

FALKLAND ISLANDS.

Governor's Office.

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From

SUBJECT.

~~Secretary of State for the Colonies.~~
GOVERNOR.

FIELD DAY.

H.M.S. Kent and Falkland Islands Volunteers.
Report on

No.

Date

64

14th April, 1916.

Colonial Secretary's
Record No.

MINUTES.

Despatch to Sec, of State No. 64 of the 14th April, 1916.

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No. next Despatch.

FAKLAND ISLANDS.

No. 64.

Government House, Stanley.

14th April, 1916.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I arranged last month with Captain J.D.Allen, C.B. R.N., H.M.S.Kent, at the time in Port, to land a party from the ship on Thursday morning the 30th March, for a field day with the Falkland Islands Volunteers. The idea being that the landing party were to attack the Government Wireless Station and the Volunteers to defend it.

2. Captain Allen was good enough to act as Umpire of the day's exercises, and I beg to submit for your information a copy of his report. I also submit a copy of a report made by Captain F.J.Newnham, in command of the Volunteers.

3. The day proved most successful, and the March Past through the Main Street of Stanley on the return of the men was excellent and created a good impression.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

Douglas Young
Governor.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.

H.M.S. 'KENT' at Falkland Island

31st March 1916.

REPORT ON EXERCISES CARRIED OUT

ON MARCH 30th 1916.

The attacking force, consisting of 14 Officers, 292 rank & file and 2 Maxim guns from H.M.S. 'Kent' landed in York Bay with the intention of seizing the neck of land marked preparatory to destroying the Wireless Telegraphy Station.

The advanced guard consisting of one company of Marines and two Maxim guns were landed by 9.15 a.m., and advanced along the beach of York Bay until N.W.E. of Whalebone Bay when they changed direction to the South.

Scouts were sent on in advance to the summit of the Hill marked E B B to try and locate the defending force.

The main body of the attacking force consisting of four companies of Seamen were landed by 9.45 a.m. The landing was slow and difficult owing to its being low water and not enough water for large boats to get alongside the pier.

The main body followed the advanced guard and at 10.4 a.m. the advanced scouts reported the enemy in sight. The main body was then in the position marked 'A'. Two companies were sent on in an easterly direction with the orders to work round to the eastward of Hill marked B B B. One company was sent to the westward of Hill marked B B B in support of Maxims and Marines. The remaining company advanced towards the hut on the Hill B B B. The Maxims opened fire on the enemy who were observed in large numbers west of Hookers point.

At 10.15 a.m. the enemy's field gun was heard firing and located S.E. of and close to the W.T. Station.

At 10.25 a.m. the two Maxims from a gully on western side of Hill B B B opened fire on enemy, range 900 yards. The whole attacking force then advanced in extended

order down the south side of Hill B B B and on towards the neck of land . At the same time the Maxims moved across the southern slope of Hill B B B to cover the advance.

At 11.5 a.m. 'Cease firing ' was sounded and the operations concluded.

REMARKS BY THE CHIEF UMPIRE.

At 10.a.m. from my position close to the W.T. Station I distinctly saw two men of the attacking force standing up on the summit of the Hill B B B against the sky. They showed up very distinctly against the skyline and presumably were seen by the men of the defending force who were close to the W.T. Station. From then onwards the men of the attacking force ~~was~~ were very clearly visible as they advanced over the summit of the Hill and down the slope of the Hill towards the neck of land .

At 10.20 a.m. I was on the summit of the Hill B B B near the hut and I could see some of the defending force in the position they had taken up. Some of them could be seen very distinctly as they were in positions where they showed up against the sea or sky. Those who had the land or rocks behind them and who kept still could not be seen at all. Some of the men appeared to me to be moving about more than was necessary and it was very noticeable how clearly men can be seen when they move at all. As long as a man keeps perfectly still, even though in what may seem to him to be an exposed position, he cannot be seen, but directly a man moves or changes his position from one place to another he can be seen at once. The same applies to both sides. Most of the men moved about too much and it cannot be too much impressed on the men that they must keep perfectly still once they have arrived in their positions. The men of the attacking force did not keep sufficiently extended, and in consequence would have lost heavily as they were necessarily very exposed. In many cases there were groups or bunches

Bunches of men close together who would have afforded an easy target for a field or machine gun.

The advanced scouts of the attacking force advanced too quickly and ran straight into the defending force where they were promptly taken prisoners. They would have been shot long before and they advanced much too quickly and too carelessly as regards taking cover.

The attacking forces were very much exposed to the fire of the defending field gun by the W.T. Station and the two defending Maxim guns which were in good positions and well protected against rifle or machine gun fire. But it must be borne in mind that gun positions are easily located once they open fire and the Maxim guns of the ~~the~~ defending force could have been quickly shelled out if the attacking force had had field guns. Machine gun crews must therefore be prepared to move quickly from one position to another when once they have been located by the enemy.

I am of the opinion that the attacking force ~~XXXXXX~~ would have been repulsed by the defenders and would have lost heavily.

The task of the attacking force was an exceedingly difficult one and provided that ~~that~~ the defenders had time, as they had, to take up a good defensive position I do not think that it would have been possible for the attacking force to take the neck of land by a frontal attack without the aid of field guns. With field guns it would have been quite an easy matter to destroy the W.T. Station without advancing against the neck of land.

The principal faults on both sides were insufficient care in taking cover and in not keeping perfectly still, after taking cover.

Officers and men on both sides appeared to take great interest in the proceedings and undoubtedly the exercise carried out was of great instructional value.

The men marched past His Excellency the Governor remarkably well and in a manner which would have done credit to any regular troops.

I consider that exercises of this description should be carried out whenever suitable opportunities occur, such as when any of H.M. Ships visit this port. They are of great value in teaching men to take cover and keep still which can only be acquired by practice.

(SIGNED) J. D. Allen'

Captain H.M.S "KENN".

March 31st 1916.

Mary Point

Ordinance Point

Harke P.

BA

Whitewater

Slaughter
40150

Dries

Hookers P.

12 pdr.

19 pdr.

71
Warner

RTSC

0 1000 1500 2000
Yards

Falkland Islands Volunteer Force.

Headquarters.

Stanley.

Report on exercises carried out on 30th March 1916.

I was informed that a landing party of about 300 men from H.M.S. Kent would land in York Bay about 9 a.m. on the 30th and make an attack on the old Wireless Station. I decided to adhere as closely as possible to the Standing Orders posted at Headquarters relative to a sudden alarm, the various sections reporting at their allotted stations.

A council was held on the evening of the 29th at which I explained to the Officers and N.C.O.s the plans for defence. The field-gun crews were ordered to remain at their homes till the alarm was sounded: the Maxim crew, scouts and remainder of the Force paraded at Headquarters at 8.15 a.m. on the 30th for the inspection of rifles and the serving out of blank.

At 8.50 word was received that the attacking party had left H.M.S. Kent, the Alarm was sounded and the details immediately moved off, proceeding under cover of the houses to the south of the peat banks, thence down the valley by which they could reach the Wireless station and Hooker's neck undetected by any party advancing over the northern slopes. All depended on which party reached the neck first, as if the defending force could take up their positions under cover commanding the neck they could hold it against vastly superior forces.

The defending force numbered 5 Officers, 8 N.C.O.s and 48 rank and file.

On the alarm the outpost at Sapper Hill connected their telephone line with the main system: communication was established direct with the wireless and all movements of the enemy were immediately reported to that station. The Wireless station

had orders to disconnect the line beyond their station in order to prevent tapping and to pick up or jam any wireless messages from H.M.S. Kent to the enemy.

The four scouts under Lieut. Townson, riding under cover of the ridge, reached the Wireless by 9.12 and leaving their horses under cover of the buildings took up their station on the south end of the neck. Being well hidden they captured the scouts of the enemy who advanced without discovering them.

The Maxim section arrived at their position before ten and at 9.55 No.1 gun was ready for action in the gun-pit constructed to cover approach from the north, No.2 being ready 5 minutes later under shelter of a peat bank on the right flank.

The main body reached the neck 5 minutes later and took cover in extended order in a semicircle covering the south end of the neck from bay to bay, ~~the~~ one file on the right being placed in the trench on the top of Hooker's Point and the left resting on the Canash supported by No.1 Maxim.

The 12 pdr. field-gun, manned by a nucleus crew of five men, was posted under cover of the Look-out Rocks with orders to fire on any close body of men advancing from the north.

The 9 pdr., also with 5 men, was posted to the right rear of the Wireless station, commanding the north slopes across the Canash and the approach to the neck, the corporal in charge having similar orders to those given to the corporal in charge of the 12 pdr.

Immediately the details had moved off I rode to the Wireless, visiting the positions en route.

At 9.54 Sapper Hill reported the enemy appearing over the rocks abutting on York Bay.

At 10.4 the enemy scouts were sighted on the ridge above the Canash and were subsequently captured as stated.

At 10.10 the enemy advanced in skirmishing order across the flat and were enfiladed from the flank by the 12 pdr which opened with shrapnel at 3800 yards. Five minutes later the enemy's main body

had collected in mass behind Observation^r hut, covering them from the position in which the defenders were supposed to be. They were however exposed to the guns, and the 9 pdr. opened on the mass with shrapnel from the flank at 1900 yards while the 12 pdr. fired shrapnel from the right rear flank at 4000 yards. The enemy turned their Maxims on the 9 pdr. and could have shot down the crew or prevented further use of the gun at that object. The presence of the 12 pdr. which was firing from a position two miles in the rear was not discovered.

Any enemy advancing from the north would have been decimated when attempting to cross Observation ridge, provided the gunners estimated the range correctly, and the subsequent attack on the neck in force could not have occurred.

The guns had orders to retreat behind their cover after opening fire and in that case they could have fired with effect on any body that succeeded in reaching the neck. Both guns did fire on the open slope leading to the neck at easy range.

The main body had orders to reserve their fire until the enemy actually reached this open space. As the attacking party collected there for their rush No.2 Maxim in the centre and No.1 on the flank swept the open ground while the main body, extended across the south end of the neck picked off those heading the attack. The position was all in favour of the defending party, and if the latter seize the position first and preserve their cover the success of an attack without artillery preparation can only be forced at great sacrifice.

The position of the machine-gun pit was not discovered.

At 11.5 "cease firing" was sounded and the exercise concluded.

F. J. Newman Capt.
Commandant.