



Checking medical supplies – photo (c) NP Jewell, *On Call in Africa*

Zorawar Singh, MM

Sub-Assistant Surgeon, 3 East Africa Field Ambulance

Sub-Assistant Surgeon, Zorawar Singh, worked with Norman Parsons Jewell in 3EAFA (East Africa Field Ambulance) from October 1915 when he was posted to Kichwa Tembo Fort in the Tsavo area through to 26 March 1918 when Norman returned to civilian medical duties.

For the wider context in which Zorawar served, Norman's memoirs *On call in Africa 1910-1932* is best as it contains the transcripts of the war diaries for the period Norman was in the field in all his capacities.

The following has been extracted from the diaries.

On 17 December 1915, Zorawar was sent to Mwatate, near Voi, to undertake outpost duty. He was expected to be away temporarily being given rations for a week. Zorawar and his team of twelve stretcher bearers, a cook and dresser returned on 12 January 1916. A week later, Zorawar led the Ambulance [a group of people with stretchers, not a vehicle as we currently understand the term] to Mashoti, however, they were diverted to Bura where they cleaned camp following the departure of the troops.

The Ambulance was involved in the battle of Salaita Hill on 12 February 1916 with Norman recording that Zorawar 'did excellent work'. Between 2pm and 6.30pm they treated '21 Europeans, 2 Indians and 1 African suffering from GS [gunshot] and shell wounds.' This included having to fetch them from the field of battle.

From February 3EAFA, with Zorawar, became part of No 1 Combined Field Ambulance in support of 1 East Africa Division under the command of General Reginald Hoskins. 3EAFA served alongside C&D subunits of 26 British Field Ambulance and A/140 Indian Field Ambulance, each Ambulance responsible for its own people. The Ambulances moved south with the forces they were accompanying.

In 1917, they were in the south of the German colony first at Schaedel's Farm and then at Ziwani in August. On 9 August, Norman recommended Zorawar for the IOM 2nd Class for his action on 3 August at the battle of Tandamuti which was fought by the 25th Royal Fusiliers and 3/4 King's African Rifles. The Fusiliers suffered seven dead and twenty wounded, whilst the KAR lost 15 dead, 58 wounded and nine

missing. Later that afternoon the Field Hospital, two miles behind the engagement, was attacked. This led to the officer and a rank and file being wounded and another being captured.

On 14 August 1917, Zorawar was recorded as having ptomaine poisoning but was continuing to work. Ptomaine poisoning is a form of food poison received from beans or other greens.

On 2 September 1917, Zorawar was ill again and this time off duty and being treated in the unit. He returned to work on 5 September.

Again, Norman praised Zorawar for the work he did between 16 and 23 October 1917 whilst the battles of Mahiwa (15-18 October) and Lukuledi Mission (18 October-21 October) were fought. During this time the Combined Ambulance admitted 758 wounded, 384 sick, evacuated 664 wounded and 378 sick, making a total of 1,042 patients being treated. Dressings took 18 hours a day and Norman records that 'No case left the section without being dressed and any urgent surgical work being performed.'

On 8 November 1917, Zorawar is recorded as performing 'the duties of writer of 3EFA from 18 July 1915 to 25 January 1917 and from 13 June 1917 to 13 September 1917 inclusive.' This means that the detailed record keeping available for the unit was in large part due to Zorawar.

Zorawar was again off duty on 1 December 1917, this time with dysentery and on light duty the following day. There were 55 patients in hospital. However, between 3 and 5 December he was unable to work. During this period the Ambulance was in a severe situation. Norman records: '124 patients in hospital. Rations scarce only 3 bags of mealie meal, 30-lbs of beans and 10-lbs of salt issued today for 343 Africans, no medical comforts.'

On 25 January 1918, Zorawar was granted two days leave in Lindi and was awarded the Indian Military Service Medal. Between 6 and 11 March, Zorawar was away from camp in order to spend time in Lindi.

When Zorawar was due to return to India, he travelled from Dar es Salaam to Nakuru to say farewell to Norman Jewell, a distance of 635 miles one way. It appears Zorawar Singh had been in East Africa when war broke out, the Kenya Gazette of 27 May 1914 having record of registration for Hospital Assistant Zorawar Singh. This would explain his being allocated to a Colonial led Field Ambulance unit and not an Indian one. His medal card confirms he was with East Africa Medical Supplies.

On 21 June 1921, with effect of 1 August 1921, Zorawar, now a Second Class Senior Sub-Assistant Surgeon in the Indian Medical Department, was awarded the Royal Red Cross 'in recognition of their valuable nursing services rendered in connection with Military Operations of the Waziristan Force [in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of today's Pakistan].'

Sources:

Norman Parsons Jewell, *On Call in Africa 1910-1932* (Gillyflower, 2016)

Kenya Gazette, 27 May 1914

London Gazette, Supplement, 21 June 1921

Author: Anne Samson

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