against them every week in November. By the middle of Feb.y neither side could have raised a team to save their lives, so many of us were down with enteric & dysentry & two of them were dead. Our life was always a busy one from a subalterns point of view.

Our routine early in December was,

2.15 a.m. Reveillé. 3.30 a.m till 4.45 a.m. route march for exercise of horses. 5.30 am to 6.30 gun drill & laying. (horses fed at 5.30 am) 7 am. breakfast. 8.30 am (water + feed for orderly officer) 9 a.m. Orderly room. kit inspections &c. 11.30 am water 12 noon feed & then men's dinners. 12.30 p.m. lunch. 4.30 p.m. water. 5 pm – 6 p.m. Stables for all subalterns. 6.30 p.m. guard mounting. 7 p.m. dinner & bed about 8.30 p.m. If one was ~~on~~ Regimental Orderly Officer one had in addition to turn out the guards (4 of them) once during the day & once between 10 pm & 2 a.m. Also we took it in turns of 2 h.rs throughout the day to be on duty, watching for an attack on Helpmakaar, at Blewitts post. Should one's turn for this happen to be 2 till 4 p.m., and if one happened to be Regimental Orderly Officer, it was impossible to get any sleep at all, to speak of.

We always made our men shave, have their hair cut & keep clean. On Sundays we had Church parade, either under the Major or altogether under a parson, and the men turned out beautifully clean & soldierly considering, having their ragged coats and patched breeches.

However Gun drill was abolished about 19th Decr when the shelling got so thick in our camp, and Blewitts Post disappeared early in Febry In conclusion; we were all very fit till the New Year, and by the middle of Feb? we were all very weak & many very ill. The troops by then, (exclusive horses or men) had it in them to move 5 miles out of Ladysmith. We always kept our spirits up well, and always were expecting to be relieved in about a fortnight. We had many bitter disappointments. A few favoured ones managed to get helio messages sent to their relatives & some of the volunteers got letters through by Kaffir runners, I tried to in vain.

Tuesday 14th Novr 1899. "Second Pogglehurst Affair"

We cannot believe our ears, when we are warned at daybreak to turn out & join the 18th Hussars for a second outing under Brocklehurst. Surely they are not going to let this old muddler waste any more precious ammunition. In order to avoid attention of Long Tom we are ordered to start at 5 a.m. & proceed over the Iron Bridge up the road & down to the right to the river, where the 18th Hussars are encamped, hidden from Bulwana, the 53rd go with us. We hear that we are to go out towards Blaauwkrans with 18th Hussars & I.L.H, attract the enemy's attention towards us & silence his

guns, whilst the 67th (Manifold battery) & 53rd go out with rest of cavalry (19th Hussars & 5 D.Gs & 5 Lancers) north from the tin camp and cut off a large convoy that has been seen daily moving towards Colenso. No one knows what they are going to do with this huge train of slow moving bullock wagons, when it is captured. They couldn't bring it in over 5 miles of enemy's country! Our force is to be the decoy & go first. We form up in column of route by the 18th camp, who very kindly give us some cocoa. For some reason the orders to move do not arrive, & we wait on into daylight. About 8 a.m. we hear that the orders have been entirely changed (as per usual) & that all the cavalry (except the 19th Hussars) ~~as~~ ourselves & 67th bat.s are going out to Blaubank to "capture or destroy enemy's guns". The 53rd is to remain in camp taking 67th's place, 4 guns at King's Post & 2 at river covering Star Kopie. We none of us (especially 18th Hussars) look forward to the job, as we know it will be another "Poggle" & expect to get half annihilated by Long Tom & other guns as we cross Range Post ridge. We have to explain to the officers of 18th Hussars how to destroy or disable a gun. We don't get orders to move till 11 a.m. instead of going out under cover of dark as was arranged. A Staff officer rides by (Ramsden thought it was the same one as on Black Monday) and says in a loud voice, "Well they decided to go out, we'll get hell from Long Tom as we cross Range Post & about 6 other guns out-

side, I don't suppose half of us will get back" This was overheard by the men. Hanging is too good for such an officer! The 5th D.G.s & 67th battery go first, we follow & then the 1st H. 18th Hussars. 5th Lancers in reserve. To our surprise & delight Long Tom doesn't wake up till we are all over the ridge west of his sights. The 67th come into action on Sign Post ridge where they are out of effectual range & never discover the Blaubank gun. We wait with an escort of 1st H. behind. The 18th Hussars & 5th D.G.s disappear on the flanks & do nothing all day, but watch. We pass behind the 67th & then turning to the left come into action beyond & north of ~~the~~ Sign Post Ridge, exchange several shell with a gun on Right tropic of Blaubank, but find we are further off than we thought, so take ground to the right & then advance to just this side of flag spruit & come into action at 2700x from the gun. During our advance, get heavily shelled. As usual we silence the gun, the gunners having it & going under cover, & distribute our fire over the tropic. The 67th pass us, and with the 1st H., take up a position on the other side of flag spruit & enfilade Blaubank with their fire. However not a single volunteer or cavalryman smokes the slightest attempt to take any position on tropic & the 1st H. (with 67th battery) are the only ones who get off their

weapons at all. The 1/H. had dismounted and were on Star Kopie, firing across at Left Kopie from a position which was actually further from the enemy than the 67th battery were. The 67th were too near & had some casualties from rifle fire, Lieut Du Port being shot through the leg. Two ~~st~~ smoky guns on middle hill were firing at the batteries, which the Navy tried ineffectually to silence, also Long Tom from Pepworth tries to find us. "Poggle hurst" now gives the order to retire. The 67th limber up & trot off. The 1/H. come off their Kopie & retire, but getting a shell at them from time to time, they scatter out in twos & threes & fairly gallop home as hard as they can. The rest of the cavalry also retire & we are left out alone. The Major on seeing the 1/H's method of retiring turns to me & says "They don't mean anything by it, its ~~only~~ their only pace I suppose." However he determines to shew them how it ought to be done, & at the same time to "accustom the men to shell fire" (he said). I think myself it was a good deal to steady the wagon drivers after the 1st Poggle hurst Episode. Be that as it may, he sent him back up, and although we ~~were~~ are the only souls left in that plain & ~~were~~ are under a concentrated fire of 3 or 4 guns, (1 of which ~~was~~ is a quick-firer) he marched the battery off in battery column at a slow

walk. Directly the Blankbank gunners see us turn back up they are back to their quick firing guns & firing like mad. As soon as we get behind "Sign Post Ridge" we will be out of sight of this gun, but he walks slowly the whole distance with the whole length of the battery broadside on to the gun, he checks one of the Grand Scouts for trotting up to his place at head of battery. The gun gets 8 shell at us ~~same~~ before we get to S. P. ridge. If we had trotted he could'nt have got more than two. He has our range to perfection & bursts his shell right among us both time & percussion & yet not a soul is hit excepting by spent fragments. I admit is was a very uncomfortable 2 minutes. We walk the whole way home, as soon as we come out of cover of Sign Post ridge getting shell from Red Hill, Blankbank and Long Tom of Pepworth. As we approach Range Post ridge we will become visible to Long Tom of Belwana, and we can see him bursting shell about it, having the range to perfection. Just as the centre section is silhouetted on the sky line there is a tremendous explosion & flash two yards in front of it & just behind the leading section. The shell must have fallen under the Major's horse & exploded about 2 yards in front of me. I expect to see half a dozen horses & men killed at least & the road to be blocked for half an hour. But when the smoke clears

away & we have got the dust out of our eyes & mouth. I see that not a soul is hurt, and only one horse's eye cut. My own horse rears up & nearly has me off, & how the Major sits his I cannot imagine. [I could never get my horse to face this spot afterwards, he was so terrified.] It was the most marvellous thing I've seen yet, as the shell burst in the midst of the Lead road & must have just passed over the leading sections' heads. A hundred pound shell filled with high explosive! People who were watching from the camps never expected to see most of us again, & could not believe their eyes as we emerged from the smoke & proceed down the hill with the gunners holding on to the drag ropes to keep the guns & waggons back. 9th Long Toms fire shell after shell at us, but, although they land two more on the road, never get so near again. We turn off into the sand to the west of the river, & cross by the I.C.H. ford, being followed by shell the whole way, but we are all on now. Nicks is so frightened I can hardly hold him & has burst his curb chain. We return to camp amidst congratulations at our safety & thus ends a day of wonderful escapes & another absolutely useless waste of ammunition. From this date the Boers fortify Blaubank, Sand Hill & Middle Hill very strongly & make exit in that direction almost impossible.

Wednesday 24th January. Very heavy firing from Buller from 3am till 7am. We hear, and it is accepted as a fact, that Buller's force have taken a position on this side of river called Spion Kopje. The Boers have been seeing trekking for the Vaal Rensans in great numbers. Stamps of waggons &c, and 3 Boer Camps disappear, we are reported to be in possession of one that remains. Everyone says we are to be relieved by Sunday at latest.

Thursday 25th. No news yet from Buller. His guns are quiet. The staff tell us nothing, but everyone now believes the Spion Kopje tale. Very bad night, in much pain.

Friday 26th January. Ordered to draw rations for tomorrow today. Evidently relief very near. Another shocking night.

Saturday 27th January.

Very bad news. Heliomessage comes in to say that "Buller has suffered another repulse. He took the Kopje, under Warren (rumour says a division) and it was immediately retaken by the Boers; our loss 200 killed 300 wounded. (Rumoured 100 prisoners). We do seem to have some choice fools as generals. Shall we ever be relieved! I suppose this means another 6 weeks, if we are to be relieved at all. Probably we shall be starved into fighting our way out, relieving Buller in fact. The

During the day the 19th Hussars had galloped out from the Tin Camp westerly had got a shell or two & galloped home again, never seeing the enemy at-all. How a man like Brocklehurst is allowed to command at-all, is more than we can conceive! I got a bit of the Long Tom shell. The Major's action is much talked about by the cavalry, & some say it was

some shrapnel

a bit of useless swagger, but I know full well that he had good reasons for doing it, as he has for most things. Certainly the after effect was to make us very callous of shell fire. I find Mick has one or two very small wounds on his legs.

Wednesday 15th Nov 1899. at 12.30 midnight we are awaked by a furious Bombardment which apparently does no damage, though waking us all up. Several shell fall very close. Pours with rain today. From this date the subaltern's have to take it in watches of 2 hrs, at Bluvitt's Post with an orderly in case of an attack, from 6 a.m. till 5 p.m. This irksome duty continues till 1st Feby 1900, & we dislike it very much as it stops us sleeping during the day, as well as getting little sleep at night. It is quite useless.

Thursday 16th Nov/99 All very hopeful, a column of Boers reported to be trekking towards Van Reenans.

Saturday 18th Nov. Gr Copeland dies of enteric. Gordons all ordered to take shelter under river bank when Long Tom fires. Col. won't have it, as he thinks it may demoralize the men. Rumours that an army corps has landed at Cape. I dine with 19th Hussars & get a good dinner. Another midnight bombardment

Friday 17th Nov/99. Campbell having raised some green peas & pork, we have a guest night. I ask Fanshawe (19th Hussars).

Sunday 19th Novr. Quiet as usual. How we look forward to Sabbath quiet now! In afternoon I attend a drumhead funeral of 42nd battery with the Col Cochead - Afterwards we have a cricket match v the Pass. Maxwell. Mand. Stevens. James. Goldman & Mitchell play for them. Result we win by 12 runs. Monday 20th Novr. Another midnight bombardment of only two guns. No news. When will Clery move? Boers are distinctly Shelling the Town Hall although it has huge Geneva flag on it. Tuesday 21st Novr. Turned out at 3a.m. to go to Ration Post to take place of 67th who are on a flying column. Two guns under Evans go to river by 18th Hussars Camp, the rest in open north of Ration Post. We take shelter on the kopje, just out of view of all guns. Get some rifle bullets but shell all pass overhead. It is frightfully hot here & we haven't a bit of shade, & have to beg it as to food &c. Thanks goodness we are allowed to go back to camp after dark. Buller said to be at Bloemfontein to relieve us by drawing off the Boers. [Proves a lie.] Wednesday 22nd Novr. The 53rd go to Ration Post today. One Shell falls into Town Hall & the Batmen are taken out in to shelter trenches while it "Shells". Melton Prior comes to see us & says that Gen French has recaptured Dundee with cavalry & R.H.A. [an awful lie.] Rumours of Buller at Bloemfontein confirmed by {(i) Seven of our wounded sent by Boers to Intombi from Colenso, who say it was read to 'em on parade.
(ii) Kaffirs from Basuto land.} Batman returns from hospital.

Thursday 23rd November. Pepworth Long Tom has not fired for several days; traffic says the breech blew out, our Navy think they have knocked it out. We went to Ration Post as before under cover of darkness, returning at night. This time we make some sun-shelters with blankets. We take it in turn with the 57th. Shelling in town does good deal of damage. Town hall hit again & a wood boy killed. A shop set on fire & archdeacons Barbers Church hit through porch. In evening a shell comes through Royal Hotel & takes off a poor old doctor's leg (about 70 years old) as we were going in to dinner. He dies shortly. Walker returns from hospital, had a narrow escape from shell in town hall on Wednesday. He says he saw our shell bursting in the distance between Caucas Camp & Balwana. If so we will soon be relieved. [Turned out to be a grass fire.].

Friday 24th Nov. Official news that on 20th inst.

Hilyard is only at Escourt
Cleary at Maritzburg

Boers hold Colenso & have destroyed the bridge.

Rather a damper after the rumours!

Saturday 25th Nov. Ration Post. we get two shrapnell from Blaauwkrantz into us, one at breakfast one at tea. No one hurt, though Corpl. Addendorf has his tea tool smashed in his hands. In future men are placed in a donga behind the hill.

I hear that Kimberley & Mafeking are still invested. No news of Buller. Ration Kopje is very unpleasant spot as, if you stir in any direction more than 5 yards, you get shot at by shells & rifles from about 2000 yards. We are most advanced outpost in that direction.

Sunday 26th Novr 1899. Neither battery has to go to Ration Post today, so we have another cricket match v the Prov. They win by 5 runs. I make 3. A Naval 12 pr is taken up to garrison Caesar's Camp.

Monday 27th Nov 1899. 53rd go to Ration Post. Hear another Long Tom is mounted on Middle Hill. Shell very thick round our camp today. Fragments through Colonel's & Office tents, and native servant of Slaytens (our doctor) wounded. Caesar's Camp is also very heavily shelled today. All in great spirits as heavy firing has been heard at Colenso, & 3000 Boers are reported to have moved back. We'll soon be relieved !!

Tuesday 28th Nov 1899. Ration Post a warm time from New Long Tom on End Hill who can both see us & reach us.

Hear officially of a successful engagement at Moio River (10 miles south of Colenso.) Hear from letter of 18th inst. that,

(i) Kimberley & Mafeking still besieged.

(ii) Warren is at Kuruman (South of Free State)

(iii) Buller at De Aar Junction (also for Bloemfontein column)

(iv) Methuen at Naauwpoort (West side of Free State)

(v) Lil about Dundee being reinforced, as Symons is still South of Colenso.

(vi) Gatacre at Queenstown.

(vii) Free State Boers & disloyal Cape Dutch occupy Aliwal North.

We are very sick at this. Two old 6·3 inch howitzers (20 years old) taken to Wagon Hill tonight to compete with new Long Tom. Capt Christie R.A. in command. A Dummy battery erected on flats near Helpmakaar succeeds in drawing 45 shells from Balwana!

Wednesday 29th Novr. Both batteries remain in camp & are told to get ready for marching order. The howitzers silence new Long Tom, which is never fired again. Navy very sick at our doing what they could not, with old guns too. Rumoured all day in town that we are all going out to attack Blaubank tomorrow. Supposed dissensions in Boer Camp, as Free Staters want to chuck it. At 8 p.m. we get printed orders for an attack on Blaubank, (these go straight to Boers.) with infantry & cavalry. Blaubank to be held by Rifles when captured. Representations made to Chief by various officers

that as this has been the talk of the Town all day, it will not surprise the Boers & we shall fail, so 11 p.m. orders all cancelled. Lucky for us too, as it turned out.

Thursday 30th November 99. Very heavy bombardment commences at 4.55, as the Boers have got wind of intended attack & have had search lights going all night. Another Long Tom opens fires from Gun Hill, firing mostly at our end of Town & Caesars Camp. Very unpleasant having two ones side. Hear that Talbot was wounded by the howitzers, on middle hill, yesterday. Major Manifold is slightly wounded by shell fire, & Major Wing has his helmet hit. Gordons kept St Andrews day in style. They ask Sir Geo White & Col Cochead to dinner.

Friday 1st Decr 1899. About 11 a.m. the Boers send in to ask why we are flying Geneva Flag over Town Hall, & before we can reply, proceed to deliberately range on it, finally dropping a shell through the roof which kills 1 mortally wounds 1 & wounds 8 other patients. Town Hall is no longer used as hospital, all patients moved to Intombi. Mollie's birthday. I wish I could write to her to-day!

Saturday 2nd Decr 1899. Lot of Bombardment from both Long Toms. Shell fall in our mules lines, officers tents & 53rd lines. Also fired at while watering the horses. We were suddenly turned out at 8 p.m. without warning, &

marched up main street with 3 days provisions. Find that nearly all the garrison have rendezvoused. Wonder if it is to attack Blaubank or Gun Hill, or if to meet relieving Column. Great excitement in town, the fools of civilians all light their lamps &c. & shew the Boers there's something on. However after waiting 2 hours, we are marched home & told it was a rehearsal. Bed again at 12 m.

Sunday 3rd Decr 1899. Gr Regans dies of enteric.

Hear that # Sir Geo is very pleased at prompt way guns turned out last night. Staff are arranging order in which supplies are to be sent up when line opens. ~~We are~~ It is now quite certain we'll be relieved soon, at any rate before Xmas. Another (the last) cricket match against the press. Played across the river, as horses of 53rd moved onto old pitch. Pitch so bad that neither side reach~~ed~~ double figures. Press win. Result. RA 1. Press 1. 1 Tie.

I Take everyone back across the ford to our camp to tea on my two horses. ~~Two~~ Peep-o-day bolts with Mitchell and throws him, hurting him rather severely. We finish last of our jam today. In evening the whole of our Bde Divr R.F.A. are entertained to spendid out of doors cold supper by the Press at Mrs Haydon's boarding house. Maud gives me some of his experiences which are very interesting. He was a student in the Latin Quarter.

Monday 4th December. Official news received is,

(i) Buller at Maritzburg.

(ii) Methuen has defeated the Boers in 3 successive engagements. Belmont. Graspan. Modder River. He specially mentions his Field Artillery for gallantry, at one fight, above the other troops. Last fight only 10 miles from Kimberley, so suppose it is now relieved.

Unofficial news that-

(i) Clery defeated Boers at Colenso & has crossed Tugela. (absolute lie!)

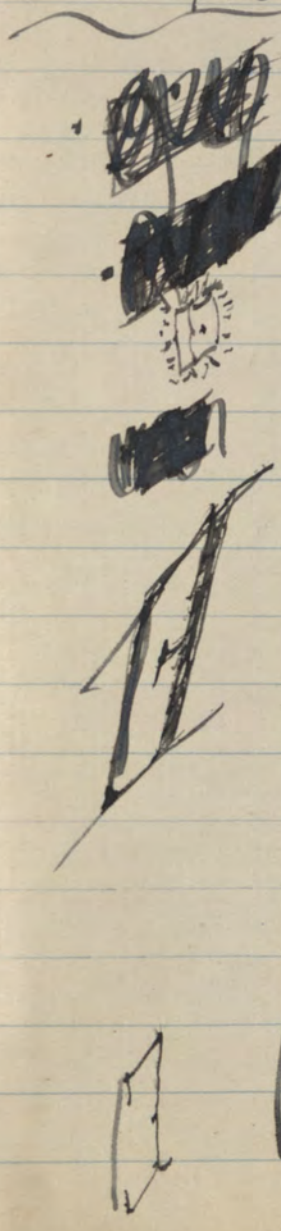
(ii) Bridge at Colenso is destroyed (true)

(iii) We have 20,000 troops now between here and Maritzburg. (overestimate at time)

Everyone greatly elated. Troops cheer news & issue of rum to drink Methuen's health. We are now struck off 7th Brigade (Hamiltons) as whole of RFA is to be immediately under O.C. R.A.

Tuesday 5th Decr. More shell into mule lines. 1 native driver wounded. Ride with Mitchell in evening. Details of fight at Modder River disappointing, as no guns apparently captured, & our infantry did not get home. Methuen describes it as "Bloodiest on record in annals of British history".

Wed 6th Dec 1899. No news, but report says Free State Boers are trekking. Days getting very long, Hagtree gun (16 pr on Bulwana) fires at us exercising at 4.40 a.m. Another rehearsal under Brigadiers, but only battery on duty turn out goes out (53rd), sendy rains tin camp at 9.30 p.m.
Thursday 7th Dec 1899. Hear that Kimberley is relieved [absolute lie] and Methuen slightly wounded. Shell falls through a gunners tent full of mess, hurting no one. Hear (on good authority) 3000 Boers leaving to reinforce Free State, + more to the passes + some trekking "sick of it". That 3 guns about 6 miles south of Bulwana have been firing. (absolute lie.) Are woken up at 11 p.m. by adjutant to say we are to turn out at 3 a.m. Ready worked in. I go + warn Sgt-Major Reveillé at 2 a.m. We wonder what is in store for us!



"Blowing up Gun Hill guns"
Friday 8th Dec 1899. We parade at 3 a.m. as per orders. Two land reports (but no shell) ∓ are heard while we are dressing. We form up in road, ready to move off, all mounted. All sorts of rumours flying about. Ol Rhodes rides by + says he believes we have blown up a Long Tom. Don't believe him. Orders arrive 4.35 am for a battery to join the cavalry on Newcastle Road (Junction Hill) 53rd, being on duty, start off at a fast trot in battery column.

At 4.45 we get orders that the other battery may turn in, do so. Very heavy musketry fire & is now heard (5 am till 6 am.) in direction of Pepworth (but much closer.) Naval guns are busy at the Boer guns who are shelling our cavalry & the 53rd., but we notice Long Tom of Gun Hill doesn't fire. Major Grant R.E. comes in to camp & tells us that Capt Fowlke & Lieut Turner (R.E.) with two sapper NCOs have blown up Long Tom of Gun Hill & a 4.7 howitzer about 2 a.m. Hear that Hunter went out in charge. Storming party of 100 I.L.H. and 100 Carbineers & 10 mountain gunners. Turner blew up Long Tom & they have brought back his breech block, rammer & tangent sight. The gunners were first up & disabled the gun. Fowlke blew up the howitzer. They also brought back a Maxim. Our casualties 6 men. Boers only 1 (they think) as they all fled as soon when one of the I.L.H. shouted fix bayonets. It was beautiful planned by Hunter & kept perfectly secret, no one knowing till it was over. Meanwhile XIXth Hussars sent out (11 p.m.) to destroy Modder Spruit station. But they only succeed in burning two kaffir kraals & cutting a telegraph wire. Made a hash of it. Rest of cavalry made an absurd advance at daybreak towards Pepworth — found it more strongly held than anticipated & returned being fired at — a few casualties — 53rd were sent for to

support them, but never brought into action. The 53rd return to camps about 6·30. We till the men about Long Tom & all cheer enthusiastically. 53rd, who were halted on sky line, came in to hot fire from Long Tom of Telegraph Hill, Thwaites said he had to "light his pipe to conceal his emotion." No damage however beyond wounding Major Gore 5 D.G.s & killing a horse or two. We get several shell during day from other Long Tom, a fragments through tents. No one as yet takes any cover, however, in our camps.

Sunday 10th Decr 1899. Usual quiet broken by Long Tom firing about 8 rounds into cavalry camps at 11 a.m., as the 19th Hussars had left their horses on the lines, instead of taking them under cover as usual at day break. They quickly do so. No Cricket, as correspondents too busy writing accounts of gun still. They decide to drop the Ladysmith Lyre also. Hear that the two 6·3" howitzers are being taken from Wagon Hill to beyond Range Post (in river bed) as a new Long Tom has been set up on Telegraph Hill. [They found it beyond their range & although they kept his fire under somewhat, could not silence him.]

	Killed	Wounded	Total Casr
Officers	14	23	343
Men	150	306	

Monday 11th December 1899. "Blowing up Surprise Hill Howitzer"
We wake up to hear that Digby Jones RE and party of Sappers (1 killed 1 wounded) have blown up the 4·7" howitzer on Surprise Hill. ~~Rifles~~ Two Co.s Rifle Brigade & some mountain gunners formed storming party. Boers not so unprepared, so we lost 12 killed 48 wounded & 6 prisoners. Boers subsequently fired into each other as our men retired & rifles bayonetted some, they admit to 28 killed. [We heard some weeks after, from a Boer paper, that they were fearfully sick at these two episodes, several of their Officers were broke, disgraced & reprimanded over it. Shaft Baylee, who was commanding at time as Joubert was wounded, was particularly sick it should have happened just after Joubert had gone away.] Four guns of 42nd battery leave Caesars camp to relieve 69th at King's Post, as 69th are ordered for Flying column with our two battalions.

Tuesday 12th December 1899. Driver D. Lennon dies of enteric — Such a good driver too. 6·30 p.m. are ordered out for flying column light scale. Expect it is only a rehearsal, which proves true, so back at 10 p.m. Higgins is sent to Intombi Hospital Camp with ~~enteric~~ fever.

Wednesday 13th Dec 1899. Curtis rejoins ammunition column. We distinctly hear heavy guns of Relieving Column towards Colenso. Hurrah! Another flying column rehearsal tonight. Infantry practice marching every night.

Thursday 14th Decr. 1899. More distant firing is heard. Heat is abnormal & Capt. Thwaites is on sick list with fever. Curtis is ordered to join the two mountain guns, at Helpmakaar.

Friday 15th December 1899. "Buller's disaster at Colenso". We hear distant firing very heavy all the morning. A Kaffir says that we have re-occupied Colenso & that the Boers are moving back towards Elands Laagte' [Turns out a pack of lies.] Horse rations are reduced. In evening a very heavy thunderstorm (first rain for weeks) washes out our tents & blows down mess tent. Are told Methuen has gained a glorious victory at Sprickfontein (? wasn't Magersfontein) but accounts seem to point to an undecided battle, as he has apparently fallen back & entrenched himself.

Saturday 16th Dec. "Dingaans Day."
Have been expecting an attack today, as it is the great Boer Day. However Boers celebrate it by a heavy Bombardment from 4.30 till 6.15 a.m. & are then quiet. A Long Tom shell lands in road opposite Mr. Hayden's House & blows off the back of a driver in the 53rd which lot they are exercising, killing him almost at once. ~~Higgins~~ In future we have to exercise earlier (3.15 am.) Higgins rejoins from Intonti. We hear no more of Buller guns today.

We hear that Japan has declard war on Russia. What cheek & pluck! Capt Hon Lambton R.N. says Japs will lick Russians at sea. At 7.40 p.m. orders come for the 42nd guns to return to Caesars Camp & the 69th to go back to their old place. Evidently flying columns are off pro tem.

Sunday 17th Dec 1899. Very bad news, if not true. We are told privately that Buller failed miserably at Colenso & lost 10 field guns, that Cols Long & Hunt (RA) were killed. & that there is no chance of relief for probably 3 months. Can we do it? There is a feeling abroad that we are here to stick it in earnest now. How many of us will come out? One thing is certain, thank God, we will never surrender. If the worst comes we must cut our way out, at least some will, others will take a longer journey. We all, however, simulate great cheerfulness to deceive the men. A lot of alarmist rumours flying about. Some say several more heavy guns are on their way from Pretoria to Ladysmith, amongst others two 6" inch. Jolly!!!

We hear that several reported victories were mere fables & that Spearfontein was a heavy reverse, the Highland brigade being cut up. We try in vain to suppress alarmist rumours. I'm afraid the men will know all soon. The civilians are being given arms to take place of dead soldiers. This might be called 'Black Sunday' for the gloom it has caused.

Monday Decr 18th 1899. Rations (man & beast) reduced. As we are parading for gun drill at 5.30 am. a shell bursts in the Carbineers lines 200 yards short of us, but fragments whiz through the battery & Campbell's horse is so badly wounded in back that he has to be shot. another fragment killed a sapper next door & another nearly hit Walker in his tent. We hear that this infernal shell struck a horse in the Carb's lines, exploded & killed five of them in addition to the damage in our lines. Very sad, it is the worst shell that's fallen. We continue gun-drill however. About 11 a.m. another shell lands in the road just opposite our guard tent & wounds Gr Law in the head, the fragments whistling through our men's tents. Gr Law goes to Intombi.

Tuesday 19th Decr 1899. We hear reinforcements have Cape for Durban. From this date all men are ordered down the river banks when L.T. starts firing until he finishes. Stableman & guard remain in lines behind shelters which are promptly dug.

Wednesday 20th Decr 1899. General order is published saying "General Buller has failed in his first attack on Colenso & the G.O.C. feels sure that his gallant troops will continue the defence of Ladysmith in the same spirited fashion as heretofor, as the relief is necessarily postponed."

We will! Hear that Cols Long & Hunt were severely wounded not killed, that Capts ~~Schreiber~~ Goldie & Schreiber were killed, two batteries wiped out by infantry fire, having galloped right in to the Boers, all their officers killed wounded or prisoners & 10 guns captured by Boers. Only 2 saved. Our total casualties were over 1000 & the whole thing a frightful blunder. Terribly depressed! Add to this two of our own 15 p^r^s supposed to be mounted on Gun Hill & Pepworth. Another 4·7" howitzer mounted on Surprise Hill. Boers hello in, "what about 10 guns in exchange for 1 long tom & two howitzers, where is your Buller now?" A shell from Long Tom falls in our lines killing 5 mules & wounding 1, luckily we were all under cover of river bank.

Thursday 21st Dec 1899. Long Tom systematically shells the G.O.C's house at last getting one in, so the Head Quarters are shifted. No comforting news, except that Boers lost heavily, as well as us, at Colenso. Hear that Methuen has fallen back to Modder River & is no nearer relieving Kimberley. That 5th Div^n^ has landed at Cape & is en route to reinforce him, the 6th are outward bound, to reinforce Buller, under Warren. That siege artillery is, at last, to be sent. Siege prices at auction in town. 4½ tins of sardines fetch 2/3 each.

Capt. Ousely is on sick list with fever, so Evans leaves the battery to rejoin ammunition column.

Friday 22nd December 1899. Down town in morning with Walker, meet Russell who tells us that a Long Tom melinite shell fell amongst the Gloucesters at Helpmakaar post, being burst by the edge of a shelter proof, it killed 9 men & wounded five. He was there & saw it, says it was the most awful sight he has ever seen, 3 men were literally blown to little bits. This is ghastly. The poor fellows were cooking their breakfasts at the time. Their ought to be a general order that every regiment should have a look out for the smoke of the gun & all men to get under cover when he fires. The Carbineers now have a trumpeter on duty who blows "Left wheel into line" when he sees the smoke & they all get into big shelters at once. A shell from the Surprise Hill howitzer falls amidst a group of 5th Lancers officers at Stables, wounding the Col & 3 officers & taking out a Sergt-Major's eye.

Saturday 23rd Dec. Rumours that "Bobs" & Kitchener are coming out. Horse rations reduced again, no grass!

Sunday 24th Dec. Ingredients (only flour & currants & sugar) issued to troops for Plum puddings. No suet, Mrs Tatham kindly volunteers to make ours for us, so we send our ingredients across to her.

Monday 25th Decr 1899. "Christmas Day"

The Boers make it plain, by bombarding early, that they are not going to let us have a day of peace & goodwill, so we have to give up any ideas of holding Sports on the old polo ground. We had got together a tug of war & tent pegging team from the battery, & and are sick at it not coming off as the battery are so good at tent-pegging have won always beaten all the other batteries & cavalry squadrons at Secunderabad & Bangalore & sports. What Xmas bells to & heralds in the glad day! We have Church service in May's garden all the brigade of R.H.A together under a parson, and Gen Hamilton attends it. The parson preached a dreadfully gloomy sermon contrasting the black side of our present Xmas with the bright picture of former ones, & drew such touching pictures of homes, empty chairs &c that half the men were in tears. This is just what we are trying to avoid. We're endeavouring by hard work & strict attention to discipline, smartness of turn out &c, to make the men forget that they are in a peculiar position, & here comes a fellow who rakes it all up with a lot of exaggeration thrown in. ~~In the evening~~ The Major in addressing the men, thanks them for their good behaviour & "regrets that owing to the peculiar

Major Cary-Davis I.L.H. & others get up a Xmas tree for the children of Ladysmith for which they buy every procurable toy.

Circumstances under which we are placed, ~~they~~ you are unable to keep the day in the usual way ~~they~~ we do in barracks, but trust that when we get away from here we may celebrate it some other day instead."

A message from the Queen ~~is read~~ "God bless her" – is read to the men on parade at Stables, having just been helioed through. "I wish you & all my brave soldiers & sailors a happy Xmas; may God bless & protect you" The men are deeply touched & we all cheer like mad. I wish I could get a helio message home, but have tried in rain. We have a fine dinner thanks to kind friends. Campbell has got some Pork, General Hunter gives us a ham, Mrs Tatham makes our plum pudding & gives us a little one of her own & an apple tart & good old Anderson gives us one of his last dozen of whiskey. We try a bottle of Coca Wine as a liqueur, but don't like it.

Tuesday 26th Dec. Heavy bombardment today – Ride with Walker.

Wednesday 27th Dec A nother ghastly shell falls into the Devons Officers Mess killing 2 & wounding 5 officers. We begin to treat Long Toms with respect at last.

Thursday 28th Dec. About 1 a.m. fairly heavy rifle fire breaks out in direction of Surprise Hill, but it appears to be only the Boers who have the jumps firing at

(nothing

at 4.30 a.m. the Naval guns fire at Boer pickets as they leave Bulwana gun. This is the first time for a week our guns have fired at all.

Friday 29th Decr We again hear distant firing in Colenso direction, but not a word of news from Buller. Amongst other lies, they say Long Tom was turned round & fired towards Colenso.

Saturday 30th December. Slaytor is taken to Intombi with enteric fever. Our sick, wounded, ~~up~~ in the battery on this morning's state number 59 (out of 172) Our dead up to date 4. Altogether only just over 100 fit for duty, out of 172 we started with. ~~Weekly~~ off. Sunday 31st December 1899.

The Boers usher in the New Year with a midnight bombardment, but our naval guns are ready laid & reply. The worst of it is, the naval guns, (which have a good moral effect though no actual) are so short of ammunition, that they seldom reply to the Boer guns, and the Dutch grow more daring & shell more every day. Since the Gun Hill episode they have made all their positions frightfully strong, with sangars, wire entanglements, brushwood abattis & probably land mines. They have wires stretched along the open with kicking bells when ~~they~~ caught in the foot,

the whole of Blaubank, Gun Hill, the nek between Gun Hill & Bulwana & the nek between Bulwana & Caesars camp, are strongly entrenched and defended as described. They have search lights on Bulwana & Blaubank at work every night, & evidently don't mean to be caught again by night attacks.

End of 1899.

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* The Major sends a party of men to collect the harness off the dead horses & bring it back.

Geography of Ladysmith.

The importance of Ladysmith is due to the fact that it is the railway junction of the Transvaal & Free State Railways. As a strategical position it has no value otherwise, being commanded on nearly all sides by high hills & being situated in about the hilliest & most difficult part of S. africa, moreover it is cut off from the South of Natal by the River Tugela, the largest river in the country & with difficult approaches. This river flows both South & west of Ladysmith & varies from 12 to 16 miles from the town at its nearest point. The only bridge across is at Colenso (nearly due South of Ladysmith), but there are drifts at Keats and Potgeiters (west of Ladysmith). The Town itself consists mainly of two parallel roads, ~~the~~ with stone houses thinly roofed. The River Clip runs round the South of the town from west to east & is crossed by an Iron Bridge further at the South, and by several drifts. The railway station is situated in the north of the town and forms a Junction of the lines from Durban, Van Reenan's Pass and the Transvaal. The ~~the~~ camp in peace time is of ~~tents~~ tin and is situated about 1½ miles west of the town. The whole town is surrounded by rocky hills and ridges, but on the east side

there is flat undulating ~~gravy~~ veldt for about 5 miles, till you come to the commanding hill called Bulwana which stands about 1000 feet above the level of the surrounding veldt. To the South of the town is another large high flat topped hill named Caesars Camp. To the north ~~as~~ is a range of small hills named, King's Post. Observation Hill. Leicester Post. Junction Hill. Tunnel Hill & Helpma kaar ridges. These formed our northern line of defence. On the South we held Caesar's Camp & it's underfeatures Wagon Hill & Maiden Castle. On the West & South West we held a ridge known as Range Post and a detached hill called Riflemans Post, with several minor positions such as, Ration Post. Dawson City. Little Riflemans Post. Due east we trusted to the open veldt and the many bends of the river to protect us. ~~The~~ South West of Range Post ~~was~~ is a large open plain cut by a small stream called Flag Spruit (there is also another Flag Spruit N.E. of the town). This plain is ~~[illegible]~~ called Long Valley, & stretches away towards a ridge of hills on the west usually known as Blaubank & held by the Boers. The Main positions of the Boers were as follows. Bulwana due east. A high flat topped hill about 2 miles long and 8000 yards

* or Rifleman's Ridge.

distant from the town. To the North of Bulwana are two hills called Gun Hill & Lombards Kop also held by them. To the South they held a range of hills known as Colenso ridges which are on a level with Caesars Camp & about 4000 yards from it. West of this & commanding the Long Valley they held two important hills known as Middle & End Hill. To the west of the Long valley they occupied a ~~so~~ long ridge of hills commonly (but erroneously) termed Blaubank*. This ridge consisted of (starting from the South) Lancers Hill. Lancers Nek. Left Kopjie. Right Kopjie & Star Kopjie. Away north west of this, they held a large flat hill called Telegraph Hill, which commands Riflemans & Kings Post. The Blaubank ~~ridg~~ ridge commands the whole of Long Valley & ~~has to be~~ is crossed by roads ~~in order to~~ ~~get~~ to Van Reenan's & Colenso. It prevents all egress to the West. Their main North West position was Surprise Hill which commands Kings Post & Observation Hill, & away to the N.E they held Pepworth a large flat topped hill commanding Helpmakaar ridges & the Town. Our Naval guns were posted on Junction Hill (to engage Pepworth) and Cove Redoubt (a hill just west of the town, not in the outer line of Defence) to engage Bulwana. Helpmakaar Ridges stretching away to the East and

north of Ladysmith we fortified very strongly, as they were naturally a weak spot and low lying. Caesars Camp had too large a ~~face~~ surface to be adequately fortified all round with the few men at our disposal. It commands the whole town & if it fell would practically end the Seige. The weakness of our defences on that side were somewhat compensated for by the ~~sho~~ great natural strength of the ground. Range Post & it's continuation Stiplanders Post are a low lying rocky ridge & we had only sufficient men to hold ~~it~~ them in parts. Riflemans Post is a small detached grassy hill, cut off from the rest of the defence by the river. This we were compelled to hold strongly. It had a regular fort built on it ~~with~~ made of stone & earth & several detached posts. The fort contained 4 guns and the whole was protected with wire entanglements. Kings Post. Observation Hill (which was within 1700 yards of enemy) and Junction Hill were also strongly held & gunned. When the Boers attacked us on the 6th Jan? on the Caesars Camp & Wagon Hill side, they attacked, by far, our weakest point, as at that time our whole defences ~~th~~ along that huge area of ground consisted of practically one small stone fort for infantry

and 6 isolated gun pits. Wagon Hill was then practically undefended, although one emplacement had been made for a Naval gun. Bde Gen Howard commanded the Section of defence comprising, Leicester Post. Observation Hill. Imps Post. Riflemans Post & Durban City. Bde Gen Hamilton commanded the Section consisting of Caesars Camp. Wagon Hill & Range Post. Col. Ross commanded the Helpmakaar Ridges & Junction Hill was under Capt Lambton R.N. & held entirely by the Navy. The defence of the flats east of Ladysmith was entrusted to Col Royston commanding all the volunteers & irregular troops. Towards the end of the Siege (Feb 1900) a second line of defence west of the town was prepared consisting of Convent Hill on the north, Poundbury & Pavillion Hills on the south, but no guns were mounted on them. With very few exceptions all the hills round Ladysmith were exceedingly rocky with precipitous sides. Roads had to be constructed up to them during the night, as to ascend many of them otherwise meant crawling on hands & knees. All fortifying &c. had to be done by night. The greatest credit is due to Col Ross C.B. R.A. for the extraordinary strength of his defences on Helpmakaar ridges, which were nearly completed

long before the other ports were put in an adequate state of defence. The enemy had guns mounted on all the hills round Ladysmith & there was only one corner of about an acre surface, behind Pound-bury hill, where you could get out of sight of all his guns. A hospital camp was formed on the flats between the east end of Caesars Camp & the South end of Balwana. It was named Intombi & considered neutral ground. There was a large open plain between the town & the old Tin Camp, where the Garrison polo ground used to be. It was well commanded by the enemy's guns to the west of our defences. Sir Geo Whites Head quarters were on Convent Hill.

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