

History

The origins of Royal Navy Field Gun lay in 1899, in the Second Boer War, and in particular the 119-day Siege of Ladysmith. The British Army was besieged by Boer fighters in the garrison town of Ladysmith, Natal.

The Afrikaans fighters were outranging the British artillery, with their French siege guns, known as the Long Tom. Realising that they needed a battle winning asset, the British Army requested help from the the Royal Navy's Naval Brigade. The Naval Brigade landed guns from HMS Terrible and Powerful to help in the relief of the siege.

Special carriages and mountings for these guns had been improvised by Percy Scott, before the Naval Brigade manhandled six field guns each weighing nearly half a metric tonne over rough terrain to assist their opposite numbers of the British Army. Initially transported by rail, the Blue Jackets of The Naval Brigade drove their guns by oxen and, finally, man handled them across all sorts of arduous terrain. Making it into the defended area and setting up gun positions before being encircled by the Boers.

The British Army were helped enormously by last minute arrival, of Captain the Hon Hedworth Lambton and his 280 Blue-Jackets, four 12 pounders and two 4.7 inch guns. The siege of Ladysmith was finally lifted on 28 Feb 1900. Stopping the Boer Army utilising their long toms and thus denying freedom to movement around the town of Ladysmith.

Technical Data

12 Pounder:

Barrell = 89.7kg (198lbs) (21% of the full size) – full size = 427kg
Carriage = 91.6kg (202lbs) (57% of the full size) – full size = 161kg
Wheels = 26.5kg (58.4lbs) (50% of the full size) – full size = 53kg
Wellington Gun = 234.3kg
12 pounder = 694kg

Limber:

Limber = 106.5kg (235lbs) (66% of the full size) – full size = 161kg
Wheels = 26.5kg (58.4lbs) (50% of the full size) – full size = 53kg
Wellington Limber = 160kg
Actual limber = 267kg

Rig:

10ft = 34.5kg Same

Sheer leg (15ft) = 79kg Same

28ft = 52kg Same

Traveller = 23.5kg Same

Rig total = 233.5kg

Bottle = 18.5kg Same

The Run

The Field Gun Run is divided into three sections. The "Run Out", the "Run Back", and the "Run Home".

The Run Out

1. The Start

Each Crew consist of 18 gunners, each of whom run a number corresponding to the drill they carry out during the course of the run.

Here, following the start of the Run Out, they "Chomp down the Straight", before all the equipment is man-handled over the wall.

2. Over Home Wall

The gun and limber together with the 18 gunners of the crew have to negotiate the "Run", Starting with the 5 foot "Home" wall.

This involves the gun, a carriage, limber, and two pairs of wheels being shoved, heaved and pulled over the wall before the "Rig" can be erected.

3. Up Rig

The "Rig" consists of two 18 foot spars (shear legs), each weighing 80kg, a 10 foot spar (35kg) which will cross the chasm and support the wire, which weighs 60kg, will form a "Necklace" for the shear legs as they are lifted off the ground.

The cruciform supports the 28 foot spar (weighing 52kg) which allows the "1st Swing" to cross the chasm, closely followed by the "2nd Swing" who carries the wire.

The wire is then coupled at both ends and the "Rig" is "Lifted Back" into two metal shoes (elephant feet) before being tightened by the bottle screw to allow the gun, limber and gunners to cross the 28 foot chasm.

4. Chasm Drill

With the "Rig" successfully in place, the first pair of wheels, with the hitchhiker at the back, will be "hailed" across the chasm by the swings. The carriage with 4 gunners will follow, then the barrel and the second pair of wheels.

This is quickly followed by the limber with a further 4 gunners.

If any mission critical equipment falls into the chasm this is an instant disqualification.

5. Through the wall to action line

The last gunner will sprint to catch up with the crews as they negotiate the "hole" in the "enemy wall", then race to the "Action line" to fire the first 3 rounds against the enemy.

The 3 rounds complete, the Trainer will ask permission to make up the equipment for the "Run Back" which has to be completed with "Full Speed".

Unless there is a delay or an injury, the crew may not move, or they will incur a time penalty which is added to the final time of the overall run.

The Run Back

1. The Barrel Drop

Having negotiated the "enemy wall", the swings propel themselves across the chasm, holding the traveller, to then haul across the closely following wheels and limber.

The gun is run up the ramp, and the barrel is then hauled right up to the shear leg cruciform.

Hooked to the wire and slipped, the barrel now drops to hand "in the trees" awaiting to be reunited with the carriage.

2. Gun to Action Line

The gun, now ready to move, is "boxed" away to the 2nd action line.

The "rig" will now be collapsed by attaching the traveller "pull lines" to the pin which holds the 10-foot spar, to leave nothing on the enemy side, the "rig" is collapsed.

The wire and lines are pulled from the chasm by the "Traveller Man".

The gun is again fired 3 times, this time in rear-guard action.

The Run Home

1. A tight Squeeze

As on the "Run Out", the gun and limber need to be disassembled and together with the 18 gunners, are squeezed through this small "hole" in the home wall to be reassembled before racing for the finish line; all of which should take less than 30 seconds and is often much faster!