

S8 E14 - African Incident

Transcribed by Yukka Tukka Indians. Final corrections by Helen.

GREENSLADE:

This is the BBC Light Programme. We present those friends of royalty, The Goons.

GRAMS:

REGAL FANFARE. STOPS SUDDENLY.

ORCHESTRA:

TATTY CHORD.

SEAGOON:

Yes, folks. And now it's time for ME!

GRAMS:

CHEERS, APPLAUSE.

SEAGOON:

Stop! Stop!

GRAMS:

CHEERS, APPLAUSE SUDDENLY STOP.

GREENSLADE:

This week our story is set in the year 1914. England is at war and the script has been censored.

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC INTRO.

SELLERS:

The German colony in East Africa, under its brilliant commander Von Gutern, was attacking the British forces with great success.

PLUCK:

[MILLIGAN]

Yes. My name's Terence Pluck, M.O. I and my unit had been captured on the first day of the hostilities. We were all marched to a German prison camp five hundred miles two inches deep in the heart of the jungle. It was a comfortable camp and we were well treated. Trouble started the day a new batch of English type prisoners were brought in.

GRAMS:

BATTALION MARCHING DOUBLE TIME.

MAJOR SPON:

[SELLERS]

(AS ALEC GUINNESS) Keep up, men, don't lag. Feet in line with the seats of the underpants.

SEAGOON:

That was Major Spon, B.O.

MAJOR SPON:

And that was Captain Seagoon, our C.O. A brilliant soldier. When the Germans attacked Fort Blun he rallied his men round the white flag.

SEAGOON:

Yes. Rather than surrender, we gave ourselves up.

MAJOR SPON:

And so... we marched into the naughty German prison camp.

GRAMS:

BATTALION SLOW MARCHING. CONTINUE UNDER.

MAJOR SPON:

That's it. men. Show 'em we're still soldiers. Left, left, left, left, left. Um, what's next?

SEAGOON:

Right.

MAJOR SPON:

Right. Company... halt!

GRAMS:

RECORDING OF MARCHING GRINDS TO A HALT.

PLUCK:

Gad! What discipline, I thought.

SEAGOON:

Eyes front!

MAJOR SPON:

Eyes are always at the front, Mr Seagoon.

SEAGOON:

Here comes the German camp commandant. And what luck, sir, look, he's shorter than I am!

COMMANDANT:

[MILLIGAN]

This camp will try to keep you occupied until the war is over. Tomorrow you will all start work on a railway bridge over the river Kapatee.

MAJOR SPON:

Er... did you say work?

COMMANDANT:

Ja.

MAJOR SPON:

But we're English.

COMMANDANT:

Makes nein the difference. You must work.

MAJOR SPON:

My dear fellow, according to article three etcetera etcetera of the Geneva convention, it states categorically that officers must not work.

COMMANDANT:

You... you refuse?

MAJOR SPON:

Yes.

COMMANDANT:

Then you will be shot!

MAJOR SPON:

Ah, well, now, that's much more reasonable.

SEAGOON:

Major, I'd... I'd rather work than die.

MAJOR SPON:

Do you know what you're saying?

SEAGOON:

Yes, I speak the same language. Ahhh! They're pointing a machine gun at us.

MAJOR SPON:

How rude. Pretend we haven't seen them.

COMMANDANT:

I will count up to one then I will fire. A quarter. Half. Three quarters. Four fifths.

SEAGOON:

If you kill us, we'll refuse to stand up.

COMMANDANT:

Very well, I change my mind. But I'll also make you change yours. (GIVES ORDERS IN GERMAN)

OMNES:

SHOUTING OF TROOPS.

SEAGOON:

We were forced into a corrugated iron hut, one foot tall by three inches wide.

MAJOR SPON:

No food, no water and the temperature inside was 130 degrees in the shade.

FX:

BANGING ON DOOR.

SEAGOON:

Let me out! I can't stand it any longer. We'll die. No water, no food! I... I can't stand it! Let me out, you devils! Ahahahahaha!

MAJOR SPON:

Steady, steady. We've only been in here thirty seconds.

SEAGOON:

There's a limit to what a man can stand.

FX:

DOOR OPENS.

MAJOR SPON:

Who the devil are you?

PLUCK:

It's alright, you can put your hands down. I'm British.

MAJOR SPON:

So are we. You can put *your* hands down.

PLUCK:

Thank you. I am Lieutenant Pluck, I'm the camp M.O. I had a word with General Von Gutern. He's agreed that the English officers needn't work.

GRAMS:

MASSED MALE CHEERING.

SEAGOON:

For the next three weeks the officers did nothing but gad, we did it magnificently. We did it magnificently, folks! Hello, folks! Hello, folks! Hello, folks!

GRAMS:

NIGHT SOUNDS. FROGS, CRICKETS ETC.

GREENSLADE:

It wasn't long before escape committees were organised.

MAJOR SPON:

Now, gentlemen, before we start are there any questions?

ECCLES:

Yer. I want to know how I became a Field Marshal.

MAJOR SPON:

Wouldn't we all. Now, I've studied the jungle around this camp and I find it's impenetrable.

SEAGOON:

One of the men is determined to escape, sir.

MAJOR SPON:

Escape from this place? Is he mad?

SEAGOON:

He has a certificate.

MAJOR SPON:

It means certain death.

SEAGOON:

Yes. It's a death certificate.

MAJOR SPON:

No. I won't agree to it. He'll die out there, die for sure. Who is he?

ECCLES:

Er, me.

MAJOR SPON:

Goodbye and good luck to you.

SEAGOON:

Well said, sir. It's the duty of every English soldier to try to escape. I've done it myself twice.

MAJOR SPON:

Oh, where from?

SEAGOON:

Aldershot.

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC CHORDS.

GRAMS:

NIGHT SOUNDS CONTINUE.

OMNES:

MASSED MILITARY SNORING.

SEAGOON:

Pssst. Doc! Doc! Are you awake?

PLUCK:

Yes, that's why I'm standing up.

SEAGOON:

What's the time?

PLUCK:

Let's have a look at your wristwatch. Ah, it's nearly midnight.

SEAGOON:

By dawn I should be well clear of the camp.

PLUCK:

Ah, good. Now listen. If ever you get to the stage that there's no hope, swallow this little black capsule.

SEAGOON:

What... what is it?

PLUCK:

Concentrated liquorice. It gives a man something.

SEAGOON:

Thanks, doc. And here to take my place is prisoner Max Geldray.

MAX GELDRAY:

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC LINK

GREENSLADE:

(ON NEDDIE'S MEGAPHONE) Hello, folks. Take your seat for part two of the wireless play 'African Incident'. Long live the miracle of sound wireless broadcasting.

GRAMS:

MANY BOOTS APPROACHING AT SPEED.

MAJOR SPON:

Gather round chaps. I'm glad to say we seemed to have scored a moral victory.

SEAGOON:

Oh, good show.

MAJOR SPON:

The German Commandant has asked me to take charge of the building of this bridge over the river.

SEAGOON:

Jolly good news, sir.

MAJOR SPON:

Oh. I thought you'd escaped.

SEAGOON:

I did, but I came back for lunch.

MAJOR SPON:

Jolly good. Then you can help. Just stand in this hole and read these statistics on the river.

SEAGOON:

Well, sir, the river's two thousand miles long.

MAJOR SPON:

Two thousand miles. How wide?

SEAGOON:

Three yards.

MAJOR SPON:

Well that settles it, we'll build the bridge across it. General?

COMMANDANT:

Ja?

MAJOR SPON:

When is this bridge supposed to be completed?

COMMANDANT:

It must be finished by April the 1st.

MAJOR SPON:

What's today?

SEAGOON:

April the 14th.

MAJOR SPON:

Oh, it's not... er... not going to be easy, is it. If we wait for April the 1st to come round again it'll be over a year.

SEAGOON:

Well, let's work backwards then it's only a fortnight away.

MAJOR SPON:

That's a very good idea. Field Marshal Eccles, have you any knowledge of trees?

ECCLES:

Yer, I was born in one.

MAJOR SPON:

Ah, good. Well, see those wooden ones on the opposite bank?

ECCLES:

Um? Oh, yer, yer.

MAJOR SPON:

Do you think you could chop them down?

ECCLES:

Um, not from here.

FX:

CLUBBING.

ECCLES:

Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC LINK.

GRAMS:

NIGHT SOUNDS. CRICKETS, FROGS ETC.

SEAGOON:

That night I made my second attempt to escape. And succeeded by walking a thousand miles and swimming the bay of Tunis. I managed to get to Gibraltar where I'm now recovering from hospital treatment.

SELLERS:

Then suddenly, Lieutenant Seagoon was summoned to British Hind Quarters at Aden.

ORCHESTRA:

BLOODNOK THEME, FAST.

BLOODNOK:

Ohhhhh!

FX:

DOOR OPENS

SEAGOON:

Lieutenant Seagoon reporting from the front, sir.

BLOODNOK:

Pull up a chair, man, and sit down.

SEAGOON:

I'd rather stand.

BLOODNOK:

Well, stand in a chair, then. We respect these old Welsh idiot customs, you know. Now, this man in the shredded vest is our French A.D.C., Count Moriarty.

MORIARTY:

Owwwwww....

BLOODNOK:

Ex-actor... and has played the male lead in over fifty postcards.

MORIARTY:

Ah, mon pleasure, mon ami, owwwww, (LAUGHS).

BLOODNOK:

Yes, yes. We want you to take a raiding party and destroy that bridge they're building. Boom, boom, boom. Crash, thud, bang. Um... er... Bang, bang, boom, thud, crash. One of those combinations should prove fatal.

SEAGOON:

I've only just *escaped* from the place. It's too dangerous. Apart from which, I'm a married man.

BLOODNOK:

I'm ordering you to go.

SEAGOON:

Oh, well. Can't I see my wife before I go?

BLOODNOK:

No.

SEAGOON:

But I love her.

BLOODNOK:

So do I, that's why I'm sending you!

SEAGOON:

Alright. I'll go. But one last favour. If I don't come back, could you give this to my father?

BLOODNOK:

Oh, your... your cheque book.

SEAGOON:

Yes. He always wanted it.

BLOODNOK:

Don't worry, I'll get it to him. Even if I have to cash every cheque in it myself.

MORIARTY:

Now, come, Seagoon, we leave at dawn tonight by legs on feet on ground.

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC CHORDS.

GREENSLADE:

Meantime, a hundred miles away in the German camp a soldier, lies dreaming on a palm leaf.

ECCLES:

(SINGS RUBBISH) I can't stand this singing, I wish I'd escaped with Lieutenant Seagoon. I wonder if he got back to the base.

SEAGOON:

Yes, I did.

ECCLES:

Oh! Where are you, den?

SEAGOON:

I'm a mere six hundred miles away.

ECCLES:

Oh, goodie. I won't tell anybody.

BLOODNOK:

Seagoon, you fool. Stop talking to that man six hundred miles away.

SEAGOON:

It's alright, sir, he's one of ours.

BLOODNOK:

I know and I wish he wasn't. Now then, according to British intelligence, April the 1st is only three days away.

SEAGOON:

Gad! How *do* those chaps get the information?

BLOODNOK:

They captured a German calender - alive! Well men, forward!

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC SAFARI LINK.

GRAMS:

CUTTING THROUGH JUNGLE SOUNDS.

GREENSLADE:

(ON NEDDIE'S MEGAPHONE) For a hundred miles, Bloodnok and his party hacked their way through the jungle that ran alongside the arterial road. En route, they had managed to enlist ten Mabootu women to help carry their supplies.

BLOODNOK:

We were just good friends, you understand, nothing more.

MORIARTY:

Nevertheless, it was a mistake having women porters. On the second day of the trip Lieutenant Seagoon became terribly amorous.

GRAMS:

HAWAIIAN GUITAR.

SEAGOON:

You, very beautiful. Hahahahahah. I've seen lots of girls in my time but you... much prettier than any white girl.

BLOODNOK:

I know I am. And it gets very embarrassing at times, I can tell you. Where's Moriarty?

SEAGOON:

The native girls were having a bathe and he's guarding their clothes.

BLOODNOK:

It was *my* turn for that! Where's my binoculars?

MORIARTY:

(FRENCH-SOUNDING GIBBERISH) There's a patrol of German colonial troops coming this way.

BLOODNOK:

What!

SEAGOON:

We must stop them. No shooting now.

PLUCK:

Meantime, back at the camp, the German POW camp...

SECOMBE:

Owww.

PLUCK:

That's an abbreviation of prisoner of war. I say "POW" so it saves the necessity of saying prisoner of war, it's much shorter. Takes less time. At this camp we were having a party. We'd completed the bridge and all the lads were having a sing-song to celebrate.

GRAMS:

RECORDING: MASSED SINGING OF 'BLIGHTY IS THE PLACE FOR ME". SPED UP. QUICK BURST OF APPLAUSE

SERGEANT BLOODNOK:

Right, men. Settle down! Now, a word from our C.O., Major Spon.

MAJOR SPON:

Thank you, men. Well as you can see, we've taught our captors how we English can build a wooden bridge over a water river. So let us stand, raise our right legs and sing our national anthem.

GRAMS:

MALE VOICE CHOIR SINGING LA MARSEILLAISE. FADE BEHIND.

BLOODNOK:

Seagoon! Over here. I can hear men in the camp singing the French national anthem.

SEAGOON:

Nonsense. That's the British national anthem in disguise. They didn't want it captured.

BLOODNOK:

Good lads!

MORIARTY:

Pssst! Information. The first German puff-puff goes over that bridge at dawn.

BLOODNOK:

What! Action! Here's the explosive, men. Off you go. I'd come with you myself if it weren't for this terrible hand-painted wound on my foot. Ohhhh!

SEAGOON:

Then we'll need one more volunteer. How about you?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Let go of me, man! Let go of me! Let go, I'm not working this week. I'm on christmas hols. Doing a bit of carol singing. (SINGS)

Good King Wenceslas looked out,
on the feast of Ste...

FX:

SLAPSTICK

BLUEBOTTLE:

Aiii! Right on my music stand!

SEAGOON:

Lad! Lad! Little looney lad. Help us... help us destroy that bridge and you can have the 'Junior Rock-and-Roll' set.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Cor!

SEAGOON:

Yes! Out of tune Bakelite...

BLUEBOTTLE:

Ohhh!

SEAGOON:

...banjo. And a pair of genuine Tommy Steele earplugs.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Cor! Thank you. That will make me the centre of attraction at the school party. Thinks: that Eileen Shoulders likes rocking and rolling. Let me try that for that the Eileen Shoulders. (SINGS FEEBLE ROCK AND ROLL OVER TIMID FOOT TAPPING)

GREENSLADE:

Now, while Bluebottle is deliberating, Ray Ellington will play a melody devine in an anti-clockwise fashion.

RAY ELLINGTON QUARTET:

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

ORCHESTRA:

EXOTIC JUNGLE LINK.

GRAMS:

RIVER RUNNING STRONGLY.

SELLERS:

In the darkening night, Seagoon and his saboteurs dived in and attached limpet mines to the bridge over the ice-cold river Kapatee.

SEAGOON:

And there's nothing worse than a cold Kapatee!

GELDRAY:

Hi!

ORCHESTRA:

TATTY CHORD IN C. CYMBAL SNAP.

SEAGOON:

Thank you, folks, thank you, folks.

MORIARTY:

Shhhhh! You fools, the German guards will hear us.

BLUEBOTTLE:

It's alright, they don't understand English.

SEAGOON:

Turn the wireless on and let's hear the rest of the show.

GRAMS:

WIRELESS TUNING INTO FREQUENCY.

BLOODNOK:

Ohhhh! Oh. It's nearly dawn. Well, I wonder when Seagoon's coming back.

NATIVE WOMAN:

[CHEVREAU]

Oh, white man is not really worried about them?

BLOODNOK:

Oh, no, not really, you know. It's just that I don't really want to be caught like this.

NATIVE WOMAN:

Is this what English call 'embarrassing situation'?

BLOODNOK:

Well, yes. I mean, after all, I mean, me half way up a tree dressed as Timon of Athens and... you whitewashing the grass, well, no one would believe us, you see.

NATIVE WOMAN:

Oh, come, Major, let us dance.

BLOODNOK:

Yes. After all, even though we're in the jungle, we're still civilised aren't we. I'll put this record on my portable military gramophone.

GRAMS:

ROMANTIC STRING TANGO.

BLOODNOK:

What a strange sight it must have been. Me and the dusky beauty tangoing through the dense jungle on foot.

NATIVE WOMAN:

I only had eyes for him and he only had eyes for me.

BLOODNOK:

That explains why we fell over a cliff.

SEAGOON:

Major! Major Bloodnok! Where are you?

NATIVE WOMAN:

He's here with me.

SEAGOON:

Great spondiliks! Well anyhow, we've laid the detonation cable.

BLOODNOK:

Ohhhhh!

SEAGOON:

We're all ready to blow up the bridge.

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC LINK

GREENSLADE:

Meantime, on the bridge, Major Spon walks across to make sure all is well.

FX:

HOLLOW FOOTSTEPS.

MAJOR SPON:

I'm walking across the bridge to make sure that all is well. That's why I'm walking across the bridge... for christmas.

COMMANDANT:

Er, good morning, Major Spon.

MAJOR SPON:

Oh, good morning, Von Gutern. Cigarette?

COMMANDANT:

Thanks, I... I have one.

MAJOR SPON:

Ah, but von Gutern deserves another. Jolly English joke.

COMMANDANT:

Yes. Definite German silence. You are... you are early this morning.

MAJOR SPON:

Well, there's an old English proverb.

COMMANDANT:

Ha-ha!

MAJOR SPON:

'The early bird always catches the worm'.

COMMANDANT:

Oh, is that so? Please, I... er... what... what's the meaning of that?

MAJOR SPON:

It means that I've had worms for breakfast.

GRAMS:

LOCOMOTIVE APPROACHES. WHISTLES. VERY FAST.

COMMANDANT:

Ah, geblunden! I can hear the first puff-puff approaching. I must go and lay out the railway lines and my combined chair.

MAJOR SPON:

Goodbye! There he goes, poor fellow. Little does he know Germany can't possibly win the war.

ECCLES:

Ooo! Then I'd better take this German uniform off.

MAJOR SPON:

Field Marshal Eccles, why have you left your post?

ECCLES:

It had woodworm in it. And I didn't want to catch it.

FX:

(TRAIN WHISTLE)

MAJOR SPON:

Look down there.

ECCLES:

Ohhh!

MAJOR SPON:

You see it? Down in the river?

ECCLES:

Water!

MAJOR SPON:

Yes, but just above it, a cable.

ECCLES:

I wonder who it's from.

FX:

MULTIPLE SLAPSTICKS.

ECCLES:

(VARIOUS OWS AND CRIES OF PAIN)

SEAGOON:

Watching from the opposite bank, we all held our breath. As Major Spon went down the river bank, we all asked ourselves the same question...

BLOODNOK/ECCLES/SEAGOON:

(VARIOUS QUESTIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY)

SEAGOON:

He's spotted the cable!

BLOODNOK:

He's got eyes like a hawk.

SEAGOON:

And legs like a kangaroo. I wonder what he's going to do?

BLOODNOK:

Join a freak show, perhaps.

SEAGOON:

If he follows that cable it will lead him to Private Mate who's waiting to press the dreaded plunger!

WILLIUM:

Ah, they'll never find me, mate, in the master disguise. You see I got a little bit of twig stuck out all over me. Me old plates stuck in two lumps of grass, I looks like a perfect tree, there.

ECCLES:

Ah! Oooh! A perfect tree with boots on. Must be going somewhere.

WILLIUM:

Go away, mate, go away. And keep that dog off.

ECCLES:

Dere's no dog here.

WILLIUM:

Well you just watch what you're doing then, mate.

ECCLES:

Erm...what's your... what... what...what your name?

WILLIUM:

My name's Jim Coconut-Tree.

ECCLES:

Oooo!

FX:

SAWING

WILLIUM:

Oh! Stop! Help! Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeelp! (FADES)

ECCLES:

(DISTANT) Timbeeeeeeeeeeeer!

GRAMS:

TREE FALLING.

SEAGOON:

Major! Major! They've chopped Willium down. I must go and help.

GRAMS:

BOOTS RUNNING OFF.

BLOODNOK:

I shall now keep the audience entertained.

ORCHESTRA:

DRAMATIC CHORDS.

GREENSLADE:

And here's a brief resumé with piano accompaniment.

PIANO:

SELLERS AWFUL ARPEGGIOS.

GREENSLADE:

William lies chopped down. Neddie on his way to assist. Eccles eating coconuts. Major Spon approaching the felled William. And suddenly...

SEAGOON:

Hands up, Major Spon!

MAJOR SPON:

You!

SEAGOON:

Yes, it's me - you - or you, me - it's me. We've come to blow the bridge up.

MAJOR SPON:

You can't, it's got a puncture.

SEAGOON:

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! William, press yer old plunger!

WILLIUM:

Right, mate.

GRAMS:

LOUD EXPLOSION. SPLASH IN WATER.

LITTLE JIM:

They've fallen in the wa-tah.

MILLIGAN:

(AFTER AUDIENCE APPLAUSE) Thank you.

MAJOR SPON:

I don't know how we'd do without that lad.

SEAGOON:

Well, that's the lot for this week, innit? Come on, lads, back to the old brandy, there.

GRAMS:

BOOTS RUNNING AWAY AT SPEED.

GREENSLADE:

It's all in the mind, you know.

ORCHESTRA:

OLD COMRADES PLAYOUT.

GREENSLADE:

That was The Goon Show, a BBC recorded programme featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and Cécile Chevreau, with the Ray Ellington Quartet, Max Geldray and the Orchestra conducted by Wally Stott. Script by Spike Milligan and Larry Stephens. Announcer Wallace Greenslade. The programme produced by Roy Spear.

NOTES

When Eccles wonders who the cable is from, the joke relies on "cable" having two meanings: an electrical wire and a telegram.