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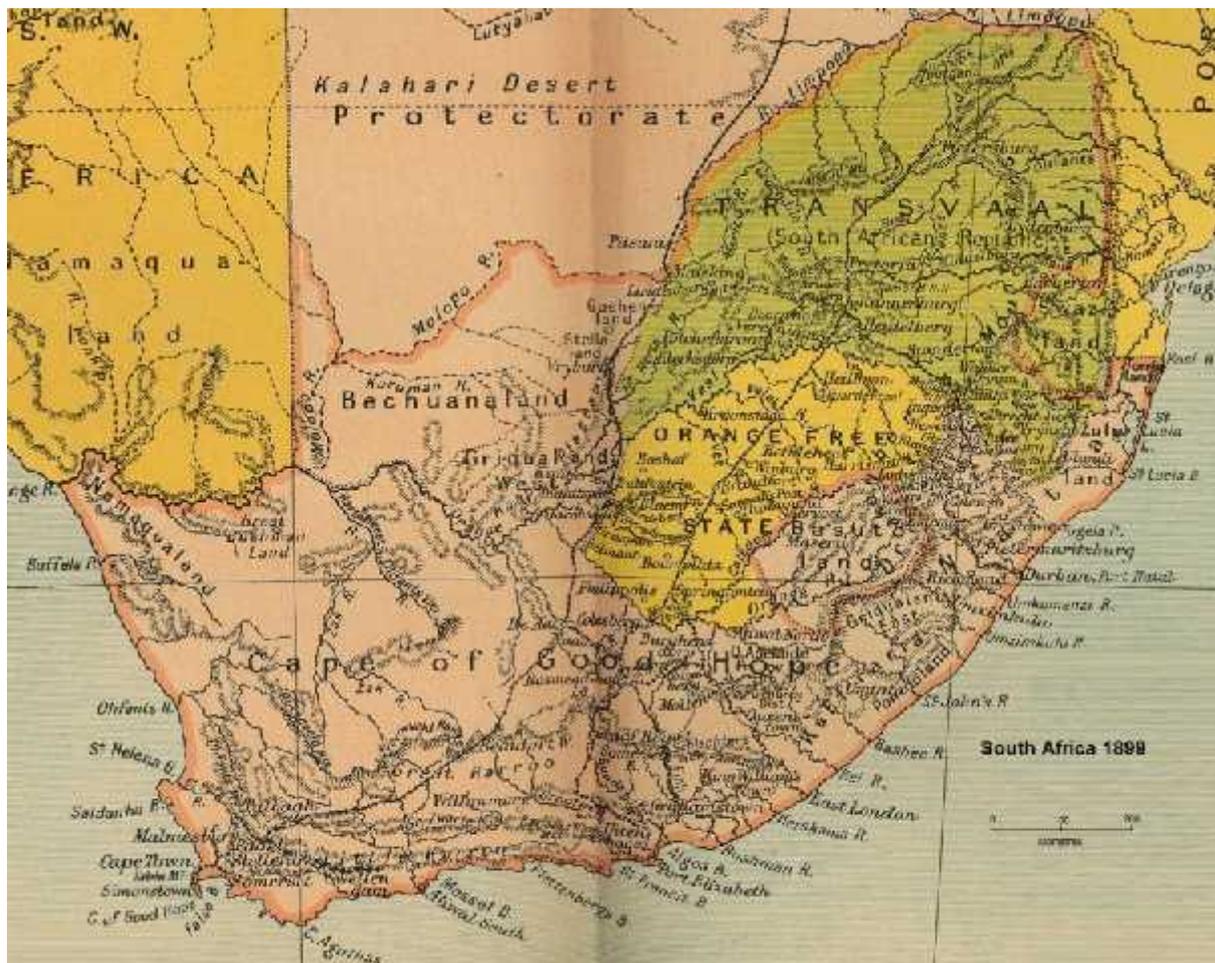
## ANZAC-15 Australia in the Second Anglo-Boer War

John Howells – April 2015

With ANZAC commemorations upon us, it behoves us to look at our nation in the years that led up to its involvement in World War 1.

Australia as a nation had been at war before; it was at war in 1901 when the continent's six colonies federated to become a sovereign nation, a Commonwealth within the British Empire. The Second Anglo Boer War took place almost as far from our shores as Europe. Over 500 of our citizens were to die in the conflict, one created by economic envy, overwhelming desire for influence and to some small extent to stand up for the disenfranchised. It took place against a background of events, a listing of which can help us to understand some of the context:

- 1652 Dutch Colonisation;
- 1815 British Sovereignty (Treaty of Vienna);
- 1835 The Great Trek Begins;
- 1862 ZAR<sup>i</sup> and OFS<sup>ii</sup> granted independence;
- 1869 Diamonds and 1886 Gold found in the Republics;
- 1880 First Boer War, Boer republics (ZAR and OFS) fully recognised by the British;
- 1886 Rhodes founded Rhodesia, north of ZAR;
- 1895 The Jamison Raid.



It is of particular interest to note that the British possession of the Cape came out of the treaty that ended the Napoleonic Wars. The Netherlands had an arrangement with the elected despot which meant it lost the prize. And prize it was, the main stopover on the valuable route to India, and on the way to visit a few convicts in the antipodes.

Discovery and subsequent exploitation of the mineral resources was the ultimate trigger for the conflict. The Boer Republics had confirmed their right to exist in the first Boer War where the British were soundly defeated. Boer society, however, was rural and exclusive. Farmers were free to work their properties, and it was only they who were free to take part in the democratic process of government. Indigenous black and yellow people were regarded as “drawers of water and hewers of wood”, foreigners (utilanders) as outsiders, both categories were disenfranchised. It was the foreigners who exploited the gold and diamonds. By 1890, there were more people in Johannesburg more economic activity generated there than in the rest of the Transvaal; those involved were disenfranchised. Those outside the borders (mainly in the British colonies) looked in with envy; they wanted a piece of the action.

After the failure of the Jamison raid, the British reinforced garrisons in their surrounding possessions, in response the two Boer Republics entered a formal alliance. Then on 10 October 1899 the British Government received an ultimatum from the Boers demanding that additional British forces be removed from the British colonies of the Cape and Natal. The ultimatum gave the British 48 hours to act or the Boers would declare war.

The British did not reply so the Boers declared war then struck out and lay siege to the key towns of Mafikeng, Kimberley and Ladysmith.



The British sent out an appeal to the colonies for: “iii Manageable numbers of dutiful military apprentices – company-sized units, preferably foot soldiers that could embark by 31 October 1899 and be attached to regular regiments on arrival. They would be paid at the usual low regular army rates, and any wounded or invalided man would be eligible for a regular army pension.”. No cavalry, artillery or medical services of-course, far too sophisticated for mere colonials to provide.

The forces used fell into these categories:

Infantry, the “dutiful military apprentices” requested. Australian colonies all sent an infantry company. Within two months of arrival, their British commanders recognised the men were also competent horsemen so commandeered cape ponies and mounted them.

*Light Cavalry.* By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cavalry, horse mounted with a shock weapon that scouted and could be used against infantry were deemed “Light”. Since their introduction to the British Army in the 1820s Lancers were the best of the light cavalry, with their long reach weapons they could break up infantry in squares. Even in the Boer war they did have some use against infantry that was in open ground and not dug-in. Australia sent one light cavalry sub-unit, the New South Wales Lancer Squadron.

*Heavy Cavalry.* Mounted on substantial steeds for use against other cavalry, they were not of great use; the Boers did not have conventional cavalry. Australia sent a squadron of the Australian Horse a NSW unit who were trained and equipped as heavy cavalry. They soon gave up carrying their swords and worked as mounted infantry albeit with their Martini Enfield carbines and no bayonets.

*Mounted Infantry.* Horse mounted soldiers who dismounted when they approached the point of battle, one in four taking the mounts, the others fighting on foot. Other than the single artillery battery, lancer squadron, heavy cavalry squadron and medical services; all Australian units and sub-units sent to South Africa were mounted infantry. The particular skills Australians were able to bring to the field were honed by years working in the dry Australian “bush” where navigation, riding and shooting were part of life. As the war passed into the guerrilla phase, “Bushmen” were specifically recruited, most with little formal military training. Initially funded by colonial citizens and their governments (the “Citizens’ Bushmen”) these particular mounted infantry units with scouting capability proved successful. The UK government paid for more (the “Imperial Bushmen”). When our new federated nation sent its first soldiers overseas in the first months of 1902, they were mounted infantry again with scouting capability, the “Australian Commonwealth Horse”. The experience of the Boer War meant that when the Australian Commonwealth Military Force (the Australian Army) was organised in 1903, all mounted units were to be mounted infantry with scouting capability, the Light Horse.

*Artillery.* This was a time when artillery was in transition. Since its inception, it had been used for direct fire, shooting at targets the gunners could see. In the Boer War the use of telephones and balloons allowed gunners to fire beyond their horizon.



Australian soldiers from A Battery with an 18 pounder

The main field piece, the 18 pounder was restricted in range; using fuse determined air burst rounds,

4,200 metres was the maximum range. Our contribution, A Battery, New South Wales permanent Artillery had its skill diluted being split into sections to work with British sub-units. Kept out of much of the action, on occasion they like most other Australian contributions were used as mounted infantry<sup>v</sup>. Both sides also used “Pom Poms” capable of firing 300 half a kilo explosive shells a minute, and siege guns mounted on gun carriages as heavy artillery, the British guns having been stripped from the fortress at Malta.

*Logistics.* Transport for troops and supplies was primarily by metre (3 foot six inch) gauge rail supplemented by horses and ox wagons. Protection of the life blood railways became paramount in the latter guerrilla phase of the conflict. Australia’s specific logistic commitment was to the medical services. Nurses were sent from South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, New South Wales and later the Commonwealth sent medical teams consisting of surgeons, nurses and orderlies with their own equipment and administration.

For the British there were two enemies, the Boer soldiers, and the terrain.

The Boer army was not conventional. As with the Australian colonial forces, Artillery was seen as requiring professional skill. The Staatsartillerie was manned by permanent soldiers with conventional uniforms and ranks who spent their careers studying their art<sup>v</sup>. The other soldiers were recruited from the citizenry using the kommando system, the Kommandowet (Commando Act) 19 February 1866 of the Orange Free State Republic stipulating “<sup>vi</sup>All residents between 16 and 60 years who had no legal reasons for excuse were compelled to do commando duty. All residents, provided they had sufficient means thereto, had to be ready at all times with a horse, saddle, reins, a weapon, half a pound (250 g) of gunpowder, thirty bullets and food for eight days.” By 1899, the age was 18 (with those younger permitted to volunteer) and the gunpowder requirement replaced by thirty rounds the government having purchase and supplied 7 mm “Spanish” Mauser rifles. The men were recruited by locally appointed field cornets and grouped under district commandants. White men were compelled to be part of the system, blacks could be conscripted in emergencies. When in the field, a general would command a number of commandants and their commandos. Unit and sub-unit sizes varied. At full strength a Field Cornet commanded a company with assistants commanding at lower levels; a commandant, a battalion; few units and sub-units reached and certainly did not maintain full strength. There were no uniforms or badges of rank, at least until their civilian clothes wore out and were replaced with readily available khaki taken from prisoners and their enemy’s field casualties.

The skill of the Boer soldier was his knowledge of the terrain and of how to handle weapons honed by many years of working a land with little water, and many predators. His mount, the cape pony was eminently suited to the country, capable of surviving on the local vegetation and live on little water. Their stature did not match the Waler or the magnificent beasts of the British Dragoons, but they were thus less of a target.



The terrain near Colesburg

Terrain is flat almost punctured by somewhat conical hills, kopjes, the veld and karoo once a silted sea bed, the kopjes are remnants of undersea mountains surrounded by silt. Rivers flow westward from mountains along the eastern coastline across a plain swept by

violent monsoonal storms. Water holes only fill by summer rains, in the winter they dry and were readily polluted. Typhoid (enteric) responsible for half the war's casualties was endemic, and well recognised, most towns had signs warning of the problem and advising citizens to boil their water. A patrol striking a water-hole after three days dry, however, usually did not take the necessary precautions and paid the price. Camps in the driving rain of summer became quagmires where water was readily contaminated. Imported horses found the sparse greenery of the veld and karoo unpalatable. Fodder for horses became a logistics nightmare.

To put Australia's involvement into perspective we need to consider these figures<sup>vii</sup>:

<b>Combat Forces</b>	<b>Total Served</b>	<b>Total Deaths</b>	<b>Non-Combat Deaths</b>
United Kingdom	337,435	16,786	12,482
Australian	16,175	516	267
Other Colonial	94,825	4,640	3,419
<b>Total British</b>	<b>448,435</b>	<b>21,942</b>	<b>16,168</b>
Boer	87,365	7,140	

#### **Concentration Camps**

<b>Total Incarcerated</b>	<b>Deaths White</b>	<b>Deaths Black</b>
116,500	26,000	<sup>viii</sup> 20,000

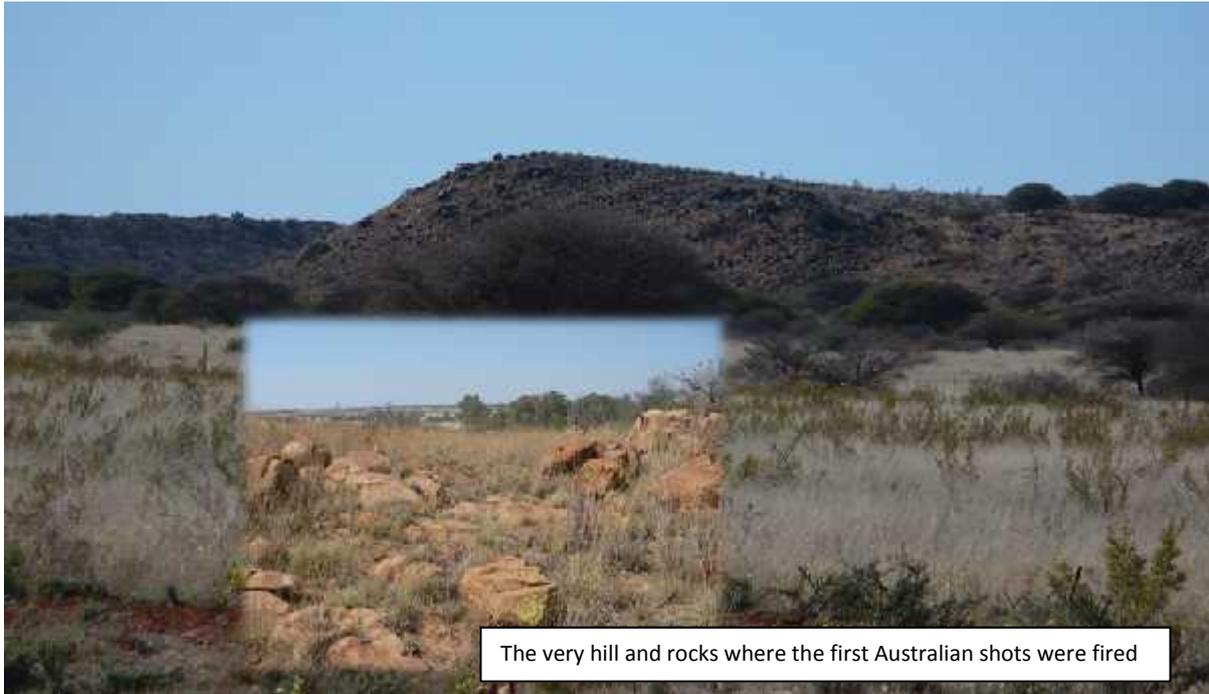
The average official death rate, caused by medical neglect, exposure, infectious diseases and malnutrition inside the camps was 350 per thousand per annum, peaking at 436 per thousand per annum in certain Free State camps. Eighty-one percent of the fatalities were children.

**Horses** Total served: 500,000 (approx); Total deaths: 300,000 (approx)

There were some 150 engagements involving Australians in this hapless conflict, I will discuss but a few illustrative examples starting with Lieutenant General Lord Methuen's advance along the line of the western railway to relieve Kimberley. A squadron of New South Wales Lancers had been training with British cavalry in the UK since April 1899 mostly at their own expense. As the prospect of war in South Africa loomed, their commander Captain Cox had lobbied the British and New South Wales governments for permission to take part. The squadron left the UK as war was declared and arrived in Cape Town to the news that they could stay and fight. With no horses and little equipment the squadron quickly assembled a troop of 29 (one officer Lieutenant FS Osborne and 28 other ranks) mounted them on cape ponies and sent them north. They de-trained at the rail centre of de Aar and were sent to join Lord Methuen's force.

As the Lancers arrived, the general's army had struck the first covering position deployed by the Boers on hills near Belmont railway station, some 80 km south of Kimberley. Attached to the ninth lancers, the 29 were given the task of covering their withdrawal, should it be necessary, as they skirmished forward. It was necessary; the shots fired by the 29 were the first by soldiers in Australian uniform in this war.





The troop then took part in the subsequent covering force battles of Grasspan and Modder River before lining up to take the main position at Magersfontein; a line of kopjes covering the rail line to Kimberley. It was de la Rey who came up with the innovative layout. Commandos were entrenched at the base of the kopjes taking advantage of the flat trajectory of their Mauser rounds, their smokeless powder making it difficult for the British to target, and the deep trenches difficult for the Free Staters to slip away from as they had tended to do in the covering force engagements.

The Boer battle plan was a success. The 29 were the only Australians at this Black Week battle. Their task was to guard the guns of the Royal Horse Artillery who even with a balloon spotting for them found it difficult to target the Boer trenches.

The other lancers joined by the Australian infantry companies now mounted were soon in action 500 km east at Colesberg. Tom Morris, a farm labourer from Singleton became the first Australian nominated for the VC when he rescued his mate Harrison after his horse was shot from under him. With General French in command the Stormberg (another Black Week battle) defeat was avenged and the Boers pushed from Colesberg. Casualties rose, the first Australian in an Australian uniform to die was Victor Jones, a trooper of the Queensland Mounted Infantry at Sunnyside 20 km west of Belmont on 1 January 1900. The next casualties were at Colesberg where a single patrol on 17 January saw the deaths of the first New South Welshman Troop Sergeant Major Griffin and first Lancer Corporal Kilpatrick. The Australians started to make their name here as the casualties mounted the first Victorian, South Australian and Western Australian also died here.

The successful French was soon rushed off to take a more iconic prize. Taking many of his mounted colonials with him he joined Methuen south of the Magersfontein feature. Kimberley was to be relieved by a wide flanking move to the east. At the time there was no video to show the folks at home, only verbal imagery.

<sup>ix</sup>The Boers were down on Kimberley with siege and Maxim gun;  
The Boers were down on Kimberley, their numbers ten to one!

Faint were the hopes the British had to make the struggle good-  
Defenceless in an open plain the Diamond City stood.  
They built them forts with bags of sand, they fought from roof and wall,  
They flashed a message to the south, 'Help! or the town must fall'

Then down our ranks the order ran to march at dawn of day,  
And French was off to Kimberley to drive the Boers away.  
He made no march along the line; he made no front attack  
Upon those Magersfontein heights that held the Seaforths back;  
But eastward over pathless plains, by open veldt and vley.  
Across the front of Cronje's force his troopers held their way." *AB Patterson*

500 dead horses later, the diamond city was relieved.



Boer forces drew back from the city General Cronje deciding to make a stand at Paardeberg on the Modder River. Here the tactics used by the Boers were brilliant. The riverbank was used as the major entrenchment. The low trajectory of the Mauser rounds was again used to decimate the British attacks over the wide open ground. Australian forces were building; they took part, but did not make a great showing here. It was the Scottish infantry who bore the brunt of the fighting and took most of the casualties. One Australian special service officer, who died commanding a company of the Black Watch, Lieutenant Gideon Grieve was an exception.

Good tactics could not, however, counter the numbers the British could now field or the gallantry of the Canadians who delivered the coup de grâce. General Cronje found his forces and supply train

surrounded; surrender was the only alternative. On 27 February 1900 surrender he did, and so ended the last conventional battle.

What followed was a fighting withdrawal, first to Bloemfontein, capital of the OFS, thence to Pretoria capital of the ZAR. The Boer forces were eventually seen off in the battle of Diamond Hill 11-12 June 1900. The war should have been over, Ladysmith had been relieved on 1 March, and Mafikeng 11 May. Even in May, Queensland Bushmen fresh for the fray having spent weeks on the narrow gauge railway and dusty roads from Beira in what is now Mozambique were so eager to take part in the war before it ended they rushed forward without orders to attempt to fight for Mafikeng.

Now began the guerrilla campaign. Boer Forces seeking to disrupt and demoralise the occupiers.

On 22 July 1900, De Wet had derailed and looted a train, before moving towards the Orange Free State village of Vredefort. Part of a nearby British force, accompanied by members of the NSW Medical team, were sent to investigate. Among the first to fall in the forward line was a young trumpeter, who lay shot through the bladder and bleeding severely as his comrades were forced to retreat.

Lieutenant Howse did not hesitate. Digging his spurs into his horse, he charged through literally a hail of bullets to the wounded man. The brave doctor's horse dropped dead under him. Undaunted Howse grabbed his medical bag and ran forward on foot. Reaching the trumpeter, he dressed his wound and while bullets flew round him, lifted the man onto his shoulders and carried him to safety. For his courage, Lieutenant Howse was awarded the Victoria Cross - the first ever awarded to someone in an Australian unit, and the only one ever awarded to an Australian medical officer.

With Pretoria and Mafikeng secure, a supply depot was established mid-way between where the road crossed the Elands River (site of the present day town of Swartruggens). It was garrisoned by Australian Bushmen from all colonies, Queensland Mounted Infantry, 200 Rhodesian volunteers and some other horsemen; 500 defenders in all. It was a prize the Boers could not resist. From 4 – 16 August 1900 Boer General de la Rey lay siege. Attempts were made by forces led by Carrington and Baden-Powell to relieve the post. With communications cut, Kitchener was advised the post was lost. Not so, the garrison held out, eventually whilst on another task and the C in C South Africa himself with an overwhelming 10,000 strong relief force stumbled on the position. The story of the siege is the stuff of legend. They had been outnumbered by four or five to one, they had been massively out-gunned but had not shown the slightest sign of surrendering. They had lost heavily in horses, over 1400 of the 1550 in the post were killed. Among the men the casualties had been amazingly light; of the seventy seven casualties only eight Australians had died.



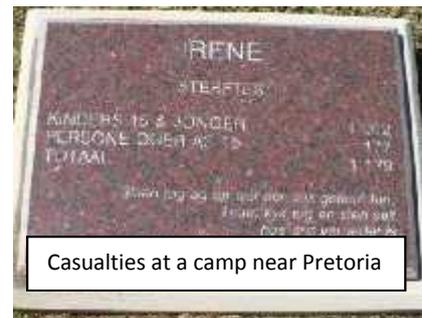
Rhenosterkop (near the present day town of Motetema, 100 km north east of Pretoria) could perhaps be rated the first occasion where troops from all the Australian colonies and New Zealand

were involved. Fought against Boer General Viljoen on 29 November 1900, it was mainly the Australian Bushmen contingents that took part. The Australians had 12 casualties (the Queenslanders having the majority) and the New Zealanders had 28 casualties. The horseshoe shaped position with the horns facing the British advance, and Boer laager behind was classic. General Paget in command of the force embodying the ANZAC troops attacked the position's front door; the fighting was fierce. However, as Viljoen recognised the British were massing their forces to a point where the 5,000 he could field would be substantially outnumbered, he withdrew from the position. General Paget achieved one of the many pyrrhic victories that were to plague the developing guerrilla phase of the war.

The British had a problem, the Boer forces were mobile and very hard to pin. Victories like Rhenosterkop could but sap their manpower, not defeat them. They were supported by every family, on every farm. Faced with an unwinnable war, Roberts and Kitchener like many others when faced with an insoluble situation came up with a strategy that had inexcusable consequences:

- detach the Boer fighters from their support bases;
- raze their farms – destroy crops and kill stock;
- concentrate their families in camps;
- set-up lines of block houses and barbed wire to restrict the fighters' movement kraal and capture them.

Camp logistics were bad. Typhoid was ever present. The children suffered terribly, not only were the medical services inadequate but Boer mothers preferred to trust traditional remedies, including the administration of crushed rat droppings to bring down fever, over the medicines offered by those incarcerating them.



The saddest incident I will review is that of Grobelaar Recht on 16 May 1901. It took place about 8 km north of the present day town of Hendrina, south east of Pretoria where the old road that preceded the N11 crossed a non-perennial creek.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Western Australian Mounted Infantry was the second last contingent sent by Western Australia. Anthony Forrest was the son of the Premier's brother. He was an experienced cadet and desperate to prove himself on the battlefield. Dad organised a commission for him at age 16, he lasted three months in the combat zone. Giving him charge of a squad picquetting a supply wagon, his commander possibly considered he was protecting his young charge. The Boers were, however, short of supplies. As the wagon approached the boggy sprut, Boers laying in ambush rose from a mealie (maize) field and fired killing Forrest. The raiding party were driven off unable to claim their prize and in this action, two more West Australians were killed.

If you visit the place where it happened now, and it is hard to find, the records are muddied<sup>x</sup>, you can see where the old bullock track approached the crossing passing under the current bridge and out the other side. There is still a mealie field from which the ambush was most likely launched. The ground takes your mind back to what happened. Lieutenant Forrest's well-tended grave can be found in Middleberg, 40 km north of where he was killed.



The war continued. One particular tragedy with consequences that possibly saved many Australian lives in subsequent wars stands out. In June 1901, a newly arrived contingent from Victoria, the 5<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles under the command of a British officer (Major Morris RA) with no South African experience was tracking a party of Boers. On 12 June they camped for the night near Wilmansrust farm, about 2 km north of Grobelaar Recht on the N11. Unbeknown to the Victorians they too were being tracked by another party of Boers. Major Morris personally placed the piquets, some up to 1 km away from the encampment where in accord with King's Regulations and consistent with his experience in India, he ordered the soldiers to erect their bell tents, stack their weapons outside their accommodation and bed down for a good night's rest.

In the dimming light of sunset, the tracking Boers dressed in salvaged British khaki easily passed the sparsely placed guard parties, crawling to within 30 metres of the main camp. The result was a massacre, <sup>xi</sup>“they ran along the line of saddles and shot men in their beds” 18 were killed and 42 wounded the largest casualty list of any Australian contingent in the war. The action ended when an order given by a well-spoken Boer to the detachment's bugler resulted in “cease fire” being sounded. This saved lives but resulted in unfounded accusations of cowardice being levelled at the Victorians.



On hearing of the debacle General Beatson in charge of the column was heard to remark: <sup>xii</sup>“I tell you what I think. The Australians are a damned fat, round shouldered, useless crowd of wasters ... In my opinion they are a lot of white-livered curs ... you can add dogs too”. News of these remarks filtered down through the ranks.

On 7 July, when the Victorians were ordered out on another operation, Trooper James Steele was overheard by nearby British officers to say: “It will be better for the men to be shot than to go out with a man who called them white-livered curs”. Steele and troopers Arthur Richards and Herbert Parry were arrested, given a summary court-martial and sentenced to death. Lord Kitchener intervened. He commuted the sentences (Steele to do ten years jail, the others to do one year

each). Controversy continued when a speech in the new Australian Federal Parliament lingered on how the aftermath of Wilmansrust was a disgraceful way to treat men who had volunteered to go to war. The men were ultimately released, the Court Martial deemed not to have followed proper process.

The Boer War was the last time a death sentence given an Australian soldier was not commuted.

As the conflict dragged on into 1902 the Boer tactics were well established. Where possible draw a manageable British force into an ambush, attack with overwhelming force, take their uniforms weapons and supplies then leave. Don't kill the prisoners just humiliate them by stripping them almost naked and leave them on the veld. The Boer wagon trains were becoming smaller. The once self-sufficient travelling communities, full families complete with driven stock and mobile flour mills had faded. Kitchener's scorched earth policy was working. As supplies ran low, children suffered, Boer commanders saw no alternative but to hand their families over to the British. Even as peace approached, however, the bitter ends their skills honed by two years in the field were capable of delivering humiliation. The action at Onverwacht a few kilometres south east of Ermelo on 4 January 1902 stands testament.

This time it was the Queenslanders of the fifth Queensland Imperial Bushmen who were to suffer. They were the advance guard of a major force tracking Boers under General Opperman. They were banded together with British troops under a British Major Valentin. Shortly after they had come to a halt in undulating terrain, they noticed about 50 Boers on the flank of a small ravine. Without waiting to familiarise himself with the unknown terrain, Major Vallentin decided to chase the small party of Boers. As they charged down the hollow they were surprised by 300 Boers who had been concealed by the ground to their flanks.

The superior power of the Boers forced Vallentin's force back. The Boers could then concentrate on trying to seize a British Pom-Pom. Lightning-fast action of the Queenslanders under their own Major Toll allowed the Pom-Pom to withdraw. However, with all their horses shot, a final stand was made on a bare knoll against a force now of 500 Boers. 13 young Queenslanders died, the rest taken prisoner to be stripped and released.

General Louis Botha tried to operate on the Eastern Transvaal Highveld between the blockhouse lines for about another month. After the Battle of Onverwacht, resisting became more and more senseless.



Melrose House

Negotiations between the warring parties had been sporadic in nature for some time. In early 1901, Kitchener had reached an agreement on terms to end the conflict only to have these rejected by the UK government. A meeting was called at a tented encampment at Vereeniging then on the border of the ZAR and OFS, now a suburb 50 km south of Johannesburg, and noted as the car sales (and theft) capital of the nation. There terms were agreed and although remarkably similar to those agreed twelve months

previously, acceded to by London. Rather than signing them off in a tent, they were formally signed in Melrose House the splendid gentleman's residence in Pretoria that Kitchener had commandeered as his headquarters. If you visit, the room is still there, very well preserved.

So what came out of this war? The Transvaal and Orange Free State became part of British South Africa. Within nine years, South Africa became a self-governing Dominion of the British Empire led by Boer Generals. This resulted in no granting of any 'legal equality' or 'the vote' to both black and coloured South Africans as was promised in the treaty of Vereeniging. We know of course, the terrors that followed with the introduction of 'Apartheid' in the decades after. It took until 27 April 1994 for the democratic elections, with people of all races being able to vote to take place as agreed in the treaty.

Australia came out of the war with its own military tradition, a fiercely independent one that distrusted commanders who had been bred to lead regardless of their competence. It ensured that ground rules on command were laid down before our troops were committed to World War 1. No longer would our soldiers be willing military apprentices to be sacrificed on the altar of "well-bred" incompetence. No longer would they be subject to the death penalty for crimes as slight as a bit of back-chat.

This change of attitude can best be shown by contrasting the tone of this poem by Banjo Patterson written in 1902 with his epic "With French to Kimberley" above.

“<sup>xiii</sup>They mustered us with a royal din,  
In wearisome weeks of drought,  
Ere ever the half of the crops were in,  
Or the half of the sheds cut out.

'Twas down with saddle and spurs and whip,  
The swagman dropped his swag,  
And we hurried us off to an outbound ship,  
To fight for the English flag.

The English flag it is ours in sooth,  
We stand by it wrong or right,  
But deep in our hearts is the honest truth,  
We fought for the sake of a fight.

And the English flag may flutter and wave,  
Where the World-wide Oceans toss,  
But the flag the Australian dies to save,  
Is the flag of the Southern Cross.”

Not that I am a republican, after all King John gave England to the Pope in 1213 when the country was on its uppers and needed a financial bailout. This has never been reversed, even though the annual payments have ceased. And the Westminster system works well. But we like our forebears who ensured no Australian soldier after the Boer War suffered the death penalty, should seek to have a flag rather than a defaced ensign.

## The Author

John Howells served in the Australian Armed Forces for 32 years mostly in the Army Reserve with 20 years in the Armoured Corps. His Regimental service was with the Royal New South Wales Lancers at Parramatta. A parallel civil career included time as a manager with the National Archives of Australia and a computer systems manager with the Commonwealth Bank.



After he retired from the Army in 1995, he became a volunteer guide at the Lancers' Museum, establishing the Museum's website in 1997. Since 2000, he has filled the roles of secretary and public officer. He is also secretary of the Royal New South Wales Lancers Association.

When he retired from the Commonwealth Bank in 2010, John established his own web design business and joined a group of old Army colleagues in a business taking tour groups to Australian battle sites. He will be leaving mid-May 2014 to take another group on a tour of the Boer War sites in South Africa.

John's qualifications include an MBA from Macquarie. He retired from the Army with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was awarded the Reserve Forces Decoration. He is married with two children and four grandchildren. Part of every day when he is in Australia is taken-up ferrying grandchildren to and from school.

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Author photographed by Sean Littler, other present day photographs by the Author. Maps from the internet, Wikimedia common.

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<sup>i</sup> ZAR – Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (South African Republic), the Transvaal

<sup>ii</sup> OFS – Orange Free State

<sup>iii</sup> Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: the war in South Africa, 1899–1902*, Oxford, 2002, page 20

<sup>iv</sup> RL Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, AWM and AGPS 1976, page 355

<sup>v</sup> Die Suid-Afrikaanse Krygshistoriese Vereniging Journal Vol 9 No 4 - December 1993

<sup>vi</sup> Die Suid-Afrikaanse Krygshistoriese Vereniging Journal Vol 1 No 5 - December 1969

<sup>vii</sup> Taken from British War Office and AWM records – some figures are projections

<sup>viii</sup> South African History Online (2014)

<sup>ix</sup> AB Patterson, *With French to Kimberley* - 1900

<sup>x</sup> Military Historical Society of Australia - Sabretache 1 September 2004

<sup>xi</sup> Trooper Chas Redstone a member of the piquet on the perimeter of the camp, in a letter home

<sup>xii</sup> Max Chamberlain *The Wilmansrust Affair* AWM Journal: No. 6: April 1985

<sup>xiii</sup> AB Patterson, *Our Own Flag* - 1902