

# About some of the Indian units that participated The Battle of Tanga, November 1914, Part 3

## 27th (Bangalore) Brigade (Indian Expeditionary Force B)

The brigade belonged to the regular Indian Army, but was not originally intended to be sent to East

Africa. This task was intended for the 16th (Poona) Brigade, which was instead sent to Basra, as the vanguard of the Indian Expeditionary Force D [1](#)). Two experienced battalions left for other service and were replaced by two others whose reputations were not the best (discussed in Part 1).

*Chef:* Brigadier-General Richard Wapshare *Stabsofficerer:* Major H. De C. O'Grady (Brigade-Major)  
Captain W.G. Charles (Staff-Captain)

2nd Bn. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (*Lieutenant-Colonel CEA Jourdain*) 63rd Palamcottah Light Infantry (reinforced with personnel from 83rd Wallajahbad Light Infantry) 98th Infantry 101st Grenadiers

**Table 1: Strength figures - 27th (Bangalore) Infantry Brigade** (Source 1)

Pr. 1. november 1914	Brigadestab Signaldeling 2nd Bn.		Loyal	63rd Palamcottah	98th Infantry	101st Grenadiers	Total
English officers	3	1	28	13	13	13	71
English non-commissioned officers and privates	7	12	804				823
Indian officers				17	17	17	51
Indian NCOs and Privates	6	15		732	732	732	2.217
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>762</b>	<b>3.162</b>
Helpers	7	4	58	58	58	58	243

Mule

2

2

2

2

8

Machine guns

## The brigades' signal divisions



*Indian Signal Office, 1930s.*  
From Source 2.

The Signal Detachment of the 27th (Bangalore) Brigade and the Imperial Service Brigade was provided by the 31st Signal Company, Royal Engineers, who remained in East Africa until 3 April 1915, when they were sent to Mesopotamia.

A number of signalmen accompanied the first forces landed on the night of 2-3 November 1914 at A Beach.

A provisional command post was set up at the RED HOUSE and from here a field cable connection was laid to the SIGNAL TOWER (at B BEACH) which patrols of the 61st Pioneers had found abandoned.

From here, at 02:00, an optical connection was established - via flashing lights - with the vessels at sea.

The handsome soldiers in the foreground could be Gurkhas.

Subsequently, connection was established between the various command stations as they were landed. The field cables were often damaged and the best connection was per food ordinance.

### Table 2: Signal connections (See Map 1)

**B1**

Provisional Command Station

**B2**

Optical signal connection

**B3**

Expeditionary Force Command Station

**I**

Imperial Service Brigade Command Station

**27**

27th (Bangalore) Brigade Command Station



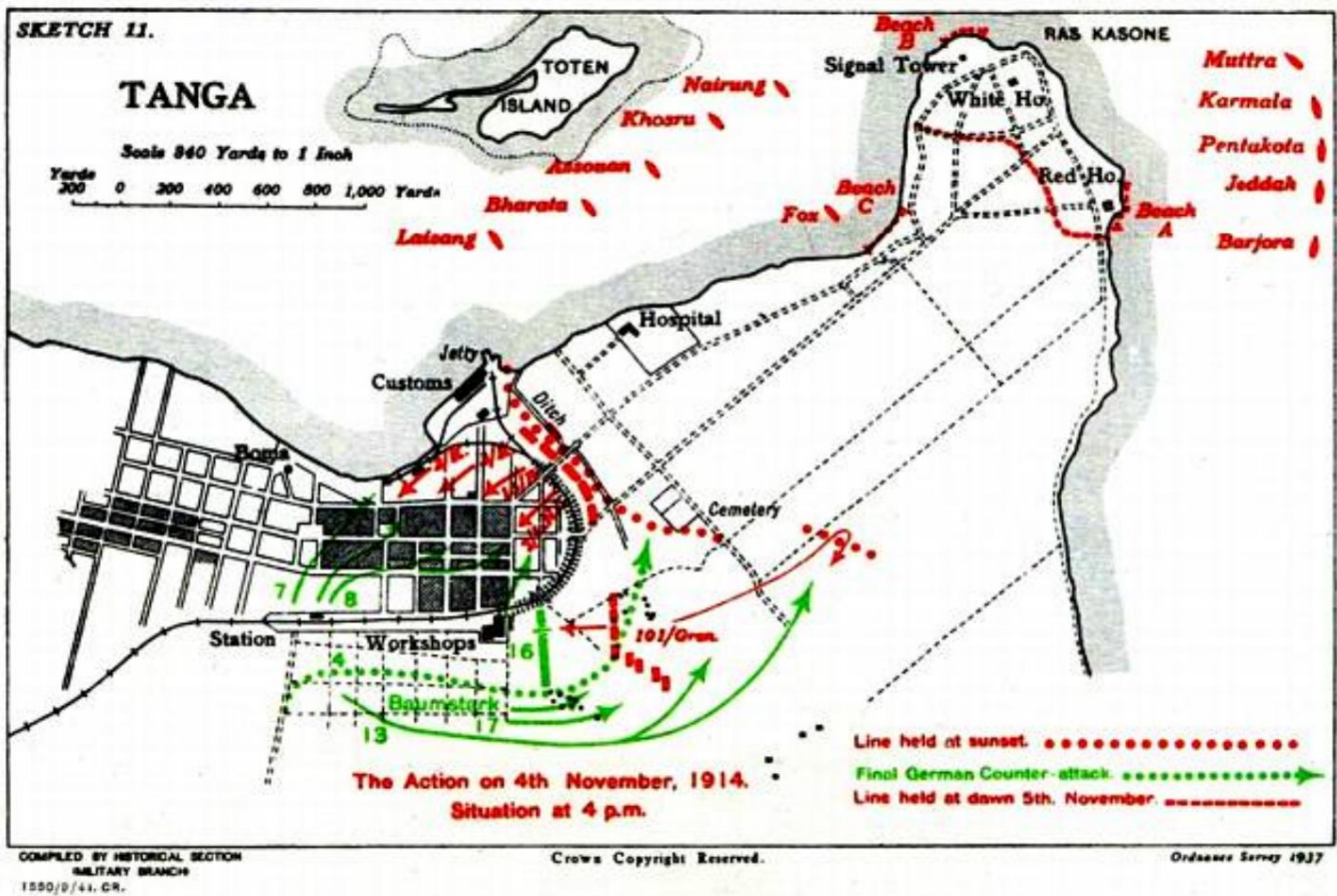
*Optical signaling with heliograph by 1st  
Grenadier Regiment of Bombay Infantry, 1897.  
From Source 5.*

An English signal division at brigade level in 1914 consisted of two telephone teams. The telephone equipment included approx. 12 km of field cable (8 miles) and 10 field telephones.

In addition, optical signaling devices were available - heliographs, flashing lanterns and signal flags.

The regiment later became the 101st Grenadiers.

A modern signal service was still, even in India, in its infancy. The signal divisions consisted of English officers and personnel from the Royal Engineers, while the Indian personnel were specially trained personnel from the Sappers and Miners corps.



Card 1 - Tanga, 4 November 1914 (D+1).

From Source 1, from which also the location of command stations etc. is derived.



English vessels at anchor off Ras Kasone.

From Tanga History.

The picture gives a good impression of the coast, which is described as shallow and muddy.

Especially at A BEACH, reefs and mangrove trees made it necessary to wade ashore from the landing craft - barges pulled by tugs as well as boats from the transport vessels.

The source of the image provides a review of a seemingly quite interesting book *Seven letters to Tattam* by Ann Chricton-Harris (privately published in Canada, 2001) which reproduces letters that Dr. Temple Harris - a doctor with Expeditionary Force B - wrote to his brother in India. In this he mentions, among other things, his experiences as a doctor at a field hospital, set up by RED HOUSE.

**Table 3: Caste-wise affiliation - 27th (Bangalore) Infantry Brigade (Source 1)**

Pr. 1. november 1914	98th Infantry	101st Grenadiers
<i>Punjabi Musalmans</i>		202
<i>Hindustani Musalmans</i>	240	
<i>Rajputana Muslims</i>		172
<i>Hindu Rajputs</i>	255	
<i>Ahirs</i>	172	
<i>Mahrattas</i>		337
<i>Others, various</i>	82	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>749</b>	<b>749</b>

The eight companies in the 98th Infantry were distributed with two companies of *Hindu Rajputs* and *Ahirs (Eastern Punjab)* and three companies of *Hindustani Musalmans*.

The eight companies of the 101st Grenadiers were distributed with two companies of *Dekhani Mahrattas*, *Konkani Mahrattas*, *Rajputana Musalmans* and *Punjabi Musalmans*.

**Table 4: Casualties - 27th (Bangalore) Infantry Brigade (Source 1)**

Tab	2nd Bn. Loyals				Composition and casualty figures of the 63rd Palamcottah Light Infantry is discussed in Part 1.
	Fallen	Wounded	Missing	Total	
Officers	3	1	1	5	
Non-commissioned officers and privates	26	62	22	110	
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>115</b>	

98th Infantry

101st Grenadiers

Tab	Fallen	Wounded	Missing	Total	Fallen	Wounded	Missing	Total
English officers	1	1		2	6		1	
Indian officers			1	1	6	3		
Indian NCOs and Privates	6	32	38	76	172	28	6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>222</b>

## Major General Arthur Aitken



*Major General Arthur Aitken.*  
Fra Spottiswoode Family Archive.

The commander of Expeditionary Force B, Major General Arthur Edward Aitken [2](#)), was transferred to the Indian Army from the Worcestershire Regiment in 1882.

As a young officer, Aitken saw active service in the Sudan (1885), and his only combat experience came from there.

In 1904 he is in command of the 119th Infantry (The Mooltan Regiment) [3](#)), garrisoned at Ahmednagar. He held this post until 1911, when he was appointed commander of the 16th (Poona) Brigade.

Aitken is described as easy to work with, although his contemporaries found him somewhat "bloated" and dominated by his chief of staff.

Photos of the general are among the rarities, so it was a bit of a scoop to find this. The General was married to Sybil Spottiswoode (her second marriage). The wife marries a third time, perhaps after the general's death in 1924; further details are not known.

After returning from Tanga to Mombasa, Aitken sets about reorganizing his units for deployment in the defense of British East Africa. In London, Lord Kitchener is so dissatisfied with the situation that he refuses to comply with the proposals for honors that have been forwarded. Correspondingly, everything is done to keep the matter secret.

Shortly after his return, the general was stricken with malaria and was admitted to hospital, where he remains, when on 4 December 1914 he received orders to hand over command to Brigadier General Richard Wapshare, and then return to London. He departs from Mombasa on 17 December 1914.

Lord Kitchener does not want to speak to him, but the head of military affairs at the India Office, Sir Edmond Barrow, unkindly informs him that he has been demoted and will receive only half-pay as a colonel until the end of the war.

In 1920, the case was taken up for reassessment. The circumstances surrounding the operation, and the Expeditionary Force's real lack of opportunities to carry out the assigned task, means that he will receive an honorable discharge. This is announced publicly in a statement from Parliament, after which Aitken is pardoned, and with a pension as a colonel in the Indian Army. For reasons of principle, however, they refrain from compensating the missing salary. He dies in 1924.

## 2nd Bn. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment



*Regimentsmærke*

*Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.*

*Fra The British Army of 1914 af*

*R. Money Barnes,*

*Seeley Service & Co. Ltd., London 1968.*

The 2nd Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was the only English unit to take part in the landing operations at Tanga. In 1914 the battalion was garrisoned in Bangalore, India 4). 

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The forces that formed part of Expeditionary Force B, by order, brought no wood, and the battalion was relegated to 15 mules, for the transport of machine guns, ammunition and other supplies.





*The Landing at Gallipoli, 1915.*

From a roughly contemporaneous postcard [5](#)).

In terms of uniform, 2nd Bn is described . Loyal North Lancashire Regiment as being in shirt sleeves.

In this way they differed from the Indian units, whose movements were further hindered by a leather armor that was heavier than the British webbing, as well as belts with extra ammunition and containers with extra water 6) .

The battalion was the part of the infantry of Indian Expeditionary Force B that the Deputy Commander of the Intelligence Section, Captain Richard Meinerzhagen, relied on when he described his impression of the forces:

*"Neither am I enthusiastic about the troops sent with the force. They constitute the worst in India, and I tremble to think what may happen if we meet with serious opposition. I have seen many of the men and they did not impress me at all, either as men or as soldiers. Two battalions have no machine guns and the senior officers are nearer to fossils than active, energetic leaders of men. But it serves no useful purpose being critical at this stage. One can only hope for the best and rely on our British Battalion, Mountain Battery and the element of surprise."*





*Soldiers from 2nd Bn. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment setting up a machine gun emplacement in a - hopefully vacated - anthill, East Africa, 1914.*

From Source 6.

### **Logan's Battery**

14 men from 2nd Bn. Loyal North Lancashire, under the command of Captain, later Major, RH Logan, was given a very special task, being fitted with two 3-pdr naval guns from HMS GOLIATH.

The guns were mounted in improvised field mounts and then served as *Logan's Battery* during the landing at Tanga, from where they, from positions on the deck of the S/S BAJORA, among others. covered the withdrawal from A BEACH.

During the later campaign in East Africa, the battery was equipped with two 12-pdr naval guns. The battery served under the name No. 1 Light Battery, later No. 6 Battery. During the land operations, the battery was equipped with motor vehicles of the *Hupmobile* type and later with trucks of the *Reo* type.



*Motor Lorry, East Africa.*

Card No. 16 in the Military Motors cigarette card series, published by WD & HO Wills in 1916, and republished in 1993 by Imperial Publishing Ltd.

The conditions for the use of motor vehicles in East Africa were not the best, which i.a. shown in

the following cigarette card, which could in principle represent Logan's Battery.

The following appears from the back of the card:

*Motor traction is proving of great service to the British forces in East Africa. Motor Lorries are extensively used for transporting the necessary guns, ammunition and stores.*

*Enormous difficulties are confronting our Army Transport Corps, but in spite of the almost insurmountable obstacles encountered by our brave soldiers operating in that difficult country, swamps and rivers are crossed, and rough but serviceable roads made through the dense scrub and over parched, desolate wastes.*



*102nd and 101st Grenadiers.*

Drawn by AC Lovett, 1910. From Source 4.

From the left you can see:

1. 102nd King Edwards Own Grenadiers (*Bagri Jat*)
2. 101st Grenadiers, Naik (corporal) (*Punjabi Musalman*).

Analogous to the grenadier tradition in the English army, the corporal wears a flaming grenade in his turban.

## 101st Grenadiers

Unlike other Indian battalions, the 101st Grenadiers had a good reputation, among other things on the basis of a good effort on the North-West Frontier and in Somaliland (1902).

Even before the mobilization, the battalion was part of the 27th (Bangalore) Brigade, and must thus be assumed to have been in collaboration with the 2nd Bn. Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.

The battalion suffered heavy losses at Tanga and similarly during the later action in East Africa, i.a. by Jassin i

January 1915. Read more about these battles in the article [The Battle for Jassin, 18 -19 January 1915](#) by Dennis L. Bishop and Holger Dobold (By Jingo!).

The battalion was awarded the East Africa banner, 1914-16.

In August 1916, the battalion was sent to Egypt and then to Palestine, but one company managed to take part in the capture of Tanga on 7 July 1916, and the battalion thereby received a somewhat belated compensation for its losses on 4 November 1914.

During the war, 2/101st Grenadiers is created and both battalions take part in the campaign in Palestine, in the 29th and 31st Brigade respectively , 10th Division [7](#)). —



*Regimental Badge - 4th*

*Bombay Grenadiers, 1940.*

From Source 2.

### **101st Grenadiers - Historical summary**

1778: 8th Regiment of Bombay Sepoys 1783: 8th

Grenadier Regiment of Bombay Sepoys 1788: 1st Grenadier

Regiment of Bombay Sepoys 1796: 1st Battalion, 1st Grenadier

Regiment of Bombay Native Infantry 1824: 1st Grenadier Regiment of Bombay Native Infantry

1885: 1st Grenadier Regiment of Bombay Infantry 1901: 1st Grenadier

Bombay Infantry 1903: 101st Grenadiers 1922: 1st Battalion, 4th

Bombay Grenadiers

From 1922, the 1st Battalion's badge was like the regimental badge, just without the number four. (Source 8)

### **Sources**

1. *History of the Great War, Military Operations East Africa, Volume I, August 1914 - September 1916* by Second Lieutenant Charles Hordern, HSMO, London 1941. (Can be borrowed from the Royal Garrison Library.)
2. *India's Army* of Donovan Jackson, Purnell and Sons, London 1940.
3. *Field Service Pocket Book (1914)*, published by the General Staff, War Office, London 1914, Reprint

- af David & Charles Reprints, London 1971, ISBN 0-7153-5225-3.
4. *The Army of India and Its Evolution - An Official Report* published in Calcutta 1924 and reprinted by Picton Publishing, Chippenham/Wiltshire 1992, ISBN 0-948251-69-9.
  5. *The Indian Army of the Empress 1861-1903* af Alan Harfield, Spellmount, Tunbridge Wells/Kent 1990, ISBN 0-946771-03-0.
  6. *The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment 1855-1970* by Stephen Bull, Tempus Publishing Limited, Stroud, Gloucestershire 2002, ISBN 0-7524-2489-0. The series is featured here English regimental stories from Tempus Publishing Limited.
  7. *Armies of India* af major A.C. Lovett og major G.F. MacMunn, Adam and Charles Black, London 1911.
  8. 101st Grenadiers (Land Forces of Britain, the Empire and Commonwealth) og 101st Grenadiers (The British Empire).
  9. *The Battle of Tanga 1914* af Ross Anderson, Tempus Publishing Ltd., Stroud, Gloucestershire 2002, ISBN 0-7524-2349-5.

Per Finsted

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**To note:**

- 1) Se The Road to Basra - 1914.
- 2) Generalmajor Arthur Edward Aitken (1861-1924). (FirstWorldWar.com)
- 3) Se 119th Infantry (The Mooltan Regiment). (British Empire)
- 4) Se The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment in 1914-1918 (The long, long trail).
- 5) Judging by the markings on the troop helmets, the soldiers represent the Lancashire Fusiliers. Although the terrain at Tanga is not quite as rocky as at Gallipoli, especially on the east side of Ras Kasone there are steep and rocky slopes.
- 6) The water container is made of canvas and is called a *chagal*. See A Journey through World War Two (Burma Star Association)
- 7) Se f.eks. Order-of-Battle of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, september 1918 (Historical Military Organization).