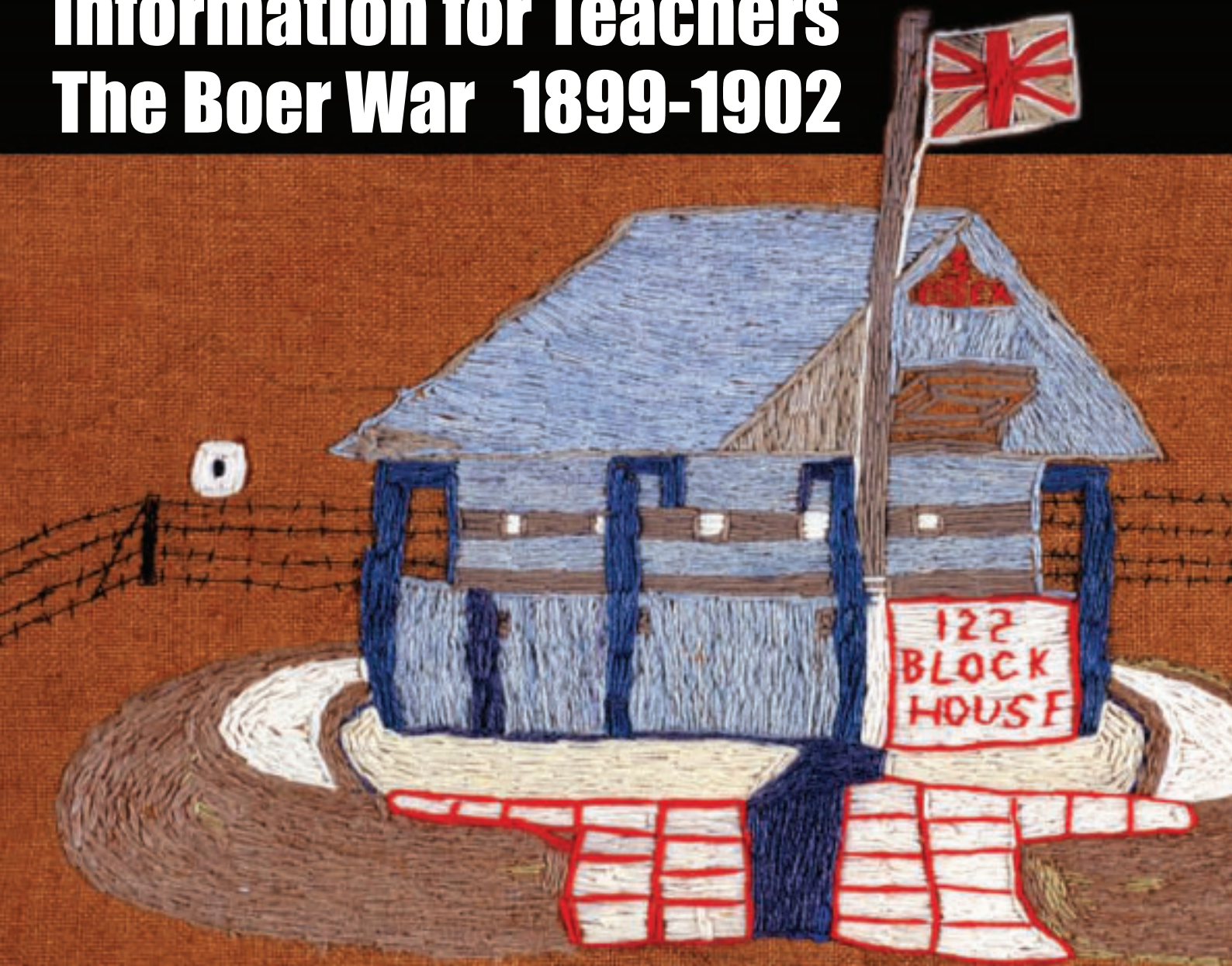




Information for Teachers

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. 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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Impact of War

– 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.

The significance of the Boer War was overshadowed by the First World War. Like the Great War the Boer War required links between the military and civilians which affected society at large. The number of British volunteer soldiers involved in South Africa reached 109,048 including those from the militia and yeomanry. The total number of men serving in South Africa including those from the colonies and the regular army is estimated at 448,435.

For Britain the Boer War was one of around 200 conflicts during the 19th century. For South Africa it was considered the first 'total war' involving civilians and soldiers. British treatment of the Boers had far reaching consequences and evoked international condemnation. The scorched earth policy left women and children homeless and unable to go anywhere other than the controversial camps. 160,000 Afrikaners and 130,000 blacks were forced into camps and 28,000 Afrikaners and 17,000 blacks died in camps. Once conditions in camps became widely known far-reaching improvements were made by the British and mortality rates amongst civilians fell below those living in British cities such as Manchester at that time.





NAM. 92156

“The Queen and the Sightless Captain - A Touching Episode/ South African Victoria Cross Heroes, 1901” Chromolithograph, artist unknown

Capt Ernest Towse being presented to Queen Victoria. Her interest in the war and soldiers' welfare reinforced support of the war as an act of patriotism. Captain Ernest Towse of the Gordon Highlanders was featured in the London Gazette on 6th July, 1900. The first act of bravery Towse was noted for concerned trying to carry mortally wounded Colonel Dowman away from fighting at Magersfontein on 11th December 1899. The second act resulted in Towse losing his sight while involved in a skirmish on mount Thaba, 30th April 1900.



NAM. 81037

Winston Churchill, won his first political seat in the Khaki election. The lost battles of 1899 were a shock to the British public who believed that the Boers were simple farmers and that the war would be over by Christmas. Public disappointment and humiliation gave way to fervent patriotism. The parliamentary opposition would not criticise the government fearing they would be branded unpatriotic. The government of the day, exploiting the situation, called the 'Khaki' election. Criticism in newspapers concerned the fact that many of the voters were out of the country, old electoral rolls were used and an election was not essential for another 2 years. The conservative government won a landslide victory in 1900 with a combined majority of 134 seats. The Liberals found themselves split almost evenly between pro and anti-war factions. The election coincided with a series of well-publicised victories in the war.



NAM. 20850

Requisitioning Supplies from a Boer Farm, 1900

Watercolour by Charles Edwin Fripp (1854-1906), special artist for 'The Graphic', published in October 1900.

Criticism of tactics employed by the British Army increased as the war continued. The scorched earth policy resulted in 30,000 homesteads being destroyed and 63,000 compensation claims being filed by Boer families at the end of the war. Britain agreed to provide 3 million pounds towards compensation and reconstruction when the peace treaty was signed. This amount was later increased to 5 million, over £2 billion today.



NAM. 15263

Photograph collected by Major J N Townsend, 2nd Mounted Infantry

Around 115,000 black Africans were held in camps during the Boer War. Conditions were less favourable than those in white camps resulting in approximately 20,000 deaths. The Treaty of Vereeniging, 31st May 1902, maintained the racial status quo and in some instances extended controls on black Africans after the Boer War. Britain did nothing practical to enforce rights for native people after the war.



NAM. 87002

Photograph of refugee camp, Winburg, 1901

In South Africa the Boer War was considered the first 'total war' involving civilians and soldiers. Approximately 14,000 women and children trekked across the country to avoid camps. News of clearance policies and camps unsettled the public, having a longer term effect on British politics. The 1906 Liberal party victory at the ballot box was the result of a Liberal anti-imperialist campaign, capitalising on the anti-war demonstrations from 1901 onwards by the better educated and more often enfranchised members of the public. The Liberal government allowed self rule under the Union of South Africa in May 1910.



NAM. 92743

Stereoscopic card captioned: "One of Her Majesty's heroes who fell at the front - Wynberg Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa"

The Boer war resulted in just under 100,000 British casualties including 22,000 deaths. Of those killed, approximately 7,582 died in action, the rest died of disease. Queen Elizabeth II journeyed to Spion Kop near Ladysmith in 1999, where the British suffered 1,100 casualties and the Boers more than 300 on 23 and 24 January 1900. Her speech delivered in South Africa was not the apology that many South Africans wanted, but did express regret at the loss of life during the conflict.



NAM. 48476

"Gen Christiaan De Wet and his Staff, 1901"

Class differences between Boer farmers and better-educated Afrikaner town dwellers decreased as a result of fighting together. Britain won the war but the Boers won the peace: forming the Union of South Africa in May 1909. Nationalism amongst Afrikaners increased along with cultural awareness and new political parties. Former Free State Men such as Christiaan De Wet and JBM Hertzog formed the Orangia Unie in 1906 and other pro-Boer political groups also emerged. Instead of renewed British interest and immigration the Boer War created strong Afrikaner leaders who were proud of having defied a world power.



NAM. 85512

A scouting party of 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers) on a kopje, Boer War, 1900 (c)

Bronze-painted plaster for central plaque in Carabiniers' war memorial on Chelsea Embankment, signed lower centre by Adrian Jones, 1905 (c).

In Britain and Ireland over 1,000 war memorials were erected in commemoration of the Boer War. For the first time women who died in service feature on memorials alongside men. Of the 29 women in the Army Nursing Service and Army Nursing Service Reserve who died of disease serving in South Africa, 7 are listed on local memorials. Memorials were also erected in Winchester and Surrey for the 350,000 horses that died either in or en route to South Africa during the conflict.



NAM. 60733

"The Plague Of Women". Colour photolithograph, Published in 'Truth Christmas Number', 25 Dec 1900

Colour photolithograph, Published in 'Truth Christmas Number', 25 Dec 1900. Caricature of elegant volunteer nurses preening themselves and sipping tea in a ward full of wounded soldiers. Nursing created opportunities for women interested in excitement and travel as well as those with more traditional values of duty and honour. Supporters of the South Africa Conciliation Committee, like Emily Hobhouse, called for public women's meetings to protest against the war. Hobhouse's investigations into concentration camp conditions preceded the Commission of Inquiry, which pro-war Millicent Garrett Fawcett was appointed by the government to lead.



NAM. 93561

Photograph taken by Nurse M S Barwell, Army Nursing Service, 1901

Previous colonial conflicts had restricted the use of female nurses, but the Boer War, as a predominantly 'white man's war', made the employment of over 1,400 nursing women acceptable. Voluntary nurses were under the control of the Central British Red Cross Committee and the War Office. The Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) accepted help from voluntary organisations but this created conflict between paid and "lady" nurses. Approximately a third of the female nurses in South Africa were recruited and contracted locally.



NAM. 86329

“Loyal to the Mother Country”- Canadian fighters for British Supremacy, Cape Town, S.A

Initially colonies were reluctant to offer troops for a war against another colony. The offer that followed was different to previous offers. It was 2,000 men from the across the colonies to fight together as one force. The British Army, however, would not accept this as they wanted to use troops to reinforce losses in existing British regiments. Eventually colonies offered troops separately. Whilst colonial nations ended the war with a sense of identity that had not been so well defined before, Britain brought to a close the period of ‘splendid isolation’.



NAM. 9130

Royal Irish Regiment, 1899 - 1902 (c)

In parts of Ireland the Boer War threatened to ignite old feuds. Sectarian violence erupted at pro-war rallies and nationalists felt a genuine analogy between the South African and Irish issues. The Irish Society in Johannesburg was formed in 1897, primarily of Irish men that had emigrated to South Africa. The society raised money during the Boer War to form two Irish brigades that would fight against the British. Neither brigade finished the war, disbanding as a result of diminished funds and lack of horses. John MacBride, a notable member of the pro-Boer Irish Regiment, was to be executed as a result of his involvement in the Easter Rising in 1916.



NAM. 86265

The Absent-Minded Beggar. Photogravure after R Caton Woodville, 1899. Published by Henry Graves and Company, London, 1900

Rudyard Kipling wrote the poem for Harmsworth to promote his newspapers charitable fund. The poem proved to be so popular that actors recited it before performances and Sir Arthur Sullivan put it to music. The Daily Mail fund raised £250,000 in total for soldiers, their wives and families.



NAM. 105404

Colonel Robert Baden-Powell held Mafeking during the siege from October 1899 to May 1900, resulting in a heroic status once he returned to Britain

Youth corps established during the siege were used as a prototype for the Scout movement Baden-Powell went on to form. Efficient use of mounted infantry during the Boer War led to the belief amongst army officers that cavalry would still be an important part of future conflicts, rather than further developing trench tactics and artillery shelling, that would ultimately prove so necessary during the Great War.



NAM. 33939

Boer Or Briton A New South African War Game, 1900 (c)

Board game Made by J Jaques and Son Ltd of London. The war created such interest that board games for families to “play” at war were popular in London and the Netherlands