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Captain J. E. H. Orr Papers

Collection Summary

Title:	Captain J. E. H. Orr Papers
Call Number:	MS 90-14
Size:	0.5 linear feet
Acquisition:	Purchased from Sotheby's, March 14, 1985 by Dr. Martin Bush.
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Note:	None
Restrictions:	None

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Restrictions

None

Content Note

This collection contains 36 letters and a journal written by Captain J. E. H. Orr of the City of London Imperial Volunteers during the Boer War. He details military engagements, comments on fellow officers and gives an account of conditions of the troops. The letters are written from Pretoria, Orange River and elsewhere in South Africa from January to September 1900. Orr's journal summarizes many of the letters, one of which mentions a conversation with Winston Churchill

Biography

Very little information is known concerning Captain J. E. H. Orr other than his appointment as Secretary to the Military Governor of Pretoria, General Sir John Maxwell, in August of 1900. Numerous mentions of Captain Orr are made by Major-General Mackinnon in The Journal of the City of London Imperial Volunteers.

Detailed Description: Box and Folder Listing

Box 1	FF 1	January 13, 1900 - Aboard R. M. S. "Garth Castle." This letter is from Captain Orr to his wife and is personal in nature.
Box 1	FF 2	January 13 - January 17, 1900 - Aboard R. M. S. "Garth Castle." Captain Orr writes his wife about his activities on board ship. Mentions Captain Shipley who will be a commanding officer. Describes crossing the Bay of Biscay and heavy sea. Met a chap called Crawford who is on his way to Las Palmas. Wrote on the 17th that they are suppose to reach Maderia by 2:00 a.m. tomorrow.
Box 1	FF 3	January 19, 1900 - Got to Maderia in the night. Went ashore about 8:00 with several other people. Describes the hike. Off Las Palmas on board describes the ship surrounded by blacks diving for money. Traveled nearly 1600 miles but have 6000 to go.
Box 1	FF 4	February 12, 1900 - Green Point - Captain Orr reports that his affairs have somewhat changed. He is now doing Quarter Master for 360 men and 80 horses, 80 or 90 mounted infantry. Explains his duties. Bailey, a friend of the Lord Mayor, found the horses for us. He says Cholmondeley mismanaged the horses and the sickness is his fault. Rumor that Roberts is pushing straight through to Bloomfontein and will cut off the Boer force who are in front of the French.
Box 1	FF 5	February 16, 1900 - Green Point - Captain Orr reports that the ship Ariosto arrived last night and troops landed this morning. Much reporting on his horses and his work with the men. Tells about an accident with his horse. News that French has cut off the Boers at Magersfontein. Also Roberts was within eight miles.
Box 1	FF 6	February 19, 1900 - Green Point - Captain Orr writes about his association with his staff and his decision. More about the movement of troops.
Box 1	FF 7	February 22, 1900 - In the train between De Aar and Orange River. Captain Orr has been made entraining officer. Describes his journey to De Aar. Mentions an alarm and how they stood their lines while the General rode around the camp. Met old friend Charlie Maberly and others for visit.
Box 1	FF 8	February 25, 1900 - Orange River. Describes an alarm with shouts for the guard to turn out. Nothing more than a Boer prisoner escaping. Mentions a telegraphist who is to be shot today for giving news to the enemy. Rumors about the Mounted Infantry being split up.
Box 1	FF 9	March 5, 1900 - On the way to Cape Town from Orange River. Went to Cape Town to get several things for the regiment. Describes the journey and meeting with friends. Has been made Quarter Master for this trip.
Box 1	FF 10	March 11, 1900 - Explains failure to accomplish his object in coming to Cape Town. Mentions talking to several people. A fight at Driefontein. Lost 250 killed and wounded. The Boer prisoners at Simonstown tried to tunnel a way under a tent, but were caught.
Box 1	FF 11	March 18, 1900 - Orange River. Describes his travel with the 7th Dragoon Guard as far as De Aar. Saw some Yeomanry starting for Britstown, which were thought to be Wenjie and Company. Have only 200 or 300 men in

camp here. Mentions his taking lost of photographs.

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| Box 1 | FF 12 | March 24, 1900 - Orange River. Describes a trip to Zautpans Drift by horseback, with Mac and Albemarle. Stayed with our regiment there. Stopped at a place called Grant's Farm. Describes shooting Steinbok, a sort of antelope. Everyone seems to think the Transvaal will go on fighting, though the Free State has chucked it. A rebellion at Prieska. |
| Box 1 | FF 13 | March 25, 1900 - In the train. Made a trip to Magerstontein with others to see the battlefield. Describes the scene. Mentions traveling and activities on the way. |
| Box 1 | FF 14 | April 7, 1900 - Orange River. Writes about his letters to his family and friends. Mentions situation of the war at present. Boers show brains and strategy. Mentions visiting the hospital. |
| Box 1 | FF 15 | April 10, 1900 - Orange River. Started on a trip from Bloemfontein with Mac. At Naauwpoort met George Gough. He saw them off from Norval's Point. Later shot himself. Describes the rest of his trip. April 13 - In the train, on the way into the Free State. Describes his movement there. Rpw with Camp Commander. |
| Box 1 | FF 16 | April 18, 1900 - Edenburg, orders to move. Started off in huge column, headed by Canadian M. Rifles. reports the movement of the troops. |
| Box 1 | FF 17 | April 24, 1900 - Bloemfontein. Arrived here about 1 o'clock. Describes the march. One night at Bethanie, next night at Kaffir Bridge where the Cameron Highlanders were under Smiler Kennedy. |
| Box 1 | FF 18 | April 27, 1900 - Glenn. Describes his living conditions and his duties. Marched about 17 miles to get here. Located on the banks of the Modder River, on a railroad between Bramfort and the Transvaal. The Boers are to the east. A fine bridge has been blown up. There are more bridges but should they be blown up, they would depend on the railroad. Writes about everyday life. |
| Box 1 | FF 19 | May 2, 1900 - Steynburg. Reports that they are on the Veldt, miles from anywhere and are dependent on convoys from Bloemfontein. Describes movements and battle. Will go on as part of General Hamilton's force. |
| Box 1 | FF 20 | May 6, 1900 - Winburg. Reached Steynburg where they rested for a day. Reached Isabelfontein, next day another 16 miles to the Vet River. Small battle with some casualties. The Boers are running. Describes his own movement. |
| Box 1 | FF 21 | May 13, 1900 - Kroonstad. Describes their movements on to the Zand River. Some gun fire and the Boers in full retreat. Mentions provisions and how the army is devouring everything. Expects to go to Lindley tomorrow, then Heilbron and rejoin the main forces at Vereenigin where we will cross the Vaal River. Over 500 Free Staters surrendered yesterday and the war is over as far as they are concerned. |
| Box 1 | FF 22 | May 22, 1900 - Heilbron. Reports movement. Arrived at spot east of Heilbron where they stopped to rest and repair equipment. Some shelling. Little rations, and animals suffering. Mentions Winston Churchill who told Albemarle and Orr that he mentions the CIV's in his dispatches to the |

"Morning Post." Thinks the war may be over soon.

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| Box 1 | FF 23 | June 7, 1900 - Irene, eight miles south of Pretoria. Describes the march from Johannesburg north on Pretoria and the situation in Pretoria. Describes the parade with compliments from Smith Dorrien. More marching on to Heidelberg, men and animals are exhausted. |
| Box 1 | FF 24 | June 14, 1900 - Elandsrivier (?). Reports that he arrived at a small railway station on the Delagoa Bay line about 20 miles from Pretoria. Talks of a march to Pretoria that was cancelled. Also mentions that he was not in the fight on Monday or Tuesday with the regiment because he was four or five miles off struggling with the wagons over bad roads and worse drifts. Also contains personal matters. The handwriting in this letter is illegible. |
| Box 1 | FF 25 | June 24, 1900 - Heildeberg. After the battle of Diamond Hill they went in two marches to Pretoria. There they rested and had pleasant time with friends. Describes movement of men and weather that does not help. General Hunter is expected today. Railroad which Boers get their supplies has been cut and may do much to end the war. Writes some about personal activities. |
| Box 1 | FF 26 | July 4, 1900 - Frankfort. There are four double pages to this letter. Most of the contents concerns the position and movements of the men. Gives details of whole situation. Also the condition of the supplies for men and beast. |
| Box 1 | FF 27 | July 16, 1900 - Heilborn. Reports change of plans. Forces arrived and we were to go back with them. Orders changed and the Highlanders were to go by train to Pretoria instead. More about the movement of troops. Mentions the Boers situation and their determination. Men are in need of personal supplies, clothing and food. |
| Box 1 | FF 28 | July 21, 1900 - Heilborn. Reports Boers all around, we are expecting to be attacked daily and for them to take the town. Some personal information concerning his clothing. July 27, 1900 - Received telegram that troops were to leave Heilborn by rail for Benghersdorp (?) and to send to Railway authorities notice of what trains he wanted. Gives details of situation. |
| Box 1 | FF 29 | August 4, 1900 - Frederickstav Stn. 12 m. short of Potchepstoam (?) on the way from Krugersdorp. Gives an account of his movements on Saturday. Marched under General Smith Domar (?). Describes a train wreck, caused by the Boers. Many casualties. Incident about a Boer coming into camp with a white flag demanding surrender. Describes the fight. August 9, 1900 - This letter continues describing the movements. August 12 - Gives position moving in hopeless pursuit of De Wet. |
| Box 1 | FF 30 | August 10, 1900 - Bauh (?) 25 m. southwest of Krugersdorp. Describes the train wreck again. Mentions Percy's arrival. Gives position and movements of troops. |
| Box 2 | FF 1 | August 17, 1900 - Brakfontoin (?). One hundred miles from Pretoria met up with Colonel Howe (?) who had been held up for eight days by Boers under De La Rey. Ketchener in pursuit of De Wet. More marching and description of incidents on the way. De Wet escaped through Olifants Nek (?). Describes the countryside. The handwriting in this letter is illegible. August 24, 1900 - Pretoria. Arrived Pretoria yesterday morning. Describes the march. Traveled 1078 miles. Reports Boers have taken a position as a last stand between Lydenbury (?) and Machadolph. Reports a plot to abduct Lt. Roberts. |

Box 2	FF 2	August 30, 1900 - Pretoria. This letter describes his present situation, everyday living and friends he meets.
Box 2	FF 3	August 31, 1900 - Personal letter about a friend Lenjie (?).
Box 2	FF 4	September 4, 1900 - Pretoria. Describes his present work. Made trip to Dasport to pay his black boys and arrange for them to go home. Reports on the war situation and possibility of being sent home first. September 7, 1900 - Reports Pretoria short of food.
Box 2	FF 5	September 5, 1900 - A newspaper clipping from <i>Government Gazette</i> . Government Notice No. 81 OF 1900. Captain J. E. H. Orr, C. I. V., has been provisionally appointed Secretary to the Military Governor signed by J. G. Maxwell, Major-General, Military Governor, Pretoria, 30 August, 1900.
Box 2	FF 6	September 1900 - Pretoria. Telegram concerning convalescence from typhoid from Captain Jones.
Box 2	FF 7	September 11, 1900 - Pretoria. Reports on his present situation and his duties. Describes small accounts which happen to him and his men.
Box 2	FF 8	September 18, 1900 - Pretoria. Reports that his job is running smoothly. The government told Mac that they are satisfied with him. Meets with friends. Predicts war will last another week.
Box 2	FF 9	September 24, 1900 - Pretoria. Reports receiving articles from home. Lunched with friends. Writes about Mac saying Orr wasn't going home. Expresses his thoughts about going home.
Box 2	FF 10	Contains a typewritten journal written by Captain Orr to his wife in 1900. The journal contains diary entries from January 13, 1900 to July 10, 1900. The journal entries are mainly condensations of the correspondence contained in this collection.

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