

**THE  
NORTH LONDON  
RAILWAY AND  
THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN WAR**

**by  
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## **The North London Railway and the South African War (1899 until 1902 )**

### **Peter Bloomfield and Richard Rees, Major, RE**

The Boer war took place between October 1899 and May 1902. It is largely regarded as having three phases; initially, the Boers (majoritively South African settled Dutch farmers) besieged several British Garrisons namely Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley. Subsequently the British, riled at the actions of the Boers, launched several attacks countering the Boer actions but with only limited success. The third phase saw the Boers, now outnumbered by British soldiers, adopting an insurgent campaign with the British undertaking what could be regarded as its first significant counter insurgency operation. Notable tactics included attacking logistic convoys both horse drawn and rail. The Boers ultimately surrendered in 1902 (known as the Treaty of Vereeniging). In Britain, the popular view of the day thought that victory would be swift and simple, over in a matter of months, but it instead became a war involving 450,000 British soldiers fighting against an insurgent force of no more than 60,000 Boers. With literacy rates in Britain increasing at the turn of the century public consciousness and opinion played a much greater part in the war than ever before and support quickly waned.

Unlike the Great War there was no conscription. Shortages were met by calling up reservists and volunteers from local militias, etc. When soldiers enlisted into the Army they did so for a specified period which was split into two. The first part was served with the Colours and the second was on the reserve until the full period had been completed. For example, a soldier who signed on for twelve years could serve with the Colours for seven years and then serve a further five years on the reserve, although he could have extended his Colour service had he (and the Army!) so wanted to twelve years.

In January 1899 the General Manager informed the Board of a proposal to enlist railway reservists into the First Class Army Reserve, Royal Engineers. Twenty vacancies had been apportioned to the NLR. Nine months later he was reporting that the twenty NLR men who had enlisted into the First Class Army Reserve, RE, had been withdrawn to serve with the Colours, together with thirty-seven other reservists in the employ of the Company. By March 1900 a total of seventy-three of the Company's men had been recalled to the Colours. The breakdown by departments was: Traffic forty-one, Locomotive twenty-two, Engineer's nine and Goods one. In addition three men joined the Imperial Yeomanry: one took unpaid leave; one resigned; one did both - took unpaid leave, returned and later resigned to return to the Imperial Yeomanry for a second stint.

The majority of railway general managers believed that railway companies should not be under an obligation to grant pay to reservists. There was, however, a general feeling that their wives and families should be looked after by companies, each case considered and dealt with upon its merits. It would appear from those staff records still available for reservists, the NLR allowed half pay to wives. In the case of unmarried reservists, mothers who were dependant upon financial assistance from their sons were given an allowance of a third of their pay.

The names of most of those from the Traffic and Goods Departments have been found in various minutes of the Locomotive, Stores and Traffic Committee. The majority of these reservists were called-up and eventually returned to duty. There were exceptions:

- a few decided not to return to the railway;
- two died from disease in South Africa;
- two reservists were called up but rejected on medical grounds by the Army medical officer;
- a few were called up, returned to civilian life and then called up for a second stint;
- one who went further and was called up a total of three times with his NLR record being endorsed after he returned a third time, "Resumed duty again – another two years to serve on the Reserve".

Then there was the reservist who proved to be an expensive railway servant. He started work on 14 June 1899 and was recalled to the Colours in the following November. He returned to the North London on 8 September 1902, during which time his wife had been receiving half his pay. He resigned on 17 April 1903. His total wages for the two periods he worked and the sum paid to his wife was £106.59. For the time that he worked it equated to £2.36 a week against the normal wage of 90 pence (18 shillings). The reason for his resignation was that he refused to do extra duty on Easter Monday; presumably he was given the option to work or to go. There was another reservist in a similar situation but he resigned to go to Liverpool.

In addition, over nine hundred troop trains were moved over the NLR between 16 October 1899 and 19 June 1902.

Sources:

RAIL 529/30: 19 Jan 1899 Board Min 5648; 19 Oct 1899 Board Min 5745; 16 Nov 1899 Board Min 5755; 15 Feb 1900, Board Min 5808; 15 Mar 1900, Board Min 5815. Also various minutes giving details of numbers of troop trains.  
RAIL 529/31. Board Meetings. Various minutes giving details of numbers of troop trains.  
RAIL 529/60 and 61. Minutes of Locomotive, Stores and Traffic Committee, 1899-1903. Names of reservists of the Traffic and Goods Departments from the lists of staff changes (normally the last minute of each meeting).  
RAIL 529/130-135. Staff registers.

findmypast.co.uk Service and Boer War records.

Essential histories:

Greg Fremont-Barnes, *The Boer War 1899-1902*. Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2003.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/second\\_boer\\_war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/second_boer_war).  
Sheffield, Gary, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army*. Adium Press, 2011.  
Porter, Andrew, *The South African War (1899-1902): Context and Motive Reconsidered*. *The Journal of African History*, Vol 31, Issue 1 Mar 1990.

## North London Railway Railwaymen and the South African War

Name	Job	Recalled	Returned	Notes
<b>Army Reservists Recalled to the Colours (ex-regular soldiers)</b>				
Back, John	Porter, Bow	9 Oct 1899	11 Sep 1902	
Baker, Arthur	Porter, Broad Street	17 Nov 1899	26 Aug 1902	Later changed name to Arthur Hills
Barnes, H C	Porter, Highbury	Mins 31 Jan 1900 and 2 May 1901		
Bishop, George John	Porter, Broad Street	14 Oct 1899	20 Aug 1902	
Bovingdon, William John Jos	Under guard	8 Mar 1900	-	On return took other employment
Brown, Benjamin	Porter, Bow	c. Nov 1899	6 Oct 1900	
Bruce, Henry Charles	Porter, Broad Street	23 Dec 1899	10 Sep 1902	
Burt, Frederick	Porter, Canonbury	30 Dec 1899	22 Sep 1902	
Carter, William	Porter, Poplar	13 Oct 1899	12 Aug 1902	
<u>Clive, Henry</u>	Porter, Broad Street	17 Feb 1900	14 Nov 1900	
Cornish, Charles Samuel P	Porter, Dalston	20 Nov 1899	29 Aug 1900	
	Porter	11 May 1901	4 Sep 1901	
	Collector, Broad Street	15 Apr 1902	14 Jul 1902	
Ellis, Henry Edward	Under guard	10 Feb 1900	31 Dec 1901	
Evans, Alfred Henry	Porter, Highbury	12 Oct 1899	28 Nov 1899	Failed medical
	Porter, Dalston	13 Feb 1900	8 Mar 1900	Failed medical a second time
Flint, William	Porter, Mildmay Park	11 Oct 1899	4 Nov 1901	
Gipson, J R	Porter, Barnsbury	Mins 29 Nov 1899 and 6 Nov 1902		
Gladwell, William	Porter, Broad Street	4 Nov 1899	25 Oct 1900	Invalided home. Later John William Gladwell
Grimsey, J or H E	Porter, Broad Street	Mins 31 Jan 1900 and 31 Oct 1901		
Harrison, George Henry	Porter, Dalston	16 Nov 1899	8 Sep 1902	
Heath, W J	Policeman, Broad Street	Mins 2 May 1900 and 6 Nov 1902		
<u>Hewett, William</u>	Porter, Broad Street	16 Nov 1899	19 Aug 1902	
Holyome, John Henry	Porter, Broad Street	15 Nov 1899	-	On return took other employment
Hopping, Henry George	Porter, Broad Street	14 Oct 1899	11 Aug 1902	
Hughes, Walter	Porter, Chalk Farm	20 Jan 1900	21 Aug 1901	
	Porter, Broad Street	23 Nov 1901	3 Sep 1902	
Keeble, Alfred Arthur	Porter, Canonbury	16 Dec 1899	27 Aug 1902	
Kitcatt, Charles Henry	Porter, Dalston	14 Oct 1899	6 Nov 1900	
Lawman, T	Porter, Broad Street	Mins 1 Nov 1899 and 31 Oct 1901		
Lenton, Ernest Leopold	Porter, Dalston	16 Nov 1899	-	On return took other employment
Murray, William	Porter, Bow	20 Nov 1899	10 Dec 1900	
	Under brakesman	16 Feb 1901	18 Aug 1902	
Nicholls, C W	Porter, Broad Street	Mins 1 Nov 1899 and 6 Nov 1902		
<u>Perks, W</u>	Policeman, Broad Street	Min 31 Jan 1900		No further details whatsoever
Price, William John	Porter, Dalston	23 Dec 1899	-	Died of enteric fever, Bloemfontein, 9 Jun 1900
Sedgwick, William	Porter, Maiden Lane	11 Jun 1899	-	Died of pneumonia, Standerton, on 22 Jul 1900
Turner, G J	Porter, Broad Street	Mins 28 Feb 1900 and 6 Jun 1901		
Tyrrell, Walter	Porter, Broad Street	4 Nov 1899	9 Jul 1901	
Tyson, George Frederick	Cashier's messenger	7 Mar 1900	1 Nov 1900	
Wade, George John	Porter, Bow	16 Oct 1899	29 Sep 1902	
Watts, George James	Porter, Shoreditch	13 Oct 1899	-	Failed army medical and took other employment
White, J	Porter, Broad Street	Mins 28 Feb 1900 and 6 Jun 1901		
Wilson, Jason Boaz	Collector, Broad Street	20 Nov 1899	2 Aug 1902	
<u>Young, John</u>	Under brakesman	9 Dec 1899	17 Dec 1901	
<b>RE special reservists and Imperial Yeomanry volunteers</b>				
Dimmock, Edward Warwick	Capstan man, Poplar	16 Oct 1899	7 Aug 1900	RE Special Reserve
	Capstan man, Poplar		1 Nov 1901	
Herrington, Sidney	Porter, Dalston	21 Apr 1900	20 Nov 1900	RE Special Reserve
		13 Apr 1901	21 Oct 1902	
Shury, H J	Signalman, Canonbury	Mins 1 Nov 1899 & 11 Nov 1900		RE Special Reserve
Daniel, Joseph William	Clerk, Tfc Supt's Office	20 Jan 1900	1 Dec 1900	Unpaid leave – Imperial Yeomanry
	Parcels clerk Shoreditch	23 Jan 1902	-	Resigned to serve with the Imperial Yeomanry
Flynn, Louis Joseph	Clerk Manager's Office	24 Feb 1900	2 Jul 1901	Unpaid leave – Imperial Yeomanry
Welford, William March	Porter, Broad Street			Resigned 6 Mar 1901 to serve with the Imperial Yeomanry. On return became a newsagent in Hackney

Notes: Dates of Locomotive, etc, Committee meeting minutes are shown when actual dates have not be found. Total names 46.

## Troop Trains Running Over the North London Railway during the South African War

Period	Troop Trains		Horse Trains		Baggage, etc	Total No. of Trains	Running Total	Board minute and date
	Special	Empties	Special	Empties				
	RAIL 529/30							
16 Oct – 16 Nov 1899	41	41	2	2	7	93	93	5754 16 Nov 1899
22 Nov – 18 Jan 1900	41	40	1	1	6	89	182	5781 18 Jan 1900
17 Jan – 14 Feb 1900	23	23	11	8	6	71	253	5807 15 Feb 1900
14 Feb – 15 Mar 1900	35	35	3	2	3	78	331	5814 15 Mar 1900
20 Mar – 26 Apr 1900	24	24	11	9	1	69	400	5827 26 Apr 1900
26 Apr – 17 May 1900	27	25	6	3		61	461	5841 17 May 1900
18 May – 14 Jun 1900	5	5	3	2		15	476	5852 14 Jun 1900
7 Jun – 19 Jul 1900	8	8				16	492	5862 19 Jul 1900
18 Jul – 15 Nov 1900	11	10				21	513	5895 15 Nov 1900
9 Nov – 17 Jan 1901	16	14				30	543	5918 17 Jan 1901
15 Jan – 18 Apr 1901	57	35				92	635	5962 18 Apr 1901
18 Apr – 16 May 1901	14	14				28	663	5970 16 May 1901
14 May – 20 Jun 1901	12	8				20	683	5988 20 Jun 1901
18 Jun – 18 Jul 1901	8	5				13	696	6003 18 Jul 1901
24 Jul – 9 Aug 1901	11	9				20	716	6016 9 Aug 1901
	RAIL 529/31							
9 Aug – 17 Oct 1901	21	20				41	757	6033 17 Oct 1901
17 Oct – 14 Nov 1901	7	5				12	769	6044 14 Nov 1901
11 Nov – 19 Dec 1901	13	10				23	792	6062 19 Dec 1901
13 Dec – 16 Jan 1902	9	6				15	807	6076 16 Jan 1902
15 Jan – 20 Mar 1902	18	19				37	844	6103 20 Mar 1902
17 Mar – 17 Apr 1902	12	8				20	864	6113 17 Apr 1902
11 Apr – 15 May 1902	7	4				11	875	6121 15 May 1902
8 May – 19 Jun 1902	22	8				30	905	6135 19 Jun 1902
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>905</b>		