

On English units during the campaign in Cameroon, 1914-1916 - Part 2

Nigeria Regiment, West African Frontier Force

The regiment was established on 1 January 1914 by an amalgamation of the Northern Nigeria Regiment and the Southern Nigeria Regiment. The new regiment consisted of five infantry battalions and two artillery batteries.



2nd Battalion,

Northern Nigeria Regiment.

From a cigarette card, made of silk, seen for sale on eBay.

I am not aware of the name of the company that manufactured the card.

Nigeria Regiment - Historical summary [11](#))

- 1914
- 1st Battalion (originally Northern Nigeria Regiment) 2nd Battalion
 - (originally Northern Nigeria Regiment) 3rd Battalion (originally Southern Nigeria Regiment) 4th (Lagos) Battalion (originally Southern Nigeria Regiment) 5th (Mounted Infantry) Battalion (originally Northern Nigeria Regiment)
 - 1st and 2nd Nigeria Battery.
 -

1956 The Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment, Royal West African Frontier Force

1960 Transferred to the Nigerian Army at the country's independence

1963 The Nigeria Regiment

The following is printed on the back of the card:



West African Frontier Force.
Kort nr. 4 i serien Colonial & Indian

Army Badges, John Player
& Sons, 1917.

"The badge of the West African Frontier Force. There are included in the W.A.F.F. not only the regiment which was raised on the Niger in 1897-98, but also the local forces, formerly known as the Gold Coast and Lagos Constabularies (Hausa Forces), the Royal Niger Constabulary, the Sierra Leone Frontier Police, and the Niger Coast Protection Force."

Each of the four infantry battalions consisted of 8 companies and numbered 27 officers as well as 1,200 non-commissioned officers and privates. The mounted battalion consisted of 3 companies and numbered 15 officers as well as 500 non-commissioned officers and privates.

The regiment's efforts in West and East Africa were recognized in the form of the banners: Duala, Garua, Banyo and Cameroons 1914-16 and Behobeho, Nyangao and East Africa 1916-18.

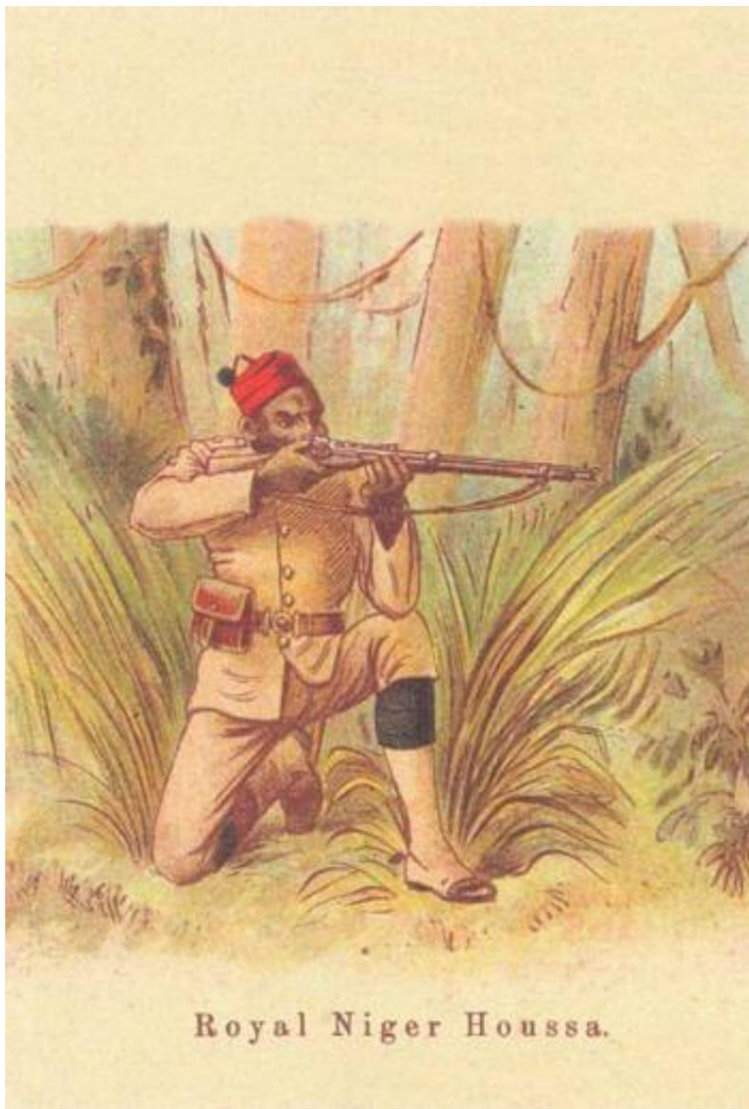


Hausa Soldiers, Lokoja, Northern Nigeria, ca. 1912.

From contemporaneous postcard, sent 22 January 1913.

The following appears from the back of the card:

"Dressed in khaki uniforms, including putties, and wearing a red fez, the Hausa look as though born to soldiering. Sandals are carried for use on rough roads. Their natural erectness gives them an enviable military appearance."



*Royal Niger Houssa, approx. 1900. Drawn by Richard Simkin.
From a postcard published by Dorset Soldiers in 2007.*

The Hausas are from the Hausa-speaking, Muslim population group that inhabits northern Nigeria. The above postcard does not identify the unit, but I assume it is one of the two infantry battalions of The Northern Nigeria Regiment.

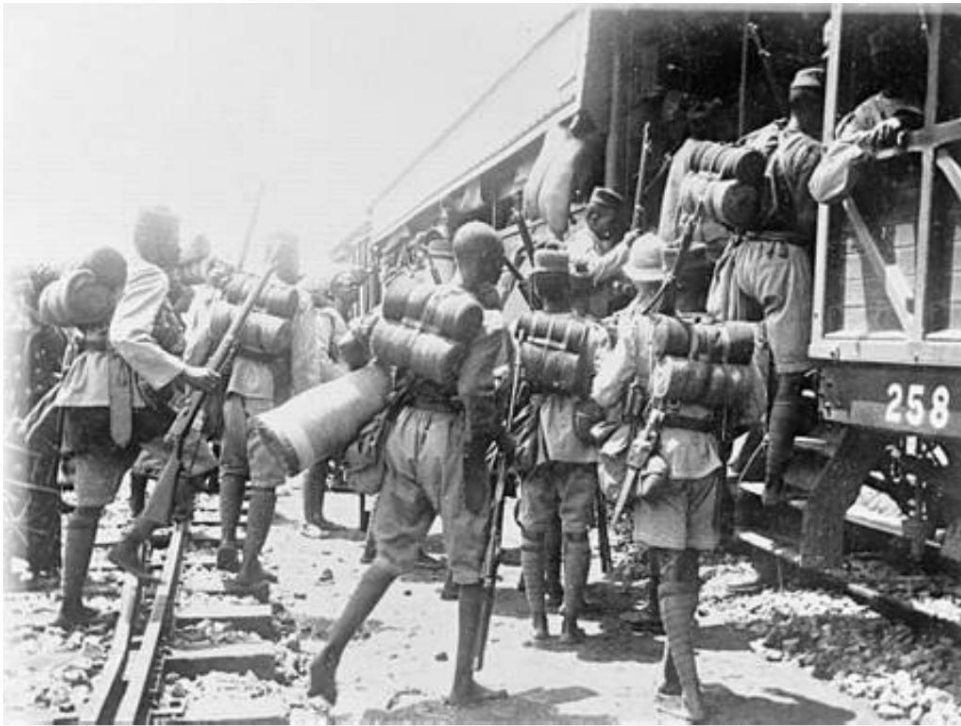
The subtitle on the postcard refers to the Royal Niger Company [12](#)), which [until](#) 1900 was responsible for the operation of the later colony of Nigeria, as well as the Hausas who were in service as gendarmes and soldiers.

In Cameroon

The regiment provided a total of 8 infantry companies to the Anglo-French expeditionary force as well as a battery with 4 pamphlets. The force was organized as follows:

No. 1 Battalion, Nigeria Regiment [13](#)) (*Lieutenant Colonel JB Cockburn*)

- 21 English officers, 12 English non-commissioned officers and 600 native non-commissioned officers and privates.
- The battalion consisted of A and F Company from the 1st Battalion, Nigeria Regiment, and D and F Company from the 2nd Battalion, Nigeria Regiment.



Troops from the 1st Battalion, Nigeria Regiment embarking at Kaduna for Lagos and then to the German Cameroons, August 1914. Fra We Were There (UK Ministry of Defence).

No. 2 Battalion, Nigeria Regiment (*Lieutenant-Colonel AHW Haywood*)

- 21 English officers, 12 English non-commissioned officers and 600 native non-commissioned officers and privates.
- The battalion consisted of A, D, E and F Company from the 4th Battalion, Nigeria Regiment.



Nigerian Battery in Action.
From Source 2.

No. 1 Battery, Nigeria Regiment (*kaptajn C.F.S. Maclaverty, Royal Artillery*).

- 3 English officers, 2 English non-commissioned officers and 64 natives); to this must be added a number of carriers.
- The battery was equipped with 4 pcs. 2.95-inch mountain guns.

The Nigerian units were transported to Cameroon aboard the vessels mentioned below. The force reached Suelaba in the bay off Duala in Cameroon on 23 September 1914.

Unit	From Vessel 14)	Shipping company	BRT Built
	S/S NIGER		980 1908
At the. 1 Battalion, Nigeria Regiment Forcados	S/S BLOCKS	Elder-Dempster Line	981 1908
No. 1 Battery, Nigeria Regiment	Calabar S/S BOMA		2.681 1889
No. 2 Battalion, Nigeria Regiment			

Another vessel was included in the transport of the Nigerian units, but the name has not been disclosed. A corps of approx. 1,500 native porters and a number of military doctors and officers from the supply service.

Field uniforms



English non-commissioned officer of the Nigeria Regiment.
From Source 2.



*Native soldier of the Nigeria Regiment.
From Source 2.*

Paradeuniformer



*Regimental Sergeant-Major, Nigeria Regiment, West
African Frontier Force, ca. 1920.
From a simultaneous postcard.*



*Royal West African
Frontier Force (Nigeria Regiment).*

Card No. 34 in the *Soldiers of The King* series
published by Godfrey Philips Ltd., 1939.

The following appears from the back of the card:

"Generally known as the 'Waffs', the main purpose of the Royal West African Frontier Force is to preserve internal security.

The Nigeria Regiment forms part of the 'Waffs' and the force have played an important part in the history and development of West Africa. Its colours bear many battle honours, and tradition was fully lived up to during the Great War, when nine battalions were raised. The distinction "Royal" was conferred by King George V in 1925, and the regimental motto is "Victory is from God alone". His Majesty the King is Colonel-in-Chief."

The following appears from the back of the card:



Bandsman, Nigerian Regiment, West African Frontier Force, ca. 1920.
From a simultaneous postcard.



The Nigeria Regiment.

Kort nr. 42 i Player's cigaretkortserie Military
Uniforms of the British
Empire
Overseas, 1938

"The Nigeria Regiment is one of the units of the Royal West African Frontier Force (popularly known as the "Waffs"), of which His Majesty the King is Colonel-in-Chief.

The Force has played an important part in the history of the development of West Africa, and its colours bear many battle honours. The West African Frontier (the distinction "Royal" was conferred by H.M. King George V in 1925 [15](#)) was first formed in 1897 when Colonel Lugard (now Lord Lugard) raised an African Force in Nigeria for the protection of the frontiers. In 1901 the African Military forces of the West Coast were amalgamated into the W.A.F.F. We show a Lance-Corporal of the Nigeria Regiment, with Government House, Lagos, in the background."

The Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force



Royal West African Frontier Force.
From *Regimental Badges* by TJ Edwards, Gale & Polden Limited, 1951.

Gold Coast Regiment - Historical Summary [16](#) ---

1879

Gold Coast Constabulary
established by cadres of the Hausa Constabulary
(from the then Southern Nigeria)

1901

Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force

1928

Gold Coast Regiment, Royal West African Frontier Force

1957

Ghana Regiment (at the country's independence)



Gold Coast Constabulary, c. 1900. Drawn by Richard Simkin.

From a postcard published by Dorset Soldiers in 2007.

On 31 July 1914, four days before the English declaration of war against Germany, the military units in West Africa were mobilized.

The Gold Coast Regiment was organized into 8 infantry companies, 1 pioneer company and the mountain gun battery - Gold Coast Battery.

The strength was 38 English officers, 11 English non-commissioned officers and 1,584 native soldiers, including 124 porters who carried the regiment's machine guns and the mountain guns. In addition, the regiment had about 300 reservists.

The regiment first participated in the campaigns against the German colonies in West Africa - Togoland [17](#)) and Kamerun - and then in the campaign in German East Africa.

In Cameroon

In addition to the previously mentioned signal element, the regiment provided 2 infantry companies, the pioneer company and a cannon division to the French-English expeditionary corps.

The infantry companies, together with 2 companies from the Sierra Leone Regiment, formed a composite *battalion*, which was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel RA de B. Rose, commander of the Gold Coast Regiment.

B and F Company, Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force 18)

- The strength figure is not disclosed, but it is assumed to be on a par with the companies from Sierra Leone (14 British officers, 6 British non-commissioned officers and 211 native non-commissioned officers and privates).

Pioneer Company, Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force (Captain H. Goodwin)

- 5 English officers, 2 English non-commissioned officers and 149 native non-commissioned officers and privates.



S/S ALBERTVILLE, later S/S ELMINA 19).
Fra Belgian Shipping Company (Simplon Postcards).

Kanondeling, Gold Coast Battery, West African Frontier Force (løjtnant W.L. St. Clair)

- 2 English officers and 1 English non-commissioned officer, and 28 natives; to this must be added a number of carriers.
- The platoon was equipped with 2 units. 2.95-inch mountain guns.

Together with C and E Company of the Sierra Leone Regiment, the pioneer company and the gun platoon sailed from Lomé on 16 September 1914 aboard the S/S ELMINA, which reached Lagos the following day, to depart for Cameroon on 20 September 1914.

With the force came a corps of approx. 800 native carriers.

Uniforms



The Gold Coast Regiment, 1912; drawn by Richard Simkin.
Reproduced from a postcard from the National Army Museum, London.

The illustration brilliantly reproduces both the regiment's field uniforms and parade uniforms. The field uniform of the native soldiers consisted of a woolen blouse (*jersey*) and khaki shorts. A red sash was worn around the waist. The headgear is a round, green hat (*Kilbarrack cap*), which gave the soldiers the nickname *The Green Caps*. The hat was equipped with a green pompom (*tourie*). The soldiers usually went barefoot, but could wear brown leather sandals called *chuplies*.

The officer's uniform was made of khaki colored canvas or wool (*serges*), with breeches or shorts. Footwear included brown boots, worn with brown leather gaiters, alternatively dark blue or khaki wraps. In the field, the officers usually wore a shirt uniform with a tie.

The department badge with the palm tree was introduced in the West African Frontier Force before 1914. At first it was only worn by officers, but later also became the cap badge of the native soldiers.

Paradeuniformer



The Gold Coast Regiment.

Kort nr. 43 i

Player's cigaretkortserie

Military Uniforms
of the British

Empire Overseas, 1938.

The parade uniform consisted of a red fez, with blue tassel, khaki uniform blouse and shorts. A red waistcoat was worn over the uniform blouse; for chief sergeants and staff sergeants (Warrant Officers) the vest was equipped with yellow cord trim.

The following appears from the back of the card:

"The Gold Coast Regiment is a unit of the Royal West African Frontier Force and is descended from the various military bodies which enlisted in the Gold Coast from the 17th and 18th centuries for the protection of trading settlements. The Regiment played a distinguished part in the Ashanti Wars of 1873-4 and 1900, and in the Great War in Togoland, the Cameroons and East Africa. The Regiment, recruited from Africans in the Gold Coast, is officered by officers of the British Army. It bears the Royal West African Frontier Force badge of a palm tree and has for its motto "Kullum Shiri" in Hausa, which means "Always Ready". We show a Regimental Sergeant-Major, with Christiansborg Castle, Accra, in the background."

Machine guns



The Machine Gun Section No.1 Company, Gold Coast Regiment.
From Source 7.

Unlike the German units that the units of the West African Frontier Force fought against in Cameroon, the companies were each equipped with one medium machine gun, the German askaris often had 3 machine guns per company. company.

The company name comes from Source 7, but it is not known when, if at all, they switched from numbers to letters.

It is difficult to determine whether the uniform blouses are dark blue (old model) or brown (new model).

Of particular interest is the English non-commissioned officer lying next to the machine gunner, as he wears the same uniform as the soldiers and not a khaki uniform in the style of the officers.

Load Bearers Donkeys

Transport of a medium machine gun

Crew equipment (9 kg per man)	54 kg --	1
Machine gun	28 kg 1	
Felt sharpening	25 kg 1	
Shield, spare parts, etc.	27 kg 1	
3,000 cartridges, in boxes with two tapes in each	163 kg 6	
6,000 cartridges, in boxes of three tapes each	163 kg --	4

Carriers in reserve

Leader of the bearers

Carry equipment and water supply

Total

1

3

14

5

Information originates from East Africa, 1915 [20](#)). [Here](#) the donkey that transported the crew's equipment could be replaced by an ox. The animals were looked after by a boy .

In West Africa a similar setup may have been used, although the donkeys would often be replaced by porters.

Flags and flag bands



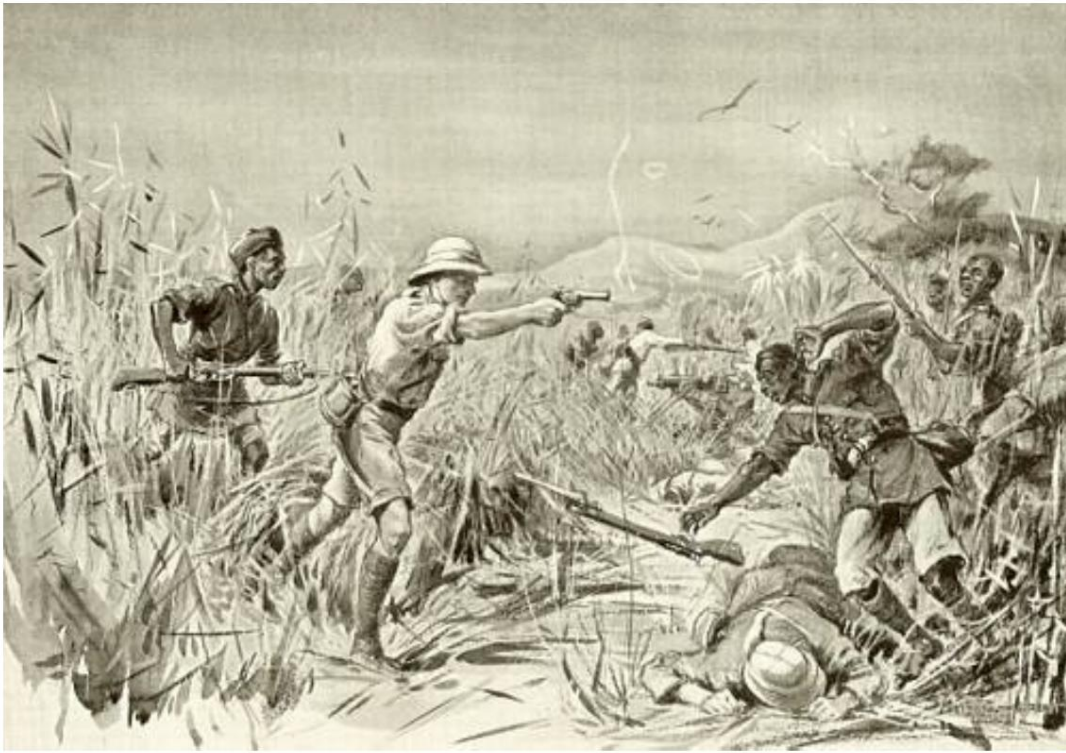
Banner of the Gold Coast Regiment, c. 1926 [21](#). [_____](#)

The regiment was awarded the Kamina, Duala and Cameroons 1914-16 and Narungombe and East Africa 1916-18 banners for its service during the First World War.

On the King's Color (Union Jack) the banner ribbons from the First World War are carried.

The regimental banner carries the previous banners - Ashantee 1873-4 and Ashanti 1900 - the first of which was awarded to the Hausa Constabulary (Southern Nigeria).

And Victoriakors



Captain Butler and thirteen Native Soldiers attacking one hundred of the enemy in the bush of the Cameroons.
Drawn by M. Dovaston, and seen for sale at MILPRINTS.
The plan comes from the book *Deeds that Thrilled The Empire*.

The text of the plate reads as follows:

"By the beginning of October, 1914, the German West African Colony, the Cameroons, was virtually captured.

Wireless stations no longer existed, and the coast was in British hands, while the enemy were compelled to carry on defensive warfare in difficult country in the interior. On November 17th, with a party of thirteen native soldiers, Captain John Fitzhardinge Paul Butler [22](#)), of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, who was attached to the Pioneer Company, Gold Coast Regiment, West African Frontier Force, advanced into the thick bush and attacked the enemy. Though the latter were much superior in numbers, being about one hundred strong, including several Europeans, Captain Butler and his party defeated them, capturing a machine-gun and many loads of ammunition."

Other units from the Gold Coast

The military units from the Gold Coast also included four volunteer corps made up of Europeans – the Gold Coast Volunteers, the Gold Coast Railway Volunteers, the Gold Coast Mines Volunteers and the Ashanti Mines Volunteers – totaling approx. 900 men. These units functioned i.a. as a basis for the recruitment of officers and non-commissioned officers for the native units.



Native Non-Commissioned Officers, Gold Coast Regiment, Kumasi, British West Africa, Christmas 1925.

From a simultaneous postcard.

Although the photograph was taken some years after the war, the non-commissioned officers' medals clearly show that they are war veterans.

The sanitary service

Responsibility for the medical service (*Director of Medical Services*) was in the hands of Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) JCB Statham, Royal Army Medical Corps.

Proper sanitary units did not exist in the earliest days of the expeditionary corps, but were improvised from the available resources - personnel as well as material.

The English part of the Anglo-French expeditionary force included 23 September 1914 the following sanitary personnel:

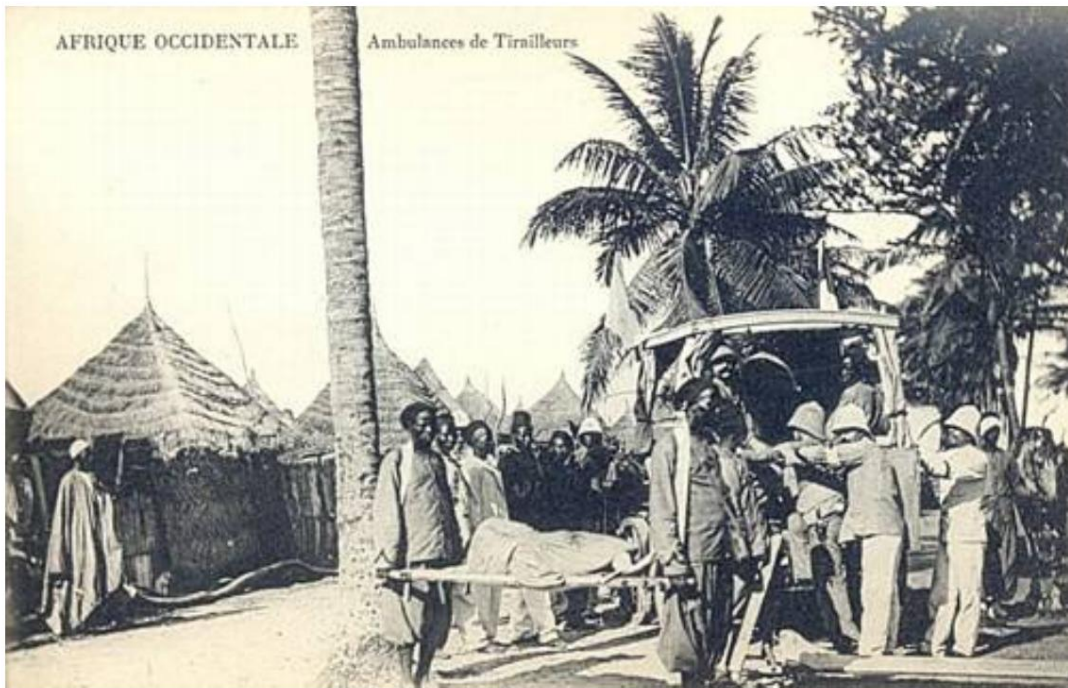
- 19 English officers (= doctors), 4 English non-commissioned officers and 20 native nurses (*dressers*).

In addition, there were 4 doctors who must have been part of the battalions, as well as the head of the sanitary element, Major WHGH Best, Royal Army Medical Corps Special Reserve. It is stated that only one of the officers, probably Major Best, had previous experience of sanitary service in units higher than a company.

The doctors belonged to *the West African Medical Staff*, an organization established in 1902 responsible for medical assistance to both military and civilians. In addition, 6 English nurses from *the Colonial Nursing Association* were part of the force 23).

Prior to the landing at Duala, 4 field ambulances were organized, each consisting of:

- 3 doctors, 1 non-commissioned officer and 2 paramedics.
- A stretcher section with 32-48 native (sick) bearers
- Equipment and material for the establishment of a main connection point; equipment and materiel packed so that it could be carried by 32-48 native porters.

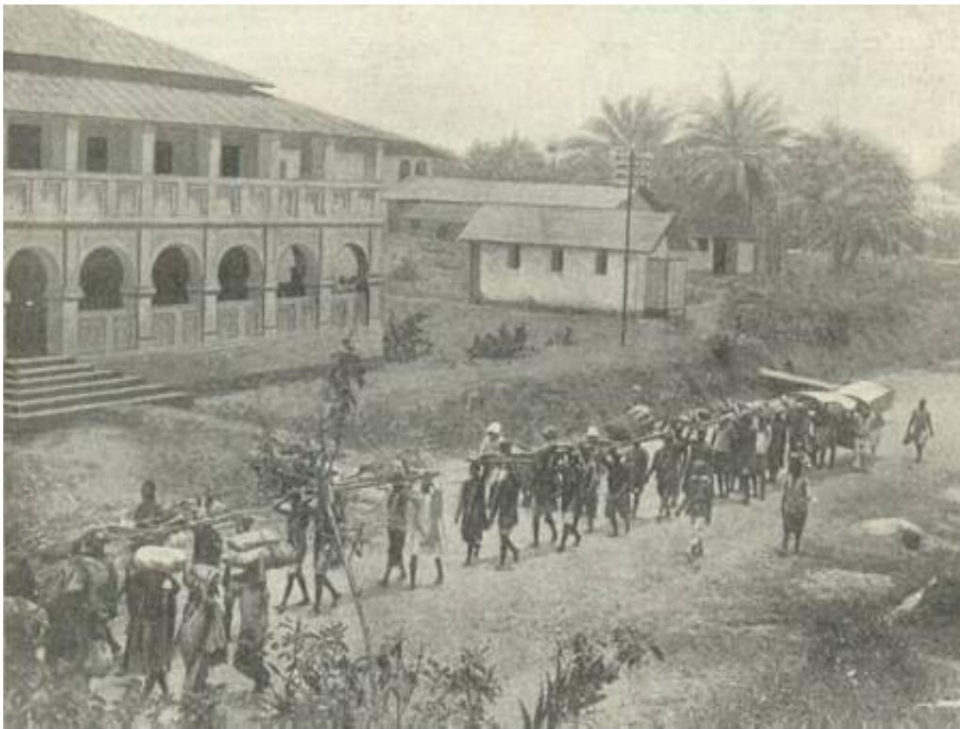


West Africa - Tirailleurs Ambulance, ca. 1910.

From a simultaneous postcard.

It did not come to the expected hard battles for Duala and shortly after the capture of the city, three field hospitals (*base hospitals*) were established, which per 10 October 1915 has a capacity of 12 European and 130 native patients. The support ship - S/S Appam - is being fitted out as a hospital ship, with a capacity of 80 European and 300 native patients. In addition, a number of train carriages and a smaller vessel for the transport of the wounded and sick are being fitted out.

These sanitary installations are staffed only from the English side, as the French sanitary element - in addition to the efforts at battalion level - only had the capacity to establish a single field ambulance.



Native porters transport wounded, Cameroon, c. 1915.

From Source 1.

All official sources highlight the excellent performance of the sanitary service during the operations, including its ability to cope with improvised means.

The building in the background can be identified using Source 2 as the European Hospital in Douala.

To note:

- 11) From The Nigeria Regiment (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth). (The page no longer exists.)
- 12) The Royal Niger Company (Wikipedia).
- 13) The units are also referred to as 1 Nigeria Regiment and 2 Nigeria Regiment respectively.
- 14) The information on the transport vessels comes from Elder Dempster & Company / African Steam Ship Company (The Ship List). Additional data can be found in the Miramar Ship Index (New Zealand Ship & Marine Society).
- 15) In 1925, the English king became an honorary colonel of the West African Frontier Force, but the unit's name was only changed in 1928 to the Royal West African Frontier Force.
- 16) From the Gold Coast Regiment (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth). (The page no longer exists.)
- 17) Se f.eks. Lieut.Col. F.C. Bryant, Gold Coast Regiment, and the short campaign in Togo, August 11 to 26, 1914 af Keith Steward (British Colonial History in Africa Research).
- 18) The decision that B and F Company from the Gold Coast Regiment should be included in the expeditionary corps was first made in Lagos on 17 September 1914. The companies joined the expeditionary corps on 25 September 1914.
- 19) S/S Elmina (4,798 GRT) was built in 1906 and originally belonged to the Compagnie Maritime Belge, but was purchased in 1910 by the Elder Dempster Line, possibly to the subsidiary British and African Steam Navigation Company.
- 20) Fra "Standing Orders and Regulations for the Forces in British East Africa, 1915" gengivet i *The Carrier Corps - Military Labour in the East African Campaign 1914-1918* by Geoffrey Hodges, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut 1986, ISBN 0-313-24418-9.
- 21) Fra *Standards, Guidons and Colours of the Commonwealth Forces* af T.J. Edwards, Gale & Polden, Aldershot 1953.
- 22) See also John Fitzhardinge Paul Butler (Wikipedia).
- 23) In The British Journal of Nursing, 21 October 1916 - with reference to an official report from the Commander-in-Chief in Cameroon - two nurses, Senior Nursing Sister Miss E. L. Fleming, Duala (British Section), being singled out for her administrative talents, while Nursing Sister Miss L. Bell is mentioned for special care of her native patients.