



ORDERS & MEDALS RESEARCH SOCIETY

This is to Certify that

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Presented an Exhibit entitled
"Casualties of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902"
at the Society's 2017 Convention

Introduction

The aim was to create the first electronic and most accurate casualty roll. The first published database of casualties. The first to actively correct and enrich the rolls. Research over 10 years has uncovered many new records. The database is available online at:

www.boerwarregister.com

www.findmypast.co.uk

The basic sources are the two published rolls, the “official casualty rolls”, and *The Last Post*, a contemporary compilation of biographies of officers, nurses and war correspondents who died.

The “official casualty rolls” contain 56,439 entries for 52,690 individuals. My research has added 9,534 entries and 3,413 individuals, 41% of the entries in the official casualty rolls have been corrected or enriched. Over 120 sources have been used in the research.

In 2016 I revised *The Last Post* revealing duplications, errors and missing individuals. I published an article in *Soldiers of the Queen* detailing my findings, along with the first published biography of the author.

Research has revealed many interesting stories some of which are displayed here today with medals. Other stories and statistical tables are in the supporting documentation.

See “Additional Notes” for more on this topic and the article on the revision of *The Last Post*.

New Records

My research has added 3,415 new individuals to the casualty roll and 9,534 new casualty events.

New Individuals

- 1,161 fatalities
 - 210 fatal battle casualties
- 894 non-fatal battle casualties

1,048 individuals do not have a known date of death, most of these records come from war memorials and medal rolls.

New Casualty Events

The largest number of casualty event added are the release dates for the British POWs held in Pretoria. The Official Casualty Roll shows very few release dates. This data comes from The Times.

- 5,665 dates for POW release, escape, re-joined
- 916 POWs not previously recorded
- 1,348 battle casualties

The remainder are various events such as desertion and injury.

The Times newspaper also records men in hospital, this is an unrecorded source which is a future project.

Repeating Mistakes

In the “official casualty rolls” there are numerous errors which give false information and can lead the unwary astray. Unfortunately the “official casualty rolls” are copied without regard for this.

In addition to my database on-line there are three other sources all of which faithfully copy and repeat the errors in the “official casualty rolls”:

www.ancestry.com

www.forces-war-records.com.uk

www.nmarchive.com

I analysed a sample of data from Ancestry and Naval & Military to test the transcription quality against the “official casualty rolls”. Forces War Records did not respond to my request to participate in the survey.

Naval & Military were 100 % accurate. However, I found that Ancestry, who use Naval & Military’s data, had de-valued the data by summarising the cause of a casualty and omitting key words such as “severely” and “self-inflicted” as in “self-inflicted - wounded severely”. Causes such as “Bright’s disease” and “Bee stings” become just “Died”. Some fatalities are listed as “killed” which suggests they died in battle, but the true cause was “murdered” and “Lioness – killed”.

So far Ancestry have declined to discuss using an accurate set of data.

I have found at least one case of Ancestry data causing researchers to publish incorrect information on-line.

See “Additional Notes” and the “The Anglo-Boer Wars Blog Spot” folder for more on this topic.

Location, Location, Location

There are four elements to a casualty record: “Who”, “What”, “Where”, “When”.

The “Where” is particularly problematic in this war. The vast majority of the battlefield was bare countryside; rolling veldt, mountainous regions, dusty plains and desert. The names of farms, hills and rivers were in a foreign language such as Afrikaans, High Dutch and a number of African tongues. During the war the British Army also named features, many of these have disappeared from modern maps. Maps were scarce and concentrated on more developed areas. The British military had no useful maps of southern Africa in 1899 and producing quality maps was a major effort. To confuse matters some place names are repeated: Gun Hill x 7, Klipfontein x 8, Nooitgedacht x 9, Palmietfontein x 9, Spitz Kop x 15.

My research corrects place names and links them to the gazetteer I wrote with my Father:

A Gazetteer of the Second Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902, The Military Press, 1999

The published casualty rolls include 773 entries simply with “Natal” as the location, most of these cover the key fighting on the Tugela Heights in February 1900. I have corrected 88% of these allowing researchers to accurately locate the “Where”.

For the famous Guards battle at Biddulphsberg (29th May, 1900) 77% of the casualties are recorded as “Senekal”, the town to which the force retreated after the battle and where the casualty roll was prepared.

For the battle of Spion Kop the casualty rolls lead the unwary astray. The battle on 24th January, 1900 is distinguished by its ferocious nature and medals to men on that “acre of massacre” are highly prized and highly priced. However, contemporary reports describe the “Battle of Spion Kop” from the 19th January when the first efforts were made to capture adjacent heights. 188 casualties that occurred from 19-24 January but were not on Spion Kop but are listed as “Spion Kop”, most have been corrected. However, the published rolls are used unquestioningly, here is an example from a current dealer’s stock. 63rd battery Q.S.A. 2 bars, C.C., Rel. of Ladysmith, Dvr. A.D. Baseley, 63rd. Bty. R.F.A. , Artillery killed in action Spion Kop,

20/1/1900



Item type:

Product code: A1742

Item condition: N.E.F.

Our price: £620.00

Add to Basket

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were on Three Tree Hill to south-west of Spion Kop.

My work on the casualty rolls has added an extra 359 entries to 2,363 in the published *The Gazetteer*.

See the “The Anglo-Boer Wars Blog Spot” folder for an article on re-stating the Imperial Light Infantry casualties at Spion Kop.

Deaths at Sea

The war, fought at the tip of the African continent, was about as far away from Britain as you can get. The vast majority of personnel and material had to be shipped across the oceans, inevitably men died en route.

355 men have been identified as dying at sea, 205 of these are recorded in the published casualty rolls. The remaining 150 deaths have been identified from other sources, the majority (114) coming from war memorials.

All deaths recorded so far occurred on the UK-SA route, with just one from India: Pte 5788 J Black, Black Watch.

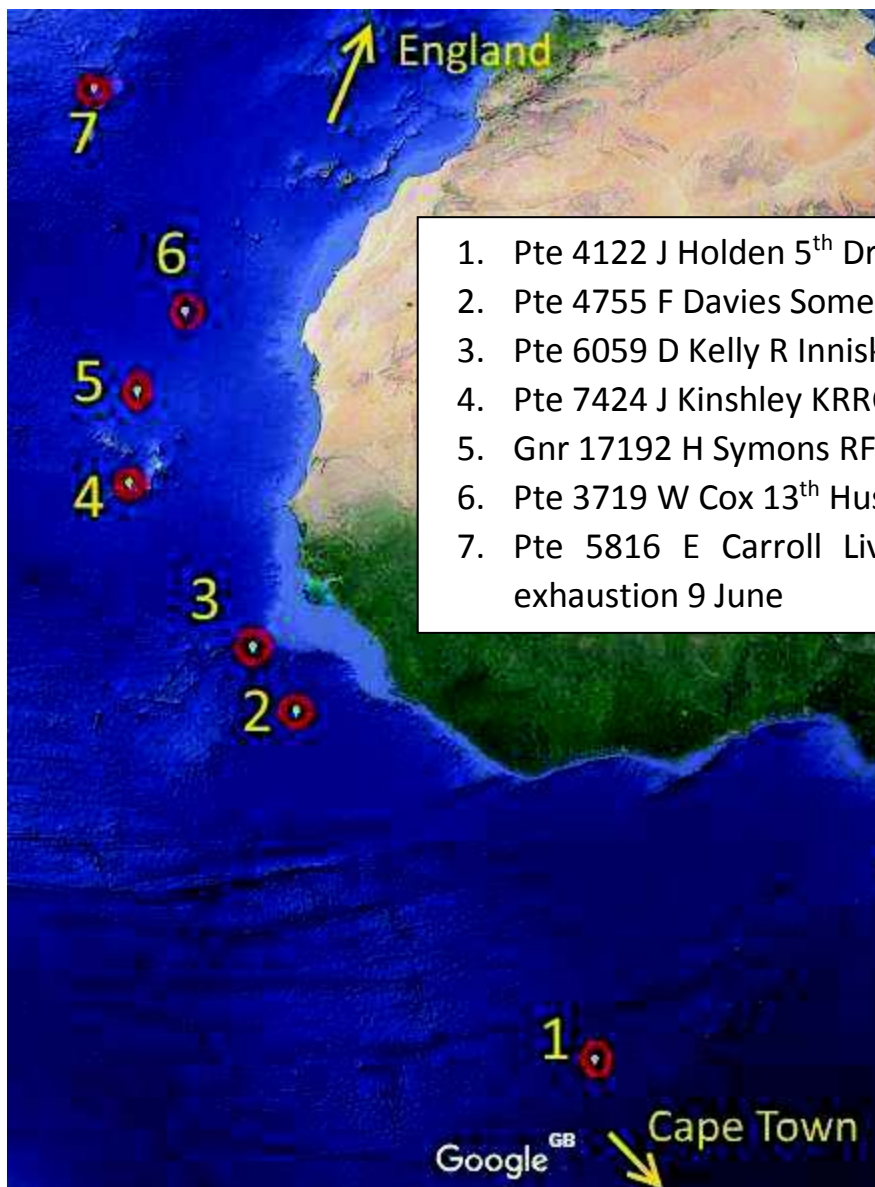
Most deaths were caused by disease; on the voyage out pneumonia was common and the voyage back diseases contracted on active service such as enteric. Four men are recorded as committing suicide by jumping overboard a further six are recorded simply as drowned and one “fell overboard”.

Deaths from wounds as recorded is very low, just six. This can be explained by recognising that only those thought likely to survive the two-three week journey would be sent home.

A death at sea can help the researcher overcome the common problem of service records being destroyed leaving no biographical information. On FindmyPast.co.uk there is the Deaths At Sea, 1781-1968 register which provides basic biographical information.

The image below plots the location of the deaths that occurred aboard the SS Simla (ex Cape Town 21 May, 1900) transporting sick and wounded to England.

Only one of these seven deaths is recorded in the published casualty rolls: Pte Kinshley, Natal Field Force Roll.



1. Pte 4122 J Holden 5th Dragoon Guards – dysentery 28 May
2. Pte 4755 F Davies Somerset LI – enteric 1 June
3. Pte 6059 D Kelly R Inniskilling Fus – wounds 2 June
4. Pte 7424 J Kinshley KRRC - acute mania cerebritis 4 June
5. Gnr 17192 H Symons RFA – dysentery 6 June
6. Pte 3719 W Cox 13th Hussars – dysentery 7 June
7. Pte 5816 E Carroll Liverpool Rgt – enteric, dysentery, exhaustion 9 June

See “Additional Notes” for more information.

Identifying a Casualty

Battles are chaotic, hospital wards can be too when faced with an epidemic, notes and records are not correctly completed, and they get lost. So, how was a dead body or a patient identified?

The “Dog Tags” we know today weren’t used by the British Army until 1916. From 1907 regiments issued metal discs which in turn replaced the “description card”.

The “description card” (below) was made from cloth, *Army Form B.2067 Description Card For Active Service*. The piece of cloth was then sewn into the tunic so it could be found on the deceased.

But sometimes the wrong man was declared dead: AEC Love appears in the casualty rolls and a memorial in a cemetery where his body apparently rests. However research shows he survived to serve in WW1.

See his full story in the “Additional Notes”.

Army Form B. 2067.

DESCRIPTION CARD FOR ACTIVE

SERVICE.

No. and Name

2520

Wallace E.

Rank and Regiment

of Capt. 28.9.28. 28.9.28. 28.9.28.

Nearest of Kin

Father James

Residing at

37 South St

Maybome
London

Signature of Officer

Commanding Troop,

Battery or Company

H W V

50,000

8-99

100,000

9-99

8 4 80

Major

William



The Wrong Man

A medal to Sgt 416 HF Adlard, South African Light Horse was sold in 2016 with information from the “official casualty rolls” that he died of wounds 31st March 1900.

It was the wrong man.

Left: Trpr 99 A Adlard South African Light Horse, wounded at Hussar Hill 23rd January, 1900, died 31st March.

See the “The Anglo-Boer Wars Blog Spot” folder.

Kitchener’s Secret Army

Without any fanfare Lord Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief of British forces, authorised an unknown number of “loot corps”. Their purpose was to raid Boer farms and destroy or steal crops and livestock.

One such unit came to light through the medal rolls, Loxton’s Horse. As far as is known they suffered just one fatality, shown right.

Cpl CW Abel killed 20th August, 1901 at Nooitgedacht, OFS.

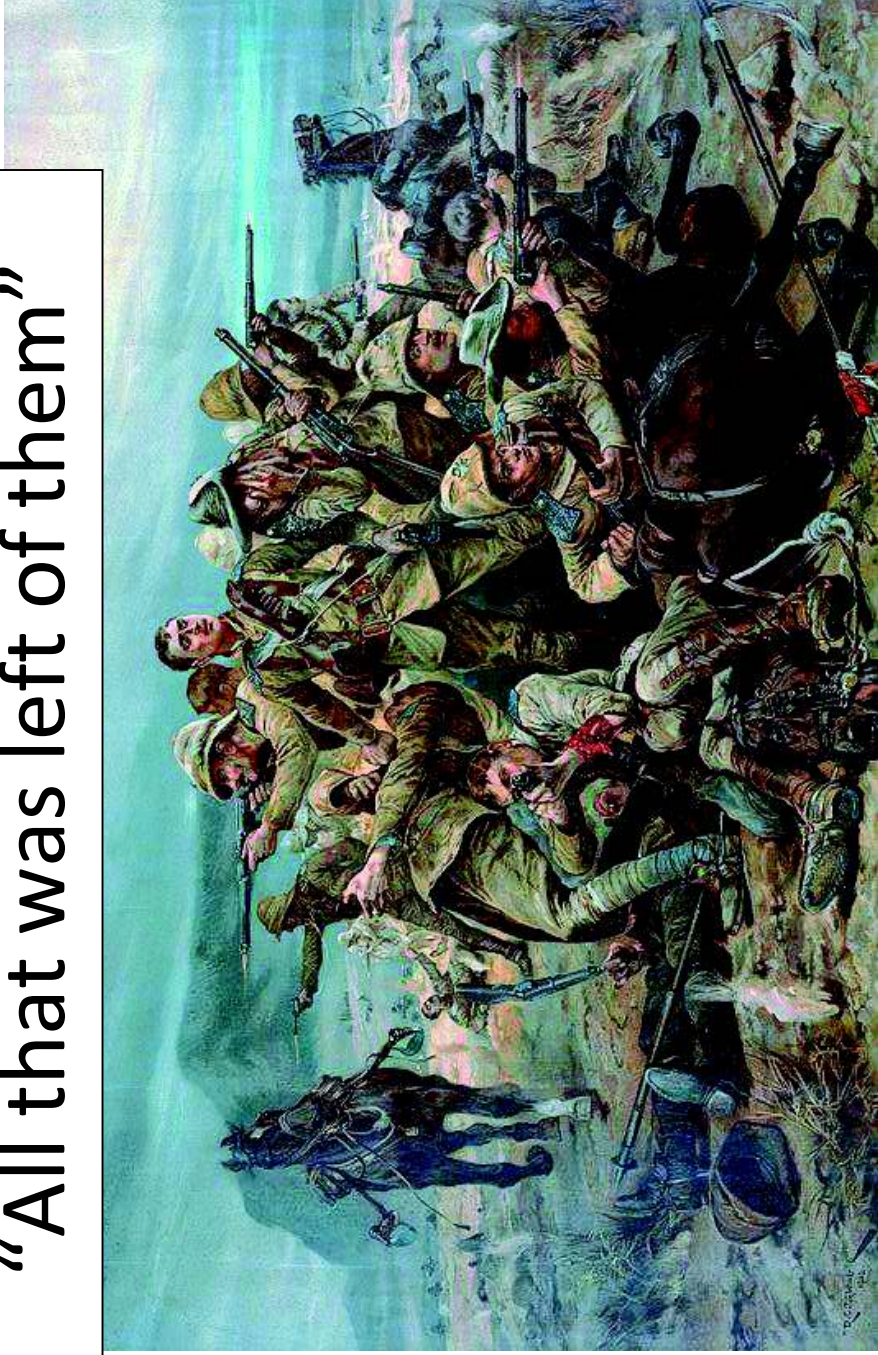
Abel is not listed in the “official casualty rolls” nor The Times. Evidence for his death comes from the medal rolls and *In Memoriam*.

A short history of this shadowy unit resulted from the research.

See the “The Anglo-Boer Wars Blog Spot” folder.



“All that was left of them”



1. Source: Wikipedia Commons

Richard Caton Woodville's dramatic painting of C Squadron 17th Lancers at Modderfontein 17th September, 1901. C Squadron lost heavily, out of a force of 175, 28 were killed and 44 wounded, a number surrendered but were held for a couple of hours before a relief force drove the Boers away. Supported by a gun from 4 Mountain Battery, RGA of which two were killed and two wounded.

The medal shown is to Corporal Shoeing-Smith 4015 Henry Kelland, 17th Lancers who was killed at Modderfontein. Kelland's war began in October 1899 at the defence of Mafeking where he was one of three shoeing-smiths from the 17th Lancers attached to the Protectorate Regiment.

Black Week

The outbreak of the war on 11 October, 1899 was no great surprise. But, Britain's military forces were still inadequate to defend Cape Colony and Natal let alone attack. It was not until December that sufficient British troops were in place to allow Britain to go on the offensive.

With troops in place attacks took place in each sector; west, central and east. The attacks occurred a five day period, all failed with high casualties. This period was dubbed "Black Week".

| | Killed/Died of Wounds | Wounded | PoW | Missing | Total |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------|-----|---------|-------|
| 10 December – Stormberg (central) | 25 | 100 | 606 | 4 | 735 |
| 11 December – Magersfontein (west) | 199 | 634 | 75 | 3 | 911 |
| 15 December – Colenso (east, Natal) | 132 | 731 | 152 | 50 | 1,065 |
| Total | 356 | 1,465 | 833 | 57 | 2,711 |

Left: Sgt 2857 E Cross 1st
Northumberland Fusiliers,
POW Stormberg. Released 6
June. POW again December
1900 at Nooitgedacht.

Centre: Pte 4287 W Shuter 2nd
Seaforth Highlanders, POW
Magersfontein. Released 6
June. One of about 100 men
who made it to the kopje.

Right: Pte 3223 J Mason 2nd
West Surrey Rgt, severely
wounded Colenso.

Civilians

The War consumed the majority of the British Empire's regular military force, and significant volunteer contributions. Yet, more men were required to support the army in the field. The British army in South Africa took on a large number of civilians (black and white) to run and guard the railways, drive supply wagons, build camps (carpenters, brick layers, plumbers, painters) and work as clerks keeping track of men, stores, pay and casualties.

Approximately 120 white civilians died, the number of blacks who died in military service was not accurately recorded.

Left: JR Whitecross, Imperial Military Railway died of consumption 29th March, 1902 at Johannesburg. John Robertson Whitecross was born in 1874 at Springburn, Lanarkshire, Scotland. He arrived in Cape Town on 13th October, 1900, aged 26 trade engineer. He did not apparently serve in any fighting units.

Right: Named in correct running script to "Lieut. G. T. Wynne-Webb R.G.A.", when Webb "earned" his medal he was not a member of the Armed Forces or even as a employed civilian, he was just a spectator. Wynne-Webb is not recorded in the official casualty rolls and his story starts with his name being recorded from the Royal Artillery memorial in London.

See the "The Anglo-Boer Wars Blog Spot" folder for his full story.

Murder & Execution: “Shoot Straight You....”

The official casualty roll records 14 murders and just one execution.

Eight of the murders recorded were attributed to the Boers. All but one of the dead were in South African units, Col CWH Helyar commanding the 7th bn Imperial Yeomanry was found dead near Pretoria in August 1900. Two Boers were arrested.

Five further murders/executions carried out by the Boers on British forces have been recorded. All the men were from South African units.

The sole execution carried out British forces recorded in the official casualty rolls is:

Pte 4806 P Enright 2nd bn Royal Munster Fusiliers, 19th April, 1902, Kroonstad.

Enright was convicted of murder, possibly of Col-Sgt 2757 W Sullivan also of the 2nd bn Royal Munster Fusiliers who was “shot by a soldier” on 18th March, 1902.

Missing from the official casualty rolls are the most famous executions of the whole war, Lt HH “Breaker” Morant and Lt PJ Handcock of the Bushveldt Carbineers.

Morant and Handcock were found guilty of murdering Boer civilians and POWs. They were executed on 27th February, 1902. Their case at the time was highly controversial and remains so today. The story was told in the film “Breaker Morant” (1980), from which the title quote comes from.

A further two executions have been recorded:

Sgt-Mjr 25294 F Carpenter Kitchener's Horse, 18th December, 1900 Krugersdorp

Pte 5437 G Shaw 1st bn Loyal North Lancashire Rgt, 27th April, 1901 Ventersdorp

Carpenter was convicted of the murder of Lt HG Berghuys, Kitchener's Horse "apparently in an argument over leave". In the *Last Post* Berghuys' entry incorrectly records that he "died of wounds received at Krugersdorp, in Feb., 1901."

George Shaw was executed for desertion and fighting against the British from January to March 1901.

See "Additional Notes" for more on this topic.

Just One

76 units suffered just one casualty during the war. See "Statistics II" for the full list.

Left: Pte 262 A Hannah, Natal Royal Rifles died of enteric at Pietermaritzburg 8th July, 1900.

Hannah is the only recorded casualty for the Natal Royal Rifles. This small volunteer unit had a strength of 150 men and were based at Estcourt, Natal. They qualified for the "Relief of Ladysmith" or "Natal" clasps.

? Quiz Corner ?

It is possible to identify potential casualties from the clasps and unit on the medal. Which actions were these men casualties at?

Left: Pte 654 T Colbeck, Durban Light Infantry, clasps: Transvaal & Natal.

Right: Pte 4609 H Prince Gloucestershire Rgt, clasps: Orange Free State, Transvaal & Natal

Both these medals were sold without any casualty details.

Anti-Personnel Mines

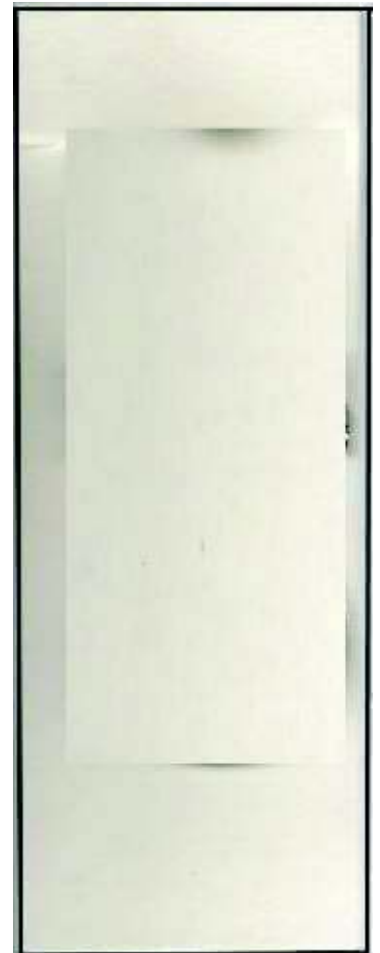
Anti-personnel mines (or simply landmines) date back to 13th century China. During the American Civil War the Confederates developed the first mechanically fused anti-personnel mines. The deployment of landmines during the Second Anglo-Boer War is not well known. Both sides deployed them, the Boers on railways and at river crossings and it appears the British as defensive shields – “area denial”. In the defense of Mafeking Colonel Baden-Powell made a great show of laying fake landmines to discourage the Boers from attacking.

The casualty rolls record four men killed and one wounded by mines, two on the railway. A sixth mine casualty came to light through an Official Enquiry filed with service papers.

Right: Sapper 26772 J Toft, 5th Field Company, Royal Engineers, was accidentally injured at Barberton on 10th November, 1901. Giving evidence to the Official Enquiry into the circumstances of his injuries, Sapper Toft states he was being shown the position of the mines and was warned by his guide (a fellow sapper) to follow him:

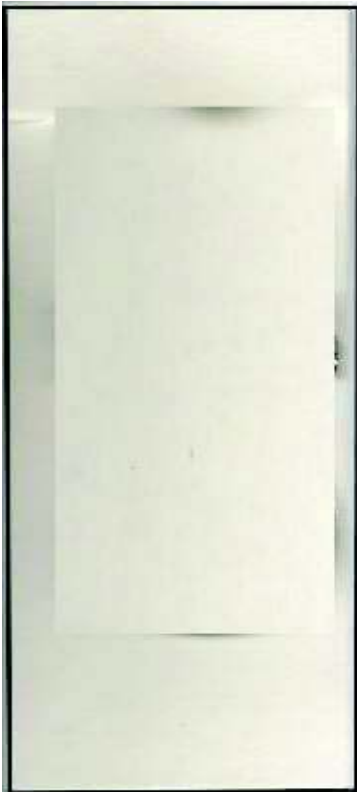
“..as I had a bag of tools in my hand and it was easier to get through the wire in another place..”

Toft put his foot down. A mine exploded which knocked him down, he got up and staggered about 20 yards before collapsing. Fortunately he only suffered severe bruising to his chest and a haemorrhage, the Enquiry also reported he was “somewhat deaf”. The incident was judged an accident despite recording that Toft did not heed the clear warning. Toft returned to duty.



Ministers of Religion

A number of religious ministers accompanied the Army to South Africa. Some operated in camps, others followed their battalions onto the field. Just seven Ministers are recorded as casualties, an eighth, Reverend A Hofmeyer, is recorded as a correspondent for the Daily Mail. Five died of disease, and two were wounded in action.

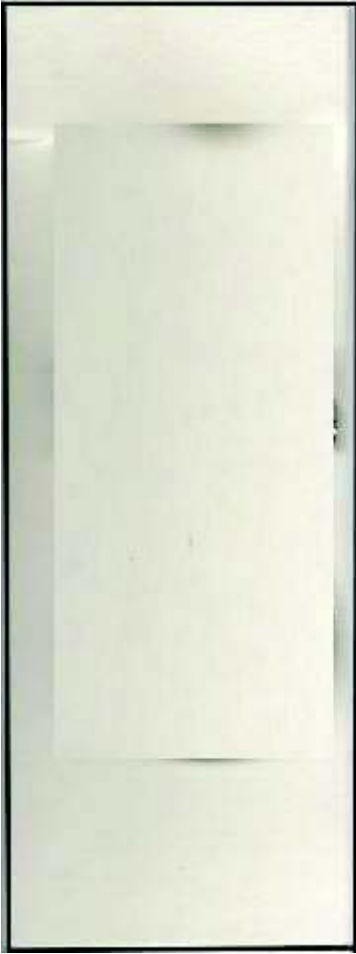


Left: Rev CF Tobias, Army Chaplains Department attached 1st bn Royal Munster Fusiliers, shot in the thigh at Mooifontein 25th May, 1901.

A full account of his wounding as he searched for wounded soldiers was reported in a newspaper. Tobias, who converted from the Jewish faith, is an interesting man. His son, also a Minister, was awarded the MC in WW1.

See “Additional Notes” for his full story.

Nurses



The Second Anglo-Boer War was the first war when women were formally employed as nurses on a large scale.

Approximately 2,000 women served as nurses, as part of the Army Nursing Service, the Army Nursing Service Reserve or civilians.

Thirty-one nurses died during the war.

Left: Medal issued to a civilian nurse, Georgina Sarah Doran who died “at the Officers' Military Hospital, Carnarvon, Cape Colony, on 11th May, 1902, of acute gastritis after two days' illness. She was the eldest daughter of General Sir John Doran, KCB, and Lady Doran, Ely House, Wexford, and went to South Africa in December 1901. She was buried in Carnarvon, and a cross was erected over her grave.” (Dooner)

Oldest and Youngest



1. The author

The youngest recorded casualty is Trumpeter 13874 REA Francis, Army Service Corps who died of enteric on 5th April, 1900 at Modder Spruit, Natal age 16 years. He is buried in Elandslaagte Naval Cemetery, Kwazulu-Natal. Lack of records make the certification of his age difficult.

The oldest casualty was 61 years old, shared by Col JG Wilson 3rd bn Yorks & Lancaster Rgt who died of wounds 9th March, 1902 sustained at De Klipdrift two days previously, and Civil Surgeon WC Grigg who died of enteric at Wynberg 12th March, 1900.

The age at death is known for just 1,510 fatalities. The average age of this group is 28 years old.

The youngest known assailant against the British forces is an un-named six year old boy:

“Whilst skirmishing Pte 4163 HH Hughes 1st King Dragoon Guards was fatally wounded by a six year old Boer boy who approached and shot him in the abdomen with a concealed pistol. Cpt EA Williams was killed and Lt HH Harris wounded in the skirmish. A report to the War Office was made by Sgt [4090] C Probertts [sic, Probetts] of Pte Hughes' troop and his comrade Pte [4225] MF Elmer.”

The Times 24th January, 1902

Prisoners of War



The Boers captured nearly 10,000 British soldiers during the war. Over 6,000 were kept in camps at Pretoria, 76 of these men died during captivity.

Left: Pte 2762 John Steele 2nd bn Northumberland Fusiliers died of disease Pretoria, 19th January, 1900. He was from 42 Milling St, Gateshead, County Durham.

Steele's death is listed in the Official Casualty roll but not his capture. He was probably taken prisoner at Stormberg on December 10, 1899 when 342 men of the battalion were captured.

Steele is interesting because his death caused a minor scandal in the Transvaal government regarding the treatment of British prisoners. The Secretary of State for War and a commissioner for POWs, Louis Francisco de Souza, tried to get the government to improve their conditions. His wife also took an active role in getting food and medical care to the POWs. Their actions were regarded as treasonous by others. Steele's death is mentioned in a letter from de Souza to Paul Kruger, the President of the Transvaal. Following some bitter infighting Kruger relieved de Souza of his role as a POW commissioner.

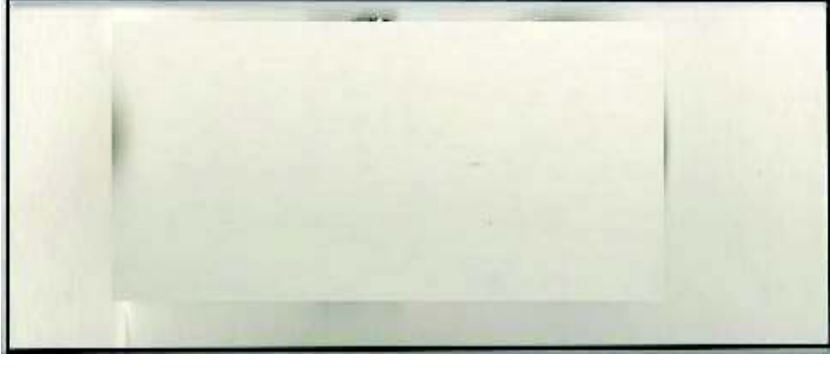
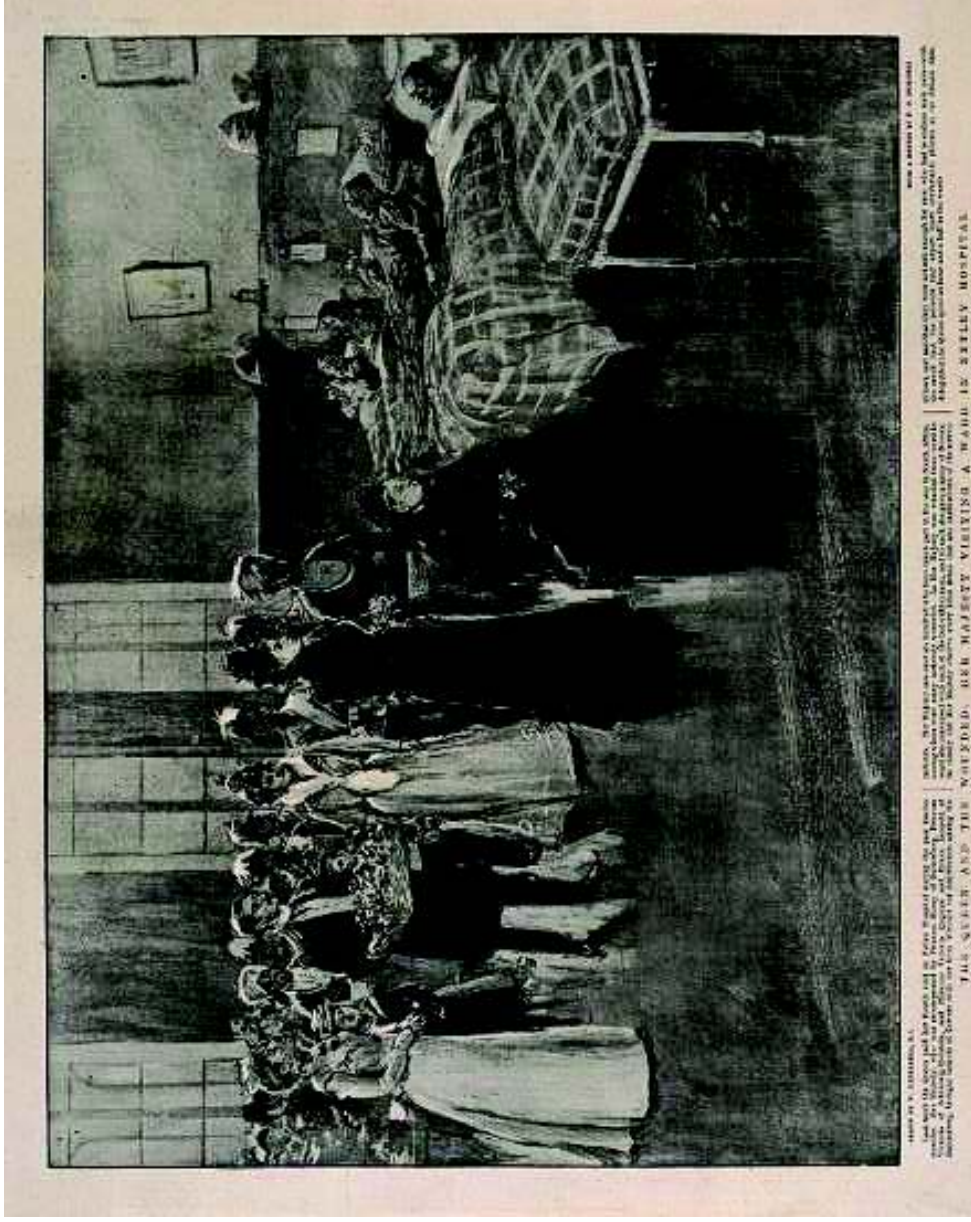
See "Additional Notes" for more on this topic.

Presented to the Queen

Queen Victoria was keenly interested in her Army and Navy and followed their activities closely.

Throughout her reign the Queen took the opportunity to visit the wounded or sick soldiers who made it back to England to continue their recovery.

In March 1900 she went to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, Southampton and there Sgt 2861 TG Morris, 12th Lancers was presented to her.



Sgt Morris had been wounded in the calf of his left leg at Magersfontein on 11 December, 1899 and invalided back to England. He returned to the war in March 1902. The 12th Lancers suffered four killed and 16 wounded at Magersfontein.

See “Additional Notes” for more information.

Self-Inflicted and Suicide

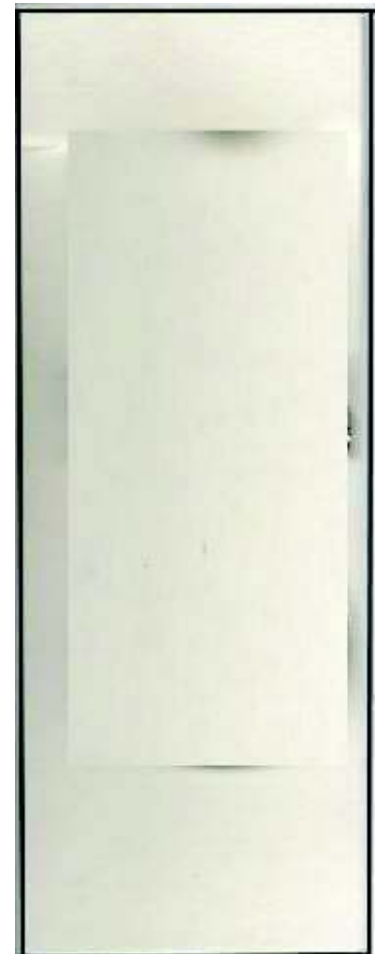
War is traumatic, life is stressful. Mix the two together and it is not surprising some seek a way out.

176 men (no women) are recorded as committing suicide or harming themselves. 58% killed themselves, half of these are recorded as suicide, 8 men jumped overboard from a troop or hospital ship. In only a few cases is it recorded the victim was “insane” or of “unsound mind”.

It is coming to light that some committed suicide after their return to Britain. In the cases known the reports stated they had suffered from enteric fever. Whether the fever itself causes mental health issues or is simply co-incidental is not known.

Not everyone injured themselves with a view to dying, but none of the non-fatal “self-inflicted” cases are recorded as “attempted suicide”.

Right: In the case of Pte 1753 P Rooney 2nd bn Coldstream Guards, he was convicted by Court Martial for "wilfully injuring himself with intent thereby to render himself unfit for service" and served a six month sentence in South Africa. Rooney injured himself on 1st September, 1900 at Waterval Onder. Exactly how he tried to injure himself and where on his body he was injured is not recorded. He returned to service after his sentence.



The First and Last

These two medals represent the first and last battle casualties of the war.

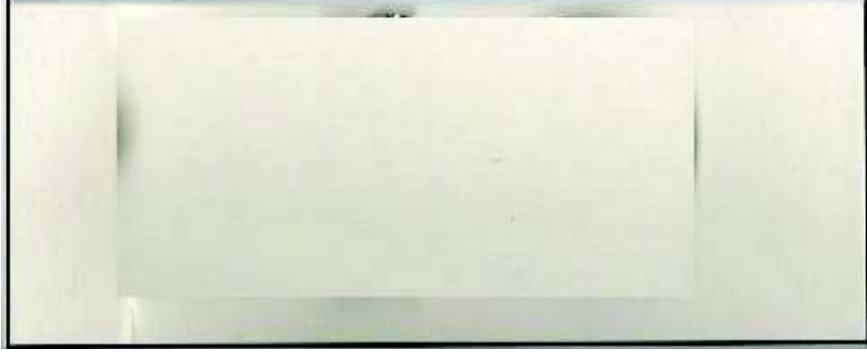


Left: Pte 30 TE Liefeldt Protectorate Regiment, prisoner of war Kraaipan 13th October, 1899. Captured when the Boers ambushed a train taking guns to defend Mafeking. Instead of being involved in the most famous siege, Liefeldt spent 9 months as a POW. The “official casualty rolls” only shows one of the first 33 casualties, Liefeldt’s commanding officer.

Right: Cpl 20495 F Boardman 32nd (Duke of Lancaster’s) Company, Imperial Yeomanry, wounded 2nd June, 1902 after peace had been declared.

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”.

See “Additional Notes” for more information.



Un-Friendly Fire

Deaths by “friendly fire” or “blue on blue” in modern parlance is an unfortunate reality in war. The casualty rolls record 959 accidental casualties, 193 were fatal. How many were due to “friendly fire” in battle can only be established by research.

Acting-Bombardier 8718 G Prime, 37 bty RFA, attached RA Mounted Rifles was deliberately shot by a Battery Sergeant-Major on 3rd February, 1902. They were on a night march and the BSM seeing a figure off to one side challenged twice, not receiving an answer he fired killing Prime. Prime is recorded in the casualty rolls as being “accidentally shot”.

At the battle of Brynbella Hill (Willow Grange) on 22nd-23rd November, 1899 the British troops advancing in a rain storm fired on each other. The guide, a local farmer, Frick Chapman, was killed and the regimental history for the West Yorkshire Rgt claims Drummer 2966 HW Russell was killed by “friendly fire”.

Negligent discharges of firearms would have been a source of accidental casualties as well.

Right: Trpr 20914 WB Smith 18th (Lanarkshire) Company, 6th bn Imperial Yeomanry, died of wounds 1st February, 1902 at Ladybrand. He had been shot in the thigh and groin while in his tent due to a negligent discharge in the next door tent.

William Brownlee Smith was born in Havelock, New Zealand and enlisted while studying in Glasgow. His cousin Trpr 2297 CW Smith 5th NZ Contingent died at Mafeking January 1901.

See “Additional Notes” for more on Trpr Smith.

