

At anchor off Capetown the cruisers HMS Powerful and HMS Terrible the British Commander in Natal, General Sir George White VC, signalled the ships for assistance, particularly long range guns. Fortunately for the General, Captain P. Scott RN of HMS Terrible was a gunnery expert and he quickly designed a carriage that could hold 6 inch, 4.7 inch and 12 pounder naval guns for transit over land and in action.

Following initial tests, all the necessary guns and equipment were transported to Durban by HMS Terrible and the carriages were then speedily manufactured in the Durban Railway Workshops. The contingent was soon ready and under the command of Captain H. Lambton RN, the 280 officers and men with two 4.7 inch guns, four long range 12 pounders and four maxim guns (early machine guns) the Naval Brigade, as they were then called, left Durban by rail for Ladysmith. Their train was the last to complete the journey to Ladysmith on the 30th October just as the siege and bombardment started.

The Naval Brigade were soon in action against the Boer artillery, their long range guns were so effective in countering the enemy batteries and holding them at bay that it was not long before Captain Scott was being asked to provide another brigade. This was duly done and the new Naval Brigade acted in support of General Buller's push towards their besieged comrades. Due to the nature of this operation the railway was of little use and guns had to be manhandled over difficult terrain to be brought into action in many different engagements, eventually reaching Ladysmith after 120 days of blockade. The news of the relief of Ladysmith was greeted with great jubilation in Britain and Queen Victoria sent a telegram to the Naval Brigades thanking them for their invaluable assistance. Leaving Ladysmith on the 7th March 1900 the sailors of Powerful and Terrible were soon back on board, the Powerful heading for home and arriving in Portsmouth on the 11th April. The officers and men of Powerful were soon invited to a number of military and civic receptions culminating in a Royal Audience with Queen Victoria when she personally thanked the ship's company for their part in the saving of Ladysmith.