



## Zambia - the end of the Great War in Africa



25 November 1918 ~ 25 November 2018



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# The laying down of arms

The following pages contain official communications and diary accounts of those involved in the last days of the war from 11 November when the Armistice was signed through to the Germans leaving East Africa. The nature of the fighting and the terrain, as well as having been cut off from Europe for so long, resulted in varied accounts of the German surrender. Bringing the known accounts together in one place for the first time, 100 years later, allows us to see how this wide-ranging conflict was finally brought to conclusion.

11 November 1918

### Headquarters / GOC

Arrive Dodoma 2.30 a.m., left Dodoma per motor car arrive Iringa 6 p.m., receiving Reuters message armistice is signed, rec telegram from Lady VD.

(*Jump van Deventer diary*)

Telegram GOC Commander-in Chief, East Africa [GOCinC EA] to War Office [WO]

2901 (G548) Armistice signed 5 hours 11 Nov, and hostilities will cease on all fronts at 11 hours 11 Nov according to Reuter's press.

Will you please confirm and inform me if in regard to terms of armistice to be communicated to enemy there (?) are any special instructions?

(*WO 33/953 Secret Telegrams vol 2, series D*)

Telegram Director of Military Intelligence [DMI] to GOCinC, East Africa.

2903 (70593) Your G548. Armistice was concluded as from 11 a.m., 11 Nov with German Higher Command. Clause 17 runs as follows: "Unconditional surrender of all German forces operating in East Africa within one month. Later on complete terms follow." (*WO 33/953*)

### German position

I myself [Lettow-Vorbeck] cycled to Kwaama and met Captain Spangenberg there, and he immediately resumed his march with two companies, southwards, in the direction of the Chambezi ferry.

(*Lettow-Vorbeck, Reminiscences p314*)

Marched on through the bush. We halted however at 11 a.m. The advance guard of Spangenberg's detachment had taken the Kwaama Boma, it had been evacuated before our troops arrived. No further news as to booty, such as telegrams has come in yet. Last night 23 Askaris deserted from the 2 company.

(*Schnee Diary*)

### In the field

At daybreak on the 11th November B Coy moves off with the main body. After three hours march we halt for breakfast. Pushing on we reach the Kalungu River 3 1/2 hours later, where, having covered 21 1/2 miles, we make camp at 2.30 p.m. The heat has been intense and we are all weary. My native ration state is 570. Two days' rations are here distributed. In the evening I attend a 'powwow' at Headquarters.

(*Rhodesiana 1967, vol 17, p46; Russell Diary*)

Kalungu River. 21 miles. Fine and hot. Batta, marched at 5 hours along old road which has improved to cut path taking two abreast. Fairly well watered. Camped on right bank Kalungu, a big river full of crocodiles. Reached camp 14.30 hours. Wireless erected but got no one. Enemy patrol tracks reported one mile N. of us. Local natives of Mahimbe came in and two sent north to scout. Sent wires to Norforce but runner to find DRA at Chambezi telling him our position and intention of attacking enemy at Malima River tomorrow. Sent on one platoon and L Gun under SM Melhuish to sleep at Chiwiri River, 6 miles on and tomorrow to scout the Malima and demonstrate on road while we do turning movements.

(*Hawkins, 1/4 KAR War Diary*)

On the morning of 11 November (Armistice Day) the column was still forty-one miles from the road junction at Malima River where we hoped to cut off at least the German rear-guard. Twenty-one miles were covered on the 11th, and touch with the enemy obtained one mile from the cross roads after marching eighteen miles on the 12th.

The position of the force on this day was a peculiar one. The column, consisting of 750 rifles, was probably considerably inferior to the total number of the enemy should he stand at bay. Further, our column had far outripped all communications, and it was therefore impossible to pursue beyond Kwaama without waiting for food. It was therefore determined to deal as heavy a blow as possible at the enemy before he got out of reach.

There turned out to be six enemy companies on the Malima, who, being attacked unexpectedly in the rear, hastily retired with loss to the north side of the open valley of the Malima, across which a hot fight raged till dark - 9-30 p.m. - when fighting ceased.

(*Hawkins in The Times*)