

'On Call in Africa, in War and Peace.'

Dr Norman Jewell, MC.

A dedicated, well researched family account of Dr Norman Jewell's fascinating diaries written during his long and interesting medical career in Kenya and with No 3 East African Field Ambulance Unit during the East African Campaign of the First World War. This book adds another deeply pertinent dimension to the military operations of the East African Campaign of 1914 & 1918, highlighting the vital work of the Field Ambulance crews in supporting the front line troops, a subject which has been neglected in many other recorded histories.

His graphic descriptions of the places and the peoples he served, to the extraordinary experiences he coped with during his civilian and military attachment, are extremely well documented throughout the easy to read chapters, with detailed footnotes and explanations. Most importantly Jewell, an obviously social and caring person, mentions by name many of the people he was in contact with both military and civilians. This is an important source for historians of the early history of Kenya, as to who was who, where and when.

'On Call in Africa' provides the reader with the nitty gritty, fundamental jobs behind the scenes of the postings and battles that Dr Jewell and his No 3 East African Field Ambulance Unit were involved in; from Kisumu, Kichwa Tembo Fort (October 1915), Bura (now Ng'ambwa), Mashoti (or Mwashoti), the desolate cantonment at Maktau, to the battles and skirmishes at Salaita Hill (February & March 1916) all the way down the Pangani River to Korogwe (June 1916). Here, to his surprise is an interesting rebuff to reports of the German's mistreatment of Allied civilian Prisoners of War, Jewel records the comments by Nurse MG Burns, who had been captured on the outbreak of war and was found working in the German hospital at Korogwe, was how well she had been treated by them.

Jewell's No 3 East African Field Ambulance then headed southwards to Morogoro via Handeni where his Ambulance unit was withdrawn to Dar es Salaam (November 1916) to refit. 'Our troops' he writes 'were not at all smart or soldierly as we had worn out our uniforms which now hung from our backs or from around our waists in rags. My own shirt had disintegrated long before and as a substitute I used a green triangular bandage worn like a shawl and tied into my belt by the corners, two in front and one behind. The belt also supported a disreputable pair of what had once been khaki shorts but which, at that time, were more reminiscent of lace curtains.'

By this time Jewell had also succumbed to several severe bouts of malaria, and after a well deserved period of leave to join his family in the Seychelles where he was originally stationed before the war, he rejoined his unit (July 1917) in southern German East Africa, where some of the hardest fighting of the campaign took place.

Interestingly, virtually the first brief mention is made by Dr Jewell, of the highly critical Pike Commission Report released in January 1918, following serious complaints and allegations about the notoriously appalling conditions along the military supply chain, the diet of the troops in the arduous conditions and lack of adequate medical units, details from which have so far have received little scrutiny or attention in other histories of the campaign and is in need of further research and understanding.

In March 1918, Dr Jewell MC, returned to Kisumu as a civilian, retaining his rank of Captain, as Medical Officer for Nyanza, from where he takes up his duties and experiences in the various stations that he was responsible for meting out his good humour and dedication to all races during outbreaks of Bubonic plague, Asian flu, small pox and a host of other diseases as he describes the development of the hospital facilities in Nakuru, Mombasa and Nairobi.

'On Call in Africa, in War and Peace', by Dr Norman Jewell, MC., fills in many blank spaces to the East African Campaign and brings an interesting and different angle to the medical services in the colony at the height of the British Empire. The Jewell family have done a great service to the memory of these interesting times and the people that lived through it.