

We eventually arrived at Garrison Headquarters, having on the way witnessed the numbers of fires taking place, burning transport. Why were all these vehicles being destroyed when at one time it was the idea to make a break out?

A conference was being held with the G.O.C. and all Brigadiers as to the action that was to be taken as no contact could be made with General Ritchie who was then commanding the 8th. Army of which we formed a part.

Colonel Richards had reported to the G.O.C. that it was impossible to carry on as the artillery was very short of ammunition. Richards was the Officer Commanding Artillery (C.R.A.) When I told him that I had been told a very short while earlier that he had plenty of ammunition, all he said was "Rubbish". "Excuse me, Sir, but do you doubt Whites word"? he just turned and walked away.

After a very long session, the meeting eventually came to a decision and my Brigadier came to me and said "Geoff, we are to carry on. Go out to the Perimeter and do your best, but mind the butchers' bill."

This was about one o' clock in the morning.

During the meeting, Colonel Stephenson, the Divisional Signals Officer, wept, tears rolling down his cheeks, and said to Gen Klopper "You must surrender, Sir. You cannot sacrifice the flower of South African manhood." This did happen and I have actually seen it in print in some war book. Of Stephenson you will hear more later.

Well, having been given a signal truck and two signallers, I set off for the Perimeter 'B' Company where Colonel Page and our Regimental Headquarters were now established. This must have been between two and three in the morning because as I passed through the R.D.L.I. area a little later there were signs of daylight. Remember, it is summer time in the Northern hemisphere where you get very early morning light and twilight at night. The D.L.I. had men out busy digging new strong-points inside what was known as the blue line, that is, an inner perimeter where there were uncharted mines - if any left. I gave them the latest news and then next stopped at Lieut Featherstone's Middelandse Regiment heavy machine detachment attached to the Kaffrarian Rifles. Feathers asked me what was happening so I recounted all I knew but said "Feathers, as things appear now we will never hold out. There have already been two orders to prepare to break out and both countermanded. There is very little transport but as you have five good trucks and as I know some chaps have already made tracks, including some of the Worcesters, get going while you have the chance." He thanked me and made ready. At this time the enemy were using a lot of our trucks, and all troops, including the enemy were wearing shorts and shirts, so by driving down the main road, joining all convoys, two of his trucks got through to our lines, the other three were stopped by the Germans. Anyway he had a fair number in those two trucks, including about ten Kaffrarian Rifles, Brian Watson, Boniface, etc. These chaps were eventually attached to the other Units and fought at Alamein.

I eventually arrived at our headquarters and gave them the latest news and instructions.

Page then wanted to contact our Brigade headquarters and so was pleased to have the signal truck. As would happen the truck was a washout as the machine would not work and there was no other means of communication. I am sure our signalling system had been sabotaged.

Well we just sat there wondering what was happening as there was no sound of guns or tanks. A hopeless situation. Remember, Tobruk twenty mile perimeter enclosed about umpteen square miles of undulating territory.

It must have been about eleven o' clock when Lieut. Baillie of A Company came to the headquarters and told us that he had been told that the G.O.C. had surrendered at 7 o' clock that morning and that there were any number of Units who had transport, passing through their lanes.