

4 FIELD REGIMENT IN EAST AFRICA, 1939-1941

“Those were happy care-free, though at times, worrying, days, during which we were ill-equipped — the home front was ill organised — and fortunately had to fight only a half-hearted enemy.”

— Lt Col M. D. Mackenzie

4 Field Regiment, SA Artillery, today based at Potchefstroom, is one of the country's best-known artillery units. It was called into being after the outbreak of the Second World War, and fought in East Africa, North Africa, and Italy. After the war it was re-established and in 1967 became a Permanent Force Citizen Force unit. This is the story of its first campaign.

On 14 October 1939 the following four Active Citizen Force batteries were voluntarily mobilized at Voortrekkerhoogte:

- 1 Field Battery, with four 4.5" howitzers.
(Capt A. A. Visser);
- 2 Field Battery, with four 18-pdr MK IV's.
(2/Lt J. N. Bierman);
- 3 Medium Battery, with four 6" 26 cwt howitzers.
(2/Lt J. S. Storey);
- 1 Light Battery, with four 3.7" howitzers.
(2/Lt L. D. Kay).

They departed for Potchefstroom the same day for full-time service, accompanied by Lt Col M. de Villiers (Officer Commanding camp), Capt C. S. Leisegang (Adjutant), and WO1 B. J. de Wet as RSM. All Permanent Force details of the SA Artillery went with them. The total strength was approximately twenty officers and four hundred other ranks.

During the subsequent ten weeks various batteries from other provinces arrived at Potchefstroom, enabling the formation early in November of No 1 Field Brigade. It comprised 1 and 2 Field Batteries, 1 and 2 Armoured Trains, and 2 Medium Battery. Toward the end of December further division into 1 Field Brigade and 1 Light Brigade occurred. Maj R. H. E. Murray acted as temporary OC of 1 Field Brigade pending the arrival of Maj M. D. Mackenzie on 2 January 1940. Meanwhile

over half the complement of 1-2 OVS Veld-artillerie, undergoing peace training at Potchefstroom, volunteered for full-time service and were absorbed as one complete battery into 1 Field Brigade under Capt J. L. Gordon-Gray.

After a course at the Military College Maj Mackenzie was promoted to Lt Col from 1 Feb 1940. Owing to disagreement about seniorities 1 Field Brigade became 4 Field Brigade, comprising:

- 10 Field Battery, late 1 Field Battery
(Maj A. A. Visser).
- 11 Field Battery, late 2 Field Battery
(Maj R. E. Murray).
- 12 Field Battery, late 1-2 OVSSA (Capt J. L. Gordon Gray).

Nos 1 and 2 Armoured Trains were attached.

Between January and April 1940 the Brigade underwent intensive training with as much equipment and transport as was available. Usually only one officer was available to each battery, the others being away on courses. Small drafts of recruits were posted to the Brigade to complete establishment.

Many personnel were transferred from 4 Field Brigade to the Coast Artillery during April and May, mainly due to unwillingness of 160 other ranks to complete the new attestation from 88B for service in Africa. This impeded training considerably. Lightning changes in equipment also caused difficulties. During May, for instance, 10 Field Battery exchanged its 4.5 Howitzers for 18 pdr Mark II guns belonging to 3 Field Brigade, and 12 Field Battery exchanged its 18 pdrs for 3.7 Howitzers, formerly belonging to 1 Light Brigade. A week later 10 Field Battery regained their 4.5 Howitzers.

Numerous changes in staff led to great difficulty in completing establishment and maintaining continuity. But by the middle of May conditions stabilized, and for the first time the transport establishment was completed. On May 29 orders were received to proceed

for the North. Three trains with guns, vehicles, stores and equipment left Potchefstroom for Durban early the following morning.

En route to East Africa

The advance party, consisting of the Brigade Commander, Lt Col M. D. Mackenzie, the Adjutant, Lt J. S. Storey, the Brigade Orderly Officer, Lt A. H. de Wet and a QM Sergeant, was followed the next day by the Brigade under Maj R. E. Murray. Just prior to departure Maj A. A. Visser handed command of 10 Field Battery over to Capt G. P. Jacobs. Lt J. H. Louw was recalled from a course at the Military College to become Battery Captain of 10 Field Battery and Lt R. Harrison was transferred from 3 Field Brigade to become Battery Captain of 11 Field Battery. The following officers, who passed out from the Cadet course (30 March 1940) and who had been attached to the Brigade, were absorbed:

- 2 Lt N. D. Toner
- " G. J. Wright
- " R. D. Mackenzie
- " J. H. Oosthuysen

The following officers who had been on voluntary full time service from the dates shown brought the strength of officers up to the full 20 combatant officers on establishment:

- 2 Lt E. E. Steyn (15 Jan 1940)
- " L. R. Botha (27 Oct 1939)
- " S. vd V. Snyman (23 Oct 1939)
- " N. T. Coetzee (5 Jan 1940)
- " J. Miskin (4 Nov 1939)
- " J. Pieters (27 Nov 1939)
- " E. van Kerkhof (4 Nov 1939)

Two Medical Officers arrived, Capt J. F. C. du Toit and Lt R. F. Denholm. Lt E. E. Steyn became Survey Officer and Lt N. D. Toner became Signals Officer.

4 Field Brigade, together with 2 and 3 AA Batteries and 10 Field Ambulance, arrived at Durban at 1100 hrs, 3 June 1940. After most difficulties had been overcome by the advance party, working non-stop for 36 hours, embarkation began. As it was not possible to load more than half the transport of the unit the balance was left in a military car park at Durban. When this transport, con-

sisting largely of three-ton vehicles, was eventually transported North, it was collected at Nairobi and placed in a general pool.

The voyage on board HM Troopship No 3 (**Express of Japan**, 38 000 tons) with 42 officers and 684 other ranks was completed in luxury. It lasted five days and disembarkation was completed by 1300 hrs on 8 June 1940.

The ship was met by Lt Col J. J. C. Venter (DAAG), Lt Col Jeffries (1 AA Brigade), Majors Sutcliffe and Pettifer of Movement Control, Capt Russouw and Capt Schulman (Movements Embarkation Staff Officer). Whilst Lt A. H. de Wet was left at Mombasa to attend to the off-loading of transport, stores and equipment, the troops left for Gilgil by train.

The Brigade passed through Nairobi early on 9 June and arrived at Gilgil the same afternoon, pitched tents and settled down in what was subsequently known as Camp A.

On 10 June the trains with the guns, stores, equipment and technical transport arrived and unloaded in record time.

The peaceful weeks before operations commenced

As Italy had declared war on the Allies, slit trenches were dug immediately and instructions requested from HQ. The evening was spent helping the Kenya Police collect random Italians who in most cases were waiting to be fetched, with suitcases already packed. Because this unit was the only combative unit at or near Gilgil until near the end of the following month, it was obliged to supply guards for all railway bridges, the station and Post Office. At night assistance was given to the Kenya Police tracking down Fifth Columnists, signalling from mountain tops. Assistance was also given in the erecting of camps pending the arrival of SA troops late in July.

On 18 June the unit moved to Camp B about half a mile away. In spite of numerous duties to be performed, as much time as possible was devoted to training. During this time the unit was honoured by a visit of the GOC (Major General D. P. Dickinson DSO, OBE, MC) who impressed the fact that the war might last ten years.



Lt Genl D. P. Dickinson

Parties of men were granted leave to NAKURU and apart from strenuous efforts to obtain equipment for the unit, life was rather calm at Camp B at this stage.

Lt A. F. Ayre was attached to the Brigade as Intelligence Officer by East African Forces on 11 July 1940. This was of tremendous value to the Brigade as this officer, having spent over 30 years in Kenya, knew the country like a book.

Acting on orders the unit continued to stand by for fourteen days ready to move at twelve hours' notice. Lt Col Mackenzie was moved to hospital with a bad case of malaria and command passed over to Maj R. E. Murray.

On 26 July 1940 1 SA Infantry Brigade arrived at Gilgil. The GOC ruled that 4 Field Brigade were Divisional Troops, and during their stay at Gilgil would come under orders of the Commander of 1 SA Infantry Brigade. He further ruled that 4 Field Brigade would be available for co-operation in training with Infantry units of 1 SA Infantry.

The guns of all the batteries were calibrated early on the morning of 10 August. Various reconnaissance parties left by road for Wajir to plot routes for the subsequent move.

The order to move to Camp 13 came on 1 September and the next 26 days were used to construct huts with the result that the Brigade spent most of its stay at Camp 13 under canvas. Two major problems were shortage of personnel and lack of adequate water containers.

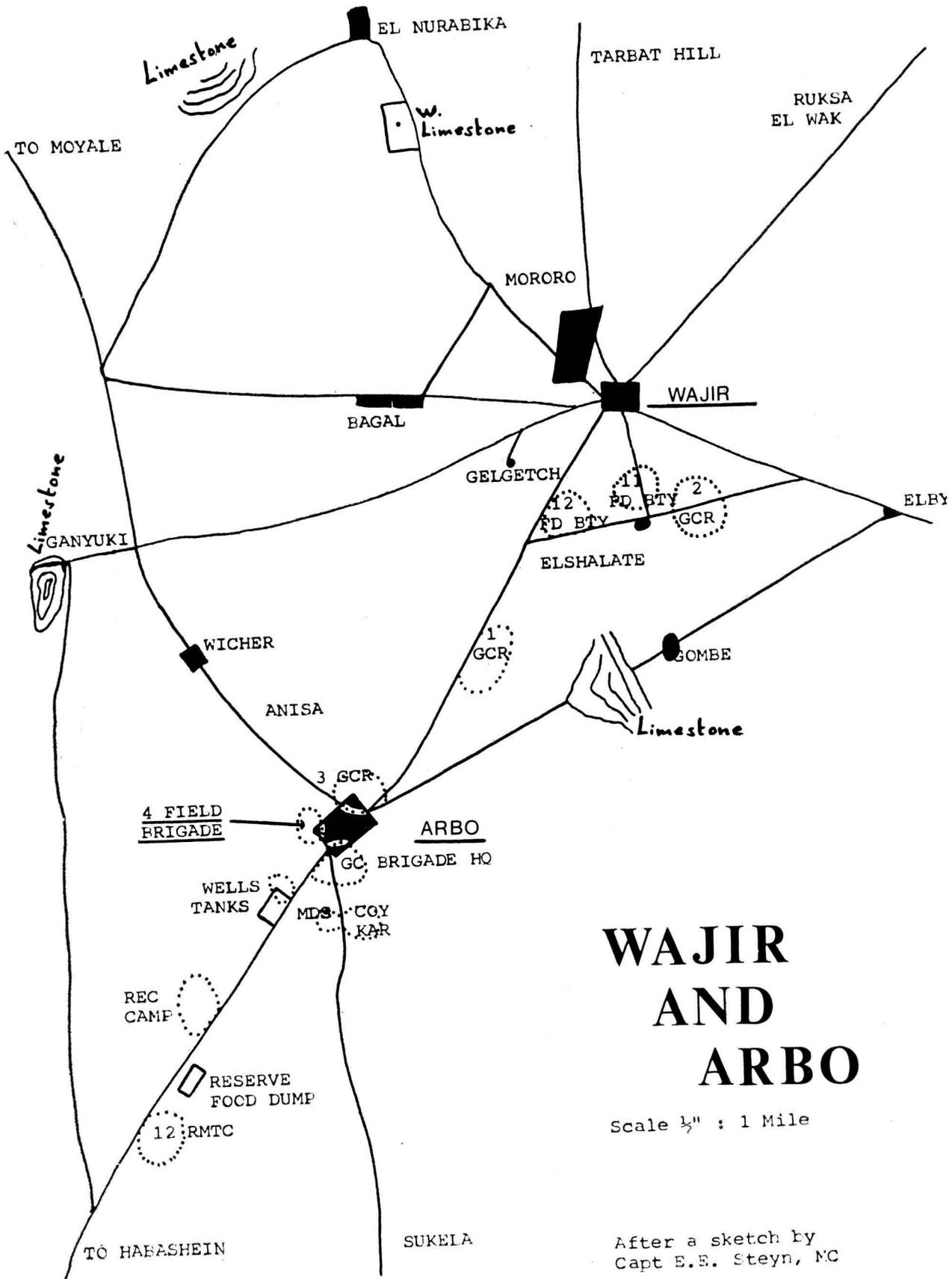
4 Field Brigade now became 2(A) Division Troops which again became 12(A) Division. Capt E. E. Steyn accompanied by his party of surveyors moved to Wajir to survey the area for artillery work and to draw accurate maps. This was followed on 11 September with orders for the Brigade to be prepared to move to Arbo in order to relieve 22 Indian Mountain Battery, Royal Artillery. On 13 September 10 Field Battery left Gilgil for Arbo.

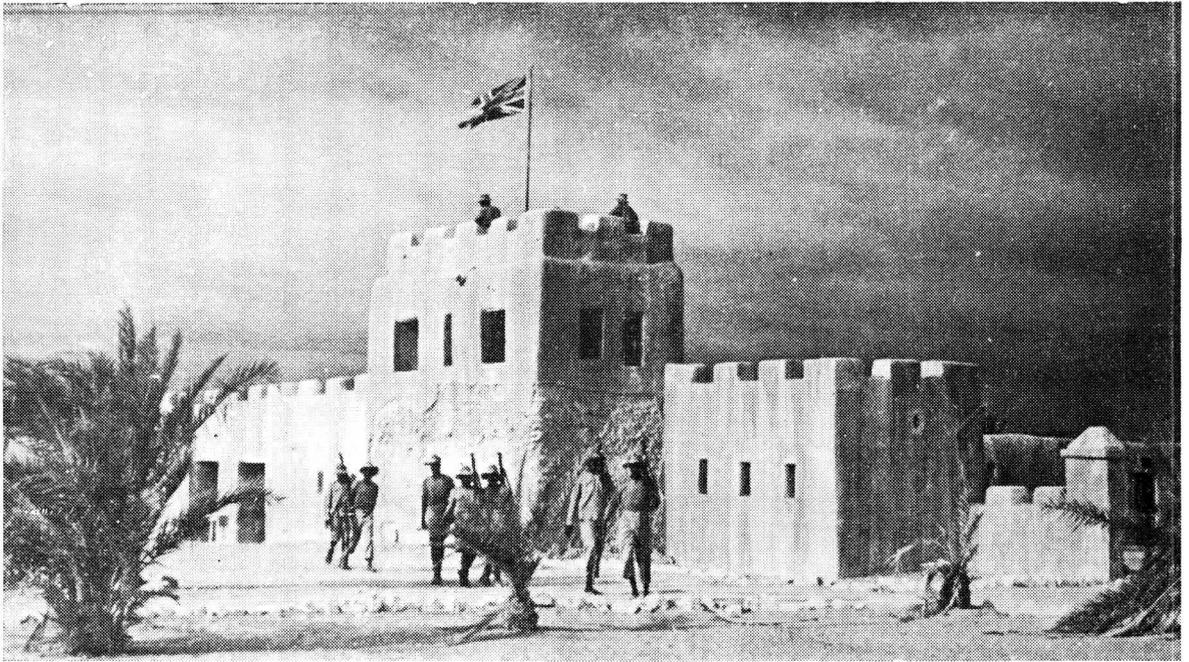
4 Field Brigade moves towards action

After 10 Field Battery moved out, the remainder of the unit was warned to stand by to move at twelve hours' notice. On 25 September the Brigade (less 10 field Battery) was ordered to move to Benane. The following night the Brigade encamped 10 miles beyond Nanyuki and Lt Col Mackenzie, on reporting to 2(A) Divisional HQ, was ordered not to proceed to Benane, but to report to Brig Richards at 24 (GC) Infantry Brigade at Arbo. The unit arrived at Arbo on 28 September.

During this time considerable "banda" groups were prowling around the Northern Frontier Districts and the No Man's Land northwest and north east of Wajir had to be constantly patrolled. Over the next three months Wajir was converted from a small frontier outpost to a strongly prepared though lightly garrisoned fort.

Selection and occupation of battery positions covering all approaches to Wajir proved simple, although suitable observation posts were difficult to find due to the uninterrupted evenness of the ground. Subsequently OP's for each battery were selected and manned in the fort itself. Adequate intercommunication between all batteries and 4 Field Brigade was installed and maintained. Owing to the wanderings of giraffe above-ground telephone wires were not possible and shallow burying had to be resorted to. 4 Field Brigade HQ remained at Arbo about three hundred yards from 24 (GC) Infantry Brigade HQ and over five miles from the battery positions. Great pains were taken with camouflage and removal of trees was avoided in order not to alter the appearance of any bivouac area. Three Capronis raided Wajir Fort at dusk on 10 October. The men were reassured by the number of bombs dropped compared with the small amount of damage done.





Wajir Fort

A signal was received ordering one 4.5 Ho-witzer Battery to Habaswein to come under command of 1 SA Infantry Brigade. 10 Field Battery under command of Maj G. P. Jacobs was ordered to move to Habaswein.

Training was carried out along the Arbo-Habaswein road and useful lessons were learnt. It became apparent that the system of communication should be speeded up. Consequently the unit's signallers trained in conjunction with the signallers of 24 (GC) Infantry Brigade on 26 November.

On 28 November the Brigade HQ moved from Arbo to a new bivouac area near Gombe Wells. Two days later 10 Field Battery left Habaswein and rejoined the rest of the Brigade. On 9 December the whole Brigade participated in a general exercise lasting three days. Immediately afterwards preparations started for the raid on El Wak.

The attack on El Wak

4 Field Brigade's first big offensive started with the move to El Wak. 12 Field Battery moved with PINFORCE whilst the remainder of 4 Field Brigade moved with DICKFORCE. During daylight of 15 December 1940 the units advanced to El Katulo and after dark to Dimo.

They remained at Dimo throughout the next day. After dark the units again advanced to British Landing Ground. No slit trenches were dug to avoid damaging the landing ground. Bullets and small bombs awakened the men at 2200 hrs. The whole landing ground had been surrounded by "banda". More guards were posted, but at 2359 the "banda" again attacked but were soon dispersed by the fire of one LMG. A third attack at 0200 was soon ended by all the guards firing on the attackers. No casualties resulted but a few vehicles were hit.

At 0500 hrs on 16 December 1940 the 1 DEOR, supported by 4 Field Brigade, moved off to British El Wak. Just after the convoy started a Caproni bomber attacked the landing ground and the road. The AA gunners of 4 Field Brigade as well as 6 AA Battery had their first chance of firing at enemy aircraft. Although both units claimed hits, the Caproni got away.

Points "S" and "P" and British El Wak were the object of this column. Point "S" was easily overcome. The attack on point "P" started with an eight gun salvo from 4.5 howitzers by 10 and 11 Field Batteries. 1 DEOR advanced and found that "P" had been hastily evacuated.

The following objective proved just as easy. 2 GC Regiment had been left to garrison Wajir fort area. 3 GC Regiment had preceded all other units, protecting prisoners who were preparing tracks through the thick bush from British LG to British El Wak. One GC Regiment supported by 51 (GC) Light Battery and 1 SA Light Tank Company captured Italian El Wak from the south.

PINCOL (1 SA Infantry Brigade less 1 battalion supported by 12 Field Battery and 3 Armoured Car Company) followed 1 GC Regiment east through the bush after dark as far as the boundary cut. On arrival at the boundary cut PINCOL moved eastwards through heavy bush, deployed and formed up for their attack on Zariba. The idea was for PINCOL to carry out an enveloping movement beyond the boundary cut to enemy positions in rear of Italian El Wak, with the object of surrounding the enemy and securing large numbers of prisoners. In this PINCOL was successful and Zariba was captured. The afternoon was spent by both DICKCOL and PINCOL in consolidating positions gained, searching for prisoners and preparing to demolish everything that could not be taken away in the withdrawal.

Preparations were made on 17 December to withdraw to Wajir. On the afternoon of 19 December all troops engaged in the capture of El Wak were back at the bivouac areas at Wajir. Casualties to 4 Field Brigade were light. The enemy suffered over 100 killed, 20 Europeans (including 4 officers) and 50 natives captured.

For the first time since the unit's arrival in East Africa local leave was granted to 10 per cent of the men.

On 31 December instructions were received to change guns. 11 Field Battery changed, much to their regret, their 4.5 Howitzers for 18-pounders from 9 Field Battery and 12 Field Battery exchanged their 3.7 Howitzers also for 18-pounders from 17 Field Battery.

On 6 January 1941 Brig D. H. Pienaar received the immediate award of the DSO for his handling of PINCOL at El Wak.

4 Field Brigade was now absorbed into the 1 SA Infantry Brigade Group.

The advance to Moyale

11 and 12 Batteries started immediately with gun drill to acquaint themselves with the new 18-pounders.

On 8 January 1941 a stirring message was received from 12 (A) Divisional Commander signed by Major General A. G. Godwin-Austin. He gave the troops a general idea of what lay ahead and urged them to fight to the utmost. The enemy's spirit was declining and the troops must give them no chance of recovering.

On 9 January 10 Field Battery in support of 1 DEOR raided Buna, over a hundred miles away, and found it unoccupied.

Preparations were started for Moyale. On 24 January an advance party consisting of Lt Coetzee and 9 other ranks proceeded through Buna to Dobel. The Brigade followed towards Dobel as support to 1 SA Infantry Brigade on a demonstration towards Moyale with definite instructions not to be deeply committed. With new moon the next day the unit setting out just after nightfall and with orders to the effect of No Lights, difficulties were encountered in moving in the inky darkness. However only one accident occurred and there were no casualties. The Brigade arrived at Dobel on 27 January and spent one day resting. At 0200 hrs on 28 January the unit arrived at the bivouac area about 2 miles from the landing ground at Moyale.

10 Field Battery immediately selected position and brought their 4.5 howitzers into action. At 0540 hrs 11 Field Battery was also brought into action after delay caused by difficulty in finding a suitable position. Reconnaissance parties were sent forward to select new battery positions since ideal targets were out of range.

At 0430 hrs on 29 January the guns were moved into new positions. The guns immediately opened fire but one 4.2" gun of the enemy, out of range, continued to fire freely all around the batteries whilst pack artillery also caused inconvenience. At 1630 hrs orders were issued for withdrawal which started at 1830 hrs for the bivouac area north-west of Bana. On 30th January withdrawal to Wajir was completed.

See the rear fold-out for a map of the operational area.

The advance again started when 10 Field Battery moved to Gurati on 3 February and 4 Field Brigade HQ with 11 Field Battery followed two days later. On that day 10 Field Battery, in support of 1 DEOR, advanced to Winti-Urungu. On 8 February 4 Field Brigade (less 10 Field Battery) advanced to Digh Merer. Eleven moves in all were carried out by night to avoid detection. On the night of 10/11 February 4 Field Brigade again moved to Garsi-Gaba just short of Afmadu.

Afmadu, after heavy shooting, was occupied by FOWCOL on 11 February. 4 Field Brigade moved during the night to Mido area. On 13 February the unit arrived at Eyedera. The importance of a quick crossing of the Juba River and the overrunning of Jumbo was stressed at a conference of the various Commanding Officers.



Maj Genl Dan Pienaar

The attack and capture of Gobwen being the next objective, the unit spent the whole day at Eyedera in preparation for the attack. At dusk the main column left Eyedera and 4 Field Brigade arrived at Satellite landing ground just before midnight. At 0600 hrs

the whole Brigade opened fire. It was calculated that the Brigade fired just under 500 shells. The enemy, having fired an estimated 3 000 shells that day, was quietened but not before they had destroyed the pontoon bridge and the ferry. This necessitated alteration of the plans for the crossing of the Juba. Preparations were immediately started for a crossing 12 miles upstream near lonte.

10 Battery moved to a position nearer Gobwen, but did not again open fire, because the observation aircraft was hit by an enemy bullet, and only just succeeded in gliding to the landing ground.

On 17 February the crossing of the river at lonte was effected, although enemy machine-gun and mortar fire was encountered. Armoured cars were sent to draw the fire. When it was discovered that all the shooting came from a small bush covered area, 18 Field Battery opened fire in such style that the fire immediately ceased, and the enemy suffered about 80 casualties.

10 and 11 Field Batteries advanced on 18 February to give covering fire to the infantry advance from the river to the main road connecting Jumbo and Margerita.

At 1200 hrs on 20 February the units were advised by aircraft that Jumbo had surrendered. At 1500 hrs 1 DEOR, supported by 12 Field Battery, arrived at lonte and crossed the pontoon bridge as rapidly as possible with the object of seizing Torda.

On 21 February both 10 and 11 Field Batteries, in support of 1 DEOR started at 0700 hrs. with a leap-frogging advance. Halfway between Torda and Margerita, as the two companies were just on the point of passing each other, the whole column was attacked from the front and the flanks by pack artillery. The two batteries opened fire in record time. They succeeded in ending the attack from more than two battalions of infantry, equipped with light and heavy machine guns, as well as two batteries of artillery. At 1600 hrs 1 DEOR entered Margerita.

On 22 February, the Royal Natal Carbineers supported by 4 Field Brigade moved towards Gelib, whilst 1 Transvaal Scottish supported by 12 Field Battery cut the Gelib-Brava road. At 0930 hrs both batteries came into action

covering Gelib. Armoured cars soon followed and collected about 500 prisoners from the village and reported that the village was clear. However, steady firing started from near the village, preventing the infantry from entering. Throughout the day resistance continued and at one stage the column was again attacked by pack artillery. In every case formal resistance was soon broken, but scattered groups of Italians and natives roaming in the area made a full-scale mopping-up operation necessary.

Everything was brought into order, an embarrassing number of prisoners being captured. The unit moved to Mabungo. There was an acute shortage of petrol at this stage due to the rapidity of the advance.

A conference of commanders was held that same day. Details of the proposed advance on Bardera were discussed, as well as possible developments in the direction of Lugh Ferrandi and Ischia Bardia. Maps were issued enabling the artillery to work out positions in advance. However aircraft reported that Bardera had surrendered and that white flags were flying from all the buildings. Further reports indicated a similar situation at Lugh Ferrandi and Ischia Bardia.

The capture of Combolcia and Dessie

On 24 February 1941 4 Field Brigade parted company with 1 SA Infantry Brigade, and was attached at Mabungo to 24 Gold Coast Infantry Brigade for the advance on Bardera. This advance proved to be an easy one and 4 Field Brigade was re-attached to 1 SA Infantry Brigade on 10 March.

1 SA Infantry left Brava on 12 March on a forced march of over 800 miles to Gigiga over extremely poor roads. The unit arrived at Gigiga on 22 March in time to view the attack on the Marda Pass. 4 Field Brigade stood by in case 7 Field Brigade needed greater fire power. After the assault 1 SA Infantry Brigade Group moved in close contact with the 23 N. Infantry Brigade rendering assistance where necessary. The Group also participated in the assault on Harar.

After Harar 1 SA Infantry Brigade Group took the lead and made contact with the enemy at the Bubeta Pass, the entry to Dire-daua. 10 and 12 Field Batteries engaged the enemy in the pass. Meanwhile 11 Field Bat-

tery made a deviation via Carsa and Collubi. This battery daily came into action and was largely responsible for the capture of many of prisoners of war. 1 TS meanwhile occupied Dire-daua whilst the remainder of 1 SA Infantry Brigade Group proceeded to Mieso, where the group had to mark time on account of a petrol shortage.

Meanwhile 22 EA Infantry Brigade passed through to Auaso and 4 Field Brigade proceeded forward to support this infantry brigade in crossing the Awaso river.

Addis Ababa was reached on 6 April, 4 Field Brigade having travelled 1 500 miles in 25 days. After only a few hours' rest 10 and 12 Batteries moved off in support of 1 TS to the Omo River in advance on Gimma. The bridge was found destroyed and the enemy kept watch over the wide valley. In spite of the range of 10,000 yds both Batteries came into action. After three days of incessant rain 1 TS and 4 Field Brigade were ordered to return to Addis Ababa.

Heavy rains delayed the advance until 14 April when 1 DEOR with 11 Battery occupied Debra Sina. 11 Field Battery were machine-gunned by three Fiats and bombed by a Savoia but all the bombs fell short. The Group advanced a further 77 miles on 16 April. On the 17th 1 DEOR with 11 Field Battery encountered heavy enemy shell-fire from Gunpit Hill some 8 000 yds ahead in the southern approaches to Combolcia Pass. 11 Field Battery moved forward and opened fire. A calculated 18 guns fired on the Battery which managed, with concentration fire, to silence the enemy. The Battery changed position and the battle opened again. An enemy battery of 6 Naval guns on Gunpit Hill drew 10 Field Battery into the engagement. Both batteries of 4 Field Brigade scored direct hits, silencing the enemy effectively. 10 Battery fired 71 rounds and 11 Battery 70 rounds.

The commanders received the impression that the enemy had withdrawn, but during the night the infantry was shelled with 6-inch guns and 60 pounders. Enemy fire from the flanks became so heavy that the crews of 11 and 12 Field Batteries had to be withdrawn temporarily from their guns. On 19 April the guns were withdrawn to a more concealed position. A quiet morning indicated that the

enemy had withdrawn. Observation aircraft over Combolcia however reported to the contrary. For the rest of the day the enemy continued to shell the battery positions with 105 mm guns, causing considerable damage to communication lines.

The infantry occupied dominating mountain tops with better observation posts for the artillery. The final assault was planned for 21 April. Heavy shelling continued through the morning of the 22nd. At 1430 hrs the enemy gave up and fled. Road blocks hampered the advance of the artillery. Road blocks and land mines restricted the 1 DEOR to a short advance of only 4 miles. At the fourth road block the advance party again encountered enemy artillery fire.

Under cover of darkness 11 Field Battery moved up on 24 April to a new covered position 9.5 km from Combolcia. When, at first light, the enemy opened up on armoured cars at the fourth road block, 11 Field battery was responsible for brilliant shooting. 10 Field Battery also moved up and the two batteries succeeded in silencing the enemy guns. The enemy moved his guns and opened fire in the afternoon, but was again hit hard by the two batteries. On the night of 26 April the two batteries advanced to another main feature on the right flank dominating Combolcia. 1 DEOR seized the high ground with little opposition — 1 TS supported by 12 Field Battery advanced and entered Combolcia at 1100 hrs. Beyond Combolcia, a very steep pass winding up to Dessie was blocked by two formidable demolitions. As soon as 1 TS started clearing the road, enemy artillery from Dessie heights opened up. One section of 12 Field Battery retaliated. Their observers noted masses of enemy infantry on the mountain tops. 10 Field Battery was immediately ordered to take position on a hill top near Combolcia and to engage the enemy on a high mountain to the right of Dessie. It was late in the afternoon when 10 Field Battery started shooting. After 18 rounds orders to cease fire were received. The enemy had surrendered.

The following extract from a report on the actions at Combolcia and Dessie clearly indicates the role of the artillery: **One of the outstanding points of the complete operation was the courage and determination by the**

Artillery. The results achieved would have been quite impossible, had it not been for the manner in which the Artillery personnel continued to man and fire their guns in support of the Infantry and in spite of heavy and accurate enemy fire directed on Battery positions. Added to this determination must be placed the accurate shooting by our Artillery. This accuracy was responsible for the supremacy gained by 11 Field Guns and two medium guns, from hastily selected positions, over a far greater number of guns in positions which had been carefully prepared, concealed and dug in over a long period.

Advance to Gura

As soon as the road damage had been repaired, 1 RNC supported by 10 and 11 Field Batteries proceeded to Amba Alagi on 30 April, 5 Indian Division was expected to engage the enemy at Amba Alagi. The column was held up 75 miles from Ualdia as the tunnel was blown up. 10 Field Battery hastened the departure of the demolition parties with a few well placed rounds. The battery remained in action covering the engineers constructing a new road round the tunnel.

The advance was impeded by road blocks. On 11 May 10 and 12 Field Batteries advanced to within 10 000 yards of Amba Alagi, screened by a high mountain. The 5th Indian Division immediately attacked.

Two large hills had been cleared by patriot forces and 4 Field Brigade was ordered to occupy these.

On 12 May it was only found possible to bring 10 Field Battery into the valley with excellent observation posts on Khaki Ridge. As no suitable 18 pounder positions could be found, 11 and 12 Field Batteries were not brought into action. Towering above all the other mountains was Amba Alagi with Toselli Fort on the right slopes.

To the right of Amba Alagi mountain was a large ridge known as Triangle. The 5th Indian Division had advanced to points 3 000 to 4 000 yds up, but enemy forces were well concealed on the slopes of these mountains. Small calibre artillery opened up spasmodically on the troops but was effectively silenced by 4 Field Brigade.

The infantry were gradually working their way

towards Triangle. During the night of 13 May 10 Field Battery opened up on Triangle and caught the enemy in the open. On 14 May 1 TS boldly advanced on the slopes of Triangle, the enemy subdued by accurate fire from 10 Field Battery. On the morning of the 16th concentrations of enemy mortars and machine gun posts were engaged. At 1300 hrs an armistice was concluded until 0900 hrs the following day. The patriot forces however kept on harassing the enemy in spite of the armistice. Terms of surrender were finally accepted on the evening of 17 May.

On 19 May the whole of 4 Field Brigade assembled in the valley and prepared to move on. On 22 May the Brigade left Amba Alagi and reached Gura the next day. After arrival at Gura there followed a period of rest, interrupted only with lectures by various commanders on experience gained in the previous months' battles.

On 11 June orders were issued that the Brigade should immediately leave for Mas-

saua. On arrival the unit embarked on the **Cap St Jacques** and arrived at Port Taffia on 16 June, again leaving by train for Amriya on the 17th. At 0900 hrs on 19 Jan the whole unit started reorganising into a new Regimental Organisation, being a Regimental Headquarters and two Batteries each comprising two troops of four guns.

After its 'bleeding' in Abyssinia, 4 Field Regiment served in North Africa and Italy. It was present at Bardia (Dec 1941/Jan 1942) and El Alamein (July 1942). 12 Field Battery was lost at Tobruk.

Reorganization for the Italian campaign led to the combination of Nos 4 and 22 Field Regiments into 4/22 Field Regiment, which became part of 6 SA Armoured Division. This Division, as part of 8th Army, played an important part in the defeat of the German forces in Italy.

4 Field Regiment was re-established at Potchefstroom on 10 October 1945.