

# The Mazoe Patrol

Report by

**H. D. RAWSON**

In 1896 my brother and I had a general store in Salisbury. Early in June of that year a man called Stunt came to the store to buy goods for a prospecting trip out Hartley way, and as we had some boys who had been sinking a well for us, whose time was not up, we let Stunt have them to help carry his kit. On opening the store at about 6 a.m. On June 16, I found, to my great surprise, that two of the boys who had gone with Stunt were standing there, and one was wounded. They told me that Stunt had been killed by natives close to Mashongombi's kraal in the Hartley District. I took the boys up to Mr. Mark Lingard, who was acting Chief Native Commissioner at that time. This was the first murder to be reported; during the day several other murders were heard of, and towards evening the news came in of the terrible massacre of the Norton family.

As I was closing the store that evening Blakiston, of the Salisbury telegraph staff, came and told me that the Acting Administrator, Judge Vincent, had asked him if he would go out to Mazoe with an ambulance to fetch the women from the Alice Mine. He asked me to go with him, and I said I would. At the Judge's house at 9 p.m., I was given a Martini rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition. I had previously borrowed a revolver.

There were several people to see us off and wish us luck, but poor old Blakiston said good-bye to everyone, saying that he knew he would never come back. Poor fellow, he was dead within eighteen hours. The moon had just gone down when we started with our ambulance and six mules, and in pitch darkness we drove along the Mazoe road.

We journeyed on, finally arriving at the Alice Mine at sunrise. What a glorious breakfast Mrs. Salthouse gave us on arrival. I can remember now how we did justice to it - ham and eggs and a tin of sardines each to finish up with. We little thought that it was the last meal we were to get till we got back to Salisbury three days later. After breakfast Blakiston walked over to the telegraph office which was about one and a half miles away, to report to Salisbury, and I was able to take stock of the situation.

Mr. Salthouse, the Manager of the Mine, had heard on the previous day from Salisbury about the murders, and had collected all the neighbours that he possibly could at the Mine; they had been on sentry duty all night but had not been molested. It was agreed that we should water and feed the mules and all leave for Salisbury at noon.

We left the Mine at noon, several of the men walking and the ladies in the ambulance; Salthouse was on his black pony, the only horse we had. We had only gone about five miles when, just as we were approaching a deep donga overhung by large trees, a terrible fusilade was poured into the men walking in front and Dickenson, Cass and Faull were shot dead. The ambulance was quickly turned round but in doing so it was upset and the women pitched out. It did not take more than a few seconds to right it and we set off back to the Mine as hard as we could go; we were being shot at all the time from the long grass but fortunately nobody was hit.

On reaching the Mine we all scrambled up to a small kopje which over-looked the Mine and there we rolled rocks together to form some kind of protection. It was now evident that, unless we could get news into Salisbury asking for help, we did not stand much chance. Blakiston and Routledge at once volunteered to try to get down to the Mazoe telegraph office and send word to Salisbury. We realised that they were almost certain to lose their lives, and I do not think that Salthouse would have allowed them to go if it had not been for the three women with us. Salthouse gave them his horse and we

watched them go down the kopje and round the far bend, Blakiston riding and Routledge at his stirrup.

We waited anxiously for about an hour, then we saw them coming round the corner and at the same time we heard firing. Salthouse, who was looking through his glasses, said that Routledge was now on the horse and Blakiston on foot. A minute or two after they came in sight we saw Blakiston drop in the road and he never moved again. Routledge galloped straight for the kopje but in doing so he had to go through a belt of timber and we never saw him or the horse again.

We now hoped for the best, and started to make our defences a little higher, and Salthouse went down to the Mine with our two coloured drivers and brought up a tin of biscuits, two buckets of water and some dynamite fuse and caps. These explosives turned out to be a perfect godsend. At night the natives crept up always nearer and nearer, and it was only small dynamite charges with short fuses thrown out as fast as they could be made which prevented the natives rushing us.

During the night we heard a cow bell in the valley below us and Salthouse said it must be old Charles Annesty, a prospector who had gone out with two pack donkeys. We heard him murdered and later saw the two donkeys lying dead. Also during the night a Basuto native took up a position on the kopje above us, and kept firing at us, and shouting out in English what he intended to do to the women when we were killed.

When the morning broke we looked a lot of tired and bedraggled people, but the women behaved magnificently. It was all the more terrible for them as two of their number had lost their husbands the day before. We could see our six mules lying dead below us having been killed in the night. Towards 2 p.m. that day we heard firing on the Salisbury road and to our intense relief we saw some mounted men coming towards us at a gallop. One of the men - I think Niebuhr - was wounded. The relief was in charge of Dan Judson and Stamford Brown and consisted of about ten men.

After some discussion it was decided that we were not strong enough to fight our way into Salisbury, so it was necessary for somebody to go and get further relief. Salthouse offered Hendricks, one of the Coloured drivers of the ambulance, £100 if he would get through in the night and take a despatch to Salisbury. This he agreed to do, and leaving us just after dark he got to town during the night, meeting Nesbitt's party on their way out to us. Meanwhile some iron plates were taken from the mine battery and put round the ambulance as some protection for the women and wounded. The many scars and bullet marks testified to the utility of this device.

The natives now drew off from the immediate vicinity of the kopje and we had a chance to get some food and a wash, and nothing more than a few stray shots during the night disturbed us. Next morning Inspector Nesbitt arrived with a further fifteen men, amongst whom was my brother, and we made arrangements to leave for Salisbury after they had rested their horses. As our mules had been shot we had to inspan six of the horses and the men had to footslog. We left the Alice Mine at noon with some mounted men in front, then some on foot and then the ambulance; then more on foot and I think three or four mounted men in the rear. I was with J. F. Darling, and we were the last two on foot behind the ambulance. We were fired at almost immediately on leaving, and had not gone far when Greer dropped from his horse in the road about 100 yards behind us. Judson rode up and told Darling and myself to go down on our knees and cover him while he went back to Greer, he found that he was dead, and taking his rifle and bandolier, came on again. It was just here that I got hit behind the right knee by what must have been a spent bullet or a ricochet, and I went down; but on limping up to the ambulance, I found that I could stand, so I rejoined Darling.

The natives were now firing very heavily, and it was only the fact of their having such old and obsolete weapons that saved us, as they were lying close to the road in the long grass. Pascoe now got on to the roof of the ambulance and was able to give us information as to the movements of the natives.

Though he was naturally very much exposed, I think that most of us would gladly have changed places with him, if only to get the ride, as the heat and dust, combined with carrying a rifle which was nearly

red-hot with rapid firing, created a thirst that was nearly unbearable. The natives did not give us a moment's peace, and to make matters worse, they shot two of the horses in the ambulance which had to be cut loose, and the remaining four had to pull the ambulance. Shortly afterwards Van Staaden and Jacobs were shot dead and Hendricks, Ogilvie and Burton were badly wounded.

When we got to the Tatagura River the natives were so close and determined that we could not even drink, and I shall never forget trailing my hat in the water as I ran through and sucking the brim for miles.

The natives left us alone after we got to the Gwebi, and a very tired, sore and thirsty lot we were when we ultimately got into Salisbury at about 10 p.m., having done thirty miles without food or water in the heat of the day.

Fifty per cent. of those who took part in this patrol were either killed or wounded, and only nine horses returned to Salisbury out of twenty-six.

## **REPORT BY LIEUT D . JUDSON TO HIS HONOUR JUDGE VINTCENT**

**JUNE 21, 1896**

According to instructions from you, I left Salisbury on the evening of the 18th inst. with a patrol of four men, viz., Tprs. Honey, Guyon, King (Godfrey) and Hendricks, the instructions being to meet the refugees from the Mazoe and to generally gain information concerning the native rising.

A short distance beyond Avondale I picked up Paymaster Capt. Stamford Brown, who attached himself to the patrol. About three miles south of the Gwebi my horse gave in, and I despatched Tpr. King to Salisbury on it with a request for reinforcements. About this time I challenged and fired on a native.

I halted at Mount Hampden until 4 o'clock the next morning, by which time six additional men arrived from Salisbury. Proceeding on in the dark, we unfortunately (as it then appeared) took the road to Lo Maghonda's, and did not discover our error until daybreak. We then struck across country toward the head of the Mazoe Valley, but were delayed by a series of mishaps: Tpr. King's horse collapsed; Tpr. Mullaney, who was told off to guard the dismounted men, lagged behind, and an hour was lost in searching for him. By this time Tpr. Finch's horse fagged, and I then decided, having in view the safety of the patrol, to send the weaklings back in charge of Tpr. Finch.

From this point we progressed satisfactorily, and arrived at Salvation Army Farm at 10 a.m., where we off-saddled and gave the horses food and drink. The surrounding kopjes were alive with natives, but I guarded against surprise by posting vedettes. At noon we moved on, and I warned the men of the gravity of the situation and issued instructions to be observed in the event of attack by a superior force. About a mile down the Mazoe Valley we entered a stretch of thick, high grass, terminating in a dense clump. I gave order to gallop, and we went forward in the following order: Myself first, Capt. Brown, Tprs. Hendricks, Niebuhr, Pollett, Honey and Coward, riding in single file. As Niebuhr and Pollett passed the end clump a volley was fired at us. I wheeled my horse round and saw Niebuhr's and Pollett's horses fall, and the riders on the ground. I was only 30 yards off, and, getting a good view of the enemy, fired two charges of slugs into the middle of them and placed two of them "hors de combat," and, I believe, thus prevented them from firing on Honey and Coward, who were then passing the bush. Coward was thrown from his horse, but quickly remounted. Brown and Hendricks engaged the enemy, whilst I got Niebuhr, who was badly wounded in the hand, up behind me. Pollett clambered up behind Hendricks, and we all fired a volley into the enemy and galloped off without further casualty.

We did the next seven miles without mishap, keeping up a running fight, dislodging the enemy from the thick clumps of grass by firing volleys into them as we advanced and then rushing the dangerous spots. Seeing a wrecked cart with a dead white man (Faull) and wounded donkeys lying near the roadside, I

believed it possible that all the Mazoe inhabitants had been murdered, and decided that if we saw no signs of them our only course was to reach the telegraph office, inform you of our situation, and then take up a position on one of the kopjes. Turning the corner of the mountain opposite the store, we noticed the rebels attacking the Alice Mine in force. We charged up the road as fast as our tired horses could go, cheering loudly, and opening up a rapid fire on the enemy. We ran the gauntlet of a hot cross-fire for about six minutes, and got safely into the laager of the Alice Mine, and a few minutes' firing caused the enemy to retire.

Mr. J. Salthouse (the manager) was of the opinion that our arrival frustrated a determined attack by the natives. He reported to me the death of Messrs. E. R. Cass, J. Dickenson and Faull, who attempted to get into Salisbury, refusing to await the promised advice from you. He also reported that on the previous day Messrs. Blakiston and Routledge of the telegraph department, had gone back to the office to inform me of the state of affairs, and were both shot down on their return within a few hundred yards of the laager. The rebels kept up a desultory firing the whole day at distances varying from 200 to 1,000 yards. I saw that it was hopeless to attempt to get out of the Mazoe Valley with our present small force, and it was decided to keep the position till further help arrived.

That night we sent a boy, Hendrick, with a despatch for you; he was fortunately intercepted and brought back by Inspector Nesbitt's patrol, which arrived at daybreak the following morning. (The despatch mentioned has since been handed to you.) A council was held, and it was decided to return at once. The wagonette was armed with iron plates, six horses were inspanned, and the laager was vacated at 11.30 yesterday morning, there being 12 mounted out of a total of 30. Half a mile from the camp the attack commenced, and from then right through the Mazoe to a point two miles beyond the firing was kept up without intermission, and we lost about eight horses and three men (viz., burghers Van Staaden, McGeer and Jacobs) killed; four wounded (viz., Hendricks and Burton seriously, Ogilvie and Barry slightly). At the time Hendricks was wounded we were in a critical position. Three horses were dead in the traces and four badly wounded, and rebels firing at us from a few yards off in the grass.

Ogilvie, seeing that Hendricks was badly hit and also cut off from the wagonette, told him to clear, which he did.

I shortly afterwards missed Tpr. Arnott, and was informed by Ogilvie that he had gone on to Salisbury. I took Tprs. Ogilvie, Harbord and Pollett to the tops of a series of small kopjes, and from these we covered the wagonette and dismounted men, allowing them each time to get well ahead before vacating our position. By these means we checked the advance of the rebels, killing a good number of them, including two mounted men, of whom there were about ten. We arrived in Salisbury about 9 p.m.

## **ACCOUNT OF THE DEFENCE OF THE ALICE MINE, BY THE MANAGER, MR. J. W. SALTHOUSE**

The Alice Mine is situated in the Mazoe district, about 27 miles from the township of Salisbury. It lies to the west and beyond the end of a long valley, eight miles in length and 500 yards wide at the base, formed by rocky hills heavily timbered on the west and the Iron Mask Mountains on the east. The road to Salisbury runs along the west side of the valley, and on both sides is completely closed in by long, coarse grass and reeds about nine feet high. At intervals it is intercepted by dongas or deep gullies.

The Tatagora River runs parallel to the road, along the middle of the valley. In the neighbourhood of the Alice Mine are the following offices: Mining Commissioner's Office, Telegraph Office, Native Commissioner's Office and two stores.

The Telegraph Office is situated at the foot of a small kopje on the Mazoe River, about two miles north-east of the mine, and is hidden from view.

On Tuesday, 16th day of June, I received a telegram from Mr. Dan Judson, Inspector of telegraphs at

Salisbury, to the effect that white men had been murdered at the Beatrice Mine, about 38 miles west of Salisbury, by natives, at that time supposed to be Matabeles. On the next day another telegram arrived, saying that similar murders had been committed close to Salisbury. Immediately on receipt of this I put myself in communication with Judge Vintcent, asking him, under these circumstances, what he would advise me to do, as we had only nine men and three women in the neighbourhood, and requesting, in case we were ordered in, that a wagonette be sent out to convey the women.

During the same day, under instructions from me, Mr. and Mrs. J. Cass, Mr. and Mrs. J. Dickenson, Archer Burton, H. Spreckley, T. G. Routledge, J. Pascoe and Stoddard joined us at the mine; our party consisted of my wife, self, Cape boy named George, and about a dozen Mashonas. Messrs. Faull, Fairbairn, Pascoe and Stoddard were engaged in removing from the Vesuvius Mine, and erecting at the Alice, a 10-stamp battery; Mr. Dickenson was the Acting Mining Commissioner for the Mazoe District, Mr. Spreckley his assistant; Mr. Routledge was in charge of the Telegraph Office; and Mr. Archer Burton was manager of the Holton Syndicate store. Mrs. Cass and Mrs. Dickenson had to be brought from their farms, eight miles away, along the MazoeSalisbury road.

After sending off the telegram to Judge Vintcent and while the others were on their way to the mine, Mr. Fairbairn, myself and a few natives, did what we could to put the place in a state of defence. We chose one of a number of steep rocky kopjes as our laager, and closed the top in as best we could with fallen timber and rocks. That night we had two sentries on the look-out. Some time after dark a telegram from the Judge arrived, saying that he was about to despatch a wagonette and six mules, and that he would send further word the next day.

The following morning, about seven o'clock, the conveyance arrived in charge of Mr. Blakiston, accompanied by Mr. Zimmerman and a Cape boy. They informed us that they had seen nothing on the road out, but deemed it advisable to start back as soon as possible. Shortly after Mr. Routledge went down to the telegraph office to communicate with Salisbury, and a little later Mr. Blakiston and one or two others followed him.

Without waiting until word had arrived from the telegraph office, Messrs. Dickenson, Cass, Faull, Pascoe, Fairbairn and Stoddard started for Salisbury, having a donkey cart with them to carry their provisions. After they had left I sent a note to Mr. Blakiston at the telegraph office, asking him to come up at once, as I was alone with the women.

The boy carrying this note met him and the others (except Routledge, who remained at the telegraph office) on their way back. When Blakiston and his companions reached my house, adjoining the laager, a note arrived from Routledge, asking me to come down at once, as Mr. Judson wished to speak to me from Salisbury. I went down and wired to him the circumstances already detailed. In reply to enquiries I informed him that we had three or four days' food, but insufficient ammunition and rifles.

We had some conversation as to a relief party being sent out from Salisbury, and Mr. Judson, after advising me to send the women off at once, left the wires to consult with the Judge as to the number of men he could send. In the meantime I galloped back to the house to send off the women.

The men who were there informed me that if they remained at Mazoe at all they would not laager at the Alice, but would combine to defend themselves at the store of the Holton Syndicate. We consulted together, and it was finally decided that we should all proceed to Salisbury. We sent off the women in the wagonette in charge of Messrs. Zimmermann, Burton (who was suffering from fever) and a Cape boy, named Hendritz. I returned to the telegraph office and informed Mr. Judson of what had taken place in the interval. He asked me to secure the telegraph office and papers as soon as possible, and also send a wire to be forwarded to Major Forbes, on the African Trans-Continental Telegraph Company's line. Mr. Routledge took this wire, which he intended sending with two native constables who were in the laager. Routledge and myself then returned towards the camp. On the way we met Hendritz, the driver of the wagonette, with a note from laager, saying, "Come at once; we are surrounded by Matabele. Wire Salisbury for relief." Immediately after receiving the note, we decided not to return to the

office, but hurried on to the laager under a heavy fire, which was directed against us from the surrounding kopjes.

When we reached the laager I found that Cass's party, excepting Cass, Faull and Dickenson, who had been shot, had returned to the laager, and, with the rest, were firing at the enemy.

The women were crouching behind rocks in the laager, covering themselves from danger as far as possible. This was about 1.30 p.m. Blakiston and Routledge then left for the telegraph office to wire to Salisbury for relief, although it was almost sure death to the poor fellows.

We caught sight of them on their way back, some 1,700 yards distant, and saw Blakiston fall with his horse, and Routledge make for the bush, from which he was never seen to emerge. Their expedition was a noble effort, and a signal self-sacrifice. It may be said to have saved all our lives, and it deserves to be long remembered in the annals of this country.

To return to laager. Though no one was actually hit during this time, there were many creeping closer and closer, advancing from rock to rock, until they reached the long grass at the foot of the kopjes, and under the cover of which they approached to within 150 yards of our position. Here we killed several of their number, but things were nevertheless looking horribly serious. Darkness then came on, and the firing abated somewhat.

We had no food or water within reach, and remained at our position all night.

Just before daybreak our Cape boy, George, ventured to the house and brought back some biscuits and water, and as dawn broke the enemy re-opened their fire on us, and continued at intervals until about 2 p.m., when we heard a Matabele Induna behind the rock, shouting to his companions to call up their men. We knew this meant one of two things - either relief was coming, or the final rush of the enemy on us was about to be made. To our great joy the former proved to be the case, for shortly after, by the aid of my field-glasses, I saw emerging from the valley, seven men and five horses, two of the latter having been shot some time before. They could not see us among the masses of the enemy, and appeared to be making for the telegraph office. We jumped to our feet, men and women, and joined in one tremendous shout. The shout was heard, and we saw our friends amidst a hail of lead turn their horses, and, while firing volley after volley, gallop for the laager, which they reached in safety. We assisted their advance as far as possible by maintaining a steady fire against the natives, who were in strong force on their left. The relief party consisted of Dan Judson, Stamford Brown, W. S. Honey, C. Hendricks, H. Pollett, E. Niebuhr and W. Carton-Coward.

Our friends informed us that they had had to fight their way to us for eight miles along the valley, having one man wounded and two horses killed. We all consulted together and decided to attempt to induce the boy, Hendritz, to carry a despatch to Salisbury, asking for a relief party of 40 men and one maxim gun. We offered him £100 if he would undertake this perilous ride. He undertook it without hesitation, and set out at about 2 o'clock the following morning, mounted on a black horse. We afterwards learned that he got safely past all dangers and met a second relief party, consisting of the following men of the Salisbury Field Force: Inspector R. Nesbitt, O. H. Ogilvie, R. A. Harbord, M. Macgregor, F. R. Byron, J. Edmonds, S. Arnott, A. Nesbitt, B. Berry, J. H. Van Staaden, O. Zimmermann, C. McGeer and Jacobs.

After our friends arrived the enemy practically ceased firing. We all remained in the laager on the alert. I occupied my time improvising hand grenades with the aid of dynamite and detonators, to be used in case we saw the enemy near by during the night. There were one or two false alarms after the sun set, but nothing more serious happened. Just before dawn we caught sight of the second relief party, and again a shout of joy broke the awful stillness. We then felt that there was some hope for us. We had with us in all 30 men and three women. We held a hasty consultation and decided to start for Salisbury as soon as the horses had been fed and were fit to travel. The women were now for the first time able to take some refreshment. In order to shield the inmates of the wagonette, we armoured the two sides and back with

sheet iron, which fitted so well that they seemed to have been made for the purpose. The mules that brought out the conveyance having been shot or lost, we dismounted six men and inspanned their horses.

These animals had never been used in harness before, but after a little preliminary jibbing we started off.

This was about mid-day. We placed an advance guard of five mounted and eight foot men, and a rear guard of seven mounted and eight foot men.

On our way to the valley and main road the enemy commenced their attack. When we reached the first donga, near the Vesuvius Mine, and about two miles along the valley, the firing became terrific. Here Mr. J. Pascoe, of the Salvation Army, with dauntless courage, mounted on the roof or hood of the wagonette, where he remained throughout the fight, firing and advising us of the movements of the enemy. The surrounding kopjes and even the grass seemed alive with men, and the bullets rained upon us. It appeared to us, indeed, like the Valley of the Shadow of Death; no other words seem adequate to portray the scene.

We now saw for the first time that among the enemy there were 30 or 40 mounted men, and these, during the whole of that terrible journey, never ceased to harass our rear. From the Vesuvius donga we struggled on and reached the Mazoe lime works. Here we had to make a halt and fire volley after volley at the rebels, who were closing in on our rear. It was at this place that Charles Hendricks of the B.T.A. store, greatly distinguished himself by racing after and capturing McGeer's riderless horse, which had bolted. Immediately after leaving this point we sustained our first loss, Lieut. McGeer, of the Salisbury Field Force, falling mortally wounded; Capt. Nesbitt and Mr. J. Edmonds, of the Rhodesia Horse, almost at the same moment, having their horses shot dead under them.

We halted for a few minutes, and Capt. D. Judson and Stamford Brown, with some others, ran back to examine Lieut. McGeer's wound. On returning they said that the poor fellow was past all human help, and we proceeded on our way.

It was almost impossible to see the enemy, owing to the long grass and reeds which grew right up the roadside, and all we could do was to continually fire in all directions from the wagonette to clear the way as we struggled forward. Our horses and men gradually became weaker and weaker, and at times many of us had not the strength to lift our rifles. We supported and rallied ourselves from time to time by holding to a companion's stirrup or to some portion of the wagon until we had regained sufficient strength to fire a few more shots. When our bandoliers were emptied the ladies, who never uttered a sound, though the bullets - slug and shot - rattled incessantly on the armour of the wagon, gave out handful after handful of ammunition to their gasping and exhausted protectors.

About a mile from the Tatagora River drift, or crossing, the road winds round between the foot of a large kopje and the river. It was at this point that it appeared to us more than ever that our advance must come to an end. The grass to within three yards of the road was swarming with blacks, and from every quarter the bullets seemed to shower. Here one of our leaders was shot through the head, and immediately after the off-side wheeler fell mortally wounded. Mr. Brown and I struggled to cut him loose. Our task was hardly completed when our hearts sank to see the other wheeler also fall.

I was just able to save myself as he fell towards me. We cut him loose also. At about the same time Van Staaden and Jacobs were shot dead and Ogilvie and Burton wounded; the latter received a wound - a terrible one - right through the face. He nevertheless, without assistance, struggled into the wagon and fell bleeding amongst the horrified women. Arnott and Hendricks also, two of our advance guard, were cut off.

We afterwards learned that they reached Salisbury - one of them, Hendricks, with a bullet wound right through his jaws and mouth. Our four remaining horses dragged on the wagonette, blood pouring from the nose and mouth of the wounded leader. We passed the body of Van Staaden lying on the road, one

side of his head having been blown away. We picked up his rifle and bandolier. Our advance guard then left the road and, continually taking up positions on any little hills or knolls that they could see, kept pouring lead on the black demons waylaying us in the grass ahead and across the Tatagora River, which was now in sight. Here we had hoped to quench our raging thirst, which had been growing momentarily more and more unbearable. But it was not to be. The firing was too terrific, and only one or two as they rushed past the water behind the wagon were able to catch up in their hats a mouthful of mud and water.

Beyond the river the ground became more open, and we were able to put out small flanking parties to aid our advance guard in clearing the way for the wagon. Hope revived, and with it our struggle seemed to rise again.

We were now able at times to see our enemy and to use our rifles with more effect. We reached the end of the valley, and, faint and exhausted, almost at our last gasp, sighted the open country. We were still 17 miles from home. Had our treacherous and cowardly pursuers faced our rifles and followed us further, we could never have reached it; but here they gave up the chase.

Near the Gwebi River our wounded leader, which had stood by us so well, could pull no further, and we released him from harness. With the remaining three we staggered on to the river, where we outspanned. We had barely rested 15 minutes when an alarm was raised that the natives were in sight again. This turned out to be incorrect, but we re-harnessed and re-saddled our jaded animals. Three miles beyond the Gwebi we found a wounded horse, which we recognised as that belonging to one of the advance guard who had been cut off.

About 10 o'clock we reached Salisbury laager, where we were greeted as men and women might be who had returned from the dead.

## **REPORT BY CAPT. R. NESBITT, TO His HONOUR JUDGE VINTCENT**

**JUNE 22, 1896**

I have the honour to report that, in accordance with your instructions of the 19th instant, I proceeded to the Mazoe with a patrol of 12 men to the relief of Mr. Salthouse and party and Lieut. Judson's patrol. I left Salisbury laager at 10.30 p.m. on the 19th inst., and proceeded by the most open route to the Mazoe.

No natives were encountered till I entered the Mazoe Valley, on striking the main road at a point about half a mile from the Salvation Army Farm, at about 4.20 a.m. The next morning I met Native Constable Hendrick making for Salisbury with an urgent despatch (see enclosure) from Lieut. Judson to you, asking for immediate assistance, as he was in a critical position, being surrounded by about 1,000 of the enemy and his ammunition running short. From information gained from N. C. Hendrick, coupled with the fact that his horse was completely knocked up. I deemed it advisable to take him back with me, as I felt confident of being able to bring the whole party through.

After entering the valley I saw numerous fires on the surrounding hills, and proceeded with great caution, thereby evading an attack until within half a mile of where Mr. Salthouse and party were, when, being obliged to pass through a gorge, the enemy opened fire from dense cover on my left flank. I replied with a volley, and pushed through, it being too dark to distinguish their whereabouts; in this engagement Sgt. Nesbitt's horse was wounded.

I arrived at Mr. Salthouse's laager without further molestation at about 5 o'clock on the morning of the 20th. I was then informed that the six mules sent out with Mr. Zimmermann had strayed and were believed to be shot. Shortly after my arrival a council was held, consisting of myself, Capt. Brown, Lieut. Judson and Mr. Salthouse, when it was decided to return forthwith, so as to give the enemy no time to concentrate.

After making the coach bullet-proof with iron sheets, we left the laager about noon on the 20th inst., dismounting six men and putting their horses in the coach; my party now consisted of 12 mounted men, 18 dismounted men and three women. On starting I sent on an advance guard of four mounted men, the same number being left as rear guard, the dismounted and four remaining mounted men being with the coach. After proceeding about a mile the advance guard were fired on, when almost immediately my whole party were engaged, and silenced the enemy's fire, thus enabling the coach to pass through a very dangerous "donga"; from this spot a heavy fire was kept up from my right flank, until, when passing the Versuvius camp, the enemy were reinforced. The fire becoming hotter, they succeeded in killing McGeer, Jacobs and two horses; from here we were constantly harassed, so pushed the advance guard further forward to hold all rising ground on the line of march, they being thus enabled to cover our advance.

I proceeded in this order till I reached a spot some two and a half miles from the Salvation Army Farm, where, from the nature of the country and the fact of having so few horses left, it was impossible to hold any rising ground, so rushed an ugly gorge, where a heavy and sustained fire was opened on my party from either side of the road, where dense reed beds, long grass, rocks and creepers effectually hid the enemy, who were only about ten yards off and sometimes nearer. At this spot Tpr. Van Staaden and four horses were shot dead, Mr. Burton and Tpr. Hendricks wounded dangerously, Ogilvie, Berry and two horses wounded slightly. Mr. Arnott and Tpr. Hendricks, part of my advance guard, who had pushed through this trap, thinking all was over, rode for Salisbury. The enemy followed us for another four miles, keeping up a harassing fire and wounding another horse, this making a total of about 14 miles' constant fighting, occupying about three and half hours. When arriving near Mount Hampden and getting into the open, the enemy retired, and I proceeded without further delay, arriving in Salisbury about 9.30 p.m.

I estimated the enemy's strength to be at least 1,500, many of them being armed with Lee-Metford, Martini and Winchester rifles, and appearing to be well supplied with ammunition. I have every reason to believe that Cape boys and Matabeles were the leaders of this attacking party. I compute that the enemy's loss must be about 100.

The men of the patrol behaved splendidly all through; many of them had never been under fire before. I would especially mention the good services rendered by Messrs. Ogilvie, Pascoe and Harbord.

## **ENCLOSURE TO ABOVE REPORT**

Very Urgent.

H.H. the Administrator,  
Salisbury.

**Alice Mine, Mazoe,**

**Friday, 19th June, 1896. 10 p.m.**

Sir,

I beg to inform you that I arrived here about 1.30 p.m., having literally fought our way through nearly the whole of Mazoe Valley. Lost two horses killed and Tprs. Niebuhr badly wounded and Pollett slightly (both these men's horses were shot, and they consequently rode behind riders of two other horses). In this respect I would mention Tpr. C. Hendricks, who picked Pollett up and carried him nearly five miles. I sent back early in the day Tprs. Finch, Guyon, King and Mullaney with three horses (knocked up). Mr. Salthouse, in charge here, reports Messrs. Blakiston, Routledge, Dickenson, Cass and Faull killed. Since my arrival we have had natives firing on us at distances varying from 200 to

1,500 yards, and there is no doubt we are all in a critical position, as ammunition is rapidly running out. We have also absolutely no shelter for ladies, and they and we have to crouch behind rocks; provisions also running out. It is imperative that a force of at least 40 men with a Maxim should come to our relief at once, as I am afraid all the Mashonas here will rise if present rebels (number estimated about 1,000-mostly Mashonas, and easily licked) are not vigorously dealt with. Mesdames Salthouse, Cass and Dickenson are with us, and bearing up bravely. When relief columns enter Mazoe Valley let them watch closely the dense patches of grass along roadside, as small parties of rebels lie in ambush. Send some Martini ammunition, and we can then give our help. Men in laager, in addition to my patrol, are Darling, Spreckley, Zimmermann, Pascoe, Burton, Fairbairn, Goddard and Salthouse. Mr. Stamford Brown met us on road and accompanied us here. I may mention that we sent most of the rebels - who shot horses and wounded our men - to the happy hunting grounds. Am sending this by despatch rider (Cape boy Hendrick), who has been promised £100 if he delivers it safely. Send out 12 spare horses. We have two mules and wagonette. (Sgd.) DAN JUDSON.

*(From: Blue and Old Gold, Stories of the Rhodesian Police (1953))*

[Return to Main Page](#)