

THE SCOTTISH HORSE IN ACTION¹

BY A SQUADRON OFFICER

BAKENLAAGTE—MOEDWIL—ROOIWAL

BAKENLAAGTE, MOEDWIL, and ROOIWAL are the three especial "honours" of the Scottish Horse. A corps composed of men of all classes, upbringings, professions, and occupations—farmers, soldiers, lawyers, business men, Highlanders, Lowlanders, Australians, South Africans, moulded together and united partly by a semi-feudal idea, partly by a semi-clannish instinct, partly by an excellent organisation, primarily by a stolid sense of duty to their country—the Scottish Horse came into the field at a time when service was more irksome than during the earlier stages of the war.

At Bakenlaagte, Moedwil, and Rooiwal they were tried and passed their test, emerging from the war with a record for phlegmatic gallantry which was beyond question, and which in the eyes of the world placed them in the front rank of fighting corps, Regular or Irregular.

Yet what they chanced to do on those particular three days, they would have done whenever asked on any other occasion, and their conduct, "abounding in a spirit of courage and zeal, should neither be disfigured nor forgotten."

BAKENLAAGTE² (October 30th, 1901)

"Stranger, go tell the Lacedæmonians that we died in obedience to their laws."

—*Epitaph of the Spartans at Thermopylae.*

The column under Colonel G. E. Benson, R.A., acting upon information received by its intelligence officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Wools Sampson, had been operating in the Bethel District, Eastern Transvaal, and on the evening of the 29th of October was encamped at Quaggaslaagte, about forty miles south of Brug Spruit. Few of the enemy had been seen on the preceding days, but Boers had been reported to be concentrating in force on the high ground to the north-west, and the column commander had judged it advisable to fall back upon the line of block-houses until the situation could be met by a force of greater strength.

¹ It should be borne in mind that this article has been written chiefly with a view to showing the part taken by the Scottish Horse in the engagements described. Comparatively little mention therefore has been made of other regiments which distinguished themselves on the same occasions.—[Ed.]

² The paper on Bakenlaagte has already in substance appeared in vol. v. of *The Times History of the War*, this article and the preceding one—as the only material available with regard to the Scottish Horse—having been lent in response to a request for information about the regiment.

In case the use of the terms "front" and "rear" in this paper should not be clearly understood, it must be explained that these terms are used in their relation to the column as a whole, and not to any position taken up by the rearguard. Thus the ground between the rearguard and the rest of a column is termed the "front," even when the rearguard is faced about and in action.—[Ed.]

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The column marched from camp at 4.30 A.M. (daylight) on the 30th of October. The rearguard, consisting of three companies¹ of the 3rd Mounted Infantry (180 rifles), one company of infantry (80 rifles), and a pom-pom ("CC" Section), was under the command of Major F. G. Anley (Essex Regiment). The 2nd Scottish Horse at this time formed part of the main body, and marched on the right of the transport in company with the remainder of the infantry and guns.

The *terrain* is a slightly undulating country. Viewed from a distance, the veld hereabouts rolls gently like an Atlantic sea on a calm day. The rise and fall are so gradual that the traveller finds it hard to say at what moment he is upon the highest point of the undulation. Hence dominating ground is not easily distinguishable.

The day was cold with a thick mist; rain was imminent, and the ground being heavy and holding, the going could hardly have been worse for transport.

As soon as the force moved off parties of Boers began to press upon the rearguard, and soon the front and flanks of the column were also engaged. Though firing was at extreme ranges, one man of the rearguard was killed as early as 4.45 A.M. A little later, the convoy and main body were slowly crossing a drift, while the mounted men of the rear party were clinging to the high ground some 4000 yards behind. A little band of Boers stole round the mounted screen and captured seven stragglers of the infantry; shortly afterwards these men were returned to the main body stripped of all but their shirts. At 9 A.M. the company of infantry, being somewhat exhausted, was ordered forward to join the waggons, and the officer commanding the company was told to take up defensive positions covering the mounted troops, whenever the convoy should halt. The rearguard now consisted only of two companies of the mounted infantry and the pom-pom. Flanking parties of the third company—the Dublin Fusiliers—were kept out very wide, as the rearguard commander feared that the enemy might work round between him and the main body.

Till nine o'clock the day was only threatening, but at about that hour a cold rain began to fall, driving such dense sheets into the faces of the men of the rearguard that they could see no further than a hundred paces behind them, and making it impossible to tell where the full force of the Boer attack would fall. The march of the column, however, continued unchecked, and the convoy still laboured slowly forward; but waggons kept sticking fast in the clammy ground, and by one o'clock two of these had sunk so deep into the mud that they had dropped a considerable way behind the rest. The rearguard therefore halted upon some higher ground close to a reedy marsh, while the rest of the column proceeded on its march, and never halted again until it came into laager at Bakenlaagte farm. A second pom-pom ("R₁") was shortly afterwards sent back to reinforce the rearguard.

The rain and mist now came on more heavily than ever, and the main body

¹ i.e. one company each of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, the North Lancashire Regiment, and the Dublin Fusiliers.

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had no sooner moved off than a hot fire was opened on the rear screen from almost every quarter of the compass (as it seemed) but chiefly from the rear—the increased severity of the attack being due to the arrival of Botha with a force of some 1000 men, and to the fact that the Boers on the front and flanks of the column, disliking the rain in their faces, had worked round to the rear in order to fight with the rain behind them. A message was therefore despatched to Colonel Benson informing him of the situation.

Still the Boers continued to press on their attack, and Major Anley, finding the position by the marshes an unfavourable one, decided at length to abandon the waggons and to fall back upon a second rise some 800 yards nearer the column. This retirement was safely carried out—the rear screen being hotly engaged all the while—and in a few moments Colonel Benson himself arrived, bringing with him two weak squadrons¹ of the Scottish Horse (73 in all), under Major F. D. Murray.² It was these men, together with a company of the 3rd Mounted Infantry, a section of the 84th Battery and its escort of some twenty men each of the Scottish Horse and 25th Mounted Infantry³ (60th Rifles), who were destined to be the heroes of Bakenlaagte. The flank and advanced-guards of the column, though engaged throughout the day, were never very seriously pressed; the glorious story therefore of Bakenlaagte is the story of the rearguard.

Many minutes had not passed before Colonel Benson had realised that the second position taken up could not be held, and he accordingly ordered a retirement on to a third rise, about 1500 yards nearer camp, which he believed to be held by some 200 infantry and two guns of the 84th Battery. The artillery and two companies of infantry had, as a matter of fact, been sent back to this rise by Colonel Wools Sampson, who, as soon as the heavy rain came on, knowing the Boers' habits, foresaw that their attack on flanks and front would diminish, and that the danger to the rearguard would be correspondingly increased. Together with the guns and their escort, two companies of infantry were to hold the ridge, while the infantry company which had originally been with the rearguard, and which had not yet reached camp, was expected to cover the retirement of the mounted troops.

Each leaving a covering section, and preceded by "CC" pom-pom, which had done good service all the morning and had now been ordered to gallop straight into camp,⁴ the Scottish Horse and 3rd Mounted Infantry retired simultaneously from their second position, and as they did so, were followed up

¹ *i.e.* Squadrons H and L.—[ED.]

² Captain and brevet-major the Black Watch; commanding 2nd Scottish Horse. He had served for some time on the staff of the Governor of Natal, and in the early days of the war had been signalling officer to Lord Dundonald. Major Murray was twenty-nine years of age, and had joined the Black Watch in 1891.

³ This section of the 25th Mounted Infantry did not form part of the gun-escort at the beginning of the day, but was sent to reinforce it at about 11 A.M.—[ED.]

⁴ "R_s" had jammed about five minutes previously, and had already been sent on to camp. The two pom-poms had fired about 2000 rounds during the day.—[ED.]

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at a gallop by some 1000 Boers about 1200 yards away. The ridge was reached in safety—the retirement being aided by a well-sustained fire from Lieutenant Kelly and the Scottish Horse of the gun-escort, who had been pushed out to the left rear¹ of the hill. The guns with the remainder of the escort were found in position on the hill marked A in sketch; but no companies of infantry were to be seen, and it was discovered afterwards that the men who should have been on the ridge were sheltering from the heavy rain in a dip beyond it, while the other company had by that time reached a hollow in rear of hill A, from which it could give little or no assistance. Also in the hollow, but nearer the ridge, was a smaller body of infantry which had been told off as additional escort to the guns.

Major Murray and Captain Lindsay² dismounted by the guns at the head of the Scottish Horse, commanding and beseeching all who heard them “to stop and hold the ridge or else they’d lose the guns,” in the forlorn hope of checking the Boers until the guns could be taken away by reinforcements. Their appeal was nobly answered by all the mounted troops. The Scottish Horse and Yorkshire Company of the mounted infantry dismounted and formed a straggling line to right and left of the guns—mostly to the right—while the Lancashire Mounted Infantry Company under Major Anley took up a position on a rise some 1500 yards away to the left (see hill marked B in sketch). The Scottish Horse of the gun-escort were called up by Major Murray, and their ammunition being scarce, they were told off as horse-holders. Most of the horses of the regiment were now sent on to camp—about twenty remaining in charge of six men of the escort.³

In the meantime, as the covering troop of Scottish Horse under Lieutenant E. O. Straker abandoned the second position, the leading Boers were only 100 yards in rear of them, and nothing now checked the onslaught of the whole Boer force.⁴

Pouring from around a farm to the south-east at which they had been seen massing, they galloped round to the south-west end of the first rise, surmounted the second, and without a check charged like a regiment of cavalry in open order. Firing from their horses as they came, and, to use the words of a spectator, “yelling like savages,” they galloped straight into the infantry in rear of hill A. The men of the smaller party made a gallant resistance, losing nineteen killed and wounded out of thirty. The others were knocked down and ridden over or were clubbed by the Boer rifles, and the remainder in a few

¹ *i.e.* right front as they faced the enemy.

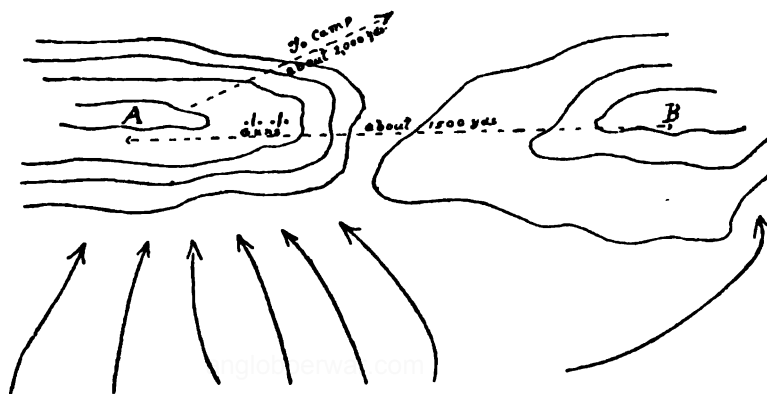
² Captain, Seaforth Highlanders and adjutant, 2nd Scottish Horse; son of Mr. Walter Lindsay (Windsor Herald). Captain Lindsay had been wounded with the Seaforth Highlanders at Magersfontein (where he was noticed for conspicuous gallantry), and again with the 2nd Scottish Horse at Roodekranz on April the 30th, 1901.

³ Of these twenty horses only one could finally be brought into camp, and it was hit in three places.

⁴ The Boers, who, it is believed, were upwards of 2000 strong, were led by Grobelaar of Ermelo, Erasmus of Carolina, and by Britz and Steyn with the Swaziland Police. Louis Botha (who is said to have ridden sixty miles to join Grobelaar) was in chief command.

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moments held up their hands in sign of surrender. Lieutenant Straker, with the Boers "on top of him" (as he describes it), had been forced to gallop as fast as his horses could move to reach Colonel Benson and the rearguard on the third rise, and as he was surmounting the latter, his horse stumbled and fell. He picked himself up shaken and half stunned, and realised that a Boer had shot at him from a few yards off and missed him. The next instant another Boer clubbed his rifle and struck him on the head from behind, and he lost consciousness until some hours afterwards, when he awoke to find himself without coat or boots lying on the ground.¹ The men of his covering party—thirteen in number—were also overtaken before they could reach the rise, and were made prisoners.



Sketch Plan of the Action at Bakenlaagte, 30th October 1901, showing roughly the lie of the ground where Colonel Benson made his last stand.
The arrows denote the direction of the Boer attack.

Dropping a few of their number to disarm the infantry, the Boers galloped on in extended order, and wheeling to their left as they approached, took advantage of some dead ground below the rise marked A to dismount. They then advanced on foot as near as they could to the guns and brought an overwhelm-

¹ As Straker opened his eyes he saw a commandant upbraiding a crowd of Boer laggards and telling them that he would beat them if they didn't return to the fight, "for if only they came now they would capture the guns." The laggards then went forward, and four Boers were left behind to escort the prisoners back to a farm named Kruisemefontein where the laager was. The prisoners numbered about one hundred, and included (besides the fourteen Scottish Horse mentioned in the text), one man of the R.A. and six "M.I." They were all wet and cold, without coats or boots. The main body of Boers arrived in laager about seven o'clock. They were jubilant, and brought in the guns. "O Khakis," they said, "we'll give you lots of whisky to-night. We're going to take your convoy now." But in the morning all they said was that the columns were coming and that they must retire, and at about 8 A.M. Commandant Brets formed up the prisoners and said "It had been a very good fight, and the English had had over 200 casualties, including Major Murray, and the prisoners would be released at three o'clock." At about four o'clock, accordingly, the prisoners were released and walked over to Bakenlaagte camp, five miles off.

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ing rifle fire to bear on this part of the ridge. The attack made on the rise marked B was less fierce, the approach to it being very exposed; the enemy, however, demonstrated in such force from all points that it was impossible for Major Anley to reinforce those on hill A. Hill B was held until dark, when the Lancashire Mounted Infantry fell back on the camp, to assist in its defence.

The doomed guns were in position at about thirty yards interval from one another. The rise on which they stood was a gentle wave of veld—there was no definite summit—and between them and the nearest Boers was a strip of open space about twenty yards broad, dotted with ant-heaps.

The mêlée which followed—in which the casualties now became so terrific—of which the survivors are so few—is not easy to describe.

Major Murray crouched down in the open and under a terrific volume of fire from the Boers began to use his pistol; the men too settled down to their rifles and brought a good fire to bear. Right and left of the guns lay seventy-nine men of the Scottish Horse, and to the left of these the Yorkshire Mounted Infantry Company, but both right and left of guns and escort were completely “in the air,” inasmuch as on the right the higher continuation of the ridge, being unoccupied, was at once seized by the Boers, while to the left of the guns was ground which it had been intended should have been held by the infantry. The latter, however, had surrendered just below it, and the Boers had also possessed themselves of this part of the ridge. Ground therefore both to the immediate left and to the immediate right of the guns was in the enemy’s hands, and an intolerable fire was at once directed upon the gun-escort from right, left, and front, at ranges never greater than 300 yards, for the most part not greater than twenty yards—from three quarters of the compass—by an enemy who outnumbered it by nearly seven to one.¹

The position of the mounted troops and the doomed guns began therefore to be desperate in the extreme, but for some time the Boers did not advance closer. They brought the same fire to bear from the front, but from the flanks their fire intensified. They had quickly seen that they could not at present advance nearer, and had determined to shoot the entire gun-escort from commanding ground to right and left before seizing the guns.

I continue the story in the words of a non-commissioned officer of the Scottish Horse who at this moment was lying beside an ant-heap near the guns. Ten yards to his left Colonel Benson himself lay behind another smaller ant-heap; some five yards from him Major Murray was crouching behind another, and a little to his right lay Captain Lindsay.

“The guns now fired three shots, of which the last two were case and at a range of about fifty yards. They then ceased fire and could never fire again, for all the gunners were killed or wounded in the first three minutes whilst they served the guns.

“There were a great many ant-heaps near the guns, but no shelter what-

¹ This is estimating the number of Boers attacking the ridge at 1500. The British troops, so far as can be ascertained, were about 220 or 230.—[Ed.]

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ever for the gunners. I had been looking for Major Murray, as my place was by him, and he was at once conspicuous to me, for he wore a double felt hat and was half on his knees firing his pistol. The Boers were only about twenty yards off, and looked to me like two rows of infantry in extended order, covering an enveloping front of about 1200 yards. I heard Major Guinness¹ call out to his sergeant-major to fetch up the gun teams which were just behind the ridge. There were no gunners left to handle up the limbers, and sending for the teams of horses when no man dared even show his head above an ant-heap was a most desperate attempt. As soon as the teams came up the Boers concentrated such a fire upon them that I saw all the horses fall in an instant like corn cut with a scythe, and the artillery sergeant-major who was leading the first team was shot through the head and all the drivers wounded or killed."

According to this N.C.O. it was immediately after this that Major Murray and Captain Lindsay were killed—the latter being hit three times. Sergeant Skinner (Scottish Horse), who was lying about six yards to Major Murray's right, relates that Captain Inglis of the regiment was killed a few minutes later, and about the same time Lieutenant Woodman, an Australian officer of the Scottish Horse, was mortally wounded.

"Soon after this," (to quote the same authority,) "I happened to look at Colonel Benson, who was lying behind a very small ant-heap about ten yards from me on my left. He seemed to have been hit in the knee, for it was tied up, and I saw that he had turned round with his back to the Boers and was watching the column which was laagered up on the low ground, some 2000 yards behind us."

Even as Colonel Benson looked, his assistant staff officer, Captain Eyre Lloyd² (Coldstream Guards), appeared and dismounted on the farther edge of the rise, about a hundred yards away, throwing the reins of his horse to a trooper. In almost the same second, as it seemed, man and horse fell dead. Captain Lloyd saw this happen, but he walked on towards Colonel Benson with a characteristic smile, and in a manner which can only be described as leisurely. He was not even carrying a revolver, and his right hand was casually slipped into his breast³ as he sauntered defiantly and quite upright across the open space, shot at by half a thousand rifles at not more than thirty or forty yards' range. All who saw him wondered at his glorious bravado—a precious example to every soldier, and one for which he paid the price—for he was severely wounded while only a few paces from his chief, and never succeeded in reaching him.⁴

¹ 84th Battery R.F.A.

² Captain Lloyd had been sent on by Colonel Benson earlier in the day to lay out the camp, but when he heard of the severe fighting and of the column commander being wounded, he felt his place was by Colonel Benson's side, and he accordingly galloped back to the ridge.—[Ed.]

³ This must have been in order to hide a wound in the right wrist which he had received a few minutes before.—[Ed.]

⁴ Captain Lloyd was mortally wounded a few minutes later, while being attended by Lieutenant J. M. Sloan, R.A.M.C. (attached Scottish Horse), and died next morning.—[Ed.]

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Of Captain Lloyd the above-mentioned N.C.O. said, "He was the bravest young officer I ever saw."

Following up their attack on the ridge, the Boers had opened a heavy fire on the camp and had by now almost surrounded it.¹ The survivors of the gun-escort could therefore look for no help from this quarter,² and the two companies of infantry, after making ineffectual attempts to reach the rise, were about this time withdrawn for the protection of the camp.

But there was no dribbling back of stragglers from the ridge; where the Scottish Horse and Yorkshire Light Infantry had dismounted they had lain down. Murray's voice was now silent for ever, but his appeal was still in their ears, and where they lay they died.

Close behind the rise, upon the side nearer camp and among the led horses, stood two ammunition carts. Squadron-Quartermaster-Sergeant Warnock's³ proper place was in camp with the waggons, but he had seen that his comrades were in a desperate plight and had put himself in charge of these ammunition carts. This man and Trooper A. Cunningham (Scottish Horse) now crawled up to within some twenty yards of the firing line, dragging a box of ammunition. Cunningham was immediately shot dead through the heart. Warnock lay down for a moment, and then undaunted crawled forward again alone, foot by foot, until he came into the firing line. The man nearest to him happened to be Sergeant W. Johnstone (Scottish Horse), who had been severely wounded in three places and was lying disabled. Warnock threw his ammunition right and left to those whom it could reach, and then seizing Johnstone's rifle, knelt and fired again and again right in the open and in full view of the Boers. To the others near by it seemed certain death under the terrific volume of fire from such close quarters, yet for some minutes Warnock bore a charmed life, and went crawling from ant-heap to ant-heap, plying his rifle undismayed, until he emerged right beyond the firing line and was all but in among the Boers, when he was badly wounded in three places. An audacity like this, displayed at such a moment, when three-fourths of the gun-escort had been killed or wounded and resistance was flickering out, will live for ever in the minds of all who saw it.⁴ Close behind Warnock came Corporal J. J. McCarthy⁵ (Scottish Horse), and another man, with a second box of ammunition. They too contrived to crawl into the firing line,

¹ A hill commanding the camp was held from noon onwards by three sections of the 25th Mounted Infantry under Captain F. M. Crum, in face of a heavy and continuous fire which caused many casualties. At dark this party fell back on the camp, and the Boers immediately seized the hill.—[ED.]

² Reinforcements had been sent out earlier from camp, but had been unable to reach the ridge, though Lieutenant G. Dalby and twenty-five men of the 25th Mounted Infantry managed to get within a hundred yards of the guns.—[ED.]

³ A Dumfries-shire man who had been for twenty-one years in the King's Own Scottish Borderers; attached Scottish Horse.

⁴ After the fight the Boers were robbing the dead and wounded, and came to Warnock to take his watch. He said to the first of them, "You don't want to take a poor old soldier's watch, do you?" and they, in admiration of his gallantry and respect for his age, abstained.

⁵ Subsequently promoted lieutenant.—[ED.]

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and Corporal M'Carthy, though three times wounded, threw his ammunition to the men on either side of him.

Meanwhile the Boers were wriggling up closer to the guns, yard by yard. Once they stood up as if to charge, but there still were some five-and-twenty unwounded men upon the ridge; a straggling volley was fired, the Boer line sank to earth again, and for another fifteen minutes they kept up their fire without advancing.

Then a man leading a grey pony with his rifle in his left hand stood up from among them, and some half-dozen others rose with him. They seemed to think the fight was over, and came walking towards the guns as if they could now take possession of them. At this moment there were merely six or seven rifles available in the gun-escort, but these poured what fire they could into the group of Boers. The man with the grey horse span round and fell, and the others behind him sank to the ground.

It was perhaps three or four minutes after this that the whole Boer line four or five deep stood upright as one man. The nearest of them were then about twelve yards from the guns, and they all seemed to be dressed in British soldiers' cloaks. One and all were firing furiously so as to stamp out the last embers of resistance from the survivors of the gun-escort.

They were cheering wildly—not as Northern people cheer, but as Kaffirs scream when exultant. Their scream was caught up all along their line, which now closed up and advanced right into the guns, shooting indiscriminately at everything that moved.

It was about this moment that Colonel Benson called out for a volunteer to go back to camp. Trooper N. H. Grierson¹ of the Scottish Horse shouted from behind his ant-heap that he would go, and a message was given to him to the effect that the ambulances were not to be sent out for the wounded, because, as the ridge was now virtually captured, the Boers would use the ambulance mules to drag the guns away. As Grierson rose and stood in front of Colonel Benson to take the message he was hit in the foot, and the self-same bullet glancing on its way pierced Colonel Benson above the left hip, passing right through his body.

The line of Boers surged slowly up and the guns were now lost.

All the officers and all but seven of the men of the Scottish Horse lay dead or wounded; all four officers of the Yorkshire Light Infantry had been laid low, and seventeen out of twenty Riflemen, while the gun section had lost twenty-nine men out of thirty-two engaged, both its officers being killed.

Lance-Corporal J. Bell² (Scottish Horse) was the only unwounded man by the guns as the Boer line advanced. Three men came up to him and called "hands up." He refused, shot one of them, and was immediately killed by the other two.

As the Boers were stripping the dead and wounded Colonel Benson con-

¹ Now 2nd lieutenant, West India Regiment.—[Ed.]

² Son of Sir James Bell, ex-Lord Provost of Glasgow.—[Ed.]

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trived to send off one of his men into camp with an order to Colonel Wools Sampson to open fire at once on the ridge and clear it, in order to prevent the Boers from taking away the guns. Colonel Benson himself was lying grievously wounded by the guns and could not move, and fire from camp would be more likely to wound him again than to hurt any Boer. This order truly displayed a self-sacrificing devotion.

His messenger arrived in camp about half-an-hour later, in his shirt, without coat or boots, and fire was opened on the ridge.

Just at this moment Corporal J. L. Meates¹ (Scottish Horse) rode up to the rise on which the guns stood, with a message for Colonel Benson. The Boers were now among the guns, firing heavily into the mob of led horses, which stood for a moment below the rise and then with one accord stampeded. All the horse-holders of the Scottish Horse were hit, except Corporal H. Haxton.² Trooper B. Campbell (Scottish Horse) was badly wounded by this fire and fell off his horse close to Meates. The latter dragged him behind an ant-heap and there they lay together.

All the time the long line of Boers surged slowly over the rise step by step, shooting at dead and dying. And—as if this inferno were not enough—the guns and pom-poms now opened fire upon the ridge from camp, and the few unfortunate survivors of the gun-escort found themselves with “death in front and destruction in the rear”—in a tornado of rifle fire from the Boers—in a storm of shrapnel from their own people.

The line of Boers still came over and down the rise. Meates was accosted by a field cornet, who nodded kindly, saying, “Get behind us here,” and the Boer line passed over him and left him alive.

As the shell-fire from camp, however, now intensified, Meates was at a loss where to seek shelter, and was standing up in despair, when a middle-aged Boer touched him on the shoulder, and speaking perfect English said, “Lie down here, my lad, and then you won’t be hit,” and led him to cover behind an ant-heap.

As the shell-fire continued most of the Boers retired, leaving the guns, but many remained, contemptuous of the fire, stripping dead and wounded men and horses. After about half-an-hour most of these too retired, but several still crawled about on their hands and knees—human jackals—rifling dead and dying.

At 5.30 all the Boers had fallen back under the shell-fire, and Meates stood up again and waved his arm to any who might be alive to see him. He was joined by three other men of the Scottish Horse, and these survivors of Bakenlaagte walked into camp, leaving seventy-three dead and wounded of their regiment on the ground.

Soon after this the ambulance waggons started out to bring in the wounded, and fire from camp ceased.

¹ Subsequently promoted lieutenant.—[ED.]

² Afterwards promoted sergeant.—[ED.]

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Under the cover of the ambulances the Boers took the guns away with oxen. The dead were left where they lay.

The night came very dark, but there was no alarm, and as morning dawned men learnt the truth of the Biblical metaphor "as snow on Salmon," for the rise on which the guns had stood was white with the naked bodies of our dead.

At about 6 A.M. on October the 31st Colonel Benson died, after giving directions for the defence of the camp, and was buried at 12.30 P.M.

On the 1st of November a burial party went out to the rise on which the guns had stood. Of all the dead, only Lieutenant Kelly, Scottish Horse, had not been stripped. His coat—riddled by over thirty bullets—was torn to shreds and not worth the taking.

But this paper ends with the close of a fight, which, for the percentage of wounds and death endured by the defenders of the guns, stands unsurpassed in civilised war, and which for the devotion displayed by them should find a perpetual place in the history of British arms.

For the officers and men who suffered at Bakenlaagte unconsciously bequeathed to those who should live after them the priceless legacy of a glorious example.

CASUALTIES OF COLONEL BENSON'S COLUMN AT BAKENLAAGTE

(Compiled from the official returns)

	Officers.	N.C.O.s and Men.	Total.
Killed and died of wounds	15	74	89
Wounded	11	138	149
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	Total, 26	Total, 212	Grand total, 238

(N.B.—These figures include, besides the casualties of the rearguard, those of the whole column on the 30th of October 1901.—Ed.)

CASUALTIES OF THE 2ND SCOTTISH HORSE AT BAKENLAAGTE

	Officers.	N.C.O.s and Men.	Total.
Killed and died of wounds—			
Major F. D. Murray, Commanding.			
Captains M. W. Lindsay (Adjutant)			
and S. W. Inglis.		28	33
Lieutenants J. B. Kelly and			
C. Woodman.			
Wounded—			
Captain C. Murray.			
Lieutenants W. Campbell, T. Firns,		36	40
and A. T. Wardrop.			
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	Total, 9	Total, 64	Grand total, 73

out of 79 officers and men engaged on the ridge by the guns.