurring theme visible across much of the Cape Corps' narrative is that of a powerful group identity which permeated across much of the class and racial lines between officer, NCO, and enlisted. This sense of what can variably be called "esprit de corps" first began to emerge in the unique circumstances of the Corps' formation and was then hardened and entrenched in the minds of many of its members thanks to the shared experiences of campaigning and the battlefield. This chapter will primarily focus on this theme of group identity and how it was maintained, policed, reacted to and- after the Corps' was demobilised- retained in the decades that followed.

A powerful example of the sort of regimental cohesion the Corps was developing can be found in their reaction to anti-Coloured rioting directed to them in Kimberley upon their return from East Africa in December of 1917. Corps soldiers, many of whom were by then veterans of East Africa and the battle of Lindi, reacted in a defiant and cohesive manner to the racial undertones of the rioting and refused to be intimidated. Cape Corps officers were not only outraged by the behaviour of white rioters but sought to actively protect their men from official sanction during the UDF's investigation.

Previously, the Cape Corps' headquarters and main camp had been moved from the Woltemaade military base near Simon's Town, to one of the De Beers mining compounds in Kimberley. The move had been prompted by complaints of "indiscipline", with the official line being taken that easy access to alcohol and prostitutes in the Cape area had provoked "immoral" behaviour. Military authorities thus acted in a classical Conellian manner, seeking to regulate and police the masculine behaviour<sup>800</sup> of the Corps Coloured enlisted. As to whether there were actual instances of behaviour genuinely disruptive to military organisation- fighting, disrespect of the chain of command, absences without leave and so on- is a point worth unpacking, and several questions bear answering. Were these reports the product of officers "inexperienced" with Cape Corps troops, who either mistook or deliberately misconstrued the "normal" exuberance of fighting men for more serious indiscipline when viewed through a racial lens? Were there incidents of Cape Corps men retaliating to provocation as they had at Kimberley? Or were there actual incidents also, where masculine pride provoked a direct challenge of the authorities and the status quo?<sup>801</sup>

The evidence through which these questions can be tested is somewhat fragmentary but, when viewed as a whole, nevertheless provide a compelling narrative which tells in many ways the story of two Cape Corps. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Cape Corps in particular seems to have initially been a unit seen as one with particular disciplinary issues, with its officer cadre in particular subject to the dismissal of its first commanding officer, Lt Colonel Flindt. The fallout of this event was the scapegoating and dismissal of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's second in command, a Major Robertson, despite indications that he was a capable of officer.<sup>802</sup> Later, despite the protestations and best efforts of its new commander, Lt Colonel McKlusky, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was effectively demobilised and disbanded by early 1918, likely as a result of a lingering reputation. In contrast, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion received a series of commendations from

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<sup>800</sup> See P.111.

<sup>801</sup> See P.114.

<sup>802</sup> Robertson's case is discussed below, see P.115.

field commanders like Van Deventer and Allenby, and there are numerous indications that Lt Colonel Morris and Major Hoy were held in very high regard by the military establishment in general. In light of such positive reports, even Smuts was forced to acknowledge publically that the Corps had rendered valuable and patriotic service when he addressed the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion prior to their demobilisation in 1919.

This brief détente in relations was not enough, however, to permanently integrate Coloureds into the Union Defence Force and after the war's end military authorities defaulted to *status quo ante bellum* when a mooted Cape Corps Active Citizen Force Unit was rejected. This dissertation will argue that the Cape Corps lived on, however, in an unofficial capacity between the First and Second World War with the formation of the Cape Corps Regimental Association. Through this association numerous events were organised, with primary emphasis placed on both commemoration of the Corps' losses over the war and maintenance of the ties that had bound the Corps together.

## **Confrontation at Kimberley**

When the troopship HMT *Caronia* arrived in Durban Harbour on Christmas Day, 1917, it carried on board roughly 1200 men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Cape Corps that had been gathered from the battlefields of Lindi, the hospitals of Dar Es Salaam and that had otherwise been scattered around much of southern German East Africa in small pockets.<sup>803</sup> Exhausted and with many still fever-ridden, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was put through what was by then standard practice for military units returning from East Africa: upon disembarkation, the Corps was transported to convalescent camps for a period of rest, rehabilitation and leave whilst they were tested for malaria and other tropical diseases.<sup>804</sup> Six hundred men were embarked for Jacob's Camp near Durban, with the remainder being split equally between convalescent camps at Potchefstroom and the Corps' then-new main depot at Kimberley, owing to a shortage of beds and medical staff. Difford records a civil and pleasant reception which awaited the Corps soldiers in the Durban and Johannesburg train stations, but for the three hundred or so men who arrived in Kimberley the situation was much different.<sup>805</sup>

As Albert Grundlingh notes in *War and Society: South Africa black and coloured troops in the First World War, 1914-1918*, when the returnees were given leave upon their arrival in Kimberley, certain white "larrikins and hooligans" took it upon themselves to insult and abuse the Coloured soldiers.<sup>806</sup> After "Gross insults were hurled at both officers and men of the Cape Corps," a street brawl broke out during which both sides "weighed into each other with gusto."<sup>807</sup> On Boxing Day, tempers again flared up and 30 people were injured in the ensuing chaos. With the rest of the Kimberley-based Cape Corps only barely dissuaded from breaking out of their camp at the De Beers mining compound in order to assist their comrades, the decision was made by the District Staff Officer, Colonel AJ Taylor, to send the entire Cape Corps depot into the field in order to prevent a full blown mutiny.<sup>808</sup> Camped out at Riverton for three days, even the weather appears to have conspired against the Corps, with rain falling in the usually hot and dry Kimberley. Difford notes that in the field "They were without tents and the weather unfortunately proved cold and wet, and officers and men

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<sup>803</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.167-169

<sup>804</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.167-169

<sup>805</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.167-169

<sup>806</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.146

<sup>807</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.146

<sup>808</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.169

consequently spent a miserable New Year. The recent arrivals from East Africa, having come direct from a tropical summer, suffered severely and were justly indignant at having to undergo this unnecessary hardship.”<sup>809</sup> Despite fears that the presence of Coloured troops would lead to tension for as long as they were present, the situation eventually cooled to the point where the Corps could return to their Depot. Major Hoy ended his leave early and departed at once from Pretoria in order to defend the unit in the investigation which followed, which was led by UDF Brigadier General Collyer.<sup>810</sup>

The “transparently one-sided” reaction of the military authorities to decamp the Corps into the field was ultimately recognised as an injustice by Collyer, who, having consulted the necessary witnesses had determined that the Corps itself were not the prime instigators of the riots and agreed with the Cape Corps OC in that they had “as a general rule showed great restraint and only when their comrades were injured, retaliated.”<sup>811</sup> Despite this official recognition of the situation, racial tensions would continue to simmer in Kimberley throughout 1918. With the war slowly winding down, Grundlingh contends that Coloured troops were accused of “not knowing their place” because of their contribution to the war effort. Furthermore, the behaviour of “lower order whites described as ‘larrikins’” had less to do with supposed misdemeanours of the Cape Corps and more to do with apprehensions about the post-war situation and a desire to return to a pre-war racial order.<sup>812</sup>

To add a point on masculine theory to Grundlingh’s argument, for poor white men written off as “hooligans” by Collyer, such an upset of racial order probably played to general concerns regarding their status in the masculine hegemon.<sup>813</sup> On the part of the Corps soldiers, it is not a stretch at all to imagine an enlisted Coloured soldier like Strydom reacting to provocation with a sense of outrage. Upon his arrival in the Lindi beachhead, for example, Strydom and his fellows enquired of a white SAI trooper about what the fighting had been like. When the trooper replied that the Corps “would only serve as a breakfast” to their enemies, Strydom was immediately irritated.<sup>814</sup> “Well, we proved the falsity of his words,” Strydom wrote in annoyance, “For not only did we show ourselves more than a breakfast to the enemy but we actually put them on the run!”<sup>815</sup>

## **A potholed road to Kimberley**

The December 1917 riots had come as a surprise to the authorities. As Grundlingh argues effectively, it had been hoped by the Union Defence Force and by the Botha government that Kimberley’s English-speaking and Unionist- or South African Party-voting population would be receptive to the hosting of Coloured troops. It was not to be, and it was from precisely English Kimberley that the rioting had originated.<sup>816</sup> What Collyer’s investigation does not properly take into account however, is the two years of systemic problems that had beset the Corps’ large manpower infrastructure that had been left behind in the Union when its East African campaign was begun in early 1916. The Cape Corps depot had been moved to

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<sup>809</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.169

<sup>810</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.169

<sup>811</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.147

<sup>812</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.148

<sup>813</sup> As defined in Chapter One, P.20.

<sup>814</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.2.

<sup>815</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Strydom, T. No date. “A Description of a ‘Stunt’ in German East Africa with the 1<sup>st</sup> K. Kor (With Introduction)”. P.2.

<sup>816</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.148

Kimberley mere weeks before the rioting had been kicked off<sup>817</sup>, amidst allegations of military “indiscipline” and a chronological overview of exactly how the Corps had gotten there casts interesting light on its general status within the Union’s military and political milieu.

Returning to February of 1916, the departing 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Cape Corps had *not* included in its ranks approximately 300 half-trained men left behind at the Noah’s Ark camp. These 300 men were left under the command of Major Durham and the Regimental Sergeant Major James Windrun, and were to be trained up and forwarded to German East Africa in “drafts of no less than 50” whenever casualties required replacements.<sup>818</sup> The Cape Corps thus adopted a British “regimental” structure, where the campaign deployed Battalion received reinforcements from its home depot and with the First Cape Corps as a whole thus being referred to as a Regiment. With the arrival of British troops in Simon’s Town in June 1916, the Cape Corps shifted from its Noah’s Ark camp across the road into the Simon’s Town military encampment proper, where the relatively small group remained until August 1<sup>st</sup> when they were ordered to the Woltemaade III rifle range.<sup>819</sup> This move coincided with a massive new recruiting effort to replace the serious disease casualties that the Corps was suffering in GEA, and although moving the Corps to the rifle ranges would have eased their training- as per the official explanation<sup>820</sup>- it would also have removed the unit from public view in Simon’s Town somewhat. By the end of October, four extra companies had been trained and officers gazetted to lead them, and the depot housed some 1500 men in total. Presented on the one hand with the honours of the Corps’ Regimental Colour by Cape Town’s mayor, Harry Hands in late October, on the other the Corps depot was ordered to move to Sir Lowry’s Pass less than 24 hours later. This order was cancelled, however, when Durham and the 1000 men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion’s new, larger establishment were ordered forward to German East Africa.<sup>821</sup>

What followed then was a cyclical process whereby disease evacuees from East Africa were replaced by a combination of fresh drafts of new recruits and rehabilitated veterans of the campaign that were treated at various hospitals and convalescent camps throughout the Union.<sup>822</sup> Given the length of treatment for disease casualties and the uneven availability of rehabilitated veterans, the military authorities invested heavily in the recruitment of new Cape Corps soldiers. This far outstripped the rates at which Corps soldiers died or were discharged as medically unfit, and as consequence, the Cape Corps rapidly grew to far above its establishment size of 2000 men.<sup>823</sup> Difford, for example, notes that by August of 1917 the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Cape Corps’ strength was approximately double that number, with 1500 employed in German East Africa, 1000 in the depot at Woltemaade, 1000 in hospital and with 500 men on leave.<sup>824</sup> However, despite being a formation large enough in manpower to form a conventional UDF brigade, the Corps remained restricted to a single battalion for the

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<sup>817</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.305

<sup>818</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.301

<sup>819</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.301

<sup>820</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.301

<sup>821</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.301

<sup>822</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.301-304

<sup>823</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.301-304

<sup>824</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.304. This was exacerbated even further when the Cape Corps depot became the central processing station for all Coloureds in uniform, with some 10 000 men eventually passing through the camps at Woltemaade and Kimberley.

political reasons already outlined until the formation second Battalion was finally agreed upon in May of 1917.<sup>825</sup>

Whilst officers were gathered for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the new Depot commander for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps, Captain WP Anderson, was tasked with recruiting and training the 1200 men required for the new battalion- crowding the camp yet further. In order to aid him in the immense task of administering and training such a large number of men, Anderson had only the permanent services of two other officers, Sergeant Major Windrun, three white staff sergeants and a staff of twenty Coloured instructor NCOs to rely on.<sup>826</sup> Other battalion officers, which included Lt Colonel Morris, would come and go on visits or leave but Anderson was perpetually short on staff like trained cooks and as a consequence the conditions in the camp began to suffer.<sup>827</sup> This was only exacerbated in May of 1917, when the Cape Corps depot briefly became the central camp for all Coloured units in the Union, including the Cape Labour Corps and the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corp with “2000 men under canvas” at Woltemaade by the end of July.<sup>828</sup>

Conditions within the camp were not conducive to the sort of disciplined, focused activity that the Corps was capable of conducting when on military campaign. Lacking the sort of purpose that campaigning provided- namely an enemy to fight and a war to win- it is possible to infer that the sort of general camp malaise that Strydom described earlier began to take hold in some quarters of the depot.<sup>829</sup> In long stretches between sessions or after the completion of the training curriculum, boredom was likely a major problem; as was poor morale brought about by logistical problems that continued to plague the unit.<sup>830</sup> In a letter to Undersecretary of Defence Bourne dated 24 November, 1916, Sir David Graaf’s secretary noted that Graaf was approached by two 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion veterans of East Africa.

“Two young fellows who had enlisted as privates and are in the Potchefstroom camp, saw me. One is Dutch and the other is English, and though I do not like to give their names, are both members of very representative families. They do not like to grouse and are not dissatisfied. They said that in speaking to me so, they are anxious to encourage recruiting and to assist other fellows, not as well off as they are, who being dissatisfied with the food in the camp and have not enough money to supplement it, are likely to write to their friends and thereby perhaps unknowingly discourage recruiting.”<sup>831</sup>

After further reassurances that the two anonymous Corps soldiers were veterans of East Africa and understood the necessity of military austerity, Smartt’s account continues, noting that “They say that there is plenty of food but that the manner in which it is cooked is something damnable and that even the meat is uneatable and the tea and coffee indescribable.”<sup>832</sup> Smartt continued, “The Non. Coms. and cooks naturally get different

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<sup>825</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.302.

<sup>826</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.302

<sup>827</sup> See for example DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Graaf to Bourne. 24 November, 1916. “Letter: Dear Bourne, I just returned to town...”

<sup>828</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.304.

<sup>829</sup> See examples referred to in Chapter 3, P. 82

<sup>830</sup> See for example Cape Corps logistics requirements in DODA. Secretary of Defence. GP 2, Vol 3. Box 899.

<sup>831</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Graaf to Bourne. 24 November, 1916. “Letter: Dear Bourne, I just returned to town...” Underlined as in original.

<sup>832</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Graaf to Bourne. 24 November, 1916. “Letter: Dear Bourne, I just returned to town...” Underlined as in original.

food.”<sup>833</sup> Smartt notes that these conditions were adverse to the morale of the camp and again repeated that the net effects of such conditions was a likely drop in recruitment rates.<sup>834</sup> Bourne’s reply on the 28<sup>th</sup> was an emphatic acknowledgement and special training for the camp’s cooks was arranged.<sup>835</sup>

Improved cooking aside, escapism from camp life was readily available on the Cape peninsula in the form of alcohol and prostitutes. Either prompted ready absenteeism in the ranks as Grundlingh notes<sup>836</sup>, in addition to complaints directed at the military authorities. In July 1919, the military district officer for Worcester wrote to the Chief of the General Staff of the UDF to complain about the possession by ex-Cape Corps men of military knives which had been used to “seriously injure” one white person in Robertson.<sup>837</sup> Whether alcohol had contributed to lesser instances of fighting or violence in war-time is more difficult to discern, but for more serious incidents there is a distinct lack of evidence like the Worcester report. What is clearer, is that sexual relations between soldiers and prostitutes in the Cape had resulted in the transmission of venereal disease. A report to Governor General Buxton noted that of approximately 150 military patients being treated that month for venereal disease, 30 were Coloured.<sup>838</sup> Buxton’s response was to order the military to increase the presence of provosts and thus the “moral” policing of the Cape’s towns and cities.<sup>839</sup> Together, such accusations began to gain traction with the Capetonian military authorities.

The Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corps, who had already been the subject of a complaint to Buxton before<sup>840</sup>, was moved to Kimberley, whilst the Cape Town military authorities- also known as CHEBEC in official telegrams- wrote to Bourne on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 1917 to: “Strongly recommend that Cape Corps depot also hospital and convalescent camp for Cape coloured men should be removed from the Peninsula and located in some such place as Matjiesfontein well away from coloured surroundings.”<sup>841</sup> The telegram continues, claiming that the Cape Corps’ soldiers “... are most insubordinate, drunken and constantly absent being surrounded here by every temptation. Simonstown, Woltemade, Maitland, Sir Lowry Pass all most unsuitable sites for such men and water insufficient at Slangkop.”<sup>842</sup> Bourne’s reply noted the expense of such a move, and additionally he saw “No possible advantage in establishing a new mobilisation and hospital camp such as Matjiesfontein.”<sup>843</sup> “Indeed”, he

<sup>833</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Graaf to Bourne. 24 November, 1916. “Letter: Dear Bourne, I just returned to town...”

<sup>834</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Graaf to Bourne. 24 November, 1916. “Letter: Dear Bourne, I just returned to town...”

<sup>835</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. Bourne to Graaf. 29 November, 1916. “Telegram: Much obliged for your letters of the 24th...”

<sup>836</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.146.

<sup>837</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol1. DC GP/40292. Box 377. District Officer, District 14 to Chief of the General Staff. 9 July, 1919. “Letter: Militaire messen in bezit van leden het ‘Cape Corps’”. Whether those responsible for the attack were actually members of the Cape Corps is not established persuasively in the letter.

<sup>838</sup> See for example SANAP. GG. 684/9/107/1. “War 1914. Health of South African Forces. Draws Attention to Prevalence of Venereal Disease in Cape Peninsula.”

<sup>839</sup> SANAP. GG. 684/9/107/1. “War 1914. Health of South African Forces. Draws Attention to Prevalence of Venereal Disease in Cape Peninsula.”

<sup>840</sup> SANAP. GG. 684/9/93/292. “Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Companies in France: complaint re lack of control over coloured members of.” (Sic)

<sup>841</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. CHEBEC to Defence, Pretoria. 27 August, 1917. “Telegram: Strongly recommend that Cape Corps...”

<sup>842</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. CHEBEC to Defence, Pretoria. 27 August, 1917. “Telegram: Strongly recommend that Cape Corps...”

<sup>843</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Bourne to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 27 August, 1917. “Letter: Re attached copy of telegram from Chebec...”

continued, “On the point of expense and control such a proposal seems entirely unwarranted.”<sup>844</sup> Noting that it was possible to move the Corps to Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom, Kimberley, or Durban, Bourne immediately ruled out the first two options as inexpedient owing to “grave political objections.”<sup>845</sup>

At the last two places, “the difficulty of controlling insubordinate and drunken Cape boys would be no less than in the Cape Peninsula.”<sup>846</sup> Bourne’s casually emasculating and racist language aside, his response concludes that “short of establishing a kind of isolation camp for these people at very great expense it does not seem to me that any good object would be served by moving the depots.”<sup>847</sup> The matter was ultimately decided by the then Director of War Recruiting, Colonel Price, who had secured the Number 3 De Beers compound for the Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corps in the months prior.<sup>848</sup> He assured Bourne that the First and Second Cape Corps could both be housed in the same compound, whilst at the same time proposing “the discharge at Cape Town of all unsatisfactory soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps.”<sup>849</sup> The decision having been arrived at and finalised in early December, the Corps depot was transferred to Kimberley on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 1917- a mere ten days before the Christmas riots.<sup>850</sup> Unfortunately for the returning members of the Cape Corps, so little time had given the authorities and camp commanders little time to appreciate how bad the situation in Kimberley would ultimately prove to be.

### **“Indiscipline” and guilt? A tale of two Cape Corps**

As to whether the Cape Corps was truly guilty of the sort of indiscipline they were accused of, it is perhaps best to examine corroborating evidence within the greater context of military discipline in general. The Cape Corps, as with other British military units and those of the UDF, were bound via their terms of service to a distinct military legal code whereby the orders of officers become binding in a legal sense.<sup>851</sup> As enlisted or non-commissioned officers, Cape Corps soldiers were thus placed under the very real physical control of the military authorities; absenteeism without leave and a failure to obey orders both being considered crimes. Militaries throughout the ages have thus been concerned with the maintenance of “discipline”, whereby the orders of officers are carried out and where other normative standards of behaviour are enforced.<sup>852</sup>

For those guilty of contravening standing orders, two main types of punishment were used. The first, that of non-judicial punishment, in the First World War usually involved detention

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<sup>844</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Bourne to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 27August, 1917. “Letter: Re attached copy of telegram from Chebec...”

<sup>845</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Bourne to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 27August, 1917. “Letter: Re attached copy of telegram from Chebec...”

<sup>846</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Bourne to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 27August, 1917. “Letter: Re attached copy of telegram from Chebec...”

<sup>847</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Bourne to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 27August, 1917. “Letter: Re attached copy of telegram from Chebec...”

<sup>848</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Price to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 7 September, 1917. “Letter: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps”

<sup>849</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Price to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 7 September, 1917. “Letter: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps”

<sup>850</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.305

<sup>851</sup> See for example the oath taken on enlistment, for example DODA. Personnel Files. John van Aarde, Cape Corps, Number 1615. See also the conditions of the Army Act in DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. “Cape Corps Conditions of Service”. No date.

<sup>852</sup> See for example Krebs, “The Citizen-Soldier Tradition,” P.19.

in some form of punishment barracks and could possibly include extra physical training, extra duties, demotion in rank, and a cut in a payment.<sup>853</sup> Although potentially humiliating, such punishments were not reflected on a soldier's permanent record- with exception of demotions in rank- and were generally reserved for lesser offences that did not warrant an expulsion of the guilty.<sup>854</sup> As consequence, records of such non-judicial punishments are fragmentary at best and are mostly hinted at in complaints such as those raised in the CHEBEC telegram above. In contrast, court-martials were serious legal proceedings equivalent to a full court trial in civilian life. As such, the outcomes of such trials were referred to the Governor General who signed them into law, and consequently recorded in the Governor General's archives.<sup>855</sup>

With these two tools, the Union military authorities were able to regulate the behaviour of soldiers and act in a very real way as the sort of hegemonic masculine power Connell describes.<sup>856</sup> Sexual morality in particular was policed through the use of provosts- military police- which patrolled towns and cities to complicate the access of soldiers to brothels. For troops who developed venereal disease, the consequences could potentially be severe, for medical boards which determined whether or not the individual was fit for continued service after treatment included a specific set of questions on the official forms, namely:

“22. Has the disability been aggravated by  
(a) intemperance?  
(b) misconduct?”<sup>857</sup>

Given the attitudes of Smuts and others towards miscegenation, it is likely that Corps soldiers who had consorted with white prostitutes in particular would have been accused of gross misconduct and whilst there is no record of any Cape Corps troops having been court-martialled for such an offence, it is possible that some of the “undesirables” that Price refers to above may have been discharged for this reason.<sup>858</sup> It is less clear how the Governor-General reacted to reports of venereal disease amongst Cape Town based troops, for the *other* 120 troops taken up in hospital had all been whites.<sup>859</sup>

Military police also had to contend with the behaviour of soldiers after they had been drinking, an activity which almost inevitably led to some form of fighting and friction- either in and amongst groups of soldiers themselves, or between soldiers and civilians. “Barroom masculinity” often presented itself in the buying of “rounds” which sought to foster a bond of peer-group cohesion.<sup>860</sup> When reciprocated, individuals could wind up consuming very large amounts of alcohol, which then served to erode normal constraints of social etiquette. As

<sup>853</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. “Cape Corps Conditions of Service”. No date.

<sup>854</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. CSO/202. Box 185. “Cape Corps Conditions of Service”. No date.

<sup>855</sup> See for example SANAP. GG. 730/9/288/4. “Courts Martial: Sentence Passed on Staff Sergeant WG Kendrick, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Cape Corps.” For those found guilty court-martials at the bare minimum resulted in expulsion from the armed forces and short prison sentences. For more serious crimes, lengthier prison sentences and even execution were potential punishments.

<sup>856</sup> See Chapter One, P.20.

<sup>857</sup> For an example of the format, see DODA. Medical Board Files, WW1. File number 53394. 3 November, 1917. “Proceedings of a Medical Board of an Invalid: Private Adams, James. Cape Corps, Force number 2556.”

<sup>858</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Price to Chief of the General Staff and Adjutant General. 7 September, 1917. “Letter: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps”

<sup>859</sup> SANAP. GG. 684/9/107/1. “War 1914. Health of South African Forces. Draws Attention to Prevalence of Venereal Disease in Cape Peninsula.”

<sup>860</sup> See for example: Macdonald, A. 2013. “Bars, Barmaids and Southern Africa’s Indian Ocean World”.

Adapted from a History Department seminar delivered at The University of Johannesburg, 12 February, 2013

Morrell argues, robust, “manly” peer bonding over drinks was a staple feature of white male masculinity in this period, and consequently a degree of physicality and brawling was almost encouraged by military authorities, within certain bounds.<sup>861</sup> Certainly, the “relief” of tensions developed over long military deployments by men on leave seems to have been tolerated by military authorities when leave was granted upon a return home. The same sort of toleration does not appear to have been extended as readily to members of the Cape Corps.

The CHEBEC telegram above is unfortunately quite incomplete and leaves some questions open to be answered. The most obvious, is whether the Union officers responsible for it were biased in some sort of way against the Coloured men of the Corps. Hints to this effect can be found in a frustrated letter sent to the Chief of the General Staff by Lt Colonel Morris on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Noting that the Corps had required a special breed of officer, Morris remarked “I would point out that in a Coloured Regiment such as mine, the Officer question is the most important and unless I have Officers who are keen and who will work with these men, the Regiment will become a total failure.”<sup>862</sup> One candidate had in his opinion been “totally unsuited to command Coloured men” and he called on the authorities “to stop any of this class of Officer being sent to me in future.”<sup>863</sup> It is possible and indeed quite likely that Capetonian officers “inexperienced” with Coloured troops misconstrued normal masculine behaviour as behaviour that was far more upsetting to them when viewed through a racial lens; a lens which suggested an upset of the of the existing racial order much as Grundlingh argues white “larrikins” had perceived the presence of the Corps in Kimberley.<sup>864</sup> These two points are indeed suggestive of systemic bias, however, based on UDF sources it is difficult to determine definitively whether there are incidents included here where provoked Cape Corps troops retaliated, or genuine incidents of malicious activity. It is possible that all three of these explanations likely hold some degree of truth, as does a potential fourth. Difford apportions a small degree of blame to some men of the Cape Auxilliary Horse Transport Corps for inflaming tensions in Kimberley, and although the Cape Corps wore uniforms distinct from those of the CAHTC, they were similar enough to possibly result in mistaken identities, with outside observers possibly conflating the behaviour of the two groups.<sup>865</sup>

With all of these factors in mind, a picture of two different Cape Corps emerges when two sets of primary sources are consulted; with a disciplined forward deployed 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion contrasting sharply with the rest of the regiment languishing in the Corps Depot in the Union. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in particular seems to have struggled with sourcing the sort of motivated officers that Morris described, with the problem endemic and reaching all the way to the Battalion’s commanding officer. Formed in May of 1917, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was initially under the command of Lt Colonel Flindt, with Major GW Robertson serving as his second in command.<sup>866</sup> Pending Flindt’s arrival, Robertson “had very great difficulties to contend with owing to large numbers of recruits and hardly any officers or NCOs to assist him,” as Brigadier General Cavendish noted in correspondence with Buxton.<sup>867</sup> Cavendish, the likely originator of the CHEBEC telegram, was by then already displaying extreme frustration with

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<sup>861</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, P.155-164.

<sup>862</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Morris, GA to Chief of the General Staff. 15 April, 1918. “Letter: With reference to your letter AG 347/18830.”

<sup>863</sup> DODA. Adjutant General 1914-1921. G3/18830. Box 42. Morris, GA to Chief of the General Staff. 15 April, 1918. “Letter: With reference to your letter AG 347/18830.”

<sup>864</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.147.

<sup>865</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.305.

<sup>866</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.304.

<sup>867</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304. Cavendish. 20 June 1917. “Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps.”

the state of affairs at Woltemaade and his intervention in this case is illustrative of both a keen desire to crack down on the Cape Corps and to scapegoat someone for its perceived failures. Of Robertson, he remarked that despite the Major's difficult situation, "these are insufficient excuses for his failure to carry out his duty" and then went on to leave a damning and career-ending indictment of Robertson's character which read thusly:

"It is evident from the Court of Enquiry that Major Robertson allowed far too much license and slackness to exist amongst the officers before the arrival of Lt. Col. Flindt, and subsequent to the arrival of that officer who up to June 4<sup>th</sup> appears to have left the control of affairs to Major Robertson, the latter had exhibited a lack of decision and the absence of 'grip' which do not indicate capacity to lick into shape and hold together a battalion composed of such officers, NCOs and men as are now in the Cape Corps."<sup>868</sup>

The Court of Enquiry mentioned was convened after Flindt arrived and promptly proceeded to make matters worse for Robertson. Robertson himself recounts what happened next, stating in a letter to the Governor General that Lt Colonel Flindt and three other officers "were turned out of a certain hotel for disgraceful behaviour" after "drinking extremely heavily."<sup>869</sup> Unwilling to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion thus scandalised, Robertson approached Brigadier-General Byron, a "Senator in the part of the Free State" where he lived, prompting an official investigation.<sup>870</sup> Unfortunately for Robertson, whilst Flindt was relieved of duty, Robertson too was blamed for the state of affairs by Cavendish and was duly stripped of his rank and pension.<sup>871</sup> Whilst perhaps not possessing the forceful personality of a battalion commander as per Cavendish's requirements, Robertson by all accounts was a good soldier and a capable administrator who did his best with the under-resourced and under-officered battalion at his disposal. After gathering letters from character witnesses such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion's chaplain and various other senior officers, Robertson wrote to the Army Council of the War Office in London, who referred his case to Governor-General Buxton.<sup>872</sup> The Army Council and Buxton together agreed and "decided that this officer shall be allowed to regain his rank and to receive the gratuity due to him."<sup>873</sup>

With the officers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps suitably chastened, Cavendish then turned his attentions to its enlisted. For two of them in particular, the sort of legal rehabilitation extended to Robertson was not forthcoming. Staff Sergeant W Kendrick was convicted on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1917 of "absenting himself without leave", "disobeying a lawful command given by his superior officer" and most tellingly, "committing a civil offence, that is to say, attempt to commit sodomy" and was sentenced to two years of imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>874</sup> Private A Thomas, in turn, was convicted the following day of also attempting to

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<sup>868</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304. Cavendish. 20 June 1917 . "Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps."

<sup>869</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304. Robertson, GW. 6 September 1918 . "Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps."

<sup>870</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304.. Robertson, GW. 6 September 1918 . "Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps."

<sup>871</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304.. Robertson, GW. 6 September 1918 . "Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps."

<sup>872</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304.. Robertson, GW. 6 September 1918 . "Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps."

<sup>873</sup> SANAP. GG. 677/9/93/304. Buxton to Defence Minister. 14 October 1919. "Review of proceedings of a Board of Enquiry into Conduct of Major GW Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps."

<sup>874</sup> SANAP. GG. 730/9/288/4. "Courts Martial: Sentence Passed on Staff Sergeant WG Kendrick, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Cape Corps."

commit sodomy, and was sentenced to eighteen months.<sup>875</sup> Both proceedings were chaired by Brigadier Cavendish, but beyond this the specifics of either case are unfortunately not recorded in the Governor General's documents. Whether these cases are related somehow, for example, is unclear; as is whether the men were convicted of consensual male-male sex. If the latter is indeed the case, it telling that the Cape Corps' only two court-martials were levied on such cases and that the sexual "transgression" of heterosexual relations with prostitutes, whilst policed, did not result in expulsions. Regardless, it is clear that military authorities considered "sodomy" an unforgivable crime and that they had decided to crack down on it harshly. Further, it is curious that whilst Robertson's "failures" were forgivable to the male hegemon, the crime of sodomy was not.

As for the rest of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, evidence suggests that, when unified by a sense of purpose on campaign and when provided with appropriate resources, the Battalion's performance improved when they were sent north to Nyasaland in December of 1917.<sup>876</sup> Flindt was replaced with a new commander, Lieutenant Colonel JCB Clayton, and on its brief service in what is modern day Malawi and Mozambique, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion earned the commendations of the local British commander, General Northey.<sup>877</sup> Despite this, however, by early May of 1918 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was returned to Kimberley and effectively gutted when five hundred of its healthiest and most experienced men were transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion.<sup>878</sup> Clayton's frustrated letters to the Union establishment, where he urged the Defence Department to make better use of the officers and men still encamped at Kimberley, gained little traction and by the end of the month the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was effectively being disbanded.<sup>879</sup>

In contrast to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and the troops of the Cape Corps depot, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had, through its extensive campaigning, acquired a substantial reputation amongst the most senior and politically powerful officers of both the East African and Palestinian forces. Two particular instances are noteworthy. In Palestine, General Allenby, with the cessation of the war, issued a telegram to the 160<sup>th</sup> Brigade wherein the Cape Corps specifically was thanked for its service, alongside the Welsh and Indian battalions of the brigade.<sup>880</sup> Even more telling than this official British recognition was the reaction of General Van Deventer, who had ultimately taken command of the East African expedition after Smuts' departure. An old Boer general remade into an Imperial commander, Van Deventer had made his opinions of the Cape Corps known and when they arrived in Durban after the battles at Lindi in December of 1917, the following telegram waited for them:

"The experiment of forming a combatant force of the coloured population of the Union of South Africa has been amply justified by the good opinion formed of the Cape Corps by 'the G.O.C.<sup>881</sup> in Chief, East Africa, where this unit has rendered constant and valuable service since taking the field early in 1916. The capacity of the officers and the zeal of the rank and file reflect the utmost credit on all concerned with the organisation and training of the Corps, and on the loyal population from which it was recruited. It is the desire of the Army Council

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<sup>875</sup> SANAP. GG. 730/9/288/3. "Courts Martial: Private A Thomas, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Cape Corps."

<sup>876</sup> See for example Desmore, A.J.B. 1920. *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps thro' Central Africa*. P.25-92.

<sup>877</sup> Desmore, A.J.B. 1920. *With the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps thro' Central Africa*. P.93.

<sup>878</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.172.

<sup>879</sup> See for example DODA. Imperial Service Details.ISD 1/2/J. Box 2. McKay to District Staff officer. 29 July, 1918. "Letter: I have the honour to inform you..."

<sup>880</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. Allenby. 26 September, 1918. "Telegram: I desire to convey..."

<sup>881</sup> General Officer Commanding

to afford the Cape Corps a further opportunity of service in another theatre, and the Union Government has accordingly been requested to reorganise the Corps with that object on its return from East Africa, after all ranks have had a period of rest and recuperation to which their services entitle them.”<sup>882</sup>

As these telegrams indicate, for those who had served alongside the Cape Corps in combat, their military service had indeed engendered a degree of masculine respectability. Morris, in contrast to Clayton and Robertson, was readily recognised as a highly capable officer and was given major commands in German East Africa, serving as the Post Commander for the British post at German Bridge and as the commander of one of the columns at Lindi, both jobs that would normally have been given to a Brigadier General.<sup>883</sup> As for the enlisted, it is evident that despite acrimonious opinions held by some in the Union toward the Depot, the reputation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion could not so easily be dismissed- particularly by the end of the war. Their campaign for recognition had been hard-fought- literally- and as a consequence even Jan Smuts was ultimately forced to acknowledge the Corps publically.

### **A long, slow demobilisation and a détente in relations?**

“You fought as well and as bravely as any other unit of the British Army,” Smuts said to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion after it returned to Cape Town on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1919.<sup>884</sup> Speaking in Dutch, Smuts continued, telling the men there that they had “established a brilliant record for your Corps. You have attained a name of honour and on behalf of the Union Government I thank you most heartily for what you have done.”<sup>885</sup> Flanked on either side by Lord Buxton, Lt Colonel Morris, the new Mayor of Cape Town- WJ Thorne- and Senator FS Malan, Smuts’ comments on that stormy day are revered as moment of glowing pride by Difford in his semi-official history.<sup>886</sup> Lt Colonel Morris’ final farewell had been published in orders the days before, wherein he thanked the Corps for their loyalty and spirit in the face of some exceptionally difficult campaigning. He further noted that the activities of the Corps had gained significant attention from “Europeans” and argued emphatically that South Africa would henceforth pay Coloured people greater interest than ever before.<sup>887</sup>

“We all hope, that this will mean that conditions as a whole for Coloured men in South Africa will be greatly improved,” Morris wrote, before wishing the Corps soldiers success and prosperity in their civilian lives.<sup>888</sup> On a final note, Morris ended the order with a promise, reminding his men that “their old Officers would always take an interest in their welfare, and be ready at all times to give them advice and such assistance as lay in their power.”<sup>889</sup> After Smuts, Buxton, Thorne and Malan had spoken, Morris issued his final order to the Cape Corps, ordering the 1033 men remaining in uniform to an army camp at Maitland. There, after a final round of medical examinations, the Corps was disbanded, with the last men to leave the camp doing so on September the 8<sup>th</sup>. From Maitland, the Cape Corps’ regimental standard was transferred to the Cape Town City Hall, where it would be interred from then on.<sup>890</sup>

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<sup>882</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. 25 December, 1916. “Telegram: The experiment of...”

<sup>883</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.5;143.

<sup>884</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.253.

<sup>885</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.253.

<sup>886</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.253.

<sup>887</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.252.

<sup>888</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.252.

<sup>889</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.252.

<sup>890</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.254.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, it had been nearly ten months since the end of the First World War. With the rest of the Cape Corps having been demobilised almost immediately after the signing of the European armistice, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in turn had found itself rooted in the midst of Allenby's vast Middle-Eastern army. After returning from Palestine to encampment in Alexandria, the Cape Corps was slated to return to the Union as early as March of 1919, but owing to a shortage of shipping their return was perpetually put on hold.<sup>891</sup> Just as it seemed a likely return was probable, the Egyptian Revolution of 1919 broke out and for the next five months the Corps was employed patrolling railway lines and otherwise securing British interests in Egypt. Three Cape Corps soldiers were injured by rebel snipers during this period, and for the duration of the insurrection neither officers nor men were permitted to leave their camp unarmed.<sup>892</sup>

Unfortunately, apart from Difford's account, there seems to be no mention of the Egyptian revolution in either the Cape Corps' official military records or in Difford's collection at the South African National Museum of Military History. How 'loyalist' Coloureds would have reacted to the Egyptian Revolution would no doubt be an interesting study, and the findings or lack thereof of more radical opinions amongst the enlisted could add to the historiography of Coloured political thinking.<sup>893</sup> As for Difford, his feelings on the matter are made fairly clear in his account, where he noted that: "On the part of most of the participants, these attacks upon communications degenerated into a simple campaign of pillage, with increasingly murderous tendencies."<sup>894</sup> Regardless of its effect upon the Corps soldiers themselves, the net effect of the Egyptian revolution was to delay the Corps departure to the Union until early August.<sup>895</sup>

A palpable question that remained after their return and demobilisation, was whether their military service had truly changed anything in the Union. Had Smuts' speech in the Cape Town City Hall, as much as it had been a public repudiation of his private opinions, truly represented a "détente" in white-Coloured relations, as Difford and Morris had so hopefully suggested? The answer, unfortunately for the men of the Cape Corps, seems to be no, with the works of Gavin Lewis and Mohammed Adhikari sketching out a future of socio-political marginalisation for the Coloured community into the 1920s, 1930s and beyond.<sup>896</sup> During the war, anti-Union Hottentot "radicals"<sup>897</sup> near Springbok had been carefully scrutinised by the military authorities.<sup>898</sup> Although these had been recognised as a minority amongst Coloureds, the pre-war logic and paranoia of internal military suppression is highly visible in the documents with the added precaution being ordered by Pretoria of safeguarding against the collaboration of potential Hottentot rebels with German missionaries.<sup>899</sup>

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<sup>891</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.243-247

<sup>892</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.243-247

<sup>893</sup> See, for example, Nasson's work on Coloured loyalism in Nasson, "Why they fought."

<sup>894</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.258

<sup>895</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.243-247

<sup>896</sup> See Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, P.89-95 and Adhikari, *Not White Enough, not Black Enough*, P. 60-70.

<sup>897</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/34421. Box 323. Elliot, FA to Defence Headquarters. 3 February, 1917. "Letter: Alleged unrest amongst Hottentots in Namaqualand."

<sup>898</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/34421. Box 323. Elliot, FA to Defence Headquarters. 3 February, 1917. "Letter: Alleged unrest amongst Hottentots in Namaqualand."

<sup>899</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/34421. Box 323. Elliot, FA to Defence Headquarters. 3 February, 1917. "Letter: Alleged unrest amongst Hottentots in Namaqualand."

Immediately after the war, too, there was a rapid return to the “internal suppression” mode of military thinking. When a deputation suggested to Smuts in Cape Town in early February, for example, to reform the Cape Corps into an Active Citizen Force unit of reservists- thus cementing Coloureds into the armed forces- Smuts deflected the question to his Chiefs of Staff.<sup>900</sup> Lt. Colonel AJ Brink, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, stated “In my opinion Cape Coloured or Blacks should not under any circumstances be allowed to serve in a combatant unit of the Union Defence Forces” and continued that “should it be decided to form Military Units in which these Cape Coloured men could engage for Active Service, that Pioneer Units be decided on.”<sup>901</sup> Brink seems to have been unaware that, in the debate on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps formation some two years earlier, it had been agreed that despite being a Pioneer unit, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion would have been armed and considered combatants.

Regardless, the opinion of the Deputy Adjutant General, Lt Colonel DO van Velden seems to have finalised the matter, when he pointed out that the Cape Corps could technically be viewed as violation of the Union Defence Act of 1913.<sup>902</sup> With the incorporation of the Cape Corps into the UDF proper only possible through an amendment of that Act, and Smuts unwilling to wage that political battle, the notion of an ACF Cape Corps unit was effectively quashed. Compellingly, a document is preserved in the Department of Defence Archives which illustrates exactly how the Cape Corps was always viewed as a wartime contingency. Dated 30<sup>th</sup> August, 1918, Major Ralph Morkel of the UDF was detailed to write up reports on the white NCOs of the old 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion at the Corp’s depot, so that those of the best “character and skill” might be retained in the UDF’s professional Permanent Force.<sup>903</sup> Coloured NCOs and instructors were deliberately excluded, indicative of the fact that the military authorities had already decided against a change in Coloureds’ military status after the war. Brigadier General Collyer, noting that white anti-Coloured agitations in Kimberley had continued after the Christmas rioting of 1917, summed up the bitter mood in the Coloured ranks thusly: “The Cape Corps take up the position that they are quite good enough to be used in a fight, but when they come back are, as stated by one, chased like mad dogs.”<sup>904</sup>

## Memory and identity

For Cape Corps troops like John van Aarde, a Private who had been stricken by no less than seven attacks of malaria in East Africa<sup>905</sup>, his demobilisation on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 1919 at Maitland was the end of a road which had begun precisely three years and 125 days earlier with his enlistment at Simon’s Town on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1916.<sup>906</sup> Enlisted at 26 years of age, van Aarde had left behind his wife Susan and two children aged four years and twelve months respectively as well as a younger brother he had marked as “wholly dependent” on him on his enlistment forms.<sup>907</sup> With his “military character” described as “Good”, van Aarde

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<sup>900</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/40222. Box 365. Chief of General Staff to Deputy Chief of Staff and Deputy Adjutant General. 17 February, 1919. “Proposed ACF units consisting of Cape Boys.”

<sup>901</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/40222. Box 365. Brink, AJ to Chief of General Staff. 21 February, 1919. “Proposed ACF units consisting of Cape Boys.”

<sup>902</sup> DODA. Secretary of Defence, GP2, Vol 1. DC GP/40222. Box 365. Van Velden, DO, to Chief of General Staff. 27 February, 1919. “Proposed ACF units consisting of Cape Boys.”

<sup>903</sup> DODA. Imperial Service Details.ISD 1/2/J. Box 2. Morkel to The Staff Officer, UIS Details, Pretoria. 30<sup>th</sup> August, , 1918. “Letter: White Non Commissioned Officers- 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps”

<sup>904</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, P.148.

<sup>905</sup> See P.77

<sup>906</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. John van Aarde, Cape Corps Number1615.

<sup>907</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. John van Aarde, Cape Corps Number1615.

was discharged with his uniform, great-coat, blanket and “necessaries” bag which included in it a shaving kit and a military issued-utility knife.<sup>908</sup> The uniform was marked with a stamp which read “Condemned or Sold” and was stripped of all of its markings and chevrons with the exception of the Cape Corps’ cap badge.<sup>909</sup> Van Aarde and his fellows were given a furlough period of exactly four weeks where they would be permitted to wear the altered uniform in public, beyond which they were required to have purchased civilian attire.<sup>910</sup> With dental treatment offered to demobilising troops- and refused by van Aarde - one final matter was the receipt of the substantial back pay and allowances due to him.<sup>911</sup> Van Aarde left the depot at Maitland bound for his house in Salt River with back-pay to the tune of £48, 7 shillings and 7 pence<sup>912</sup>, a sum worth approximately £5820 in 2017 after adjustments for inflation. With his wife and children having been able to draw from the dependants allowance, to van Aarde- a labourer before the war<sup>913</sup>- this amount of money no doubt represented a substantial windfall and may well have allowed him and a number of ex Corps soldiers to make tentative steps into the “respectable” Coloured middle class which now included in its ranks some eight thousand veterans of the two infantry battalions of the Cape Corps.

A final order of business for many members of the Cape Corps was to properly commemorate their dead, with the wartime expedience of ceremonies held in East Africa and Palestine overtaken by an opportunity to comprehensively do so “at home”, with families and broader civil society present and represented. With Cape Town authorities again proving sympathetic to the Corps, Mayor Thorne arranged for the use of the City Hall and the first of a series of yearly memorial services were held there on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1919.<sup>914</sup> The booklet issued to mourners was dedicated to “The Coloured Units in the Great War, 1914-1919” and includes in its list specifically: “1<sup>st</sup> Cape Corps, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps, Drivers of SA Field Artillery, Cape Auxiliary Horse Transport Corps, Cape Coloured Labour Battalion, The Boer War Veterans, and their support on the Home Front, the Comforts Committees.”<sup>915</sup> After wishing the reader a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, the booklet then enjoined them to “Remember the Battle of Square Hill” where the men of the Cape Corps had “fought a good fight”, with Square Hill had evidently already begun to acquire a mythological status amongst Cape Corps veterans.<sup>916</sup> Addressed first by the mayor, then by the Cape Corps Chaplain, Reverend Allan Earp-Jones, the final speaker of the day was “Ex-Sergeant” Abe Desmore.<sup>917</sup> Difford unfortunately did not record what these speeches contained, but the memorial booklet indicates that the event began with the singing of *God Save The King* and that between each speaker various Christian hymns were sung, imbuing the event with distinctly religious overtones.<sup>918</sup>

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<sup>908</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. John van Aarde, Cape Corps Number1615.

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<sup>913</sup> DODA. Personnel Files. John van Aarde, Cape Corps Number1615.

<sup>914</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Memorial Service Booklet, October 26, 1919.”

<sup>915</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Memorial Service Booklet, October 26, 1919.” Italicised as in the original

<sup>916</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Memorial Service Booklet, October 26, 1919.”

<sup>917</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Memorial Service Booklet, October 26, 1919.”

<sup>918</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Memorial Service Booklet, October 26, 1919.”

This set the pattern for the following years, with the annual memorial service generally occurring on September 20<sup>th</sup>.<sup>919</sup> Difford, who had likely been working on his history of the Cape Corps since the end of the war, had his work published in 1920; whilst Abe Desmore also published his history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cape Corps that year.<sup>920</sup> An ex-Cape Corps vocational training programme was established which trained Cape Corps veterans in leatherworking, whilst a number of ex Cape Corps officers employed Cape Corps veterans in their private enterprises and businesses.<sup>921</sup> Membership of the Cape Corps and Other Coloured Units Regimental Association thus established a socio-economic network which helped keep some Corps veterans employed, although there are indications that the Great Depression had prompted some tougher times. As a consequence, a market and sports day was arranged in 1936, with profits being directed to impoverished Coloured families.<sup>922</sup> Speaking to the press, Difford- by then the Chairman of the Regimental Association- publically called for an improvement in Coloured economic and living standards.<sup>923</sup> The memorial service of that year- the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Square Hill- was patterned on those that had come before, with Dr Abdullah Abdurahman being the keynote speaker. In addition to the hymns accompanied by music from the old Regimental band, one of the last songs of the day was the Cape Corps regimental march.<sup>924</sup>

This all points to a powerfully retained memory and identity amongst ex members of the Cape Corps, a theme Albert Grundlingh has explored at length.<sup>925</sup> Here, masculine identity was not merely remembered passively. Commemoration was- and remains- an active process, with the group identity of the Cape Corps being created in war and with the efforts of the Regimental Association serving as a constant site of recreation and retention. This helps explain why Cape Corps identities were so persistent and pertinent, and why for a man like Difford, it would remain a part of him until the very last days of his life.

## **The Second World War and beyond**

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the Union was again drawn into the conflict on the side of the British. The political situation, however, had changed and South Africa had become a fully fledged Dominion. In this conflict, as Ian Gleeson contends, “there was no chance of using the smokescreen of Imperial Service as in the First World War.”<sup>926</sup> When the decision was taken to reform the Cape Corps, it would be as a UDF unit.<sup>927</sup> Relations, however, between Coloureds and the Union government had been strained during the years of National Party rule, and when some Coloured recruits waiting on a train at Laingsburg engaged in drunken looting, white Citizen Force reservists were called in to deal with them. In the ensuing skirmish, one Cape Corps recruit was shot and killed and the resulting outcry prompted Smuts’ deputy, Jan Hofmeyer, to halt any plans to arm the resurgent Corps. When

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<sup>919</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.309-322

<sup>920</sup> Difford continued to write, covering his favourite topic- sports- with particular enthusiasm. His works on “Rugby football” appear to have been popular.

<sup>921</sup> Difford, *The Story of the Cape Corps*, P.309-322

<sup>922</sup> *The Cape Argus*, 10 April 1936. “Bazaar and Sports Meeting” and *Cape Times*, 10 April 1936. “The Cape Corps”

<sup>923</sup> *The Cape Argus*, 10 April 1936. “Bazaar and Sports Meeting” and *Cape Times*, 10 April 1936. “The Cape Corps”

<sup>924</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. “Memorial Service Booklet, September 20, 1920.”

<sup>925</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.148-150

<sup>926</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.105

<sup>927</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.105

the Corps was reformed in 1940 under the command of Lt Colonel Charles Hoy, it was as an unarmed logistical service battalion.<sup>928</sup>

Undeterred by its noncombatant status, many ex-members of First World War vintage rejoined as instructors, including Sergeants PD Schoor and TA Daniels.<sup>929</sup> Difford, by then aged 67, also volunteered his service and was made Quartermaster of the Cape Corps' new sister organisation, the Indian and Malay Corps commanded by Lt Colonel George Morris.<sup>930</sup> Despite the death in late 1940 of his son Ivor, a RAF pilot in the Battle of Britain, Difford remained in service until he was honourably discharged in 1942 owing to his age.<sup>931</sup> The two Corps, in turn, played a major role in delivering some 13 000 of the 15 000 trucks used by the UDF in its campaigns in Abyssinia and the Western Desert. Driven along a highway 8000-10 000km long which roughly followed Rhodes' Cape to Cairo railway line, the route passed through Tanzania- then Tanganyika- and included in it a stops at sites familiar to the old Corps at Dodoma and Arusha.<sup>932</sup> The 6000 members of the two Corps frequently made a habit of arming themselves with captured Italian weaponry, a practice to which Allied commanders turned a blind eye, and some Cape Corps troops became engaged in skirmishes in North Africa.<sup>933</sup> Later, Coloured and Indian logistical troops would distinguish themselves in Italy for bravery as ammunition carriers and stretcher bearers. Consequently, towards the end of the war when ideas were mooted of raising a Coloured infantry unit under the command of General HB Klopper, Hofmeyer and Smuts softened their hard objections.<sup>934</sup> The war ended before anything came of the idea, and with its end the Cape Corps was again disbanded. Difford, a stalwart of the old Corps, died on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1949. He was survived by his wife and two daughters.<sup>935</sup>

Difford was also survived by the idea of the Cape Corps and long lingering identities. The cause of the Coloured franchise was taken up, for example, by anti Nationalist Party protestors in the early and mid-50s and both the Springbok Legion and Torch Commando organisations made reference to Coloured sacrifices at Square Hill to justify their continued status as voting citizens.<sup>936</sup> The Nationalist Party government was unrelenting in its racial profiling of Coloureds in the military, however, and when the Cape Corps was reformed again in 1963, it was purely as a non-combatant service unit.<sup>937</sup> Curiously, in a turn to Coloureds and in a prelude to Tricameralism, the National Party re-armed the Corps in 1975 and deployed them to police South African and South West African borders thereafter. With a second Battalion added in 1984 and a third in 1989, the Corps even had its own junior officer's schools founded and the Corps as a whole continued to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Square Hill.<sup>938</sup> Reduced to a single Battalion in 1990, the Corps was renamed 9SAI and thereafter was absorbed into the integrated post 1994 South African National Defence Force.<sup>939</sup>

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<sup>928</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.105

<sup>929</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.105-111.

<sup>930</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. No date. "Ivor Dennis Difford Biography."

<sup>931</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. No date. "Ivor Dennis Difford Biography."

<sup>932</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.111-116.

<sup>933</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.111-116.

<sup>934</sup> Gleeson, *The Unknown Force*, P.111-116.

<sup>935</sup> SANMMH. Difford Collection, Q 355.31(68) DIF. No date. "Ivor Dennis Difford Biography."

<sup>936</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.148

<sup>937</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.148-150

<sup>938</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.148-150

<sup>939</sup> Grundlingh, *War and Society*, Pg.148-150

## Conclusion

The Cape Corps, in its First World War incarnation, existed for a period of just under four years. As an institution and object of study, it has provided a rich narrative when analysed within the broader contexts of social- and gender- specific approaches to history. As this dissertation has illustrated in Chapter One, on the level of the political and socio-cultural, the Cape Corps was ultimately an Imperial project animated by Governor-General Buxton and other liberal whites, despite both personal reluctance on the part of Jan Smuts and political reluctance expressed by the SAP in the face of a recalcitrant NP. Despite this reluctance, Coloureds and the APO responded to the outbreak of the First World War with persistent calls to be allowed to fight.

Why the APO and its Coloured constituents were so steadfastly adamant in their calls for military service is a major theme explored in Chapter One. Working from the basis of works on Coloured identity produced by Mohammed Adhikari and Gavin Lewis, this chapter then transitioned towards a gendered analysis of the masculine identity politics associated with the formation of the Cape Corps. Applying the work of Natasha Erlank to the Cape Corps case, this dissertation has argued that Coloured political organisations and individuals considered the war as an opportunity to gain access to the sort of fully paid up citizenship afforded to white males. This citizenship was wrapped up in deeply held notions of militarised masculinity and as Chapter One argued, it was hoped by many Coloureds that through emulating and accessing that same masculine identity they would be afforded the same sort of political recognition and social respectability afforded to white soldiers.

This masculine aspiration in fact underpins the golden thread of this dissertation, namely that Cape Corps soldiers pulled together under the umbrella of a powerful group identity in order to accomplish this. As consequence, much of this dissertation has been constructed through the analytical lens of Connell's *Masculinities*. Chapter Two deals with the initial construction of this identity and does so in two halves. The first pertained to the recruitment of the Cape Corps. This dissertation considered the Cape Corps Recruiting Committee and its activities and methods over the course of its existence, with particular reference to contextualising material drawn from the Department of Defence Archives. It then considered Coloured recruits and unpacked their reasons for enlisting. Apart from the powerful motivating factor of masculine prestige already discussed, dimensions of pay and differing responses between urban and rural Coloureds was also examined. Finally, consideration of the Corps' white officers was made and contextualised using Robert Morrell and Bill Nasson's studies on white settler masculinities and militaries respectively.

The second axis of Chapter Two followed chronologically on the first and considered the process of indoctrination and training that produced Cape Corps soldiers out of raw Coloured recruits. Here, this Chapter argues that Coloured enlisted and white officers were drawn together in a classic example of Herbert Kelman's theories of group identity formation, with Coloured recruits being immersed into white military culture through a process of compliance, identification and internalisation. With the Corps beginning to take shape as a unique and forward looking racial institution, Chapter Two concluded with the note that the organisation seems to have been viewed with heavy scepticism by some in the military and by Smuts in particular.

As consequence, it never enjoyed an easy relationship with its military masters in the Union, and this substantially explains command decisions made by General Smuts in German East Africa. As Chapter Three has argued, biological conditions in East Africa posed a substantial challenge to the Imperial expedition there under Smuts, with African trypanosomiasis and malaria serving as major microbial threats. Despite advances in medical understanding that had allowed colonial powers to control such diseases as malaria and dysentery, this dissertation has argued that it was a failure on the part of the Smuts and the British to anticipate the effects of sleeping sickness that led ultimately to disease disaster. After trypanosomiasis and the tsetse fly destroyed a logistical system dominated by draught animals, the expedition and the Cape Corps by extension suffered a shortage of everything from mosquito nets and quinine, to food. This Chapter references the works of Randal Packard, Anne Samson and Edward Paice, in addition to the Pike Report, and further argues that Smuts' leadership style contributed to the unfolding problems of disease. Beyond this, whilst Smuts' decision to evacuate white troops and replace them primarily with black troops had been motivated by ideas of racial and biological determinism, his decision in regards to the Cape Corps was *not* and in clarifying this, this dissertation has answered a major research question. As this chapter has shown through Department of Defence archival material, Smuts was well aware of the fact that the Cape Corps was being severely affected by disease and that his decision to keep them on was grounded in considerations of both manpower and politics.

While all this was going on, the Cape Corps was suffering on the ground and it is this situation that the second half of the third chapter sought to investigate. The Cape Corps' precarious supply situation was considered, as was its internal medical infrastructure. A comparison was made between the Cape Corps, which like most units- including those made up of white servicemen- did not have quinine readily distributed to them, and the 6<sup>th</sup> South African Infantry Battalion which *did* and subsequently fared much better as a result. For those affected by disease, the chapter then charted the course of their evacuation and subsequent treatment in the Union. This narrative was constructed primarily through the use of Difford and AG Martin's histories as framing devices, to which personal accounts from Cape Corps soldiers were added, in addition to case files drawn from the Department of Defence archives.

The resulting suffering was endured because both because military and masculine discipline had demanded it, and because the Corps was determined to demonstrate their value in set-piece military battle. Chapter Four focused heavily on the Cape Corps' "campaign" experiences in East Africa and Palestine. Frustrated themselves as a consequence of being initially employed as little more than armed labourers, this chapter considered the traction the Cape Corps gained amongst the ranks of its white commanders after its early months performing "most valuable work" building roads and railways in northern Tanzania. With even Smuts in favour of another Cape Corps 'pioneer' unit, this chapter investigated the mooted structure of the Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and the correspondences surrounding it contained within Department of Defence Archives. It argued that as consequence of extra cost or perhaps the extra prestige attached to being made a formal unit of Engineers, the project was quietly shelved and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was raised as another infantry battalion.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, in the meanwhile, had been steadily pushed into the front lines. Using first-hand accounts of patrolling produced by Cape Corps soldier PD Schoor, Chapter Four then

considered the ambiguous nature of guerrilla warfare encountered by the Corps. It then argued how steadily escalating hostilities pushed the Corps together in the face of a common foe. This culminated in a series of major battles which finally gave the Cape Corps an opportunity to “test their mettle”, with Chapter Four investigating in particular the Battles of Lindi and of Square Hill. The chapter then constructed “face of battle” style narratives of those battles which relied heavily on the first-hand accounts of Cape Corps soldiers Strydom, Daniels, Hendricks and Moses. It argued that such events were remembered by Cape Corps troops with a masculine pride which emphasised the difficult, dirty, demanding and dangerous nature of fighting in the First World War. As this Chapter emphasises, this fighting extracted an often terrible toll in injuries and deaths which in many ways bound the veterans of the Cape Corps- both enlisted and officer- together with deep bonds of loyalty and kinship.

These same bonds that had kept them alive and together on the battlefield prompted resistance to their detractors back in the Union itself, where an awkward relationship with white Union military authorities and civilians remained a constant problem. Chapter Five began with reference to the work of Albert Grundlingh and anti-Coloured rioting directed at the Corps in Kimberley in December of 1917. It then worked backwards to determine, based on Department of Defence- and Governor General- records, the causes and course of the move of the Cape Corps depot to Kimberley. It examined accusations of drunkenness and reports of Corps soldiers consorting with prostitutes, along with other accusations of “indiscipline” that ultimately prompted military authorities to send the Corps north. This is argued occurred within the context of a classic Conellian hegemonic masculinity, where military authorities acted to regulate and police the masculine and moral behaviour of the Corps Coloured enlisted.

Beyond this, Chapter Five also considered the powerful sort of regimental cohesion the Corps had developed. Corps soldiers, many of whom were by then veterans of East Africa and the battle of Lindi, reacted in a defiant and cohesive manner to the racial undertones of the rioting in Kimberley in 1917, for example, and refused to be intimidated. Cape Corps officers were not only outraged by the behaviour of white rioters but sought to actively protect their men from official sanction in the official investigation that followed. These bonds, forged on campaign and on the battlefield, were readily illustrated in the way that the ex-officers of the Cape Corps continued to advocate for the welfare of their men by way of the Cape Corps Regimental Association. It concluded by arguing that for men like Ivor Difford, the Cape Corps created a permanent bond to it and that his experiences in the battalion and regiment would continue to shape his identity for years and decades after its demobilisation.

## **Overview and final thoughts**

As argued in the Introduction, this work is a response to a historiographical gap. Perhaps as a consequence of its military nature, the history of the Cape Corps during the First World War has not received a comprehensive overlook in its entirety from dedicated academic historians, the works of Albert Grundlingh and Bill Nasson of course notwithstanding. As socio-political histories, even those have their limitations and on an informal level it was an ambition of this dissertation to fuse the approaches of the academic historical mainstream with the sort of institutional histories produced by Difford and Gleeson to provide a more comprehensive and overarching narrative. The first and second chapters together provide additional context and detail, building on previous works as a consequence of a thorough survey of the Difford papers, the Department of Defence Archives, and the Smuts and Buxton papers. Chapters three and four are the sites of this work’s most salient original research, with Chapter Three

answering in particular a research question posed by Albert Grundlingh's work. Together, three and four contribute unique and robust new narratives of what Cape Corps soldiers experienced "on the ground" whilst on campaign, and it is in these narratives that the dissertation has filled a gap in historiography most effectively. Chapter Five adds valuable context again to work already done, and serves to complete the narrative arc that powerfully binds this work together; namely the tale of a proud regiment of men.

This work has its limitations certainly, especially within the frame of the sources and archives it has consulted. A first shortcoming is that this dissertation has not adequately addressed the topic of religious identity within the Cape Corps. It has not considered how Cape Malays, for example, were represented and integrated into the Corps, or how Muslim Coloureds reacted to the overwhelmingly Christian military environment they may have found themselves in. As a topic, religious differences did not readily present themselves in the sources and as consequence religious topics as a whole were only integrated into the narrative as they became visible; in regards to the religious denomination of the Lieutenant killed at Lindi, Charles Abbot, or in regards to the content of Cape Corps memorial services. A second, perhaps related shortcoming in this dissertation is that it did not readily discover the reactions of Cape Corps troops to the Egyptian Revolution of 1919. What "loyalists" within the ranks of the Coloured enlisted would have thought of the revolutionaries would make for an interesting study no doubt, but sources dedicated to the Cape Corps specifically in the DOD archives are silent on the matter, as are those in the Difford Collection. A response to either of these shortcomings would be a thorough survey of the descendants of Cape Corps soldiers, who may through either oral histories or retained written documents be able to shed light on these elements.

In all, the sources consulted in the production of this work have worked together to produce a powerful narrative which combines in it disparate elements of race, gender, politics and genuine human drama. The Cape Corps was an "experiment" that was remembered with pride by those that had participated in it, but one that was not repeated for decades. As participants- in, and survivors-of, the First World War, the Cape Corps is a powerful example of a masculinity which leveraged virtues of courage, cohesion and plurality. In it, Coloured and white European men fought and died together for common cause. It was an idea and an institution that was ahead of its time.

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