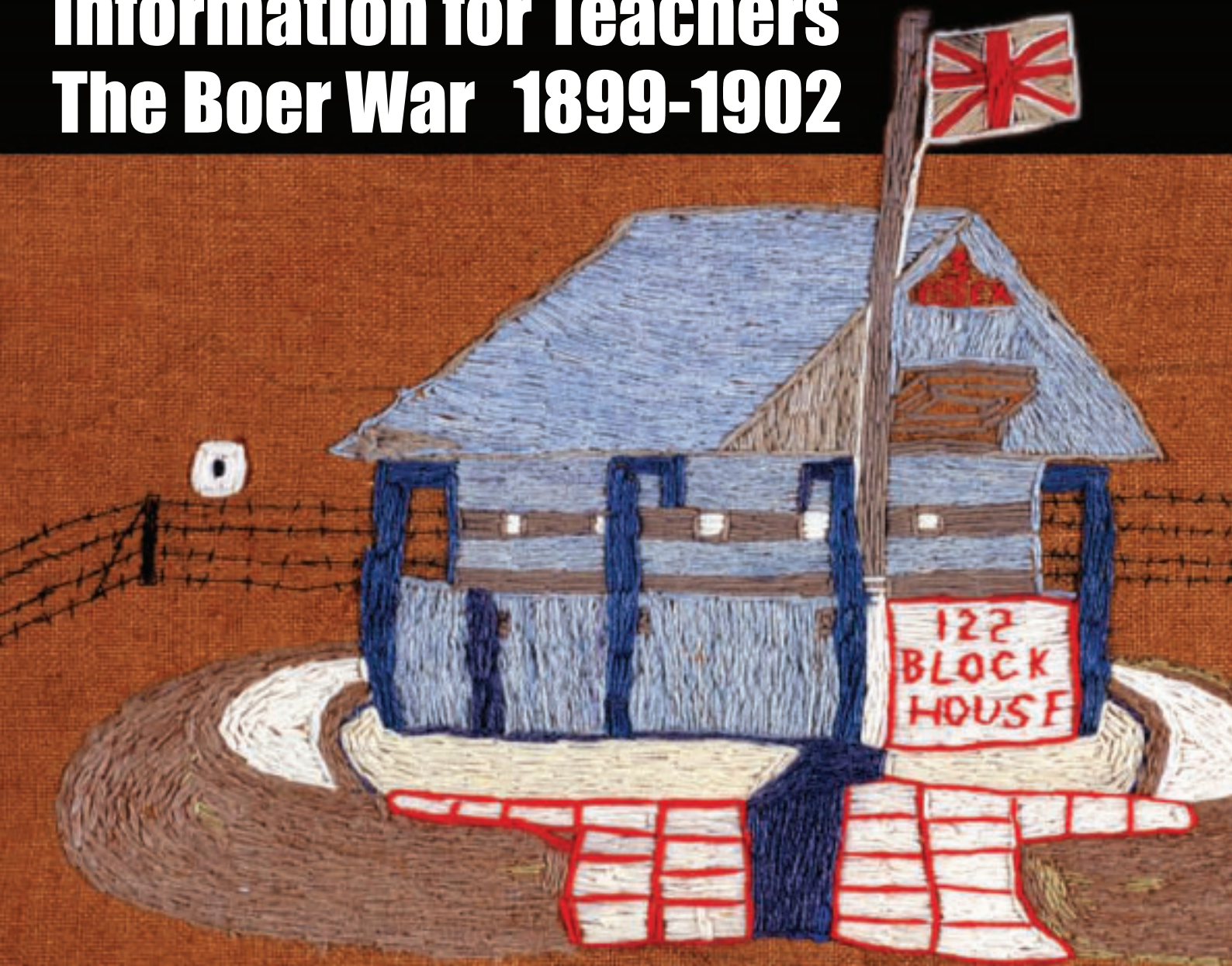




# Information for Teachers

## The Boer War 1899-1902



# Visiting the exhibition



Visit the National Army Museum and find out how Britain's past has helped to shape our present and future. Discover the impact our Army has had on the story of Britain, Europe and the world, and see how the actions of a few can affect the futures of many.

## Planning your visit

The Museum is free to enter, and it's worth making a pre-visit to familiarise yourself with the space. Gallery trails and risk assessment information are available from the web site.

## Making your booking

Call 020 7730 0717 ext 2459 (secondary and groups and Video Conferencing) or email [education@national-army-museum.ac.uk](mailto:education@national-army-museum.ac.uk). Please make us aware of any special requirements your group may have. A lunchroom and coach parking may be booked if available.

## A Typical Visit

For groups studying the Experience of Warfare 1854-1929

- 10:30 Illustrated Talk/Workshop or Archive
- 11:30 Gallery visit
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30 Handling - weapons and uniform
- 14:30 Depart

## Choose a Free workshop from:

- Medicine 1854-1929
- Weapons Development
- WW I Tactics and Technology

## Choose an Illustrated talk from:

- Women at War 1845-1929
- Media and Propaganda

Archive sessions are available on request, subject to an archivist's availability. Session spaces are limited and must be booked in advance.

# Background information for teachers



The new Boer War exhibition gives a general overview to the conflict highlighting the following significant areas.

## A Modern War

The Boer War was Britain's introduction to modern warfare. It can be seen in part as a rehearsal for the First World War (1914-18), played on the small stage.

## Boer Success

In the first phase the British were forced onto the defensive. Boer armies attacked from two fronts: into Natal from the Transvaal and into the northern Cape from the Orange Free State.

## Britain fights back

In the second phase more troops were sent to South Africa to overwhelm the Boer forces. It took the British Empire three years of fighting, three huge sieges and many costly battles to achieve victory.

## Reporting on the War

Over seventy war correspondents, more than ever before, went to South Africa on the outbreak of war.

## Product Placement

Consumer advertising flourished in the 1890s and 'the soldier' featured regularly in marketing campaigns.

## Remembering the Dead

The Boer War was the first time when war memorials became widespread. They commemorated officers and ordinary soldiers who had been killed.

### Resources

Teachers' resource pack for Key Stages 4 and 5 to support your visit: Downloadable PDF worksheet.

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# Fighting the British Army

## – Teachers' PowerPoint notes

Many of these images originate from one of the world's largest producers of stereoscopic images, Underwood and Underwood. The American company sold stereoscope slides to the general public. The original titles of these images such as 'Brave Boers Surrender' can be used to discuss bias and the meanings associated with such terms.

Civilian authorities in charge of the army gave no specific plan or instructions for the campaign in South Africa. Parliament was often more aware of the need to save money than soldiers' requirements. The army had become used to fighting disorganised natives, not highly skilled and equipped Boers. One of the most obvious points to note, using this PowerPoint, are the significant resources available to British forces, once reinforcements begin to arrive.

Each South African citizen between 16 and 60 years old had a responsibility to defend their country. This combined with a hunting culture meant that at the outbreak of war the Boers owned 100,000 rifles and over 50 million rounds of ammunition.

Boer tactics revolved around their skill at marksmanship using long-range Mauser rifles and their preference to fight on ground they knew coupled with manoeuvrability. The initial strategy was to besiege the British, however by 1900 Boer tactics switched to attacking British supply lines on the Transvaal border. Boer commanders had come to the conclusion that the war could not be won by defence alone.





NAM. 85364

**“Boers at Spion Kop”**

Collected by Cpl Edwin William Dyer, 24th Coy Army Service Corps.

British troops entrenched near the top of Spionkop suffered heavy losses because of Boer shelling, sniping, the intense heat and lack of water. The two day battle resulted in at least 332 British service men dead, 563 wounded and 163 taken prisoner.



NAM. 92793

**“Mud Hall Prison, where the British Officer Prisoners were kept by the Boers, Pretoria, S.A.”**

In August 1899 just 9,940 British troops were garrisoned in South Africa, but a further 12,546 were to arrive within the next two months. The Boers initial advances on Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafeking were successful, but siege tactics away from the ports through which British reinforcements would arrive could not deliver victory for the Boers.



NAM. 93639

**Taken by Tpr Cecil W Landon, 21st Bn Imperial Yeomanry, with Rimington's Column, 1901 on board a troop ship**

The British Empire shipped men half way around the world to reinforce troops in South Africa.



NAM. 92767

**“Occupation of Brandfort”**

Empire troops from Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, seen here, fought for the British. These troops brought with them mounted infantry techniques similar to those used by the Boers.



NAM. 115973

Signal station used also for observation. Gas Heliograph and flag signals would have been sent from this station.



NAM. 86328

**“Yorkshires signaling from New Zealand Hill (so bravely held after their Commanders had fallen, Jan 14th 1900) to Rensburg, S.A.”**

New Zealand Hill was a strategic stronghold because it overlooked the British camp at Slingersfontein.



NAM. 92783

**“British Field Telegrapher sending news of victory at Klip Drift (Feb. 12th 1900) - South Africa.”**

The British then marched from Klip Drift to Kimberley which was relieved in March 1900. The town had been besieged by Boer forces since 15th October 1899, for a total of four months. The army’s field telegraph section sailed to South Africa with 80 miles of cable. Before the end of the war they had laid 18,000 miles of line.



NAM. 92808

**“Pontoon bridge built by Royal Engineers in two hours across the Modder, S. Africa.”**

The Modder river was strategically important as it ran along the border between Cape Colony and the Orange Free State. Crossing the river was the quickest route to the besieged diamond mining town of Kimberley. The Boers defended Modder river by digging trenches rather than trying to hold kopjes. This took advantage of the Mauser rifle’s long range over flat ground.



NAM. 92182

**“Cecil Rhodes and members of the Kimberley garrison at the Westton search light, 1900”**

Rhodes (front row third from right) was in Kimberley, home of the De Beers diamond mines, throughout the siege (1899-1900), but his interference in military matters made him deeply unpopular with the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Kekewich. During the siege five searchlights were erected around the garrison perimeter and were used to illuminate the surrounding countryside at night.



NAM. 92781

**“General Cronje’s 4, 000 brave Boers after surrendering to Roberts’ force of 50, 000, Feb. 27th 1900, Paardeberg”**

Following the relief of Kimberley Boer forces retreated east and were eventually pinned down along the Modder River where they dug trenches. Unable to take the Boers’ position by storm British forces under Lord Roberts used artillery to fire on their position for the next eight days until they surrendered.



NAM. 92786

**“Supplies for Lord Roberts’ victorious Army, on the way to Pretoria, S. Africa”**

Pretoria was occupied by Lord Roberts in June 1900.



NAM. 92775

**“Balloon Corps Transport with Lord Roberts Army - advance on Johannesburg, S.A.”**

‘South African War through the Stereoscope Pt 2 Vol 1’. Published by Underwood and Underwood 1901.

The relief of Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafeking and the occupation of Johannesburg and Pretoria signaled a changing tide for the Boers fortunes.



NAM. 82814

**“Behind the Orange River entrenchments.”**

Pith helmets were designed to protect soldiers from the sun. All brightly coloured or obvious military markings were removed from uniform to prevent the Boers using them as targets.



NAM. 84827

**Photograph showing naval guns on board railway wagons.**

Buller developed a modern form of battlefield tactics called a creeping barrage: heavy artillery bombardments co-ordinated to permit the infantry to advance under their protection. The Boers’ ability to conceal themselves meant that the increased range of their rifles was of no advantage. The use of shells enabled the British to pin the Boers down without having to know their exact location.



NAM. 88407

**“Steam engine by Col H L Templer, Royal Engineers, 1900.”**

Thornycroft steam wagons were used by the British Army to shift freight of up to 30 tons at a time; they were also relatively fast, for their time.



NAM. 92820

**“Railway Bridge at Kroonstadt blown up by the Boers, South Africa 1901.”**

From 1901 the Boers fought an increasingly bitter guerilla war.



NAM. 92742

**“How ‘Tommy Atkins’ travels - Wiltshires off to take part in Roberts’ Campaign, S. Africa.”**

Published by Underwood and Underwood and produced by Works and Sun Sculpture Studios, 1900 (c) for public purchase.

There were 4 British South African railways. The limited number of railways meant that a column could be working 150 miles from the nearest railway, making blockhouses important for British troop safety.



NAM. 93636

**Copy photograph of a blockhouse, 1901-1902. Taken by Tpr Cecil W Landon, 21st Bn Imperial Yeomanry, with Rimington’s Column.**

By 1901 the British had begun a policy of clearance. Although formidable, blockhouses were often under resourced with as few as 40 soldiers based at each one instead of the recommended 100.



NAM. 93644

**“Boer prisoners coming in escorted by men of the Durham Light Infantry, 1902.”**

Around 5,000 Boers switched sides as the war progressed and approximately 15,000, surrendered to become neutral. Battle fatigue, concern about your own or your family welfare, and the futility of fighting such a large army sapped Boer morale after 1901.



NAM. 85019

As well as policing their own territories, black Africans served alongside British forces during the Boer War. It is estimated that between 15,000 and 30,000 blacks were serving under arms with the British Army as scouts and sentries, while another 100,000 worked as labourers, transport drivers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, farriers and builders. The Boers killed black people they found with weapons or considered to be British collaborators.