

Photocopy of manuscript report (1880) by the Principal Medical Officer to the forces in South Africa, re the medical establishment during operations in Zululand

Publication/Creation

1880

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This copy of a report on the Medical
arrangements during the Zulu
war is surplus to our requirements,
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With the Compliments of the Peter
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27.9.85



P. M. O's Office
P. Montebury, Natal
9th Jan'y. 1880.

Sir

In reply to your letter No 219 dated A.M.O. War Office, 2nd Decemr 1879 ²³⁹⁰ stating that His Royal Highness the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief has expressed through the Adjutant General of the Forces, His desire to be furnished with information on the following points connected with the late military operations in Zululand:

Medical Officers, ^{Regiments, Regiments,} Hospitals, Ambulances, removal of Wounded, Sanitary precautions

There the reason to report is follows:

Medical Officers

At the commencement of the campaign such difficulty was experienced in providing medical officers for the large number of stations and out-posts that were being formed; but this was met by employing Civil Practitioners in all the large garrison towns, and engaging Civil Surgeons & Medical Students of 2 or 3 years standing; the former for duty in the field, the latter for charge of sick transport convoys from the front to the base.

The total Medical Establishment thus supplemented comprised
A. M. O.
1

- 1st Their general growth and work of experience in the profession -
- 2nd Their unsympathetic with Army regulations, the routine duties and statistical records.
- 3rd Their utter powerlessness to control Orderlies & patients under their sole charge.

The total strength of the Army Hospital Orderlies Corps in the Command when the Campaign commenced was 3 Officers & 124 R.C.O. Officers & men. In March & April there arrived with the reinforcements 6 Officers & 143 R.C.O. Officers & men; but this augmentation being found insufficient further drafts were telegraphed for in April and May respectively for 1 Officer & 115 R.C.O. Officers & men and 1 Officer & 50 R.C.O. Officers & men which arrived in Malta early in July and August.

Medical Officer

In consequence of the great sickness prevalent in the 1st Division the number of A.H. Corps was unequal to the duties in the Field & Base Hospitals & had to be supplemented by convalescents selected by Medical Officers from the Convalescent Depots, who were at Italy's suggestion with the concurrence of the I.G. & J.C. & B. temporarily employed as Hospital Orderlies at the Base & Station Hospitals

The Director General
A. M. G.
London

W. 2/1917

20 Officers A.M.D. 23 Civil Surgeons
 & 3 Medical Students who were
 named Hospital Officers. Of these
 2 viz. 1 Surgeon Major and 1 Civil
 Surgeon were inefficient and subse-
 -quently invalided.

In February 2 Officers A.M.D. and 8
 Civil Surgeons arrived from England
 and during the 2 subsequent months
 26 Officers A.M.D. and 6 Civil Surgeons
 who accompanied the reinforcements.

Notwithstanding this considerable
 accession of strength, it was found
 necessary owing to the long chains
 of new posts that were being established
 and the large number of troops in
 the field, amounting in all to about
 35,000 men, to employ several additional
 Civil Surgeons & Hospital Officers
 pending the arrival of more Medical
 Officers, who had been applied for,
 from England & all of whom were
 sent to Natal with the subsequent despatches.

I may here mention that such
 arrangements had been anticipated
 and that 10 Officers A.M.D. and 3 Civil
 Surgeons were either on their way to,
 or under orders to embark for Natal
 before receipt of my first demands.

The most important posts were,
 with a few exceptions where special
 men were needed and fail to be recognized,
 assigned to the senior Officers of the

No. 3/2000

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Army Medical Department, and the Civil Surgeons were equally distributed between the 1st & 2nd Divisions & Flying Column, and the Hospitals on the Lines of Communication & at the Base.

The Duties throughout the campaigns were severe and unremitting, especially those of the Medical Officers of the 1st Division, the Troops composing which owing to protracted occupation of entrenched camps on the front line between the Trenches & the Trenches - a District practically un-healthy from its marshy situation & indifferent water supply - suffered from exposure & sickness & mortality, the result of the conditions above named, with fatigue & exposure increased.

I feel the circumstances upon me to state that the duties were performed with zeal & efficiency as a rule by the Officers A.M.D. and the Civil Surgeons; in many cases to the detriment of their health which broke down from overwork.

From experience gained in the late Campaigns I am of opinion that it is most undesirable in the best interests of the Public Service to employ more than a small percentage of Civil Surgeons on active service, for the following reasons;

pending the arrival of reinforcements of the A.H. Corps from England.

This arrangement permitted of a sufficient number of the A.H. Corps then in the Convents being sent to the Fronts for duty in the Field Hospitals; the Convents on recovery rejoining their Regiments and their places being filled by those similarly selected.

Although these ^{Regimental} ~~selected~~ Bedouins did not work under the careful supervision & instruction of Medical Officers & Nursing Sisters, and by having a proportion of the A.H. Corps working with them, yet they were necessarily wanting in that special training which is such an indispensable qualification for those attending on Sick & Wounded. I would therefore much strongly recommend that in future campaigns there should be a sufficient number of thoroughly trained Bedouins of the A.H. Corps for all Hospital duties at the Base, on the lines of Communication and in the Field.

Nurses.

The Sisters of Charity belonging to the Convent at P. M. Bay having tendered their services, 3 of them were employed at an early period of the war at Fort Napier's Base Hospital.

W.C. 32/7003

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In March an application having been made to the Bishop of Exeter, the Lady Superior & 3 Sisters of the Community of St Michael & All Angels were sent to Ladyxmill and did good work in the Bess Hospital there.

Towards the close of June 2 Lady Sisters of All Saints at Cape Town, who had gained experience in the Franco-German war, were despatched to Durham with a trained nurse by Lady Fane, and performed excellent service in the Bess Hospital at that Station, being transferred to the Convalescent Depot at Pimlico on the arrival of Lady Superintendent Mrs Deane & 6 Nurses, and Surgeon General Ross C. I. E. with 7 Sisters of the Staffed Home Committee in July.

Of the Mellay Nurses, 4 with Mrs Deane were posted to Durham, & the remaining 2 to Newcastle.

Of the Staffed Home Sisters 4 remained at Durham, 2 were sent to P. M. Barr and 1 to Newcastle: but this distribution was subsequently modified according to circumstances.

All the Nurses, but more especially those belonging to Mellay, under the able superintendence of Mrs Deane, and of the religious Communities did much excellent work, and

Hospital

W.C. 10/11/11

contributed very materially by their tender care and skilful nursing to alleviate the suffering of the sick & wounded. I may add that by their example they stimulated the Hospital Orderlies to greater exertions and zeal in the performance of their duties.

Hospitals.

Hospital equipments were provided throughout the campaign for 1 per cent of sick & wounded Whites and 3 per cent of Blacks; this being increased from time to time according to requirements.

At the commencement of the War the Field Force consisted of 4 Columns viz. No 1 (Lt. Pearson) on the coast line, No 2 (Lt. Dunford) which with No 3 (Lt. Glynn) occupied the River area at Rufus Gray, and No 4 (Lt. Wood) which advanced from Whittle.

The Hospital arrangements for the above force were as follows;

A General Base Hospital at Rufus for 200 patients, viz 60 in a small Brick Barracks which was handed over to the R. Inf. - Coy. at every opportunity and the remainder in Messrs.

For No 1 Column - a Base Hospital at Rufus for 150 patients - 100 in a large well ventilated Iron Building situated in Messrs - and a movable Field Hospital of 50 beds.

with the Column.

- For No 2 & 3 Columns. A Base Hospital at P. M. Bay for 140 patients - 110 in 2 new brick wards, an old wooden tent, & an adjacent terrace room & 30 in Marquees.
- A Fixed Field Hospital at Guytown for 50 beds - 7 Marquees.
- A Fixed Field Hospital at Roberts Hill of 75 beds - in a brick building and Marquees.
- A Fixed Field Hospital of 10 beds at Helpmacker - Marquees.
- A movable Field Hospital of 50 beds with No 2 and 75 with No 3 Column.

For No 4 Column - A Base Hospital at Muckats for 150 patients in mud tents built especially for the purpose.

A movable Field Hospital of 75 beds with the Column.

The whole of the Hospital equipment with No 3 Column and at Roberts Hill was destroyed by the enemy on the 22nd January; but on receipt of the news a Field Hospital of 75 beds was immediately despatched from P. M. Bay to Roberts Hill & Helpmacker where entrenched camps had meanwhile been established.

On the arrival of the reinforcements additional Hospital

Notes.

W.C. 30/1915

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and this I represent; but was told
no other work could be defended
by the press of the York.

Fixed Field Hospitals -

At Stanger 25 beds
 " Thornhill Park 25 beds
 " Fish Chalmers 150 beds
 " " Great Park 50 beds

Innards Field Hospitals

1st Brigade Field Hospital 75 beds
 2nd " " " 75 -
 Naval Brigade " 30 -

Hospitals of 2nd Division

(In addition to P.M. Brig Base
Hospital already mentioned.)

Base Hospital at Ladysmith
150 beds

Fixed Field Hospitals on Line of
Communication, each at 25 beds
at Newcastle - 50 beds

" Buxton - 50 "
 " Landmans Hill 25 "
 " Kippin Allen 25 "
 " Fish Head, etc 25 "
 " " Marshall 25 "
 " " Evelyn 25 "
 " Parkes Gap 25 "
 " Sand Springs - 25 "
 " Kramby Kop - 25 "

Innards Field Hospitals

1st Brigade Field Hospital 75 beds
 2nd " " " 50 "

(-5)

Flying Column

Base Hospital at Wheelo 150 beds
 Field Hospitals on Tule - Frontier
 Admin of Communications & Supplies
 at Balle Springs - 35 beds
 " Conference Hill 75 "
 " Summit 25 "
 " Pigeon's Gap 10 "
 Small Field Hospitals
 1st Field Hospital 50 beds
 2nd " " 50 beds.

Besides the Hospitals above detailed
 an Officers Hospital was established
 at the Base of each Column in
 Arizona viz at Wheelo, Ledyard &
 ? Mt. Perry and Graham - as here,
 for multiple ^{small} furnished dwellings, each
 capable of accommodating 10 or 12
 patients.

There was ample Hospital equip-
 -ment throughout the Campaign
 except for a short time at Fort Huachuca
 and the deficiency here was the result
 of movements involving expenses.

Finding that the Column for the
 relief of Ekron was to take only
 2 hill tents for Hospital purposes
 and the necessity of 2 complete
 (25 tents) field Hospitals, accompanying it,
 but this could not be allowed for fear
 of extending the line of supply & thereby
 imperiling the Column, which was
 to march as light as possible.

at Solihull & Kambule, but some of them behaved indifferently at the battle of Alandi when they were with difficulty forced by the Medical Officers & Detachments to leave the square for the purpose of conveying back those wounded in the pursuit of the retreating enemy.

After the battle their numbers were supplemented by Regimental stretcher bearers (generally 6 from 385 Army Amb. Coyth) and men from Bangalore's Native Battalion who assisted in the transport of the wounded to Lady'smith's Barr Hospital.

At an early period of the war Caerlets & Litters were landed from England, but were found far too heavy for Colonial troops I therefore applied for 24 strong English horses or large mules for this service with the 2nd Division & Flying Column, which were refused so that no opportunity occurred of using caerlets & litters for the conveyance of the wounded with the exception of the 17th Lancers, which I believe provided a horse of their own for the purpose. It is to be regretted that this mode of conveying the wounded could not have been used, as it was peculiarly

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Consequently the sick - the wounded
having been without delay removed
to Tuck Pearson - remained with
inadequate shelter, tents being
improved by stretching tarpaulins
from one wagon to another, in
placing them across the Depot forms,
until Field Hospitals could with
safety be sent from Tuck Pearson.

As the Campaign advanced
Concomitant Deficits were found
at Hanger, Pinetown, Newcastle
& Nyaberg, large numbers of Con-
-sultants being sent to these places
from the Base Hospitals for their
of care, from which considerable
numbers desired to make transfer
as to become fit for duty within
a short period.

During the months of May, June
& July when the sickness in the 1st
Division was exceptional it became
necessary to transfer a number
of patients from Durban to Cape
Town & Pinetown, in order to
prevent overcrowding at the former
places. Both Officers & men
desired the greatest benefit from
the trip by sea and the change to
Cape Town & Nyaberg.

During the first phase of the Ambulances
were improvised ambulances
(consisted Colonial wagons & Bozoes)

were used for the conveyance of sick & wounded; subsequently the large ambulances fitted with a spring platform, on which seated seats for 14 men sitting and stretchers for 3 men lying, and drawn by mules, were made under my supervision by the Govt. Contractor at P. M. Bony.

With the reinforcements arrived 38 English Regulations Ambulances both new and - old patterns.

The total number of ambulances then in the Command amounted to 67 which were distributed according to requirements on the Line of Communications, at the Base, and with the Troops in the Field.

With the exception of one, which was properly horse, all the English ambulances were drawn by mules, and some drawn by mules, and by means of towing harness traps according to Regulations.

About $\frac{1}{5}$ of the Colonial ambulances were drawn by mules, the remainder by oxen.

The new English ambulances found the mule serviceable & comfortable of all those in use; but it should have been drawn by horses or large mules with riders as the small ill-framed mules permitted by the Regulations were at times so unmanageable

W.C. 1000000

1900

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as to imperil the safety of the
 work, and such a large number
 (10 or 12) being driven from the
 large stones & deep holes in the
 road could not always be avoided.
 The large Colonial ambulances
 found very useful for conveying
 large numbers of slightly-wounded
 work & convalescents to be sent
 from the Field Field Hospitals to
 the Base.

I may add that, when the 1st
 Division advanced from the Base
 people taking with it one of the
 ambulances which had been flying
 between Fort Pearce & Denton,
 it was found necessary to obtain
 a temporary purpose which
 covered all the former places from
 the large numbers of work arriving
 from Fort Chelmsford & Bealby
 by supplementing the ambulances
 transport for the time with horse-
 drawn wagons which were made
 complete for the conveyance of
 work by placing hay on the bottom
 and by means provided to the spring
 vehicles.

For the conveyance of the various
 cases on the line of Railway between
 Kemble & Denton, it was very
 specially fitted with stretchers on
 springs of the 1st class of Kemble

Transport
 of Work

problems.

Transport As there were no men of the Army of Wounded People Corps available for stretcher duty at the beginning of the Campaign I recommended the employment of Native Bearers which was accordingly distributed as follows;

No 1 Column	-	40
" 2 "	"	24
" 3 "	"	40
" 4 "	"	40

A Native Interpreter being attached to each party.

In addition to the requisite number of stretchers, adequate cots for the convenience of the very severely wounded were provided in the following proportions;

No 1 Column	-	8
" 2 "	"	2
" 3 "	"	8
" 4 "	"	8

After the affair at Isandhlwana a great number of the Native bearers deserted through panic, and these were ^{with} difficulty replaced.

On the reformation of the Forces the Native bearers were put as follows;

No 1 Division	-	40
" 2 "	"	50
Flying Column	-	50

The Native bearers behind were

inspired by, and all sanitary
precautions taken.

12 - They will report any sanitary
defect, on uniforms, coming under
their notice to the Officers Com^d -
the Troops & the P. M. O. informing
the latter whether it has been
remedied.

The means of purification of water
was as follows;

Alumina - the sand when the
water was boiled.

Creams Filters were used in the
Large Field Hospitals

Lapsonnets with filters were
used with the smaller P. H. H.

Single & Double Barrel (sand &
charcoal) filters made at P. M. O.

were provided to the large Base
Hospitals such as Fort Pearson.

Barrel Filters (sand & charcoal)
made on the spot by the R. E. were
provided for the Troops.

On the arrival of the Troops in
Camp the following rules as to
water supply were observed:

1st A place from which to take
the drinking & cooking water was
selected highest up stream

2nd All suitable distances below
this spot were chosen for the line
to take & mark these lines and
for the Transport animals

- Sanitary
precautions

adapted to the country over which
the Corps operated in North India.

From my experience in the late
campaigns I am convinced that the
presence of a properly organized &
trained bearers Company with
every field force is not only
indispensable for the efficient
transport of the wounded, but
would add greatly to the morale
& courage of the men as they would
feel assured of quick & timely
aid & relief if wounded.

- Sanitary
Precautions

Surgeon Major^{1st} Hunt one of
the Senior Medical Officers in
the Command was appointed
Sanitary Officer to the Force in
the Field, and attached to the
D. M. General's Dept. This Officer
received weekly the Sanitary Report
from all Medical Officers in charge
of Divisions & Flying Columns as
well as of posts on the Lines of
Communications, and brought to
the immediate notice of the D. M.
General & the Principal Medical
Officer all sanitary defects requiring
remedy.

Surgeon Major C. S. Wilks I. B. performed
the duties of Sanitary Officer at the
Base Hospital and D. M. General's
General Hospital I. B. improved
his Sanitary arrangements at the

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P. M. Bony.

Medical Officers in charge of
Troops, & Column, Stations
Camps & Hospitals were held
responsible for all sanitary
arrangements connected with their
respective charges, and reported
all defects to their immediate
Command Officers together with their
recommendations on the subject
forwarding the P. M. O. at the same
time, with copy of the correspondence
& results.

The following Sanitary precautions
were submitted & published in
General Orders -

1. - In the march when the head
is exposed, the men should be
allowed greater freedom about the
neck by joining the buttons and
shirk collar.
2. - Exposure to the sun without
a helmet should be prevented.
3. - Whenever practicable the men
should sleep under cover and
wear their chitose belts.
4. - Company Officers should be
particular in ensuring personal
cleanliness among their men,
every opportunity being afforded
them of bathing & washing their faces.
The eyes should be freely bathed
& any indications of inflammation

W.C. 30777

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4 - men brought to the notice of the Medical Officers.

5 - The men should be cautioned against drinking the stagnant ponds or eating wild fruits.

6 - They should be encouraged to carry tea or coffee in their water bottles, thus insuring the water being boiled before use.

7 - Eating verminous meats, or the internal organs of animals, such as kidneys, livers, or brains, being a possible source of typhus - the Com^d Officers should adopt the pre-
cautions accordingly.

8 - Medical Officers in charge of Troops in the Field will make the most highly health inspections drawing special attention to the early detection of Scoury should such show itself.

9 - They will ascertain that 14 days from leaving the Field, during which (103 days) is spent whenever fresh vegetables are not procurable.

10 - They will see that the latrines are made to inspect the latrine meals before it is used up.

11 They will satisfy themselves that the camp grounds & vicinity are clean: the surface drainage sufficient: that all refuse, fat and carcasses of animals are properly

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to drink.

On the 21st of March every pre-
-caution was I believe taken by
Com^d Officers to prevent their men
from drinking from stagnant
pools, but unfortunately in many
instances to our prejudice.

I would therefore recommend
in any future war in I. Africa
that each company be supplied
with a filtering carb; the filter to
be a modification of Cassin's
complicated, & taps with approved
leads to be knocked off as required.

The common barrel filter is con-
sidered useless by transport men
except roads.

When it was found that Posts
had become insensible either
from long occupations, climate
or other causes, such as Posts
Belphégor, Rocher Giffle, Chelouf
& Post Furnford, I recommended
that they should be evacuated
as soon as military operations
permitted.

I have the honor to be
Sir

Yours most obedient servant
J. W. Melrose M.D.
Sur. Gen.