

**SAPPER 27655 D CROWE**  
**17<sup>th</sup> Field Company, Royal Engineers**  
**Anglo-Boer War - 1899-1902**

In June 1899, the British garrison in South Africa amounted to less than 10,000 men, (4,000 in Cape Colony and 6,000 in Natal) its only engineer support was 29th Fortress Company (Captain EF Taylor RE) stationed in Cape Town, but organised and equipped to act as a field company in case of war. It was deployed on the railway lines at Naauwport Junction, De Aar Junction and Stormberg. To bolster this inadequate engineer support three units were hastily despatched to South Africa.

- 23rd Field Company (Major SR Rice RE) despatch to Natal on 10 June 1899 - on its arrival in Natal it was sent to Ladysmith, a major railway junction, where the bulk of the British troops were stationed.
- 7th Field Company (Brevet Lieutenant Colonel WFHS Kincaid RE) despatch in July 1899 - was sent to Orange River Station with a detachment (Lieutenant RL McClintock RE) to Kimberley, where it rendered good service during the siege, which began on 17 October 1899.
- 8th Railway Company (Captain WR Stewart RE) despatch in July 1899 - was used to patrol the Cape Government Railway in two armoured trains specially constructed in Cape Town.

Colonel (local Major General, later Sir) Elliot Wood (1844-1931) was appointed Chief Engineer and the Royal Engineers detailed for service with the Army Corps were:

- Field Troop (Brevet Major AG Hunter-Weston RE) - Cavalry Division
- 17th Field Company (Major HH Massey RE) - 1st Infantry Division
- 11th Field Company (Major GF Levenson RE) - 2nd Infantry Division
- 12th Field Company (Major A Graham Thomson RE) - 3rd Infantry Division

Army Corps Troops:

- Bridging Battalion, A Troop (Major JL Irvine RE) - During the course of the war Irvine designed a special trestle for use in crossing South African streams.
- 1st Telegraph Division (Captain EG Godfrey-Fausett RE)
- 1st Balloon Section (Captain HB Jones RE)
- 26th Field Company (Major WFH Stafford RE)
- 1st Field Park (Captain RN Harvey RE)

Line of Communications troops:

- 10th Railway Company (Captain GS McD Elliot RE)
- 6th Fortress Company (Captain H Broke RE) - worked in support of the Railway companies
- 20th Fortress Company (Captain CS Wilson RE) - worked in support of the Railway companies
- 31st Fortress Company (Captain FG Fuller RE) - worked in support of the Railway companies

- 42nd Fortress Company (Captain GM Kirkpatrick RE) - worked in support of the Railway companies
- 45th Fortress Company (Captain GP Scholfield RE) - was detailed for Steam Road Transport.

The 17th Field Company famously played a crucial role in Sir Redvers Buller's fight to regain control of Natal. It was engaged in all of the major actions on the Tugela including the Battle of Spionkop, and suffered significantly for it conducted much of its crucial operations under fire. Their persistently unenviable task was in assisting the gunners by preparing the redoubts, in the digging of trenches, the repair of pontoons, bridges and disrupted railway lines and establishing troop encampments.

Much has been written about their role. It has been stated that nowhere in South Africa did the Royal Engineers do better service than in the operations in and about Ladysmith. Morbidity amongst their number due to exposure to direct fire, climate, poor nutrition and disease was significant.

For his service to the British war effort, SAPPER 27655 D CROWE of the 17th Field Company, Royal Engineers was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal with 6 clasps, Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Transvaal, Tugela Heights, Relief of Ladysmith and Laing's Nek; and the King's South Africa Medal with two clasps, South Africa 1901 and South Africa 1902.



Royal Engineers in battle fatigues 1899-1902

17<sup>th</sup> FIELD COMPANY ROYAL ENGINEERS

Regiment or Corps.

105

ROLL of Individuals entitled to the South Africa Medal and Clasps, under the Army Order granting the Medal, issued on 1st April, 1901.

To be left blank	Regimental Number	Rank	NAME	WHETHER ENTITLED TO CLASP																								Remarks
				Delmont	Mohlar River	Pardburg	Dordrecht	Wepster	Johannesburg	Diamond Hill	Bellona	Witwatersrand	Defense of Kimberley	Relief of Kimberley	Defense of Mafeking	Relief of Mafeking	Cape Colony	Orange Free State	Transvaal	Rhodes	Talana	Elanburg	Twickenham	Defense of Ladysmith	Relief of Ladysmith	Long's Nek	Heald	
	809	LEE. CML.	CHAPMAN S. W.													/	/	/				/	/	/				
	1922	SAPPER	CHAPMAN W.													/						/	/	/				TRANS: TO G. COY. R. E.
	2488	"	CLARK D. W.													/	/	/				/	/	/				
	24136	CORPL.	CLARKE F.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		TRANS: TO FIELD DEPT. R. E.
✓	2643	SAPPER	CLARKE S.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	26899	"	CLARSON W. T.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	5968	"	CLANSON J.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	2494	"	CLEAR F.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	333	DRIVER	CLIFTON H.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	23233	I CORPL.	COCKWILL T.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	2803	SAPPER	CONBOYE J. T													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		TRANS: TO G. COY. R. E.
	26211	"	CONNOLLY J.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	24412	LEE. CML.	COOK J. G.													/						/	/	/	/	/		TRANS: TO G. COY. R. E.
	5169	SAPPER	CORK A. B.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	2369	"	COSTELLO P.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	58	"	COURTNEY W. T.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	831	II CORPL.	COWLEY F.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		TRANS: TO 60 <sup>th</sup> COY. R. E.
✓	1958	SAPPER	COX H.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	27655	"	CROME D.													/	/	/				/	/	/	/	/		
	2372	"	CUNNINGHAM T.													/						/	/	/	/	/		TRANS: TO G. COY. R. E.

I certify that the Individuals named in this Roll were actually present at the operations for which the Medal and Clasps are claimed as above detailed.

Place *Standerton*

Date *18 7 01*

*Signature* *Lieut. R. E.*  
*P. E. 17th Coy. R. E.*  
Signature and Rank of Officer personally cognizant of the Claimants' service.  
105



17<sup>th</sup> Field Company, Royal Engineers  
Medal Roll WO 100 / 156 Queen's South Africa Medal

TO BE RENDERED IN TRIPLICATE.

HWV 100,000 B-02

17th Field Coy Royal Engineers Regiment or Corps.

ROLL of Individuals entitled to the King's South Africa Medal and Clasp, under the Army Order No. 232 granting the Medal issued on 1st October, 1902.

Space to be left blank for W.O. Stamp.

(To include all those entitled to the Medal, in addition to one or both Clasp; not to include those entitled to Clasp only.)

To be left blank	Regl. No.	Rank	NAME	Clasp		Any other Corps in which served in South Africa		REMARKS (including names of men becoming non-effective, forfeitures, &c.)
				South Africa, 1901	South Africa, 1902	Unit	Regl. No.	
	2497	Sapper	Clear	8	Yes	Yes		
	233	Quince	Clifton	4	Yes	Yes		Trans to Field Dep't R.E. 3-9-02
	2621	Sapper	Connelly	1	Yes	Yes		" " Provisional Co R.E. 1-8-02
	2069	"	Costello	10	Yes	Yes		" " " " " "
	50	"	Courtney	10	Yes	Yes		" " " " " "
	27655	"	Crowe	5	Yes	Yes		" " " " " "
	29621	II Bpl	Cutcliffe	1	Yes	Yes		" " 20th " 2-9-02
	23072	Corpl	Davey	5	Yes	Yes		" " 12th " 1-9-02
	2362	Sapper	Day	5	Yes	Yes		" " 11th " " "
	275	2nd Bpl	Dawson	10	Yes	Yes		" " Field Dep't " 3-9-02

[Every form submitted to be separately signed. Any form locally printed to be exactly similar as regards size and quality of paper.]

I certify that the individuals named in this Roll are entitled to the Medal under the terms of the above quoted Army Order.

Place Aldershot

Date 29-10-02

C. B. Rawley Lieut R.E.  
Signature and Rank of Officer personally cognizant of Claimant's services.

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Reference: **WO 100 / 314**

17th Field Company, Royal Engineers  
Medal Roll WO 100 / 314 King's South Africa Medal