

Field Marshall Sir George White V.C. (1847-50) and the Siege of Ladysmith (November 1899 - February 1900)

The tunic in the case above was worn by the Field Marshall during the Siege of Ladysmith. The siege lasted for 118 days, by which time the besieged were wracked by dysentery and enteric fever, and had been forced to eat their horses. However, their stubborn defence tied up large numbers of Boer soldiers and enabled reinforcements to arrive. White had fought in the Indian Mutiny and won the Victoria Cross in the Second Afghan War. Semi-retirement beckoned with the Governorship of Gibraltar, when the South African crisis diverted him to Durban and pushed him back into the front line. When the first party of the relief column, under Major Gough, arrived on 28th February 1900, White reportedly greeted them saying, "Thank God we kept the flag flying".



To keep morale high a siege newspaper was published entitled the Ladysmith Bombshell.



The siege quickly developed a monotonous routine with artillery bombardments conducted by either side each day. Long Tom, the heavy Creusot, was the main Boer armament while the Royal Navy gunners replied with a 4.7 inch gun.



British troops defending Caesar's Camp, Ladysmith



Ladysmith from a sandbagged position.