



# Cpl Schofield's Diary, 1899-1901

## Diary of the Boer War 1899-1901

by

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(Yorkshire Regiment)

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#### 1. 24 Nov 1899 - Aldershot to Southampton

A lot of hurrying and running about, I being Orderly Sergeant. The Battalion paraded at 7 a.m. in the barracks in Aldershot and marched to the station. We met very few people on the way. The Battalion entrained at 8 a.m. for Southampton. Plenty of flags hung in the gardens of the houses we passed and people cheered nearly the whole distance. Finally arrived about 12 noon, detrained and commenced to get baggage etc. aboard the troopship. Got everything and everybody aboard (with the exception of 9 men who went into the town and were left behind).

At about 2.30 p.m., I sent a photograph of the ship (Doune Castle) to Edie, also letters to my Father, Polly and Dick.

Left Southampton at 3.30 p.m. Thousands of people on the quay who cheered unceasingly. The Band played the old tunes.

#### 2. 25 Nov to 15 Dec 1899 - The Voyage to South Africa

Nothing happened during the voyage with the exception of physical drill with arms twice per week. Reservists fired a preliminary course at a barrel which caused a little excitement. There were one or two concerts.

We stopped at Las Palmas to coal. We also began to have a rather rough sea for a couple of days but altogether we had a very good trip and arrived at Cape Town and disembarked next day on the 16th December 1899.

#### 16 Dec to 1 Feb 1900 - Cape Town to De Aar

We disembarked and were issued out with 150 rounds of ball ammunition and then entrained for De Aar. We arrived on Monday 19th December at about 5 a.m. Posted to the Mounted Infantry Company and on the 23rd Feb left the battalion area and camped with 2nd M.I. We drew horses, had several parades and a few patrols. On one there was bit of a skirmish near Britstown when we were in charge of a bullock convoy.

As we were not able to trek by day, we used to start at about 4 p.m. and march till about 7 a.m. then halt for a few hours ( which

we thought at the time was hard). We remained in De Aar till 1st Feby 1900. Colonel Henry took command of the Battn. The Shropshire, Cornwall, Warwick and Yorkshire Regiments each supplying one Company. The whole was designated the 4th Battn Mounted Infantry.

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### 2 Feb to 7 Feb 1900 - De Aar to Orange River

The Battn paraded at 9 a.m. on the 2nd Feby and commenced the march to Orange River to join the 200 of .....Coy, who had left De Aar in January with Col. Alderson to go to Preiska. First day on rear guard had rather a bad time as wagons kept getting stuck which caused a lot of delay. Anyhow, after about 9 hours we had got about 6 miles and had to camp on the veldt that night, not being able to get into camp.

**On 3rd Feby**, we started to march at daybreak and arrived in camp at 12.30 p.m., had a feed and started again at 1.30 p.m.. Our Company was advance guard.

**4th Feby.** Company again advance guard and marched about 20 miles and then camped for the night.

**5th Feby;** Company advance guard arrived in Orange River at about 3 p.m. and joined remainder of Company and took over the section again.

Remained at Orange River until the 7th Feby and started advance under Lord Kitchener at 7 a.m. Got nothing to eat for two days. Being on baggage guard, after about 4 days march met the whole of 6th Division and Lord Roberts and his Staff at a place called Farm Dam

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### 8 Feb to 17 Feb 1900 - Skirmishing en Route to Kimberley

**8th Feby.** Commenced march at 5.0 a.m. and had a bit of a skirmish with the enemy. Only a few shots being fired.

**9th Feby.** Marched at 5.0 a.m. but did not meet the enemy this day.

**10th Feby.** Marched at 12 mid day on to Jacobsdal. We arrived in camp fairly knocked out and had just got off our saddles when the Boers attacked the camp. Had to saddle up again and turn out and drive the enemy off and had rather a stiff time of it. The Boers eventually retiring, we remained out till 7 p.m. when we went into camp and got a feed and a good sleep.

**11th Feby.** Marched at 6. a.m. and into a bit of a skirmish.

**12th Feby.** Marched at 3 a.m. and arrived in camp at about 6 p.m. then ordered out on outpost duty. Got no returns and nothing to drink that day and night.

**13th Feby.** Marched at 5 a.m. Nothing happened and we camped at about 6 p.m.

**14th Feby.** Marched at 5 a.m. Nothing happened. Camped at 4 p.m.

**15th Feby** Marched at 6 a.m. Part of the force engaged on our right. Camped at 5 p.m.

**16th Feby.** Marched at 4a.m. Left Division to water our horses at a farm. Everything in the farm was broken up. Lost directions and marched on to the Boer position and got to within about 2000 yards when the Boers gave us a dose of the Pom Pom. Lost my haversack and its contents in the retirement. Staff Captain came up and 'chalked off' our mad Major and then put us in the right direction. We got back all right, but then we received orders to cross the river and take up a position on the opposite bank. We got into action as soon as we crossed the river. Lieutenant Tarbet and Dr Hamley wounded. We got the order to retire half an hour after all the other troops had retired, the Boers getting well round our flanks. The CO not giving any order at all as to what we had to do. Consequently causing a panic amongst the horses and men in the river. Myself fell in as my horse lost its foothold eventually getting safely across but drenched. 18 of us stuck together with Lt Neville and commenced to return fire. but it was useless or nearly so. We had to retire singly and had a very hot time when retiring - a regular fusillade - anyhow, we got back. Somehow or other, I lost my Company and was galloping past a kopje when I was halted. I stopped and went to see who it was. I found Captain Brooks with some of 2nd M.I. He ordered me to remain with him. After about a quarter of an hour I heard someone call for help. Captain Brooks and I went to see who it was but could not find anyone. We heard no more so I suppose whoever it was had died. We were drenched to the skin when it rained all night. I had no blanket or rations only what I could beg.

**17th Feby.** Marched at 2.0 a.m. Very little fighting We went through Kimberley to get round General Cronje. We marched all night with no ration, then commenced fighting at about 2.0 a.m. on the 18th.

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### 18 Feb to 27 Feb 1900 - The Battle of Paardeberg

**18th Feby.** Fighting all day until dark. Cronje hemmed in . We in the 4th M.I. occupied a place called Kitchener's Kop for the whole night.

**19th Feby** At 11 a.m. we left , being relieved by Infantry, but I fell in the river again that day and was lucky to escape drowning. Lost my horse and walked until I was tired out and had to sleep on the veldt. Remained there until day break when I could see our camps. I made for them and found the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. I asked them if they knew where the M.I. were camped. As I was passing a convoy, I found a horse tied to a wagon and so took it and rode into the camp and rejoined my own unit or what was left of it. Stragglers coming in all day. All got in by midday. Rations issued and I got coffee, the first time for four days. We were then ordered out to take up position at Kamilfontein.

**20th Feby - 27th Feby.** Arrived at about 12.30 a.m. It rained all the march and of course I was drenched. I had had no blanket for three days. It rained all the time. We remained at Kamilfontein until the 28th. Nothing happened with the exception of one or two small engagements owing to Cronje's force trying to escape, which was useless. He surrendered on the 27th. We had been on quarter rations since the 16th Feby

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### 28 Feb to 30 March 1900 - Sick with an Abscess on my Thigh

**29th Feby.** I reported sick with an abscess on my thigh. It was cut the same day and I was sent into Kimberley on a bullock wagon with the wounded and other sick. I was treated exceedingly well by the Kimberley people and remained in hospital until the 10th March. When I was transported into a convent, with extraordinary good food and treatment, until the 12th March.. Finally, I was sent to a Rest Camp and remained there until the 15th March.

**15th March** Sent to Naaupoort at 4 p.m. and remained there until 30th March.

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### 1 Apr to 13 Apr 1900 - Advance to Bloemenfontein

All the M.I. Men were refitted ready to rejoin their units. We left N.Poort with 240 remounts for the front on 30th March 1900. We had a very rough time during the march to Bloemfontein (13 days) where we handed in the remounts.

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### 14 Apr to 20 Apr 1900 - Bloemenfontein

**14th April** Troops resting. Spent Easter Monday in Bloemenfontein. Not much of a town but very picturesque. Got wet through returning to camp

**20th April** Left Bloemenfontein for Glen and arrived at 4. p.m. All well.

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### 21 April to 31 May 1900 - Advance to Johannesburg

**21st April** Left Glen at 6.30 a.m. for Carry Siding. Saw bridge blown up by Boers so crossed the river on a pontoon and arrived at Carry Siding at 1 p.m.

**25th April** On outpost duty. In touch with the enemy all the time. Continuous firing. Got a bit of a thick on.

**30th April.** Strong reconnaissance so all mounted troops formed up at 3.30 a.m. and engaged the enemy at 7 a.m.. Fighting all

through the day until 4. p.m.. The enemy having the advantage , we having no guns with us.

**1st May.** Remained in camp until 3 May

**3rd May.** Left Karree Siding in action the same day, occupied Bramfort.

**4th May.** Marched at 4.30 a.m. Engaged enemy at 3 p.m. and was fighting until dusk.

**5th May.** Marched at 6 a.m. Engaged enemy shortly after leaving camp. Camped at dusk.

**6th May.** Marched at 6 a.m. No fighting Winburg occupied.

**7th May.** Marched at 6 am. To Lewfontein. No fighting. Camped at 4 p.m.

**8th May.** A days halt to rest the horses. Enemy attacked camp at about 3 p.m. Had to get horses in, saddled up, turned out. Returned to camp at dusk having driven the enemy off.

**9th May.** Marched at 6 a.m. From information received, enemy in full retreat. Marched about 15 miles and then camped for the night.

**10th May.** Marched at 5 a.m. Engaged enemy at 9 a.m.. Fighting until dusk.

**11th May** Marched at 5 a.m. Found enemy in position and exchanged a few shots. No casualties.

**12th May.** Marched at 5 a.m. Advanced to position held on the previous night ( on hands and knees). Sent out scouts who reported that the enemy had retired. The whole Division halted and formed up. Lord Roberts passed to the head of all the troops and accepted the surrender of Kroonstad. Lord Roberts headed the Guards Brigade who marched through the town. We camped about 2 miles outside the town after being the.

**23rd May** Marched at 5.a.m. No fighting so camped at dusk.

**24th May.** Queen Victoria's Birthday. Marched at 4.30 a.m. Little fighting, got bread from farm also fowl and so had a decent feed. Rum issue at 7 p.m. All the Army sang the National Anthem. Splendid sight. Camp fires seen for miles.

**25th May.** Commencing to get cold at night. Marched at 6 a.m.. Fighting all day.

**26th May** Marched at 5 a.m. Occupied Vilgoem's Lawn. Fighting commenced at about 10 a.m. and only lasted for about 3 hours, the Boers retiring. Camped about 2 miles from Vaal River. Got orders to cross the river and go on outpost duty. ( no sleep that night).

**27th May.** Marched at 4 a.m. To get in touch with Colonel Gordon. Did so and camped at dusk. No fight.

**28th May** Marched at 5 a.m. Fighting commenced immediately after leaving camp. We were escort to the artillery. Fight lasted all day.

**29th May** Marched at 4 a.m. Advance guard on the right flank. Fighting commenced at 6 a.m. We being in pursuit of a train with the Boers firing from the train. Pitched fight about 2 miles outside Boksburg lasting about 3 hours. At last, we charged into Boksburg, blew up the railway . Information received from 'Landrost' that trains were leaving Elandsfontein. Myself and Sergeant Couldrey having two picked sections of 9 men each, with 3 officers we had 6 miles to go in a little over 15 minutes. Arrived all well, left horses, fixed bayonets and charged the station, took 60 prisoners, 8 trains of rolling stock and 10 engines. Enemy attacked station but after a few volleys from us , they drew off. We remained on station until 5 p.m. When we were relieved by the Guards. (A record) 21 men too and held that station for 5 hours , an order was published ( which I am sorry to say I have not got ) by Lord Roberts thanking us for the splendid achievement and our pluck. Camped 2 miles outside the station. Fairly knocked out and clothing in rags

**30th May.** Boers attacked outposts at 7 am. So we turned out for about an hour. I was then sent out on patrol. Joined French and took up position outside Johannesburg.

**31st May.** Johannesburg surrendered. Marched through.

**1st June.** Remained in camp on half rations (1 & half biscuits, half a pound of preserved meat since the 28th May).

**2nd June.** Nothing of note occurred.

**3rd June** Left Johannesburg and marched about 12 miles in direction of Pretoria and then camped for the night

**4th June** Marched at 4.a.m. Fighting for about 4 hours. Forts bombarded. Retired to camp at dusk.

**5th June** Marched into Pretoria and camped on the outskirts of the town (north)

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### 6 Jun to 21 Jul 1900 - Fighting around Pretoria

**6th June** Remained in camp.

**7th June** Went into town and got cocoa and bread. Ordered back to camp.. At about 1.30 p.m. we went out in the direction of Peanarrs Poort where a few shots were exchanged

**8th June** Marched at 7 a.m. Went out on reconnaissance and had a sharp fight and got shelled by the Boer 'Long Tom' at 6 miles range. Retired to camp at 5.p.m.

**9th June** Remained in camp. Patrol fired upon and Private Ross captured and taken prisoner.

**10th June** Remained in camp, church service. Telegrams (congratulating the troops) read out from the Queen, Prince of Wales and Lord Roberts.

**11th June** Marched at 5.a.m. Engaged enemy. Stiff fight, got good position and remained until dusk.. Left on outpost duties that night.

**12th June** Reveille at 3.a.m. (Battle of Diamond Hill) Fighting all day remained in position till the 14th June with fighting each day.

**14th June** Shifted camp to Donkers Hack. Troops resting. Yeomanry disbanded from Camp.

**17th June** Church Service

**18th June.** Nothing to note. I am sick and tired of this continual misery. Wonder when it will finish.

**19th June** Rumour that Botha had surrendered. It is not true as usual. Sent letters to all at home. On patrol at 4 p.m. Boers attacked outposts a bit of a fight with the Boers eventually retiring. The whole of the regiment remained out that night , the patrol being ordered to camp.

**20th June** Patrol again at 4 a.m. We went well out, saw nothing and returned to our camp.

**21st June** Troops resting. Patrols and outpost duty every three or four days. Patrols driven in nearly every day. Boers in strong force at Bronkhorst Spruit ( the scene of the disaster in 1881 when the 92nd were on the march to Pretoria - apparently the Boers attacked and killed or wounded nearly the whole of the Regiment, because the Colonel was unaware that war had been declared and refused to surrender)

**22nd June** Relieved by the Guards Brigade, shifted camp to Streickers farm. Patrol and outpost duty as usual, refitted with clothing etc. News received in orders that Lord Methuen defeated de Wet on the 12th and that Buller occupied Laing's Nek on the 11th.

**23rd June** Still at Streickers Farm. Ordinary duties.

**28th June** Lt Underwood, self and 12 men ordered to patrol to Donkers Hack, sent out on left to try and get to Vandre Merve Railway Station. We got to within 300 yards of the station when the Boers opened fire and chased us, nearly captured us, but luckily we got away safe, fired a few volleys to check the Boers and retired to a guards outpost where we found a couple of men behind a rock and making no attempt to render assistance. Reported case on arrival in camp. Received mail.

**29th June** Remained in camp until the 2nd July

**2nd July.** Went on two or three patrols and was fired upon each time, near escape from capture on one occasion.

**4th July** On outpost duty, sent by Colonel Henry to advanced post as an attack was expected. (Post about 4 miles in front of outposts) Boers commenced to attack almost as soon as we arrived. They got well round us and within 800 yards of our position. Sent in for reinforcements then went down to the back of the kopje to let loose as Boers were firing on them. Got all of them cut loose, one being wounded and subsequently died, remainder galloped to camp. Boers pressing attack and no sign of the reinforcements. Ran short of ammunition and gave up hope of being relieved. Saw troops making attempt to get to us but they were driven back, but after making a detour (which took some hours) they finally got to us expecting to find some of us wounded, but found us all well at about 3 p.m. Remained on post till dusk then retired to camp. Remained in camp until 9th July.

**9th July** Sudden order to saddle up as enemy were attacking Erste Fabriken. A sharp fight lasting about 3 hours. Boers driven off. We retired to camp at dusk.

**10th July** Left camp at 4.30 a.m. On reconnaissance. Fighting all day till dusk and were returning to camp when we were ordered to take up fresh camp at Vlackfontein, remained there about 4 days.

**15th July** On inlying piquet. Ordered out as enemy were taking another attempt to retake Pretoria, little fighting. Boers retired. Ordered back to Penarrs Poort. No blankets, rations or kit, slept on veldt, terribly cold. Blankets sent on next day, mine getting lost, had to get fresh ones. A standing order to saddle up and stand to arms every morning at 4.30.a.m.. Strike camp and be ready to move if required.

**16th July** Ordinary Camp duties, patrols etc. until the 20th.

**21st July** Left camp at 2 a.m. On reconnaissance. Went out about 10 miles, had rather a stiff fight, four casualties, returned to camp at about 5 p.m.

**22nd July** Remained in camp

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### 23 Jul to 4 Aug 1900 - Advance to Balmoral

**23rd July** General advance. Marched at 5.a.m. No fighting.

**24th July** Marched at 5a.m. In touch with the enemy no casualties.

**25th July** Marched at 5 a.m. Rather stiff engagement. Camped at dusk.

**26th July** Marched at 4.a.m. No fighting only a few shots fired.

**27th July** Marched at 5 a.m. Not much fighting camp at Brugspruit.

**28th July** Strong patrol left Brugspruit, went about 15 miles ( north) commandeered about 200 head of cattle and took a few prisoners. Arrived at camp at about 7 p.m. Fairly tired out.

**29th July** Ordinary camp duties until 4th August.

**4th August** Shifted camp to Balmoral, laid with Regiment.

**5th August** Camp duties

**6th August** Patrol paraded at 4.30 a.m. Did not get in touch with enemy . Returned to camp at 4 p.m.

**7th August.** Ordinary camp duties until 18th August.

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### 18 August to 27 August 1900 - Heavy Fighting around Belfast

**18th August** General advance had several skirmishes with enemy as far as Wonderfontein, no heavy fighting until we reached Belfast.

**24th August** Heavy fighting commenced at about 11 a.m. Fighting till dusk, no blankets, coldest night yet experienced, no sleep and no rations.

**25th August** Heavy fighting commenced at day break. 4 men in my section wounded several of regiment killed, nothing to eat or drink since morning of the 24th. Camped at dusk. Got rations and had a really good feed (Biscuits, and macaroni rations, coffee)

**26th August** Heavy fighting commenced at daybreak several of the regiment wounded. Fighting till dusk.

**27th August** Boers evacuated position during night of the 26th. On baggage guard for 4 days. All prisoners released from Nooigtdacht on 30th. We taking part with General French, remained at Nooigtdacht till the 5th September and out every day and fighting.

**6th September** Shifted to Machadorp, marched through Helvetia and passed Regiment.

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### 7 Sep to 24 Sep 1900 - Advance to Komatie Poort

**7th September** Commenced advance to Barberton fighting every day till the 10th then remained in camp until 12th Sept.

**12th September** Commenced advance on Komatie Poort. Very hard marches and very hot., but not much fighting, arrived Komatie Poort on 24th September 1900. On arrival at K. Poort, Boers blew up a Long Tom also ammunition. Burnt stacks of rifles, railway station and everything in the vicinity burnt. Found plenty of Nestles Milk and Quaker Oats which the Boers had thrown away, evidently having too much to take away.

**17th September** On piquet on the Silatic Railway Bridge for 7 days. Very lonely piquet 7 miles from camp. Strength 21 men did not have a visit from our friends during the piquet duty. Plenty of shooting. Went out one night and got lost for about 3 hours got safely back to the piquet house at 11 p.m. After a most anxious 3 hours as there are plenty of wild beasts about this part. Returned to HQ. on the 24th September.

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### 25 Sep to 30 Oct 1900 - On the Swaziland Border

**>25th September** On patrol to the Swazi border. Saw plenty of Kaffir villages in their true state. Remained in camp till 31st September.

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### 1 Nov to 9 Nov 1900 - Advance to Kaapshoek

**1st November.** On piquet at Numerharsh had one or two bits of skirmish but nothing serious returned to HQ on 8th November 9th November Left Komatie for Kaapshoek passed Regiment at Nelspruit (riding in trucks) detained at Godwin Station and marched on foot to Kaapshoek an awful hard march, Boiling sun and all uphill. Commenced to rain when we had done about 6 miles. Another 7 to do. Got drenched. Arrived Kaapshoek about 5 p.m. Fairly knocked out. Blankets wet but have had to make the best of it as usual.

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### 10 Nov to 6 May 1901 - In and Around Kaapshoek

**11th November.** Parkinson received telegram about DCM medal . Remained at Kaapshoek and had one or two turns with the Boers and continually standing to arms at daybreak.

**11th January 1901.** We gave a dance to inhabitants of Kaapshoek and spent a good evening.

**23rd January.** Received news of the Queen's death. Special service on the 24th. A most solemn parade.

**30th January.** Mr Austin the English mine manager died. Attended funeral on the 2nd February. Had a special service for the burial of the Queen which was well attended

**16th February** . Commenced to rain and continued for four days. Everything wet through, blew all our bivouacs down and played havoc generally. Outpost duty every third night with invariably misty weather.

**4th May**. On patrol to Hill Top farm. Had to lead horses as the track was not safe to ride. Reached farm but found the Boers had gone and left Kaffirs in charge . Had a bit of something to eat and left early next morning. Got to camp at about 8 p.m.

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### 6 May to 13 May 1901 - General Duties Around Middleberg

**6th May** Left Kaapshoek for Machadsdorp (coal truck passage). Arrived Machadsdorp on the 7th May shifted camp on the 9th to Natal Hill.

**10th May** On outpost duty

**12th May** Left camp with Captain Hartley for Middelburg. Arrived there on the 13th. Patrols, outpost and camp duties till 22nd May

**13th May**. In charge of escort for mail train to Pretoria. Returned to Middelberg on the 20th. Camp duties. Etc. and turned out twice at midnight.

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### 21 May to 10 Jun 1901 - My Arrest and Court Martial

**21st May** Under arrest. Tried by Court Martial on the 5th June. Reduced to the ranks and returned to the Regiment on the 10th June.

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### 10 Jun to 21 Sept 1901 - Reduced to Ranks and Returned to 1st Yorkshires

**10th June** On outpost duty twice at East Hill for five days . Most miserable time I have had during the campaign. Employed as orderly to General Stephenson on the 29th June until 8th July 1901.

**9th July** Left Barberton for Komatie Poort and arrived the same day. Employed in the Supply Store and had an easy time.

**18th July** Left Komati Poort for Pretoria and arrived on the 19th July. Employed in prison as Quartermaster Sergeant and had a rather easy time. Left Pretoria on the 19th September for Ladysmith. 3 days awful passage on coal trucks with no cover.

**21st September** Arrived Ladysmith and was sent on outpost duty onto Leicester Hill on the 23rd September 1901.....

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Here the diary ends. Little is known of what happened to 4710 Lance Corporal F.W.Schofield, until the end of the Boer War. Research into his background conducted at the Public Records Office in Kew, London, by John Sly has produced the following information.....

- July 1894 Basic training at the Regimental Depot in Richmond, N.Yorks.
- 4 Dec 1894 Joined G Company 1st Yorkshires in Jersey, Channel Islands
- 4 March 1897 Promoted to Lance Corporal
- 1 May 1897 Passed 3rd Class Education Diploma
- 20 May 1897 Promoted to Corporal
- 10 June 1898 Passed 2nd Class Education Diploma
- 12 Dec 1898 Promoted to Lance Sergeant.
- 18 Dec 1899 Joined the Green Howard Company of the 4th Mounted Infantry in SA
- 5th Jun 1901 Court Martialed and reduced to the ranks
- 10 Jun 1901 Returned to 1st Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment in Barberton
- Dec 1901 Promoted to Lance Corporal
- Jan 1902 Promoted to Corporal
- Sept 1902 Returned to England after the Boer War

- 13 July 1904 Promoted to Lance Sergeant
  - 26 Oct 1904 Passed Part I of the 1st class Education Diploma
  - 29 Mar 1906 Passed 1st class Education
  - 22 Jul 1907 Passed Advanced Class of Maxim Gun Course at School of Musketry
  - Jan 1908 Promoted to Sergeant with c Company in Egypt.
  - Mar 1910 Promoted to Colour Sergeant in D Company
  - May 1912 Moved with 1st Yorkshires to India
  - Feb 1918 Commissioned as Lieutenant (Quartermaster)
  - Oct 1918 Awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal
  - Jan 1919 Took part in the 3rd Afghan War
  - Dec 1919 Awarded British War & Afghan Medals
  - 19 Aug 1922 Completion of Service. Retired from Army.
-