

BOOK REVIEW

Sydney Grammar School and the South African Boer War, 1899-1902

by Mathew Glozier

Dr Matthew Glozier: Darlinghurst, NSW; 2018; 294 pp.; ISBN 9781326533700 (hardback); RRP \$49.00

Apart from general histories of the 2nd Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) and a handful of Australian unit histories, very little has been written about Australia's contribution to that war. This is a pity as the many histories of Australian individuals, towns and institutions relating to both World Wars gives readers much better understanding of the experiences of citizens in those contexts. Now, Dr Matthew Glozier, history master of Sydney Grammar School, has produced a superb history of those ex-students of the school who served in the Boer War.

The roster of old boys who took part in the war includes Sir Harry Chauvel, Banjo Paterson, John Macquarie Antill, K. K. McKellar (the poet Dorothea McKellar's brother), James Gordon Legge and his brothers, and James A. K. Mackay (first director-general of the Australian Army Reserve raised for home defence in World War I).

Milverton Ford (New South Wales Lancers) was one of the few prisoners of the Boers to escape Watervale prison, Pretoria, and make it back through hostile country to his unit. This was a feat also achieved by Winston Churchill at approximately the same time.

David Cumming McLeod was the first member of an Australian contingent to be killed in action – at Sunnyside on 1 January 1900. Harry Chauvel and H. C. M. Featherstonhaugh, eventually served in three wars. Maurice Hales completed two tours of duty. Hubert Murray later became a renowned administrator of Papua and New Guinea; whilst Herbert Cox Taylor went on to design the first Rising Sun badge.

This is not just a history of old boys, but covers briefly the war itself, its background and analyses why Sydney Grammar School should have supported the war. In particular, he looks at the role played by the headmaster, Albert Weigall, in encouraging students in the military arts.

Finally, he covers the movement to memorialise those who had lost their lives in the conflict leading to a Memorial Board being produced in 1903 which still exists today.

The book includes letters from old Sydneians as well as a selection of Banjo Paterson's South African poetry. Also included are brief biographies of 150 old Sydneians who served; a basic index of personalities; timeline of major battles; a brief glossary; and 14 black-and-white photos.

For those readers who would like to know how a domestic institution, in this case a school, responded to a national emergency, this book fills a void.

David Deasey

¹Available as a print-on-demand book from Lulu Press Inc, Raleigh, North Carolina.