

British Empire Casualties of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902

Additional Notes & Sources

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Introduction

My database has a total of 64,952 entries.

Fatal	Non-Fatal	Total
23,619	42,323	64,952

The table below shows how this compares with the official casualty rolls and two authoritative sources. This table shows that it is very difficult to get an accurate count of casualties from existing and reliable sources. My database provides the best source for reliable figures.

Recorded Casualty Incidents:

	Fatal	Non-Fatal	Total
Official Casualty Rolls	21,391	35,017	56,408
The Official History	21,942	22,829	44,771
The Times History	22,450	24,202	46,652
My Database	22,672	41,443	64,115

Notes to Table:

Official Casualty Rolls:

South African Field Force 1899-1902, JB Hayward & Sons, 1982

Natal Field Force 1899-1900, JB Hayward & Sons, 1980

- Latest date is 30-10-1902
- Duplicate entries removed
- There are 58 entries with no known date

The Official History (Maurice & Grant 1906):

- specifies casualties to 31-05-1902

The Times History (Amery 1900-1909):

- time period not specified
- fatalities includes 508 men invalided to England who subsequently died
- Non-Fatal is wounded, missing & prisoners only

My database:

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- Only entries to 31-10-1902
- Excludes the 1,735 entries with no known date
- Excludes the 37 entries from November 1902 to 1907 for fatalities connected to the war

Over 120 sources have been used to add, correct and enrich the data. I have found that not one source is 100% accurate.

I have not used modern transcriptions such as *The Boer War Casualty roll 1899-1902* (A Palmer, Military Minded, 1995). As the author acknowledges it is a simple copy of the Hayward rolls and The Last Post and thus repeats all their errors.

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Deaths At Sea

A death at sea allows the researcher to use the excellent *Deaths At Sea, 1781-1968* register on FindmyPast.co.uk.

The register shows the ship, date of death, latitude and longitude of death, cause of death, cause of death and usually first name(s), age and home address or town. Occasionally the time of death is recorded.

With the latitude and longitude of death one can pinpoint exactly where on the voyage death occurred and the likely place of burial. No bodies were returned to the destination port. Using Google Earth simply type in the co-ordinates as

they are shown in *Deaths At Sea* replacing full stops with spaces.

The image (left) shows the location of the three deaths aboard the SS Dunolly Castle (ex Southampton 16 February, 1901) transporting five officers and 530 men of the 2nd contingent Imperial Yeomanry to South Africa, all died of “acute lobar pneumonia”.

1. Pte John Roche - 20 February
2. Pte Alfred James Croft - 1 March
3. Pte Claude Woollven - 5 March

Searching *Deaths at Sea* can also resolve remarks on the medal roll such as “Dead”. Pte 3009 E Hughes 8th Hussars is one such case who is not in the casualty rolls. *Deaths at Sea* show he committed suicide by jumping overboard on 6 March, 1901

off SS Idaho (ex London 28 February). Pte Hughes was on his way back to the



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war, possibly having been invalided with disease and returning upon recovery. Unusually *Deaths at Sea* gives a detailed description of his death, during the morning inspection at 11 am, Pte Hughes “had two attendants looking when he made a rush and jumped overboard”. The ship was halted and returned to look for him without success.

There is even the occasional Boer prisoner recorded who died on the way to a POW camp: SP Du Plessis age 34 died of pneumonia and heart failure on 17 May, 1900 aboard the SS Bavarian at St Helena.

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Executions

George Shaw's story was found in a newspaper report:

Bournemouth Daily Echo

18th June 1901

SHOT AS A TRAITOR.
LIVERPOOL. MAN'S FATE.
Lance-Corporal D. Thomas, of the South Wales Borderers, writing from Ventersdorp to friends at Aberswyth, describes the capture and execution on a charge of treason of Private Shaw, of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. The execution took place at Ventersdorp on April 27, and the crime was that of deserting his Majesty's army and joining the Boers. Shaw, he states, deserted from Ventersdorp in January, and joined Smut's commando; he was also with De la Rey when he fought against the South Wales Borderers at Modderfontein, on January 27, 28, and 29, and February 2. The Boers had supplied him with a rifle and ammunition, and also with a wife whilst in the laager. He was captured in March, when General Babington captured from Smut's seven guns and 200 prisoners. The prisoners were brought into Ventersdorp, where a detachment of Shaw's regiment was stationed. When Shaw went for his biscuits the officer asked his name, and he replied Field-Cornet Viljoen. The sergeant at once recognised him, and had him put under restraint. He was tried by court-martial, and found guilty, on April 26th, and he was told his sentence would be carried out at six o'clock next morning. The sentence did not seem to take any effect whatever upon him, and he seemed as jolly as ever. In the guardroom he sang different songs; one he seemed to sing more than others was, "Lay me away on the hillside among the

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was, "Lay me away on the hillside among the brave and the bold." He took no notice of the chaplain's ministrations, but the chaplain managed to touch his tender spot by mentioning about his mother. During the evening of the 26th he ate a hearty meal and smoked several cigarettes, and was laughing and cracking jokes until one a.m. on the 27th with the men on guard over him. When he retired he slept soundly until five a.m. The chaplain visited him again, but could not bring him to realise that his end was so near. Shaw seemed jovial, smoking cigarettes all the time. He told the chaplain, "I am not afraid to die, so you needn't keep worrying me." The execution took place in an old stone quarry, and as soon as the firing party had fired their rifles a doctor went forward to see if he was dead, when Shaw uttered three piteous groans. A staff officer then stepped up with a loaded revolver, and blew his brains out, thus making sure he was dead. Shaw was a native of Liverpool, and had been five years in the army. He wrote two letters—one to his mother and one to his commander.

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Family Casualties in the Anglo-Boer War

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Love, AEC – did he die in the war?

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Ministers of Religion

The account of Rev Tobias' wounding comes from a letter from Corporal 14186 William Thomas Dawes, RAMC.

A DERBY MAN WITH THE R.A.M.C.

A BUSY AND EXCITING DAY'S WORK.

Mr. E. Dawes, of 73, Cobden-street, Derby, has received an interesting letter from his son William, who left Derby on May 24, 1900, to join the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Volunteer from the Bearer Company of the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Derbyshire Regiment. Whilst in Derby Dawes was a postman. He writes under date of July 17 from Wonderfontein, Transvaal, and says:—I have not much general news for you this time of writing, but have one little bit of news that will be pleasant reading. Yesterday morning our commanding officer had all men fall in on parade, and, calling me out, read from the South African Army Orders that the General Officer Commanding had been pleased to sanction my promotion to corporal for gallantry in action and good work under heavy fire. I can assure you I was very much surprised to find my services had been so much recognised. The commanding officer, in his remarks, highly complimented me on the honour conferred upon me, and said that not only by the medical officer had I been recommended, but by Colonel Galway and four other officers, who saw me at work during the battle. I have previously refrained in my letters from referring in any detail to the fight, as I thought you would not care to hear of my having been exposed to so much danger. An ox-convoy, carrying a large number of refugees and sick, with a quantity of food supplies, left Bethel on May 22. I accompanied this convoy with an ambulance. We were attacked each day of the journey, and had several killed and wounded. But the crown-

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ing day came on May 25, when the Boers in large force made a most desperate attempt to capture the convoy. Fighting commenced at 5 a.m., immediately we moved from camp. By eight o'clock I had picked up five wounded, four being conveyed on the ox wagon, and the other on the tongas. At this time and till noon, the fighting was most heavy. Reaching the convoy, I transferred the wounded I had, and went out again. On my way out I had to pass through a fierce veldt fire, and shortly afterwards found that I was under very heavy fire from the Boers, and I later on got under our own rifle and shell fire, our own men being unable to see me through the smoke. Through all this I did not seem to have any fear, my only thought being to try and find our wounded. While under the heavy fire I met the Rev. Tobias, acting chaplain. He was out trying to find any wounded. He left me, and went a different way, and I am sorry to say I afterwards found him wounded, he having been shot two minutes after leaving me. Shortly after the above I was taken prisoner by some Boers who came upon me, but I was soon liberated upon the arrival of a field cornet, who knew where some of our wounded were. He kindly took me a distance of about two miles through their lines, where at different places I found three wounded and one killed. After dressing them the Boers helped me to load them up. On my way back to camp I met General Ben Viljoen. He asked me what wounded I had got, and promised me he would see that the dead man whom I had been forced to leave on the field was buried respectably. He also provided me with an escort, so that I should not be shot at by their men. On my way back I found the Rev. Tobias, and fetched him in, this making nine

I had dealt with out of 20 wounded. This did not finish my day's work, for I had then to assist the doctors to dress all the cases and also assist with two operations, and at last I had a chance of breaking my fast, and this at 8 p.m. By the foregoing you will see I had a very heavy day, but I never expected to be so handsomely rewarded, as I was only doing the duty I left Derby for, the duty of nursing and attending the sick and wounded. I am enjoying most excellent health.

Source: Derby Daily Telegraph 14-08-1901. FindmyPast.co.uk retrieved Jul 2017

Charles Fredrick Tobias was born in Liverpool 23rd March 1849, the third son of a merchant. He was educated at King's School, Liverpool then at Cambridge University. He matriculated in

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1871 with a law degree. According to biographical notes published by Wits University he had converted from the Jewish faith.

He then travelled to southern Africa and in 1876 was ordained a Deacon at Bloemfontein. He served a variety of parishes in Kimberley, Beaconsfield and O'Okiep in the far western Cape Colony. He left O'Okiep in 1900 to take up a post as a Chaplain in the Army. Following the war he remained in South Africa settling in Cape Town where he remained until his death in 1937.

In 1880 he married Ethel Eliza Smith in Kimberley. They had five children. One, George Robert Wolfe, followed his father into Holy Orders. He was awarded the Military Cross in World War I serving as Chaplain with the South African Heavy Artillery. He had previously served with the South African Medical Corps with whom he was severely wounded on the Somme in 1916.

Following the war George jnr took up missionary work in what is now Namibia and became Bishop of Damaraland.



Charles and his wife Eliza, from Ancestry retrieved 13th September, 2017

Source: <http://www.historicalpapers.wits.ac.za/?inventory/U/collections&c=AB934/R/7945>

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Presented to the Queen

Details of Sgt Morris' war were printed a newspaper. One a letter details his experiences at Magersfontein (or "Spytfontein"), the other appears to be an interview which records him being presented to the Queen.

**"STOPPING" A BOER BULLET.
A TERRIBLE TIME.**

The following letter has this week been received by Mrs. E. Britchiffe, of Whims Lodge, Sabden, from her brother, Sergt. T. G. Morris, of the 12th Lancers, serving with Lord Methuen. The letter is from the military hospital, Wynberg, near Cape Town. He writes:—"Just a few lines to let you know I have stopped one of the Boer bullets, on Monday, the 11th December, at the battle of Spytfontein. After lying on my belly for over 13 hours one of their shots found its way through my leg, so now I am lying on my back in hospital, but thank God it is not worse. We had a terrible time of it. I should say it was the worst fight since the Crimean War. I never expected ever seeing such a sight. Never mind, I shall soon be right again. It is only a flesh wound through my calf. I am pleased with myself when I see other poor fellows with five and six wounds and some bones broken. You will see I am in hospital, near Cape Town, which is some 700 miles from the scene of the battle. I came down from the front on the 19th, and I am all right in this hospital. We get every attention here; the people are all very kind to all of us, so are the people at home, who are constantly sending us something by every mail. We had a splendid voyage out. I was not sick one single day. I don't know whether you will have seen my name in the papers or not, but don't trouble; really there is nothing to be afraid of. I shall soon be all right again. I fancy you will have read of England's reverses, but don't you believe all you see in the papers. The Boers are losing more heavily than us. I can tell you they don't have all their own way, but the devils get behind those hills, and you can't shift them. They have not heart enough to fight in the open, or else the Lancers would show them what the cold steel was made of. Their heart is in the wrong place; they are not made of the material that constitutes the British Army."

A WOUNDED LANCER RETURNS.

Some short time ago we published an interesting letter from Sergeant T. G. Morris, of the 12th Royal Lancers. Sergt. Morris was wounded severely in the calf of the leg in the battle of Spytfontein, and was conveyed to Wynberg Hospital, near Cape Town. It appears the wound has been of so serious a character that he has been invalided home. The wounded Lancer is the brother of Mrs. Ernest Britchiffe, of Whims Lodge, Sabden, who last week paid him a visit. Sergt. Morris is a smart soldier, measuring six feet in height. He is only 23 years of age. It is six years since he enlisted. When war was declared he went out with his regiment, who have distinguished themselves in the battles of Enslin, Graspan, Modder River, and Spytfontein. In the last engagement the young soldier was shot in the leg, the bullet going clean through. He gives a graphic account of this battle, and wonders that the British loss was not greater. They were literally "swarmed" with bullets. Speaking of the death of General Wauchope, he says that by an error of judgment on the part of some unknown person the signal to retreat was given to the deceased officer and his men, with the result that considerable confusion occurred, whereby the retreating men fell in the darkness headlong over the Lancers, who were lying upon the ground, firing upon the enemy with good effect. He was of opinion had this not happened—the false alarm—victory would have been ours. He adds that Lord Methuen was in no way to blame for this awful disaster. He speaks of Lord Methuen as an excellent leader, and under whom he could again serve with the utmost confidence. He remarks that when at Wynberg Hospital he was treated with every kindness and attention. He spoke with some degree of enthusiasm that while at Netley Hospital he was one amongst the favoured few who had the privilege of being visited by the Queen, who expressed consolation with the wounded sergeant. Adverting to Boer cowardice and their firing upon the ambulance men, he said after he was shot he was carried off the field amid a storm of shot and shell—in fact he was fortunate to arrive at the hospital alive.

Source: Burnley Express 24-01-1900, 31-03-1900

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Prisoners of War

A total of 9,973 British troops were captured by the Boers during the war. A further 1,1713 were posted as “missing”, how many of these may have been captured by the Boers is not known.

The major surrenders were:

30th October, 1899 – Nicholson’s Nek (Ladysmith) : 861

10th December, 1899 – Stormberg (Central Cape): 608

6th June, 1900 – Roodewal & Rhenoster Camp (Orange Free State) : 591

3rd April, 1900 – Mostert’s Hoek (Orange Free State) : 466

31st March, 1900 – Koornspruit (Orange Free State) : 433

23rd November, 1900 – Dewetsdorp (Orange Free State) : 395

31st May, 1900 – Lindley (Orange Free State) : 373

Up to about August 1900 the majority of prisoners, some 6,000 men, were sent to Pretoria where a camp was established. The conditions were Spartan and deteriorated into 1900, food and medical supplies were scant, 80 men died as prisoners. When the British captured Pretoria on June 6, 1900 3,104 men were set free, many were in poor physical condition. The remaining prisoners were taken east with the fleeing Transvaal army, such as it was. Despite even worse conditions the Boers added more British prisoners to the “mobile” camp, such as the 187 men captured on July 11 at Zilikat’s Nek. In the chaotic conditions men escaped or were released in small batches. On September 5th the Boers guards simply left leaving 1,673 men to walk free. However a small number of prisoners they thought to be of “high value” – members of the aristocracy, were kept. These men were eventually released on September 13 at Barberton. Thereafter the Boers did not maintain a central POW camp and men captured were held for a few hours or days at the most.

The Official Casualty Rolls do not give the release date for the vast majority of POWs. My research has added 911 prisoners and 5,662 release dates. The primary source has been The Times newspaper.

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The First & Last

The official casualty rolls don't list 32 of the first 33 casualties of the war; only an officer, Lt RH Nesbitt, Protectorate Rgt is listed. Two days after the Boers invaded Natal and Cape Colony on October 11, 1899 the armies collided. At De Jager's Drift on the Natal border with the Transvaal a Natal Police picquet of five were captured. On the other side of southern Africa the Lichtenburg commando ambushed an armoured train at Kraaipan in the Cape Colony; 14 men of the Protectorate Regiment were captured along with three men of the Cape Government Railways. A further 11 civilians, probably railway employees, were also captured. The train was taking two 7pdr guns and ammunition to bolster the defences of Mafeking where the Protectorate Rgt was based. The absence of the "Defence of Mafeking" clasp marks Liefeldt's medal as a rarity for the Protectorate Rgt.

The prisoners were sent to Pretoria and spent the next nine months behind barbed wire, the longest period of all British forces captured by the Boers. Liefeldt was released on June 6, 1900 when Pretoria was captured by the British, he was finally discharged in October 1900.

After the war Theophilus Edward Liefeldt worked for the Department of Native Affairs in the western Transvaal. During World War I he served as a Major and "was chiefly responsible" for organising the Native Labour Corps who served in south-west Africa and later commanded the South African natives in the war in East Africa. For his services he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

Following the signing of the peace on May 31, 1902 the only way to inform the scattered commandos was for the British troops to become messengers not hunters. This task was incredibly dangerous, the Boer commandos had no idea peace had been declared; were the approaching British using a white flag as a trick? Eight soldiers were killed and eight wounded in June 1902 carrying the news to the Boers in the field.

Boardman was part of a patrol of 20 near Mortimer, Cape Colony that was fired on killing two, mortally wounding Lt HD Spratt and wounding Boardman. Dooner records "the Boer commandant, not being aware that peace had been declared, opened fire".

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Transcription Errors

The Banstead History Research Group (www.bansteadhistory.com) was researching the Kensington and Chelsea district School (Beechholme) war memorial. Their main source was Ancestry. They published online and unfortunately Ancestry's inaccurate transcriptions led them to publish the incorrect information online. Coincidentally errors related to brothers who died in the war.

Ancestry's casualty roll

View Record	C E Cruse 	Killed	22 Apr 1900	Karee	8th Hussars
View Record	G Cruse 	Killed	1 Dec 1900	Howick	5th Dragoons

Retrieved 29-08-2017

Trumpeter W Cruse 8th Hussars killed in action 22-04-1900 at "Karee". The group linked his death to the battle at Karee Siding 29-03-1900. In fact he was killed at Kareefontein which is not linked at all to Karee Siding. Following correspondence they update their website.

Cruse, Walter Ernest (Brother to George Alfred Cruse) - Story corrected and updated Aug 16
Trumpeter 3797
8th Kings Royal Irish Hussars
KILLED IN ACTION 22nd APRIL 1900 AT KAREEFONTEIN.

Retrieved 12-09-2017

Similarly they were mis-informed that Trumpeter WG Cruse 5th Dragoon Guards was killed at Howick, Natal. Howick was very much "behind the lines", being killed here would be of great interest. In fact he was "accidentally killed".

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Cruse, George Alfred (brother to Walter Ernest Cruse)

Trumpeter 3264

5th Dragoon Guards

Killed in Action Date uncertain Either 1st December 1900 or 1st February 1901 at Howick

NOTE : WE HAVE RECEIVED NEW INFORMATION WHICH SUGGESTS THAT OUR ORIGINAL SOURCES WERE INCORRECT. WE ARE INVESTIGATING FURTHER AND HOPE TO UPDATE THIS STORY SOON.

LNW 10 March 2016

Retrieved 12-09-2017

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Additional Notes & Sources

Selection of Casualties to show how Ancestry have truncated the cause removing valuable information								
							Cause	
							Official Casualty Roll	Ancestry
East Surrey Regiment	Private	4975	H	Hart	15-12-1899	Colenso	Wounded Severely	Wounded
Derbyshire Regiment	Private	3463	T	Yeomans	29/05/1901	Vlakfontein	Wounded Slightly	Wounded
Scots Fusiliers, Royal	Private	5462	G	Emms	06/03/1902	Strathrae	Accidentally Wounded - Slightly	Wounded - Accident
King's Royal Rifle Corps	Private	9771	GA	Harris	08/03/1900	Ladysmith	Bright's Disease	Died
Nesbitt's Horse	Private		B	Smith	05/09/1901	Oudtshoorn	Bee Stings	Died
British South Africa Police	Trooper	915	TC	Fenton	10-11-1899	Nr Tuli	Lionness - Killed	Killed
Bufs (East Kent Regiment)	Private	5818	W	Allison	14/10/1901	Zwartkopjes	Self-inflicted - Accidentally Wounded - Severely	Wounded (Remarks = Accident)
Steinaeckers Horse	Trooper	1055	Robert	Chambers	24/11/1900	No'mahashe	Fall From Horse - Killed	Killed (Remarks = Fell)
Gloucester Regiment	Private	4481	W	Acott	23/02/1900	Ladysmith	Suffocation	Died
Nesbitt's Horse	Quartermaster Sergeant		A	Beadle	19/09/1901	Guurbraai River	Fractured Leg	Broken Bone
Kitchener's Horse	Lieutenant		HG	Berghuys	29/11/1900	Krugersdorp	Murdered	Killed

All checked 11-08-2017

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Additional Notes & Sources

Un-Friendly Fire

Source:

Marlborough Express 24-06-1903

THE occasion of the anticipated large gathering at the opening of the water works, etc., on Wednesday, at Havelock, will be taken to unveil a memorial tablet to the late trooper W. Brownlee Smith, accidentally shot whilst on active service at the Boer war. The story of his death is one of those where the call of duty appealed more urgently than a personal regard for comfort. A young man, with a prosperous career in front of him, son of Mr W. H. Smith, and grandson of Mr William Brownlee, resident of this township, sent to Scotland in his youth to study for the profession of mechanical engineer, and having served his indentures in the shops, served a further term in the drafting offices. A volunteer, and a prize marksman—the Boer war—enlistment in the 18th Company Imperial Yeomanry, Lanarkshire, and killed from the accidental discharge of a rifle by the corporal of his company in an adjoining tent at McNatling's Nek. His school fellows now perpetuate his memory by erecting in the Havelock school a marble tablet inscribed: "In memory of trooper William Brownlee Smith, Imperial Yeomanry, 18th Company, who was accidentally wounded at McNatling's Nek, January, 1902, and died from the effects of the wound at Ladybrand Hospital, February 1st, 1902; aged 23 years. Erected by his school fellows."

The tablet will adjoin one previously erected in memory of trooper Cecil Smith, cousin of the young volunteer whose memory is to be honoured on Wednesday.

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WO129 - Imperial Yeomanry casualty and discharge book. The National Archives London

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