

TO : Commanding Officer, H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL.  
FROM : Commanding Officer Landing Party, ex MARION ISLAND.  
DATE : 2nd February, 1948.  
SUBJECT : REPORT OF WORK DONE AND CONDITIONS ON MARION ISLAND.

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Attached is a report giving the details of work done in connection with your orders. Although this report is in detail it is felt that this is necessary to give a full appreciation of the whole-hearted support and the long hours worked by the party under my charge. Further it is felt that this record may be of some use to other S.A.N.F. Officers if they should ever be placed in a similar position.

The first attachment is a lengthy report by myself giving as much detail as is deemed necessary. It is suggested that copies of photographs which will come to light now should be attached to help understand this report.

The second attachment is a copy of a day-to-day report made in Journal fashion, first by Sub-Lieut. McMurray and later by Sub-Lieut. Davis. Perhaps this is a more human report than the former. The party were on the Island from the fourth January until the twentieth January, 1948, with the following changes:-

13th January : Captain Anderson, S.A.E.C. and Sub-Lieut. McMurray left the island and embarked in H.M.S.A.S. NATAL.

Sub-Lieut. Davis sent from HMSAS NATAL to the island.

16th January : On instructions from the Commanding Officer, HMSAS NATAL, the following exchanges were made :-

Able Seaman Stander and Ordinary Seaman Erasmus to HMSAS NATAL.

Chief Shipwright W. Hutton, Ordnance Mechanic Coetze and Able Seaman Nimb to the island

It is necessary to submit the following regarding the Officers, i.e. Captain W.D. Anderson, S.A.E.C., Sub-Lieut. A.C. McMurray, S.A.N.F., Lieut. Berelowitz, S.A.M.C. and later, Sub-Lieut. A.S. Davis, S.A.N.F. my appreciation of their unfailing support, the manner in which they carried out their duties, and their example to the ratings.

Ratings : They carried out their duties, sometimes under very adverse conditions, without complaining about long hours. Their morale was of the highest standard.

Special mention must be made of the following :-

P.O. Steward Schott, H.M.A. who carried out his duties as cook from early morning to late at night under very adverse conditions produced hot meals, which were always on time and were praised by everyone. This one factor was responsible for the very high morale standard of the party.

P.O. S.B.A. Sorenson, H.G. Although he is not an executive Petty Officer, he rendered valuable assistance in this connection. He could be left to effectively supervise and join in with all the

/work undertaken by the party. ....

work undertaken by the party. It transpired later that he carried out his duties in spite of pain from his knee, which had to be placed in plaster-of-paris when in HMSAS NATAL.

Leading Seaman Mare, I.J. Who must have spliced more eyes in wire rope than he is likely to for the rest of his career.

Able Seaman Bold, J.G. and Stoker van Niekerk, T.F.- whose cheerful dispositions and disregard of obstacles were an example to the others.

Chief Shipwright W. Hutton. Who did not spare himself in a race against time to erect two huts and who assisted us in the erection of the booms.

Towards the latter end of the time on the island it was found that field mice, which were not noticeable at first, had become a real nuisance. They carried out their depredations in full daylight as well as at night. Due to the cramped living quarters we were unable to deal effectively with them. One has been brought back in spirits for any tests that may be considered necessary.

Empty German rifle cartridge cases were found about two miles from the camp and have been brought back for examination. Samples of rock, stone, earthworm, spider and small beetle are also available for the authorities.

(SGD.) B. GRINDLEY.

LIEUTENANT, S.A.N.F.

4th JANUARY, 1948.

At 0830 Occupation Party for MARION ISLAND left H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL to commence setting up living accomodation, etc. It was appreciated that this could not be accomplished in one day and it was intended, if conditions allowed, to re-embark the party again at night and to finally land them the next day.

The party consisted of :-

Lieutenant B. Grindley, S.A.N.F. in command.  
Captain W.D. Anderson, S.A.E.C. secondin command.  
Sub-Lieutenant A.C. McMurray, S.A.N.F.

P.O. Steward	H.M.A. Schott.
S.B.P.O.	H.G. Sorenson.
Ldg./Sea.	I.J. Maré.
A.B.	E.G. McCann.
A.B.	R.H. Lewis.
A.B.	J.G. Bold.
A.B.(Wireman)	A.F. Rentzke.
A.B.	J.R. Stander.
O/Sea	N.L. Erasmus.
Stoker	T.F. van Niekerk.

Remained on board on instructions from the Commanding Officer, H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL. The ship sailed later for PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND and P.M. The Commanding Officer landed and formally annexed the island in the name of the Union of South Africa. On completion the ship returned to MARION ISLAND. Dense fog prevented the ship coming to an anchorage so she stood out to sea to await clear visibility.

5th JANUARY, 1948.

Visibility still prevented the ship approaching her anchorage. Later the fog changed to drizzle and at about 1700 lifted sufficiently for the ship to close the anchorage. Meantime a signal received from the Union gave instructions that the Doctor, Lieut. M. Berelowitz, S.A.M.C., had to be landed if possible. At about 1930 self and Lieut. Berelowitz disembarked from the ship taking with us the last crayfish dinghy in exchange for the whaler which had been left behind previously, landing operations were completed by approximately 2100 and the whaler and motor boat returned to the ship.

Upon landing it was found that in the two days Captain Anderson with the assistance of Sub-Lieut. McMurray had erected living quarters for the party on the point immediately above the landing cove. Captain Anderson explained that he had chosen the only site which appeared to be the driest although it was very exposed. From a quick inspection it was evident that the party worked exceedingly hard. All materials and stores had had to be handled up the cliff and the first night spent under canvas had been very trying since there had not been sufficient time to secure the tarpaulins. Water, also, was a difficulty. Although a certain amount had been landed from the ship this was used up by the second day and a party had to be organised to fetch water. This had entailed a trek to the waterfall about a mile distant, the way being through several gullies and over bog and marsh. First impressions were that everything was damp and cold.

6th JANUARY, 1948.

Decided that a considerable amount of daylight was being lost by keeping Union of South Africa Standard Time, accordingly advancing the clocks two hours keeping minus four hours on G.M.T. so that daybreak was now at 0430 instead of 0230 and dusk at 2130 instead of 1930. After an

/inspection .....

inspection of the ratings' accommodation decided that their tent would need flooring over to raise them off the damp ground. This was then taken in hand and by P.M. completed and all gear returned. A further amount of necessary stores were also hauled up the cliff. A further shelter for the galley had been considered but no suitable spot could be located. It was decided to use one portion of the ratings' tent as the galley. Although this had its disadvantages there were two advantages which pointed in favour of this decision, viz, a certain amount of heat was imparted to the accommodation and the food could be served before getting cold - this latter being an important consideration. Furthermore, it meant using materials which we might find were urgently needed at a later stage. An order was given that no timber, ropes wire or canvas was to be cut without permission. These latter two precautions were justified at a later date.

After breakfast this morning, Captain Anderson and myself, provided with lunch, set out to reconnoitre the coast to the Eastward of the camp. Each bay and cove was inspected thoroughly and as a West-North-West wind, force five, of the Beaufort scale was blowing (and later becoming stronger) we considered that an inspection under these conditions would help us with our report. None of the possible landings came up to the standard of the landing then in use. Although we did not go right to EAST CAPE, we inspected all the possible landings between it and the camp.

One locality appeared, from landward, to have possibilities if it was contemplated to have a boat harbour made. (See Annexure "A"). The return journey was made inland. It was found that "bog" conditions exist to a least the foot of the mountain ranges in the centre of the island.

Due to violent weather during the later hours all naked and paraffin lights were extinguished to obviate the risk of fire if the tents collapsed.

#### 7th JANUARY, 1948

Attempted to build a wall on the North-West side of the tents so as to obtain some "lee" from the prevailing wind. Made tents secure with further frapping lines, stones and turf.

#### 8th JANUARY, 1948

As Captain Anderson was still laid up with a strained muscle, set out with Sub-Lieut. McMurray and PO Steward Schott to reconnoitre to the North-West in the hope of finding HMS "Challenger's" landing beach. When about two thirds of the way had to abandon the project due to heavy mist. Hands employed cleaning camp, sorting and stowing ammunition.

#### 9th JANUARY, 1948

Setting up wire stays and concreting the base of the Flag Staff. A volcanic grit lying in small quantities between the rocks was used instead of sand for mixing with the cement. It made a fairly decent job when mixed three and one.

#### 10th JANUARY, 1948

The necessity of some method whereby stores and personnel could be disembarked from the boats has been a consideration from the beginning. The method used to land our present stores was too primitive, fraught with the danger of a serious mishap to boats and personnel on the slippery rocks and the possibility

/that a percentage.....

that a percentage of all stores would be lost. A temporary pier or camber made from stones and the material at our disposal was out of the question due to the small labour force available, the fact that anything of this nature would have to be constructed of smaller boulders and consequently could never stand up to the heavy surf that frequently broke on the beach. The only alternative then was to suspend a platform from the top of the cliff. The cliff was surveyed and came up to expectations. All materials available were surveyed and it was found that by making one reasonable platform ten feet by twelve feet and a twentyinch wide gangplank in three lengths that it would be possible to erect means of assisting boats, the bow of the boat being in about three feet of water at low water, which would keep it from striking the rocks at most times. Work commenced, six inch wire nails were the only means at our disposal to secure the timber. Bolts would have been an asset. To ensure that the platform would bear the weight required of it, it was finally slung from a heavy baulk of timber and a pipe running at right angles to the main construction. A set of one and a half inch flexible steel wire doubled was passed round these two supports at each corner, the ends of these wires being secured to rocks well back from the cliff edge. Captain Anderson's advice was sought in this respect. This platform was built on "launching ways" consisting of baulks later to be used to construct the gangplank or "catwalk". Unfortunately, when the launching took place one of these much-needed baulks was unavoidably lost and meant that the last section of gangplank would have to be adapted from the remaining two lengths of pipe. The platform and one section of the catwalk hoisted by dark and the final adjustments were left till daylight.

A lightly made diamond shape was constructed, painted white and secured halfway up the mast. The concreting and embedding of the brass plate and brass cylinder left by HMSAS TRANSVAAL was completed.

#### 11th JANUARY, 1948

The remaining two lengths of catwalk were completed and hoisted. The work slowed up as progress was made. Adjustments were now commenced working from the shoreward end out. Some of the hands had to be taken away to replenish the water supply.

#### 12th JANUARY, 1948

When the first adjustments were made to line up the stage and catwalks it was found that everything would have to be raised between a foot and eighteen inches as the surf was already covering over parts of the staging. This was disheartening in that completion would be delayed by several hours and already all of us have been working against time. There was no alternative but to continue working until dark. When we secured at 2200D all parts had been joined to form a continuous staging, the platform had been flored over, straps seized across the ends of each section of "catwalk" to prevent them from slipping edgewise, nearly all rope guard rails in position and struts seized in position to keep the up and down wires apart.

HMSAS NATAL was sighted A.M. and closed the land but put to sea again after a short interval.

#### 13th JANUARY, 1948

The day broke bitterly cold with frequent sleet squalls. by 1100D conditions brightened considerably and the remainder of the day proved to be the best weather experienced since our arrival in these parts.

/HMSAS NATAL anchored

HMSAS NATAL anchored soon after 0900D and requested Captain Anderson and myself to proceed aboard. The dinghy was launched forthwith and hauled through the kelp by the rope attached to our buoy. There we were met by NATAL's motor-boat and taken to the ship. After consultation with Lieut-Comdr. Dymond, it was decided to return ashore so that he could get first-hand information about conditions. The motor-boat was now taken through the kelp where it showed a few clear lanes. No mishaps occurred. After spending well over an hour ashore, the party returned to HMSAS NATAL. Lieut-Comdr. Dymond then decided that as the weather was favourable he wished to reconnoitre the island close inshore from the motor-boat. Accordingly after lunch Lieut-Comdr. Dymond, Captain Anderson, Mr. Burnett and myself proceeded towards EAST CAPE in the motor boat. The motor boat was early tested in kelp of varying density and found to react very favourable so that wherever it was impossible to see a clear lane through the kelp there was no hesitation about taking the boat through it.

All landing beaches between the ship and EAST CAPE were inspected and the boat taken a short distance round the East side of the Cape but the sea and swell running at this time prevented the boat from going very far and she returned to the comparative shelter on the West side of the Cape. The boat now returned and continued Westward beyond the ship as far as HMS "Challenger's" landing place. Soundings were taken and noted by Lieut-Comdr. Dymond and all indicated deep water close inshore. The boat then returned to the ship.

After a short consultation with Lieut-Comdr Dymond it was decided to leave HMSAS TRANSVAAL's Landing Party ashore but that Sut-Lieut McMURRAY would be relieved by Sub-Lieut Davis and Captain Anderson at his own request would stay on board HMSAS NATAL. These continued to be landed at short intervals until very late. It was still later that the landing party secured because latterly stores were being landed faster than they could be cleared from the landing stage. It was after 2200 when the party secured.

#### 14th JANUARY, 1948

Weather deteriorated during the early hours and shortly after 0630D it was found that HMSAS NATAL, at anchor over night, was in difficulties with both anchors down. She appeared to be getting under weigh. As soon as the port anchor was weighed she appeared to drag very fast towards the shore and it appeared her only hope was to slip the anchor and to steam out to deeper water. It was not very long before this was done.

The swell was driving straight into the beach and the surf was the most dangerous yet seen. Some fears were felt for the landing stage and catwalk as the crest of each was catching underneath and lifting the corners unevenly. Some seas bigger than others would surge over before the staging became buoyant. Decided to leave well alone, hope for the best and meantime look the other way. Hauled dinghies higher up.

Rigged extra tarpauline supplied by HMSAS NATAL to catch rain water.

P.M., reconnoitred inland with Sub-Lieut Davis following the course of stream feeding Rayner Falls. Going heavy, as elsewhere. Struck by different formation of stone on ridge in this vicinity so decided to investigate. Arriving at the top found three large vleis. Any attempt to advance hampered by hawk gulls which were very numerous in this vicinity so decided to return. Brought samples of stone and discovered four old German

/cartridge cases.....

cartridge cases size larger than our .303. After return decided that small stream near camp had water suitable for domestic use. Consider it would save considerable labour and time and that if no ill affects after first day, would continue to use same. Also investigated queer underground noises caused by some animal. After following underground burrows with spade took some time to locate small white sea bird's nest.

#### 15th JANUARY, 1948

Aired bedding and general clean up of camp. Observed heavy breakers over obstruction. Took corrected bearing of same from flag staff. Bearing 012 to 014 degrees, distant  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles error on compass 32 degrees West, which was clear of any magnetic influence. Indicates variation might be more than 30 degrees West.

P.M. Completed guard ropes and lashings on stagings. Concerned about S.S. GAMTOOS landing heavy and bulky stores.

#### 16th JANUARY, 1948

Hands returning tools and materials lying around. Removing wire lashings from floater nets.

P.M. HMSAS NATAL sent in motor-boat with anchors, buoy and grass line. Morred buoy in same position as HMSAS TRANSVAAL's. Used our hauling-in line to get his grass line ashore. Secured the latter. Whaler then proceeded with sickles to cut a line in kelp and motor-boat landed further stores.

Chief Shipwright Hutton and his two hands landed from HMSAS NATAL. Erasmus and Stender sent to NATAL. Shipwright commenced erection of two framework huts under shelter of cliff. Trying to evolve ways and means for GAMTOOS discharging.

#### 17th JANUARY, 1948

NATAL in early and landing stores all forenoon. Weather deteriorating at midday and she put out to sea.

With materials available had decided to rig two booms on cliff face to work Cape fashion as a means of assisting GAMTOOS to discharge. Surveyed for suitable spots and commenced excavating for solid rock for first boom to rest on.

Shipwright Hutton's party finished first hut.

#### 18th JANUARY, 1948

Rain made work out of the question particularly near the cliff edge. Work on huts which are partially sheltered and to be abandoned after a start had been made.

P.M. Weather cleared so continued with booms. Baulks of timber landed from NATAL, and meant for huts, were hauled up the cliff. From these two sets of three were selected and each set nailed with two on edge and one flat. Chocks were nailed to the outboard ends to prevent topping lifts or guys slipping. The first of these booms was in position with rigging complete before securing at 2200. HMSAS NATAL came inshore P.M. and was requested to supply two and a half inch wire and three-inch rope with the necessary blocks. As the weather was deteriorating it was decided to go ahead with what rope and wire then at our disposal.

/19th January, 1948.....

19th JANUARY, 1948

When it came to bedding down the inshore boom it was found, from excavating, that the rock in the vicinity of the only possible site for it, crumbled very badly. There was no other alternative except to erect a sampson post to take the weight from the boom and to brace the boom from some firm rock close by so that little pressure came on the heel. Consequently there was further delay whilst a railway sleeper was firmly bedded and cemented in. Although this boom was to be placed in a less accessible position than the other, by taking precautions it lowered into position very nicely. By the time this had been braced and the guys placed in position it was fairly late so the hands secured.

20th JANUARY, 1948

Divided two handy billies in turn using the single blocks as the purchase blocks and the double blocks as lead blocks only. Used the last of the one and a half inch rope left to make falls, this rope had already been in use.

Fitted wooden pieces with holes bored in them to act as guides for the lower blocks to prevent them falling over. Bedded two wattle poles to act as turning up posts. At this stage all cordage and wire landed by HMSAS TRANSVAAL had been used up with the minimum of wastage.

At about 1100 HMSAS NATAL came to anchor in company with SS GAMTOOS and party with Lieut-Comdr Dymond landed. After a quick survey, party returned. SS GAMTOOS commenced turning out her boats and loading them up. At 1415D the first boat load was alongside with Army personnel and equipment. Supervised their disembarkation and landing of stores.

Rest of afternoon was spent supervising and getting the Army personnel used to working under the arrangements made. Later received instructions from Lieut-Comdr. Dymond to repair aboard with my party only taking personal gear and rifles with us as Army personnel would need all available accommodation and our stores until such time as their own was landed. Sub-Lieut Davis was to remain as Liaison Officer.

At 1800C the last of the party left the Island.

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ANNEXURE "A"

POSSIBLE SITE FOR CONSTRUCTING AN  
ALL-WEATHER BOAT HARBOUR.

(See 6th January, 1948, third para.)

This was at the base of a headland of loose earth and stones. Here three detached pieces of land (islets) stood out to seaward of the beach below. Each had a clear channel between through which the surf was surging. In spite of this the water between them and the land, about fifty to eighty feet in width, appeared to be quiet. This stretch of water appeared to be at least of an average depth of ten feet except the entrance between the western-most "islet" and the land which was covered with dense seaweed. Captain Anderson stated that it was a comparatively simple matter to close the gap between the land and any one "islet" by blasting from the headland, which in parts leaned to seaward of the perpendicular. Having closed one gap he stated it would be a simple matter to level the top of the first "islet" and continue running material from the headland to close the remaining gaps.

It was impossible to tell from the headland what the entrance to the Eastward was like (i.e. from the lee side) as the ground underfoot was too loose and dangerous to negotiate. Assuming that this entrance was impossible the entrance looking to the West-North-West (approximately) received a very reasonable lee under the conditions then prevailing. Total dimensions approximately 200 to 250 feet in length and 50 to 80 feet in width. If care was taken in filling in the gaps extra water area might be gained. As no measurements could be taken at the time those quoted have been given, if anything, on the small side.

The ground immediately behind the headland is a gentle even slope inland with a fair amount of rocky outcrop. There are several vleis in this vicinity and a small stream which might need purification for domestic use. The ground from here to EAST CAPE (one mile approximately) was reasonably even with no bad gullies to be bridged.

The headland is situated at the Eastern end of a wide shallow with the W.N.W. wind blowing nearly parallel with the bight of the bay. At right angles to the wind direction were lines of dense kelp extending about three quarters of a mile to windward and a quarter to half a mile to seaward with a clear lane about fifty yards wide coming from seaward to the headland. Although the wind was at least a force six the kelp was very effective in killing the sea and only a slight sea was running in this vicinity of the headland.

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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS : H.M.S.A.S. PIKKEWYN

Sunday 4th January, 1948.

Occupation Party for MARION ISLAND, consisting of Captain Anderson, S.A.E.C., Sub.-Lieut. Mc Murray S.A.N.F. and ten ratings from H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL embarked in the motor launch at approximately 0830 and ferried to the whaler anchored in the kelp off the landing beach. Two trips in the motor launch were required to ferry the complete party to the whaler. Four trips were required to ferry from the whaler to the beach, in the small crayfish dinghy left with the party. All supplementary stores and the landing party were on the beach by 1100.

By this time a camping site had been selected by Captain Anderson and the portable radio had been set up on Gunner's Point. The first signal made from PIKKEWYN was timed 04 1105, the text being "Last boat has just landed. Intend closing down R/T watch. Will keep V/S watch." HMSAS TRANSVAAL sailed from Transvaal Cove at approximately 1130.

The landing party by this time were occupied in bringing stores from the beach to the top of Gunner's Point. This necessitated hauling up a sheer cliff some sixty feet in height. Petty Officer Schott who has been detailed as Cook-cum-Steward to the party, was able to produce a picnic lunch by 1300.

Work proceeded during the afternoon and evening until 2100 by which time, two tents made of tarpaulins had been erected and sufficient stores for party eight hours were in the camping site.

We spent an uncomfortable night due to a force five wind, and drizzle during the early morning.

Monday, 5th January, 1948.

"Charlie" was sounded at 0900 this morning owing to the late hour at which the hands secured last night. The remainder of the day was spent in making the camp a little more habitable and secure from the prevailing weather conditions. Stores were also hauled from the beach and stowed at the camp.

Our biggest difficulty up to the present has been to procure a large enough water supply. The nearest water is about a mile distant, and to reach the stream necessitates traversing three or four gullies and crossing boggy marshland all the way.

At 1830 HMSAS TRANSVAAL entered the cove and preparations were made to put lieutenant Grindley, S.A.N.F. and Lieutenant Berelowitz, S.A.M.C. ashore. By 2000 these two officers were on the beach and HMSAS TRANSVAAL prepared to sail.

The night passed quietly but it was extremely cold. Lieuts. Grindley and Berelowitz found conditions a little hard whereas Captain Anderson and Sub-Lieut. Mc Murray with one night's experience behind them, enjoyed a good night's rest.

✓Tuesday, 6th January, 1948 .....

Tuesday, 6th January, 1948.

Hands were called at 0700, and once breakfast and the morning clean up were over, they were employed on hauling stores and equipment from the beach. A wood deck was laid in the ratings' tent and the galley, consisting of six primus stoves was installed in one corner, this being the most sheltered and suitable place.

Lieut. Grindley and Captain Anderson left camp at 1030 to do a survey of the coast from GUNNER'S POINT to EAST CAPE. It would appear from reports received when they returned to camp at 1730, that the entire coastal belt is wet and soggy. There is a suitable cove, about two and a half miles South of Transvaal Cove, to build a small harbour but Captain Anderson estimates that this would take nine months to do with the thirty three Sappers who are expected to arrive in HMSAS NATAL. All the water on the South-East side would need to be filtered before it could be used for drinking purposes. It is also reported by these two Officers that while walking into the wind on their return to camp they were attacked by black hawk-like gulls. They shot three and were obliged to keep a sharp watch to ward off subsequent attacks.

The cloks have been put forward two hours on South African time in order to bring our comings and goings more in line with the rising and setting of the sun.

Towards sunset the wind shifted to the West and freshened. During the night a fresh gale reaching force nine during squalls, threatened to blow the camp away. Paraffin stoves were put out in order to obviate the risk of fire should the canvas be blown adrift.

Wednesday, 7th January, 1948.

The wind was still blowing a good force six this morning when the hands were called, and there was an almost continuous fall of soaking rain. The object of the day's work to-day, has been to fully secure the tents against any further strong winds. All frapping lines have been doubled up and extra lines have been rigged. The outside of the tents now look like spiders webs with all the ropes across them. We have also built up a stone-and-turf sod wall about one foot above the lower edge of the canvas with the object of preventing the wind from getting under the canvas. The stones to build this wall have been quite a problem, as they seem to be conspicuous by their absence, and every man in the camp has been busy with stone breaking on the rock outcrops. We are convinced now that if we are blown away we will take Gunner's Point with us. Copyright by Captain Anderson.

The sea hawks appear to have gained courage and are proving to be quite a menace. Instructions have been issued that all men leaving the camp are to be armed with either a rifle or pistol.

Although the weather has been unkind all day we have managed to secure ourselves and at the same time keep reasonably dry. Have managed to supplement the water supply with four buckets baled from a bulge in the canvas.

The night passed quietly and we had no trouble with flapping canvas.

/Thursday, 8th January, 1948 .....

Thursday, 8th January, 1948.

We are more settled in now and apart from the necessary duties to keep the camp clean and in running order there is no heavy work to be done. The hands were employed during the forenoon fetching water from the stream and during the afternoon assisting Captain Anderson sorting the explosive stores.

The weather has been uncertain during the day, the wind blowing from the North-West a steady force three, and a heavy mist covering the Island. Lieut. Grindley and Sub.-Lieut. Mc Murray accompanied by Petty Officer Schott left camp at 1330 to make an inspection of the beaches to the North-West of Gunner's Point. They hiked some three or four miles along the coast but were unsuccessful in finding a more satisfactory landing beach. P.O. Schott was able to get some good close up photographs of penguins. On the return journey all three men took the opportunity of bathing, shaving, etc., in the stream, returning to camp at 1700. Unfortunately owing to heavy mist the party did not manage to reach the cover marked landing on the chart and a second inspection will have to be made in that direction.

It is considered that a strong high-powered launch is essential to carry out the necessary inspection and survey of the coast. It will be seen from previous day's records that it takes twice the normal time to walk a given distance. The nature of the ground makes heavy going with frequent detours to avoid bad swamp patches.

The wind appears to be freshening this evening and it looks as though we are in for a second gale.

Friday, 9th January, 1948.

We were lucky during the evening as the expected gale did not materialise. It did rain rather heavily though, but the two tents stood up to it well and once again we are able to collect rain water from the bulges in the canvas.

Hands were called as usual at 0700 and were employed during the day in setting up permanent wire stays on the flag mast, concreting the vase to the mast and carrying water from the stream. We are also making improvements to the tents and equipment as we go along. In the Officer's tent we now have a table and bench and are able to sit down to our meals. The ratings are making themselves equally as comfortable, that is, of course, as far as circumstances and material will permit.

The weather has been fine and sunny with the temperature reaching 60 degs. F. and we have been able to discard heavy clothing for the first time. The Doctor and Captain Anderson are both quite sunburnt in fact.

The general health of the party has so far been good. Apart from an occasional sweat rash and cut fingers we have had only two men, Captain Anderson and P.O. Sorenson, laid up with strained knees. It would appear that the heavy going in the swampy ground is the cause of these strains.

Heavy seas and swells have been pounding on to the beach for the last two or three days and the temporary landing jetty of floater nets has been pushed sideways and back, and is now quite useless. It is intended that we will build a large heavy stage and sling, this from the top of the cliff of Gunner's Point to facilitate the landing of personnel and stores from HMSAS NATAL. This should be completed by Sunday when we expect NATAL.

/Saturday, 10th January, 1948.....

Saturday, 10th January, 1948.

We had heavy rain during the night and the ground is more soggy than ever. The tents have stood up to the weather well so far and I think will do so now until the materials start to rot.

Work commenced to-day on the main stage for the landing. This consists of four baulks twelve feet by twelve inches by six inches strapped together with twelve inch by two inch planks. The overall size of the stage is twelve feet by five feet and its weight in the region of five hundred pounds. We have also constructed the first portion of a catwalk which will be fifty feet long. The first section is made of two baulks fifteen feet by eight inches by four inches strapped with twelve inch by two inch planking every four feet. This work was done by Sub Lieut. Mc Murray with three ratings to assist.

Lieut. Grindley with Leading Seaman Maré made the necessary wires to suspend the stage, and by 1800 when the hands secured the main staging, was in position about six feet clear of the water.

Very heavy seas and swells have been running into the cove to-day and we have placed the stage in such a position as to be sheltered from practically all the heavy weather likely to be encountered.

Captain Anderson has now completed the heavy concrete base to the flag staff and as soon as this is set and dried the complete base and plinth will be plastered. We have also made a diamond-shaped beacon which will be hoisted half way up the mast. It is intended to name this beacon "Occupation Beacon".

The weather has been fine and sunny all day, but this evening a light rain is falling and it appears to have set in for the night.

Sunday, 11th January, 1948.

Rain was falling this morning at 0800 when the hands were called and the prospects of a day's work were not good. It cleared, however, at about 0930 and we forged ahead with our landing stage.

Two more sections of catwalk have been constructed, the first similar to that made yesterday and the second with two twenty feet lengths of steel piping as a base with an eighteen inch width floor boarding as the walk.

All three sections of the catwalk have been slung from the cliff top and all that remains to be done now is to join all three up and connect with the main stage. This, together with making adjustments to height and seizing lower ends of the wires should be completed tomorrow forenoon.

HMSAS NATAL has not shown up to-day as expected and this is just as well, perhaps, as the landing stage is not quite completed. However, we are optimistic enough to hope that the weather will hold for another forty-eight hours by which time we hope NATAL will be in the anchorage, and also have a suitable landing stage.

/To-day is our third Sunday .....

To-day is our third Sunday of work and "Make and Mends" are few and far between but if it is going to keep us nearer to a hot bath, fresh vegetables and a little dryness then all is well. The ground under our tent has been covered for exactly one week now, and if anything, is even more wet than when it was uncovered.

Monday, 12th January, 1948.

We seem to be having a run of fair weather at the moment, that is fair for this part of the world. Once again we have had a peaceful night and the camp is still standing as erected.

HMSAS NATAL was sighted this morning at 0900 and after exchanging signals stood off to sea owing to the impossibility of anchoring and landing.

The landing stage has progressed favourably and is now ready for use. Heavy rain during the afternoon prevented any work after dinner, but at 1900 the weather had cleared and worked the hands until 2200. We are now ready for NATAL's landing party tomorrow, if the weather is favourable.

The occupation party are in high spirits this evening due to the arrival of HMSAS NATAL. This will be our opportunity to have a hot bath and a meal that does not come out of a tin. We are also eager to hear the news and to know what has been going on during our absence. There might even be some mail.

As usual the weather seems to be building up and it appears that we will have a heavy fall of rain again during the night.

Tuesday, 13th January, 1948.

It did rain last night and the temperature has dropped to 36 degs. F. Heavy sleet squalls passed over during the forenoon and it was bitterly cold. The rain, however, has flattened the sea and swell and it is ideal for landing.

HMSAS NATAL steamed into Transvaal Cove and anchored at approximately 1000. The motor boat came in as far as the kelp and took Lieut. Grindley and Captain Anderson off to the ship at 1100. By 1130 the motor boat was inshore again and came alongside the jetty, Lieut. Grindley having shown the way through the kelp. Lieut.-Comdr. Dymond, Lieut. McWade, S.A. O.S., Lieut. Grindley, Chief Shipwright W. Hutton made a quick survey of the coastal area between Gunner's Point and Rayner Falls.

During the afternoon these Officers went away in the motor boat to survey the coast between Gunner's Point and East Cape and to view the possibilities of a harbour in the cove two and a half miles South-East of Gunner's Point. The motor boat then proceeded to the landing point used by HMS "Challenger" and then returned to HMSAS NATAL. In the meantime, the landing party are waiting on the beach for stores to come ashore. At approximately 1100 fresh victuals were landed and met with great joy. During the afternoon coal and wood and various other items were landed including Sub.-Lieut Davis who relieved Sub.-Lieut. McMurray. The hands ~~are~~ worked well and the last boat

/left at 2030 .....

left at 2030. The coal and wood had then to be put in a place of safety and proceeded to haul them up to the beach. This went on until 2230. In the meantime a walk was laid across the boulders on the beach to make the carrying of stores easier. The weather stayed bright and warm (45°F) and with a good day's work behind us we piped down at 2315. Three days' fresh provisions for fourteen men were landed in the morning.

Movements:

Captain Anderson, S.A.E.G. and Sub-Lieut. McMurray, S.A.N.F. from PIKKEWYN to HMSAS NATAL.

Sub.-Lieut. DAVIS from HMSAS NATAL to PIKKEWYN.

Lieut. BERELOWITZ, S.A.M.C. to HMSAS NATAL.

Wednesday, 14th January, 1948.

The first thing we knew this gloomy morning was that HMSAS NATAL was heaving her anchor and getting out of it. It appears that during the night strong wind (N.N.W.) had come up and there was quite a swell running into Transvaal Cove and HMSAS NATAL thought better of it and so left us. During the morning we got our two boats further up the beach due to the heavy seas and swell running. We learned later that HMSAS NATAL had slipped her cable when leaving this morning.

We have rigged a tarpaulin on the North-westerly side of the camp so as to get water easily. The crew then proceeded to "make and mend" and Lieut. Grindley and Sub.-Lieut. Davis proceeded in a westerly direction towards a ridge approx. two miles from the camp. As we got up to the top of the ridge hawks were definitely hostile and we killed a fair number. The stone formation on this ridge is different from the rough volcanic stone found around the camp and was of grey slate formed loosely on the ground. A sample of this stone or slate was brought back. On returning to camp on the same ridge, we found weather-worn ammunition of German make, four cartridge cases in one spot. These were also brought back to camp. On our return we found a new small stream of clear water and P.O. Schott and P.O. Sorenson were sent to investigate the possibilities of using this water for domestic purposes. It proved to be good and a party of ratings were sent to "fill up", as our water supplies were running low. Before supper the hands cleared around the camp so as to get the gear handy for the further disembarkation of stores. HMSAS NATAL came within two miles of the camp and we tested R/T and passed information re landing to-morrow not so good.

And so we passed a quiet day but the wind is still blowing North-West, force seven, temperature 41 degs. F.

Thursday, 15th January, 1948.

The day opened fine and warm but windy with HMSAS NATAL out of sight. After breakfast the men aired bedding and had a "spring cleaning" of their quarters.

Later on the detonators and primers which were in the Officers' tent were put outside, at a distance from the camp, just in case. We later proceeded to the stores encampment on the beach and collected various items required for our use. At this point I must confess, that so far our Cook, Petty Officer Sorenson, is making a one hundred per cent effort and job and whether it is because we are all very hungry or what, but it is very good and appetising.

/This morning .....

This morning Lieut. Grindley observed a shoal where waves and swell were breaking very heavily. The shoal is in position approximately 1.25 miles from Flag Staff and  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles to seaward of the next point from the Flag Staff, bearing 012 to 014 degrees. The wind was N.W.W. force seven, the distance may be from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles.

During the afternoon further work was put in on completing the gangway from the catwalk to the stores pile across the boulders. In the late afternoon all hands proceeded to the new stream for washing water and to fill our boiler.

There was very little else done during the day, the weather being against us.

#### Friday, 16th January, 1948.

The wind has veered to the South-west and there is a possibility of a fine afternoon. HMSAS NATAL came in at 1100 to drag for her starboard anchor but did not recover it. At 1600 NATAL's motor boat came in to our bouy on the seaward edge of the kelp and dropped a forty-four gallon drum and anchor. From there she sent a grass line ashore and we made it fast on the beach. The whaler then came up to the bouy and ran along the grass line to cut a clearing through the kelp. The motor boat then came in with coal and stores we had asked for from her for personal use, such as overalls, jerseys and three days' fresh victuals. The last boat was at 1845 and the hands then proceeded to supper.

HMSAS NATAL then carried on dragging for her anchor but after a while proceeded to sea for the night.

During the afternoon a few changes in the crew were made. Able-Seamen Stander and Erasmus were sent to HMSAS NATAL while Shipwright II W. Hutton, A.B. Nimb and O.M. Coetze came ashore. As soon as "Chippie" had put his gear down, he and his crew commenced erecting the two huts on the beach. They worked through until 2100 by which time they had laid both foundations.

#### Saturday, 17th January, 1948.

The day opened fine and with a good chance of HMSAS NATAL coming in to destore. This she did and came in at approximately 0900 and started to unload coal and timber. The weather was fairly good at first but then it began to blow. Lieut. Grindley proceeded aboard HMSAS NATAL and returned about ten minutes after he had left us. At 1230 all stores were landed with the exception of twelve half bags of coal.

In the afternoon, the Shipwright finished his first hut and moved himself and his crew into the hut as conditions were a bit crowded up top. In the meantime, Lieut. Grindley, Sub-Lieut. Davis and P.O. Sorenson commenced work on the derrick foundations. These are to work cape fashion, the booms being fifty-four feet apart and plumb hung about four feet above the cliff edge. The necessary excavations were made to receive the booms.

During the night the Brazier was lit consequently making heavy smoke in the tent. According to our S.B.P.O. the smoke would "smoke" the mice out, but his theory was wrong as the mice were making their presence felt more than ever. Eventually the smoke cleared and we were left to sleep in comfort.

/Sunday, 18th January, 1948.

Sunday, 18th January, 1948.

The day opened cold and wet. A driving rain and a North-westerly wind were making life a bit sad.

"Chippie" continued work on the second hut but had to stop due to the weather. The hands were given a "Make and Mend" during the forenoon hoping that the weather would clear up later and work be carried out during the afternoon.

At midday HMSAS NATAL came close inshore and we had a chat to her on the R/T. We also passed a list of gear required for our derricks.

The afternoon turned out fine and work commenced in earnest on the derricks. The "Chippie" came up and gave us a hand and we made up our booms of three pieces of three inch by six inch by fifteen feet planks. Our booms having been fixed we started on the standing rigging. The topping lift was made out of two inch wire and made fast round a rock. The seaward guy was made of one and a quarter inch wire doubled back. Hands to supper was "shouted" and proceeded with forthwith.

After supper we again turned to on our project and continued with out standing rigging. Work stopped at 2200.

Monday, 19th January, 1948.

Work commenced early on the inshore derrick which was proving a tough nut. We started on erecting a sampson post a and making a solid foundation. We then concreted the bottom of the sampson post solidly in the ground.

After having guyed the boom we proceeded to lower it on the edge of the cliff by hauling it vertically and then lowering the heel of the boom in its position. The topping lift was of two inch wire led over the sampson post over the tent and stayed both on a rock forty feet back from the sampson post. As the rock formation is crumbly in that particular part, it was necessary to brace the boom. The falls giving twofold purchase were rigged on each boom by means of a strop, placed diagonally across the end. As the time was getting late (2130) there was no time to test the gear.

Gunner's Point looks more and more like a big spider's web and we are now becoming very good tight rope walkers.

Tuesday, 20th January, 1948.

This morning the weather was extremely fine and calm. Work commenced early on the purchases. Non tipping blocks were set on the blocks and the complete rig-out was tested. It Proved very successful.

At 1030 HMSAS NATAL and S.S. GAMTOOS were in sight and at 1200 both ships were at anchor outside the cove. HMSAS NATAL's motor boat then arrived alongside with Lieut. -Comdr. Dymond, Lieut. Bond S.A.E.C. and Mr. Dike, P.W.D. and started surveying for the positions of the Army hutments that would be coming later.

Mr. K. Sara and Mr. J. Marsh from the "African Mirror" and the "Cape Argus" also arrived ashore and began to take movies and snaps of the place.

/The Army personnel .....

The Army personnel arrived at 1415 from S.S. GAMTOOS with their kit and were followed by another two loads of men. The stores then began to arrive and our catwalk and jetty proved a "Godsend" for them and so did our booms. At 1745 the Navy relinquished the Island and handed over to the Army.

Sub.-Lieut. Davis remaining on the Island as Liaison Officer and to show the ropes.

At 2000 Lieut. Selk, S.A.N.F. and Mr. Burnett, Warrant Gunner, S.A.N.F. arrived on the Island to find a suitable spot where another flag pole would be erected and a Guard of Honour paraded.

Work carried on till 2230 by that time 25 to 30 tons of stores having been landed. The ships remained at anchor that night but remained ready for sea all the time.

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