The Russians were active participants in the Anglo-Boer War; and sent two medical teams as the Russian government was interested in the outcome of the War and watched all of the events!

More than 200 Russian volunteers fought on the side of the Boers. They came from different sides of the political spectrum, from communists to monarchists, but they all shared their sympathy for the Boers. Some thought that the Boers were wonderful democrats because they defended republicanism against the world’s most powerful monarchy; others admired their patriotism and their ability to stand up for their Motherland.

Some hated Britain and whatever it stood for at the end of the 1800s and were ready to fight it whenever the opportunity arose - and they fought on the side of the Boers.

Lieutenant-Colonel Yevgeny Maximov (right) may have been the most prominent of Russian volunteers. He was, at some stage, Deputy to the Commander of the European Legion, French Colonel De Villebois-Mareuil, and later, Commander of a Dutch detachment. More importantly, he made friends with the top leadership of the Boers, and could visit President Kruger without ceremony; became at home with Reitz, and befriended President Steyn. His courage and gallantry were respected by the Boers; he was even elected a Boer field general - the greatest honour that there could be for a foreigner.

After the War President Kruger wrote to Maximov, “Your services to my Fatherland were of extraordinary importance.”

There were, however, more exotic figures among Russian volunteers. A Georgian prince, Nikolai Bagration, a relative of a Russian general who fought against Napoleon, was one such person. He fought with the French Corps, then joined the European Legion and was taken prisoner in the same battle in which De Villebois-Mareuil was killed. Nikolai Bagration spent several months on St Helena. His national dress, his tall and powerful figure, his bodyguards, his good sense of humour and his endurance caught attention of several authors who wrote about the War and earned him much sympathy among his companions.

A Russian woman dressed as a man, came to South Africa in order to find her husband with whom she had had a quarrel and who had decided to find consolation on the battlefields of the Anglo-Boer War. She was rich and well educated. In search of her husband she first fought with the Boers and then worked as a nursing sister in a British hospital. She finally found her husband.
in a prisoner of war camp in Ceylon and helped him to escape. It could be a legend of fiction despite the fact that mysterious ‘Maria Z’ published her memoirs.

Lieutenant Alexei Ganetsky organised and led a controversial ‘Russian Commando’. The Russians were a minority in this detachment which was revered for valour by some and denounced for drunken brawls by others.

An experienced military journalist; a future chairman of the Russian parliament who was to receive the abdication of the last Russian Tsar; yet another prince; a socialist; a famous pilot; a count; a descendant of Catherine the Great; a future main architect of Soviet Moscow; a future top administrator of Soviet economy; - all these were Russian volunteers as were officers of the Russian army, Jews, Lithuanian peasants and adventurers.

Doctors and nurses of the Russian Red Cross Detachment and of the Russo-Dutch Ambulance worked on the frontline and in the rear, some were taken prisoner and changed their previously unfavourable opinion of the British, others went on assisting the Boers as long as the Russian government allowed them, and one, Dr. Rennenkampf stayed with De La Rey’s Commando until the very end of the War.

The Russian government of the time was highly interested in the events in South Africa. Not only did it collect information about the War wherever it could in Europe but it sent its military observers to South Africa. Official Russian military observers were attached to both fighting sides: two to each. Unofficial observers - and there is plenty of evidence to prove that some if not many officers among Russian volunteers were exactly this - watched the War from the inside and reported back to St Petersburg on the latest military technology, tactics, politics, etc.

Even though they did not have high military ranks the government held them in high regard. A volunteer Lieutenant Yedrikhin, for example, was invited for a private conversation to the then Minister of War, not even in the office but at home and over the weekend. As a result of this conversation the lieutenant was awarded his normal army salary for all the time he spent in South Africa.

Not all Russians returned home from South Africa. Captains Pokrovsky, Petrov and Duplov, Navy Lt. Strolman, Veldcorner Judelowits, Lukas Heyman, and a young nameless volunteer ‘Pavlusha R.’ who had come to South Africa with his girlfriend hoping to stay after the War, were killed. Captain Pokrovsky is still remembered in South Africa for his pluck. In 1938 his comrades in arms installed a memorial plate for him on the War memorial in Utrecht.

The Anglo-Boer War remained in the historical memory of the Russian people as an integral part of its image of the turn of the 20th century. This was because of the enormous popularity of the Boer cause in the country. ‘The Boers, the Boers and only the Boers’ wrote an annoying contemporary.

Songs were then sung about South Africa and about the Boers, articles and books published, lectures delivered, plays staged, church services served, presents sent to South Africa and donations collected. Restaurants and pubs, and even dishes and drinks were given ‘Boer’ names.

This fashion did not last long and the heroes of the Anglo-Boer War were long forgotten in Russia’s tragedies of the 20th Century. But even during the Second World War Russian soldiers still sung ‘Transvaal, Transvaal, my country’ - the only Russian folk song about a foreign country ever. This first line of the song was still remembered in 1960s and 1970s. A substantial component of Russian volunteers were Russian Jews who had emigrated to South Africa before the War to escape from ‘pogroms’ - physical attacks by the members of Russian chauvinistic organisation ‘Black Hundreds’.

The majority remained neutral, some joined the British, while others supported the Boers.

Excluding those few Finns on the British side, there were about 30 Finns in the Boer forces. Some of them had immigrated to South Africa for the allure of the gold and diamond fields, others were sailors and adventurers who travelled from one continent to another.

The Scandinavians living in Johannesburg and Pretoria had in the middle of 1899 unemployment and the risk of war, founded an organisation ‘Skandivaviska Organisation’. Its leader was a Swede, Christer Uggla, who lived in Pretoria and worked for the Transvaal Railway Company. When the war was imminent there were different opinions among the Scandinavians towards the two sides. Some sympathised with the British while many others were with the Boers.

The first meeting in Johannesburg did not reach any unity about the organisation’s opinion to the war. Those who supported the Boers organised another meeting in Pretoria on 12 October 1899. In this meeting it was decided to form a Scandinavian Volunteer Force which would fight on the Boer side. This was accepted by the Transvaal officials after which all the Scandinavian volunteers received Burgher rights and a plot of land that was promised for everyone after a successful war; the soldiers did not receive any salaries.

The Government did supply funds to the corps for equipment and purchase of horses.

Originally there were approximately 65 men who joined the Scandinavian Corps and all the Nordic countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. Besides them there were other volunteers who represented other countries in the corps.

In the original Scandinavian corps there were about 13 Finns. Most of them were from Pohjanmaa (Bothnia) and all of them had worked at the Transvaal gold mines in many occupations.

Most of the Scandinavian volunteers were miners but many of them were sailors before entering the mines. Like all the Boer corps the Scandinavians arranged to elect their Captain, who was the son of a Swedish missionary Carl Ludvig Flygare, Natal born Johannes Flygare. His greatest merit was his knowledge of the Boer language. In Finland it is often wrongly claimed that Flygare was a Finn.

Before their leave for the front between 14-17 October the Scandinavians made a parade at the residence of President Paul Kruger where he made a stimulating speech to them.

When leaving for the front the Scandinavians’ destination was Mafeking where the Boers had besieged the British forces commanded by Colonel Baden-Powell. On their way to Mafeking the Scandinavians proudly escorted the famous Boer gun ‘Long Tom’.

The Scandinavians participated in small skirmishes in Mafeking but the Boer commander General Piet Cronje opposed any large scale attack against the British occupied town because of vain losses. The Scandinavians protested strongly against Cronje’s passive viewpoint as they wanted more active attacking. They complained of Cronje’s passivity to Pretoria. It is said that Scandinavians volunteered to everything which was amusing and dangerous. They distinguished themselves in trench digging, blowing up the British mine fields, stealing cattle, etc.
The Scandinavians met their first loss in Mafeking; in an attack on 25 October, a Finn, Johan Johansson, was badly wounded. Johansson was taken into an ambulance organised by the Scandinavians Ambulance Corps. It was suggested that Johansson go to hospital in Pretoria but he preferred to stay with his compatriots.

When the strong British army led by Lord Methuen advanced from the south towards the besieged town of Kimberley, the main forces of General Cronje, which included the Scandinavian Corps, received the order on 20 November to go toward Kimberley.

On the way they received an additional 15 men: although the corps did not exceed 70 men. It corps arrived at Magersfonteine on 28 November and the slower ambulance unit arrived on 10 December 1899.

The Boer force of about 8,500 men led by Cronje prepared to avert the probable British attack by digging trenches in front of the Magersfontein hills. The Finns in the Scandinavian Corps proved to be the best experts with explosives and they distinguished themselves in sabotaging the railway at the British rear.

In the evening on 10 December after a severe British artillery bombardment, 52 men of the Scandinavian corps (according to other sources 49 men) were sent to an outpost about 1.5km in front of the defenses where 10 men stayed with horses. Other Scandinavians were around the whole encampment in different tasks. The night was rainy and chilly. At 0400 hrs in the morning the British were seen advancing towards the Boer positions. The Scandinavians received orders to retreat to the main force but Captain Flygare decided to let his men fight at the outpost. The corps, however, fought persistently and 20 Scandinavians were killed, among them Captain Flygare. Twenty-one were taken prisoners by the British with the majority badly wounded. Three of the prisoners died within the following days from their wounds. Only four of the Scandinavians at the outpost got safely back to their own side. The Finnish losses were one killed on the battlefield; one who died in captivity (from his wounds); two badly wounded and one captured.

The Boer losses, except for the Scandinavians, were slight. Cronje's troops stayed at Magersfonteine for two months until the British succeeded in bypassing the Boers to raise the siege of Kimberley in February 1900.

The Scandinavians had received an additional 20 men, (four or five of them Finns), at Magersfonteine in January. The Scandinavians formed their own unit which took part in the Battle of Paardeberg on the 18-27 February 1900. In this battle only two Scandinavians were killed. Among the wounded were three or four Finns. The whole Boer force surrendered to the British on 27 February. The Prisoners of War were sent to Cape Town and from there the largest number were sent to St Helena where they were released at the end of hostilities in 1902.

It is worth a mention that on the Scandinavian memorial erected at Magersfonteine in 1908, a name J. Jakobsson is cut among the Finnish killed. There was no person called Jakobsson among the Scandinavians as far as is known, at least not in the lists of the fallen! There were Scandinavians in the Anglo-Boer War fighting on the Boer side, as members of various commandos. There is little information available about the Finns in the Boer commandos. Presumably the names of only a few of them are known. The same applies for the Finns fighting on the British side.

According to the newspaper comments there were about 50 to 60 Finns in Johannesburg when the war broke out. Twenty of these joined the Scandinavian corps while the others either left for Finland or stayed in Johannesburg. The Finns who served in other Boer units probably lived in the Transvaal or Orange Free State but presumably not in Johannesburg or Pretoria.

The ages of sixteen Finnish Boer War participants are known. The youngest was 22 years old and the oldest 46 years old.
THE ENDUMENI/ ISANDLWANA MOTH SHELLHOLE.
THE CHRISTMAS CHEER SHELL.
BY PAT RUNDGREN.

Legend has it that, being jolly sporting fellows, the Boers only shelled the town during the siege of Ladysmith in daylight hours, and never on Sundays or religious holidays. Citizens of Ladysmith therefore adjusted their lives and spent the day in dug-outs hewn out of the banks of the Klip River. But, after dusk, they returned to their homes to take care of all their daily chores.

Knowing that they were safe from interference, Sunday was reserved for cricket day! The old cricket pitch used to be where the Post Office/shopping mall/Spur is now situated next to the Town Hall on Murchison Street.

On Christmas Day 1899, however, a cricket match was duly in progress when, horror of horrors, the dastardly Boers began shelling the cricket pitch! Everyone decided that such behaviour constituted a “No Ball” and slipped off into the Covers. After a while, though, it was noticed that none of the Boer shells appeared to be exploding, merely burying themselves in the ground. Since shell fragments were highly sought after as souvenirs, someone requisitioned a spade and began digging. Several unexploded shells were uncovered, all with their nose cones unscrewed, and the interior of the shell filled with Christmas pudding. A stencilled note on the side of the shell read “With Compliments of the Season”.

The Ladysmith Siege Museum has one such shell, and the Endumeni/Isandlwana Shellhole has another. I do question the authenticity of the story, though. Our shell is a 75mm version, and the Boers would have had to have moved such a gun well within British artillery counter fire range, which would be rather hazardous, just to shell a cricket pitch with Christmas pudding.

Their Creusot “Long Toms” would have had enough range to outgun the British artillery, but our shell is definitely not a 155mm Long Tom shell.

But it’s a good story.
The first sizable batch of Boer prisoners of war were captured at the Battle of Elandslaagte. No camps had been prepared and by arrangement with the Navy these prisoners (approx 200 men) were temporarily housed on the naval guard ship HMS Penelope in Simon’s Bay.

Several ships were used as floating POW camps until the permanent camps were established at Greenpoint, Cape Town and Bellevue, Simon’s Town. Wounded prisoners were sent to the Garrison Artillery Barracks at Simon’s Town which was converted into the Palace Hospital. The wounded arrived on 2 November.

With the invasion of the Cape Colony - at the end of 1900s - prisoners at Cape Town and Simon’s Town were held captive aboard ships. At the end of December 1900 some 2 550 men were placed on board the Kildonan Castle where they remained for six weeks before removed to two other transports at Simon’s Bay.

The camp at Ladysmith, Natal was in use from 20 December 1900 to January 1902. It was mainly used as a staging camp although it had some 120 prisoners of war. Another staging camp was established at Umbilo, Natal. POWs (repatriated to South Africa after the cessations of hostilities) were sent on arrival to either Simon’s Town or Umbilo where they were given blankets and clothing before being sent by train to their final destinations. The number of prisoners increased and the provision of accommodation raised some serious problems for the British authorities - particularly after the surrender of General Cronje with approximately 4 000 burghers at Paardeberg.

To keep large camps supplied while conducting a war over vast areas would impose intolerable strains on an already overburdened supply line. To add to this was the very real danger of insurrections in the areas bordering the camps and the risk of the release of the captives. The solution to the problem was found - ship the prisoners overseas. The first overseas camps were opened on the island of St Helena. The SS Milwaukee arrived off the island on 11 April 1900 with 514 prisoners on board. This was the first batch of some 5 000 prisoners housed in the three camps on the island, Broadbottom and Deadwood with the irreconcilables who were incarcerated at High Knoll Fort.

Six groups of prisoners from South Africa were landed in the Bermudas during the period 28 June 1901-16 January 1902. The camps were situated on islands in the Great Sound, Burts (400 men); Darrell’s (1 100 men); Hawkins (1 300 men); Hinson’s (120 men); Morgans (850 men); Tuckers (800 men). The first batch of prisoners arrived in Ceylon on 9 August 1900 with others following until some 5 000 prisoners had landed.

Diyatalawa was the main camp, Mountt Lavinia the convalescent camp and dissidents - the irreconcilables were kept at Ragama.

A camp for the prisoners who were on parole was opened at Urugasmanhandiya and Hambantota in September 1901. Other camps were also established throughout India at Abottabad; Ahmednagar; Bellary; Bhim Tal; Dagshai; Solon; Fort Govindgarh; Kaity-Nilgiris; Shahjahanpur; Sialkot; Upper Topa; Umballa; Satara and Trichinopoly.

The story of Johnny de Villiers is an inspiring story of one man’s longing to be free again.

De Villiers’ escape from a British POW camp in Trichinopoly, India during the Anglo-Boer War in 1901 is considered one of the most remarkable escapes during that war; the escape of De Villiers on the Boer side is important as he was the only prisoner of war who could succeed to successfully escape from Trichinopoly.

Jan Louw (Johnny) de Villiers was born in 1871 in Paarl, Western Cape. After completing his schooling at the Gimnasium Boys’ School, he continued his studies in Britain and qualified himself as a civil engineer. He later began working as an engineer in Pretoria and with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 he joined the Boer forces as an officer. However, he was captured on 24 April 1901 near Pietersburg in the Transvaal (Mpumalanga).

On 4 July of the same year, he and nearly 500 other Boer POWs arrived in Madras, India. From here, the prisoners were transported by train to the Trichinopoly POW camp, about 340 km from Madras.

In this camp on the vast plain, dry and hot dust winds raged, and water was scarce. In his book on his escape from the camp *How Ik Ontsnapte* (issued in 1903), De Villiers writes as follows about the conditions in the camp: “Most of us were from the freedom of the field and just could not get used to this life. . . After spending several months in the camp, some of the citizens with more entrepreneurial spirit began to devise plans to escape from captivity with all its inconveniences.”

In a research article in *Pretoriana* (1999/112), Anton Pelser of the National Museum of Cultural History describes De Villiers’ plans and eventual escape in detail. According to Pelser, escape from Trichinopoly was almost impossible as a double wire fence was stretched around the camp. On top of that, prickly pear and thorn branches were packed between the two fences. Day and night the borders were guarded by armed guards. Locals were offered a reward of 50 rupees for any information related to escaped prisoners of war.

However, de Villiers did not let this deter him and for months made plans to escape. He finally decides to disguise himself as an Indian and leave the camp at the end of the day with an Indian who worked in a camp shop. For this he had to obtain a turban. He bought it from one of the workers and pretended to use it as a sheet. A long white jacket (characteristic of the clothing of local people in the area) was also bought by one of the workers. To round off his outfit, he cut off the tips of some white tennis sticks. After several attempts with, among other things, ink, De Villiers realized that burnt cork was the suitable dye for his skin.

On 10 March 1902, the big day began. His goatee was shaved to make way for the typical Indian mustache. At about half past six in the evening he waited for the Oscar with which the workers were moving in and out of the camp and unseen, grabbed hold of the side of the wagon and drove to freedom. Shortly outside the camp he set his own course and, after much hardship, reached the French territory of Pondicherry. After almost six weeks he was able to depart aboard a Norwegian ship to Marseille - a voyage during which he still had to be hidden from the British at an anchorage.

However, he only returned to South Africa on 2 December 1902 after the end of the war and settled again in his hometown of Paarl where he worked as an engineer. He never married and died in 1910 at the age of 39 from tuberculosis. He is buried next to his brother Lammie who had died in the war.
Extracts from C. W. L. De Souza’s excellent and amusing book *No Charge for Delivery* (1969) shows a humorous side to the problems the boer generals had to cope with their troops in the field and their wives on the farms.

**KEEP THE MINES WORKING**

T.D. ZAR 22.10.1899
From General Cronje, Rietfontein
To Government, Pretoria, begins
(From a telegram to the Government from General Burger.) I note that the Government is embarrassed by the numerous English prisoners taken in Natal and elsewhere. I consider that these persons should be sent to Johannesburg to work in those mines still operating. They could thus work in the mines by day and be guarded in a compound by night under surveillance of the Johannesburg police...ends.

**WILD WIVES**

T.D. ZAR 24.11.1899
From Assistant-General Erasmus, H.Q. Ladysmith
To Landdros, Pretoria, begins
D. van Vuuren domiciled near the European Hotel, Pretoria, has complained to General Joubert that his wife - despite numerous complaints - is suffering from want. Please investigate the matter immediately and send me a report. Enquire the whereabouts from the proprietor of the hotel; he can show you the house. We are getting complaints from the burghers from dawn to dusk. Contact the Government about the matter for the situation is intolerable...ends.

From Landdros, Pretoria
To Assistant-General Erasmus, H.Q. Ladysmith
D. van Vuuren’s wife, since the 10 October has received 408 lb. of meal, as well as fish, candles, sugar, matches, soap, rice, coffee and tea. I visited her myself and she is quite satisfied. So her husband’s complaints are groundless. Letter follows. The next distribution of foodstuffs is on Monday...ends.

T.D. ZAR 8.11.1899
From Assistant-General Coetzer, H.Q. Ladysmith
To Landdros, Lydenburg, begins
Your telegram received. Among others conscripted from Lydenburg who complain is Gert Visser...ends.

T.D. ZAR 8.12.1899
From Landdros, Lydenburg
To Commandant, Ermelo and Field-Cornet Ward I, H.Q. Ladysmith, begins
It is absolute bosh about the illness of Hendrik van der Merve’s wife. I myself saw her yesterday at the office. You give us officials needless trouble with these tales of sickness. Whenever a wife is sick she can first come to me or the Field-Cornet...ends.

T.D. ZAR 9.12.1899
From Special Landdros, Boksburg
To Assistant-Commandant-General, H.Q. Ladysmith, begins
I went out personally with the Field-Cornet to the house of Mrs B.J. Bester at Vlakfontein and found her in the best health imaginable. When I showed her the telegram, she was amazed to read anything like it and remarked that she never thought her husband would make such an excuse.

T.D. ZAR 21.01.1900
From Captain Fort, Johannesburg
To Captain, Intendant Camp, Pretoria, begins
Police here refuse to carry out duties on account of dearth of sugar and coffee. ends.

As the tired eyes of President Kruger fell upon this news, one can picture first his amazement, next his anger, and finally the telegraphic thunderbolt, which, as a consequence, exploded soon after in Johannesburg. The dazed recipient abjectly answered thus:

T.D. ZAR 21.1.1900 Urgent
From Captain Fort, Johannesburg
To President, Pretoria
Your Honour’s telegram received with sorrow. Never shall men under my command here in Johannesburg prize sugar and coffee more than freedom of land and people. Contritely do they now retract their words and hope with God’s help and under Your Honour’s direction to defend both land and people in circumstances more straitened still. I thank Your Honour for Your Honour’s speedy intervention, whereby the heavy load laid upon me has been completely lifted. Shall be in Pretoria tomorrow when I hope to meet Your Honour.
- ends.

The hope expressed in the last sentence was, I fear, a pardonable but, nonetheless, enormous exaggeration.

**POETRY OF THE BOER WAR**

There is trouble in the Transvaal,
And England wants to know
Whether Mister Kruger or
John Bull shall boss the show.

The war, the war, the bloomin’ war, has turned my wife insane.
From Kruger to Majuba, she’s the Transvaal on the brain.
We went to christen our first child, last Sunday we tried,
The parson said “What’s this child’s name?” and my old gal replied:

She’s trimmed the room with Khaki, and
Although it seems a shame,
The chairs have Khaki covers, and
The table-cloth’s the same;
Her golden hair was natural,
With pride, she used to hint,
But now she’s dyed those lovely locks
A brilliant Khaki tint.

* Source: Drummer Hodge - The Poetry of the Anglo-Boer War
  By M. van Wyk Smith, Grahamstown
STORMBERG MOUNTAINS

There are places of eerie loneliness in the gaunt Stormberg range in the north-east corner of the Cape Province. For a very long time the area was only sparsely inhabited, and seemed to be shunned by white and black alike. Only the San (Bushmen), driven from the plains, took refuge in the many caves to be found among the great sandstone peaks.

Some trekboers reached the Stormberg area in the 1790s and, by the 1830s, scattered farms had been established. The big game that had once roamed there - including elephants, if local San paintings are to be taken literally - was soon shot out.

The two principal towns of the region are Molteno and Burgersdorp. Between them lies the Stormberg railway junction, the scene of a British defeat in the early stages of the Anglo-Boer War.

Stormberg Junction in the north-east Cape Colony occupied the centre of a ‘basin’ encircled by hills through which the railway line led westward to Steynsburg and Rosemead, north-east to Burgersdorp and south to Molteno and Queenstown. The huge Rooi Kop towers over the south-eastern side of the basin, with a much lower ridge, the Kisseberg, to the south and south-west.
The Battle of Stormberg was an ill-fated and aborted attempt by Maj.-General Sir William Gatacre to drive the Boers from Stormberg railway junction. Occupied, after the invasion of the Colony, by Com. E.R. Grobler, the Bethulie (Du Plooy), Smithfield (Swanepoel) and Rouxville (Olivier) Commandos, as well as some Albert and Burgersdorp rebels under Piet Steenkamp, the occupation cut off Gatacre’s lines of communication with General French. It was imperative to restore these, and Gatacre resolved to mount an attack at Kiesieberg.

A tiny force, comprising 2,600 men from two battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers and Royal Irish Fusiliers, the Berkshire regiment Mounted Infantry Company, 74th Battery Royal Field Artillery, 12th Company Royal Engineers and a detachment of Cape Police, was detailed for the attack. It was planned to take the infantry and guns as far as Molteno by train in the afternoon, followed by a night march of eight miles to rush the main position on Kiesieberg at dawn. A bold and perfectly feasible plan, so long as nothing went wrong in the execution.

Disaster dogged the expedition from the start. Local intelligence gathered on the afternoon of 9 December 1899 indicated that the Boers had entrenched the south face of Kiesieberg and had constructed a wire entanglement in front of their trenches. Although the report was later found to be false, Gatacre decided to abandon a direct march and to attempt to surprise the position from one of its undefended flanks. Although a sound decision, it added a new dimension of problems to what was already a problematic situation - the night march, which would be much longer; and over unfamiliar ground, would result in the troops being exhausted rather than fresh for the assault. Also, there was a misunderstanding between Gatacre and his guides, who failed to understand what was required. The march began some two hours later than planned. Some of the force became detached even before the march began. The guides lost their way and the column, having marched for seven hours, was delivered to the wrong part of Kiesieberg, where at dawn the men stumbled upon the first Boer laager (Olivier’s) and lost the element of surprise. A brave attempt to storm the berg failed when men of the Royal Irish and Northumberland Fusiliers encountered a sheer cliff. The Northumberlands managed to work around the flanks, but as they crested the hill artillery fire from the 74th Battery drove their own men off it again, wounding Colonel Eager, Major Seaton and several others.

The exhausted, demoralised men were in no condition to launch an attack from the side of the Nek and as there were no reserves, Gatacre was forced to order a retreat to Molteno. The General himself was in the rear guard, and at the beginning of the retreat narrowly escaped with his life when his own gunners, mistaking them for Boers, dropped shells in the middle of them. The Boers attempted to attack the retreating troops but were repulsed by the Artillery. Although the British had only 27 men killed and seven officers and 50 men injured, a third of Gatacre’s infantry spread all over and below the Nek failed to receive the order to retire. As a result, 634 men were left at Stormberg and many of them surrendered without firing a shot. Boer losses amounted to 8 killed and 26 wounded.
MRS PATRICK CAMPBELL, GEORGE BERNARD SHAW & THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

The famous G.B.Shaw has a link with the Anglo-Boer War through his long-time love affair with the equally well-known actress of the 1890s known as Mrs Patrick Campbell.

It all revolves around the adventurous Patrick Campbell however, who was estranged from his wife. Patrick, who was a Sergeant in the Imperial Yeomanry, was one of the Pioneer Column who settled in (the then) Rhodesia in 1890. He fought in the popular Uprisings of 1893 and 1896, but eventually met his fate with the Imperials in the same action at Boshof where the Comte de Villebois-Marueil met his end on 30 April 1899.

He was killed, according to first hand reports, after the white flag had been raised, together with an (unnamed) officer. His metal headstone was stolen recently from Boshof cemetery (the only one to be stolen!) but it has now been replaced by a marble stone. The Campbell’s only son, also Patrick, was killed in action during World War I.

It devastated his mother.

SOURCE: Steve’s War Stories

Walter Douglas Roughton, in October 1901, owed his life to his horse when, as a despatch-rider, he was being chased by Boers for over eight miles near the farm Bullfontein. When he had off-saddled his horse, and given him food and water; he remarked “You deserve all I can give you, for you saved my life.” An opinion that I am sure many a trooper and Boer had voiced.


RAILWAY WARFARE

When Kommandant Buys blew up a goods train 6 km east of Greylingstad on 13 February 1901, he found that it was closely followed by an armoured train which started firing its cannon at his commando. The goods train had its carriages in front so that if a charge had been placed on the tracks, the crew could uncouple the derailed trucks and steam to safety. Buys’ men uncoupled the engine, engaged reverse gear, and sent it racing at full steam towards the armoured train.

“The armoured train was forced to steam backwards in order to avoid a collision. It was a race as far as we could see. I never discovered how far they travelled.”

Heidelbergen of the Boer War by Ian Uys, 1981

KHAKI - A LONG TRAIL

“It was dark before we reached there, and the owner, a well-to-do Dutch farmer named le Roux, quickly told us such news as he had obtained from the officers and soldiers during the day. In the first place he said that three or four of our delaying party had been captured, and that one of them, my friend Jack Baxter, had been executed that morning at an adjoining farm for wearing khaki.

We were thunderstruck. The inhabitants of the districts through which we had passed could not have known of the death penalty or they would surely have mentioned it to us, and it was only when le Roux produced a recent newspaper containing Lord Kitchener’s proclamation, that we understood the position. We learned too, for the first time, that other men of ours had been shot for the same reason, although it was only later, as more newspapers came into our hands, that we found out their names.

From what I could make out, the executions had been kept quiet, but now, for some reason or other, perhaps the killing of Captain Watson, the military authorities were giving them publicity. From a farm labourer who came in, we had details of Baxter’s shooting, which brought home to me how narrowly I had on several occasions missed a similar fate, so I lost no time in changing the tunic I wore for a coat which I borrowed from our host, who also supplied such of my companions as were in khaki with whatever he had in the way of civilian dress.”

Commando by Denleys Reitz MCMXXIX
1st Frontier War (1779-1781)
Governor van Plettenberg had arranged with the Xhosa Chiefs that the Fish River be the boundary - thus adding to the Dutch East India Company the track of country usually known as the Zuurveld - now the districts of Albany and Bathurst.
The Xhosas however, did not respect the boundary and crossed it, clashing with the Boers and stealing cattle. And as a result Commandant Adrian van Jaarsveld mustered a commando, who took to the field with their coloured slaves and servants and drove the Xhosas back across the Great Fish River.

2nd Frontier War (1789-1793)
Frontier conditions remained insecure and when Ndlambe, Chief of the Western Xhosas clashed with the Gunukwebe tribe, raiding and counter-raiding in the Zuurveld was again rife, affecting conditions for Boers and Xhosas alike. Even extensive commando operations were unable to clear the Zuurveld and the peace of 1793 recognised the state of stalemate which then existed.

3rd Frontier War (1799-1800)
There occurred repeated friction between Boer and Xhosas through the 1790s. Local colonists, dissatisfied with the new British Government’s frontier policy, rebelled in Graaff-Reinet and British troops were sent to quell the trouble in 1799. Xhosa forces attacked the British soldiers, apparently under the impression that the latter wanted to drive them out of the Zuurveld. By April 1799 the Khoikhoi (Hottentots), who were semi-Nomad tribes on or near the frontier, turned hostile towards the farmers. Many of them possessed ponies and muskets and also constituted the majority of the farm servants. These Hottentots joined the Xhosas in attacks on white farms. By June 1802 the Xhosas and Hottentots had now the country along the coast from the Fish River to Plettenberg Bay at their mercy. After the Cape was handed back to the Dutch (treaty of Amiens 1803) - the Dutch concluded peace with the Xhosas and this proved inconclusive.

4th Frontier War (1811-1812)
Continued insecurity and tension along the eastern frontier led the imperial authorities to expel both Xhosa and Gunukwebe tribes from the Zuurveld. On 8 October 1811, orders were issued by Sir John Cradock to the landdrosts of Swellendam, George, Uitenhage and Graaff-Reinet to call out the burghers of their districts for the purpose of driving the marauders over the Fish River. By the beginning of March 1812 this was accomplished and in order to maintain peace and stability in the area a line of frontier forts were built, garrisoned partly by soldiers and partly by burghers.
5th Frontier War (1815-1819)

Civil war once again broke out between rival chiefs, Gaika and Ndlambe. After his defeat in the battle of Amalinde, Gaika appealed to the British authorities for help. Colonial forces entered Xhosa territory and defeated Ndlambe. The latter again defeated Gaika and invaded the colony in December 1818. An attack on Graham’s Town (spelt that way in 1800s) on the 22 April 1819 was repulsed and Ndlambe was driven to the Kei River. It was agreed to declare a no-man’s land between the Great Fish and the Keiskamma Rivers. In October 1819 the chiefs were compelled to recognise Gaika’s claim as paramount chief of the western Xhosas. The Zuurveld was later populated by the 1820 Settlers who were domiciled there to act as a buffer on the frontier.

6th Frontier War (1834-1835)

In 1830 the Cape’s eastern frontier now lay along the Keiskamma River. Whites, Khoikhoi (Hottentots) and Xhosas were once again living in the border territories. The vacillations of the Government’s weak control policy, large scale cattle thefts (once again) and harsh military reprisals were the main causes of this war. Sir Harry Smith (then Colonel Smith) personally led a force on 11 February 1835 consisting of 72nd, 75th Regts, CMR (Cape Mounted Rifles), burghers of Uitenhage, George, Graaff-Reinet, Albany sharpshooters, the Port Elizabeth yeomanry, Hottentot levies, a few artillery men and engineers. This force defeated Macomma and Tyali, two Xhosa chiefs who had combined forces. On the 10 May 1835 Sir Benjamin D’Urban issued a proclamation that the territory between the Keiskamma and the Kei be annexed and named after Queen Adelaide. Lord Glenelg’s sympathetic policy of appeasing the Xhosas by issuing a declaration on the 5 December 1836 repealing Sir Benjamin D’Urban’s proclamation caused chaos in an already troubled area, and was one of the main causes of the Great Trek. It was in this war that Sir Harry Smith’s epic ride took place - from Cape Town to Graham’s Town in 6 days!
7th Frontier War (1846) ‘The War of the Axe’

So named because in an attempt to arrest a Xhosa (by the Dutch name of Kleintje), having been detected in the act of stealing an axe at Fort Beaufort and sent to Graham’s Town to be tried was to be the start of the 7th Frontier War. Kleintje was accompanied by four armed Hottentots as guards. There were also two Hottentot offenders and a dragoon who had also committed some crimes. The patrol was ambushed along the banks of the Kat River and one Hottentot was killed while Kleintje was rescued. Because the murdered Hottentot was a British subject, the Lt. Gov. demanded retribution and tribal conflict again prevailed with the Fingoes (who were bitter enemies of the Xhosas) fighting on the side of the Europeans. Massive cattle stealing again occurred but only after a protracted and bitter “scorched earth” campaign did the Xhosas submit.

8th Frontier War (1850-1852)

Also called Umlanjeni’s war - a witchdoctor who advised Sandile, chief of the Gaika to provoke and attack British forces in the colony. In this war Hottentots of the Cape Mounted Rifles defected to the Xhosa side. Sandile was deposed by the colonial authorities and Mr Brownlee was appointed as head of the Gaika clans on 30 October 1850. The Xhosas however, did not recognize a European as a chief and the idea was abandoned. A small patrol of the
45th Regt had been surprised and attacked and 15 men were put to death without mercy - they were from the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regts viz the Sherwood Foresters. This was the start of the 8th Frontier war and was only overcome after an arduous and costly campaign.

9th Frontier War (1877)

An event at a Fingo wedding feast when a Galeka Xhosa was killed and two chiefs badly injured led to an outbreak of war between the Galekas and the Fingoes (sworn enemies for over 40 years). The Fingoes were joined by the Thembu (another tribe) and by colonial troops. The Galeka tribe were aided by the Gaika tribe.

A serious war developed but eventually the Xhosa were defeated and their territories broken under colonial control.

Conclusion

The eastern Cape Province (commonly called the Border) is where white and black first made contact over two centuries ago. It was a bloody meeting between the eastward-moving whites and the westward-moving Xhosas. In addition indigenous tribes clashed amongst themselves. Attempts were made by successive Governments to establish a firm boundary separating the areas of white and black. This was implemented from the Cape colonial Government and the Castle role was that of the military headquarters for all the wars. Nine wars were fought resulting in arduous campaigns and considerable losses to both sides.

BOWKER BRAVERY

Stock thieves were only one of the dangers the English boys faced when they were out with the flocks and herds, for the Zuurveld was full of predatory animals which attacked at every opportunity. Bertram Bowker, son of the 1820 Settler, Miles Bowker (said to be the first man to import merino sheep into South Africa) had many encounters with predators. On one occasion his father sent a message to him and his elder brothers, William and Tom, saying a leopard had killed a sheep in the kraal and telling them to come at once and hunt it down. The three boys walked the five miles to the sheep kraal with their hunting dogs, but could not find the leopard in the bush nearby. Then the dogs suddenly got his scent and tracked him down to a patch of forest two miles further on. Instead of climbing a tree, the angry beast plunged into a pool where he and the dogs began mauling each other. William and Tom Bowker ran into the water too and William was about to shoot the leopard at close quarters when Tom yelled at him not to spoil its skin. Bertram, watching from the bank, saw Tom thrust his hunting spear down the animal’s throat into its chest, and it expired with its beautifully marked coats still intact.

“thus ended the day’s sport and the tyrant that was always plundering my father’s sheep kraal,” wrote Bertram in his diary. The hunting of predators was one of the Settler Lads’ most important duties.

SOURCE: *Yesterday’s Children* by Daphne Child.
BURGHERS STAATSPOND

The story of the indigenous coinage of South Africa begins with the 1874 Staatspond of Thomas Francois Burgers, President of the Transvaal Republic. Following the discovery of alluvial gold at Pilgrim’s Rest in the Lydenburg district of the North-Eastern Transvaal (Mpumalanga) in 1873, Burgers sent a quantity of nuggets and gold dust to the Transvaal Consul-General in London with instructions that he should arrange immediately to have coins made from this Transvaal (Mpumalanga) gold of the same value and gold content as the British sovereign. He was to try to have these coins ready in time for the next session of the Volksraad. After some difficulty, a total of 837 of Burghers Staatsponden were manufactured by Messrs. Heaton and Sons of Birmingham, using dies which had been especially engraved by L. C. Wyon, engraver at the Royal Mint. At last on 22 September 1874, President Burgers was able to hand fifty pounds in Transvaal gold coin to the Chairman of the Volksraad and to seek a formal resolution that they should be declared legal tender in the South African Republic.

KRUGER COINAGE

In 1886, gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand (Gauteng) and with the economic expansion which followed, the Transvaal Government was persuaded to grant ‘The National Bank Concession’ in 1890. As a condition of this concession, the National Bank of the South African Republic undertook to establish a mint in Pretoria to manufacture coins for the Government.

The foundation stone of this Mint which was built on the site of the present General Post Office Building in Church Square, Pretoria, was laid by President Kruger on 6 July 1892. Arrangements had already been made for minting machinery, trained staff and coinage dies to be imported from Germany. Kruger, who was impatient to get his coins into circulation before his imminent election campaign against Joubert and the Chief Justice Kotze, arranged for a preliminary consignment of the new coins to be struck at the Royal Prussian Mint in Berlin. Apart from lesser coins, a gold pond and halfpond were to be struck for the obverse, Prussian Mint engraver, Otto Schultz, produced dies showing the bust of Kruger, facing left. The first batch of these gold coins arrived in Pretoria and Kruger quickly put them into circulation – causing an immediate storm!

on the reverse, the German designer had used a German wagon as the model for the Voortrekker wagon in the central shield of the Republican coat-of-arms. The German wagon had two shafts, and front and rear wheels were the same diameter - instead of the single-shafted wagon of the Voortrekkers. The bitter presidential campaign of 1893 was underway and Joubert’s supporters were quick to capitalise on this trump card which had been placed so unexpectedly in their hands. In particular they seized on the fact that the designers initials ‘O.S.’, which had been placed in accordance with minting tradition on Kruger’s bust on the obverse of the gold coins, spelt the Dutch word for ox. Their candidate, they cried, would surely beat this ‘O.S.’ Kruger in the race for the presidency!

Consternation reigned in the Kruger camp. Immediate orders were issued for the withdrawal of the coins and instructions were passed to Berlin that new dies were to be prepared immediately showing the correct South African single-shafted tented wagon. Above all, the offending ‘O.S.’ initials were to be removed from the President’s bust. In the event, Kruger
beat Joubert by a narrow margin and was returned for a third term as President. In due course new coins bearing the corrected coat-of-arms arrived from Germany and were put into circulation, to be followed later the same year by coins struck at the Pretoria Mint. The error double-shaft is found only on the pond, half-pond and five shilling piece dated 1892, but the initials ‘O.S.’ appear only on the two gold coins. Operations at the Pretoria Mint continued until 1897. The two gold pieces of the Kruger series were struck each year from 1892 to 1897.

The Mint was closed at the beginning of 1898, but was reopened 21 months later when war clouds loomed at the end of September 1899. At that stage it was decided to strike a considerable quantity of gold pond, but because the 1899 dies had not arrived from Germany, the dies which had been prepared for 1898 had to be used. Between October 1899, and the beginning of June 1900, when the Government evacuated Pretoria ahead of Lord Roberts advancing army, almost a million gold pond were struck, but all were dated either 1898 or 1900.

To mark the war-time reopening of the Mint and to record that it was operating in 1899, a Mint official was instructed to overstamp a few of the pond. He took a tiny punch of the number ‘9’ and struck ‘99’ just under the bust on the obverse of 130 of the pond dated 1898. These historic pieces are very valuable today.

During this period special permission was given to Mr Samuel Marks, one of the financial giants of the early days of the goldfields on the Witwatersrand and a personal friend of the President, to have some threepenny pieces - or tickeys - struck in gold. Dies dated 1898 for the complete series of Transvaal coins had previously been received from Germany but had not been used. The obverse and reverse dies for the threepence were, however, taken out of stock, and 215 of what we know today as the ‘Sammy Marks Tickey’ dated 1898 were struck in gold for Mr Marks. They were of course not legal tender and did not circulate, but are regarded as rare and interesting pattern coins.

The planned programme for the production of Kruger pond in 1900 had not yet been completed when the Transvaal Government evacuated Pretoria on 4 June, 1900. At the last minute trusted officials went to the Mint and, in the name of the Government, removed all gold and silver coins still in the Mint office. They also took the small amount of bar gold still in stock, and a quantity of unfinished gold coin blanks. Many of these blanks, some of which had a raised rim and some of which were plain discs, had concentric scraper markings on them and they were all of course of the correct weight of a Kruger pond. They therefore contained a pound’s worth of gold. They were later used by the Government as money when supplies of properly minted coins became exhausted. They became known as ‘kaal pond’ and circulated to some extent in the Republican army.

Z.A.R. VELD POND

The final chapter in the history of the coinage of the Transvaal belongs to the z.a.r. veld pond. 896 of these historic pieces were struck in romantic circumstances from hand-made dies at the ‘Staatsmunt te Velde’ at Pilgrim’s Rest during the closing phase of the Anglo-Boer War, in March and April 1902. Manufactured from gold recovered at the local alluvial diggings, they bear on the obverse the monogram ‘Z.A.R.’ ‘1902’, and on the reverse the value ‘EEN POND’. They were properly authorised and ordered by the Republican Government in the field and rank numismatically as ‘siege pieces’. 
Capt. Fred McCabe, OC of the DMT had amazing luck. While scouting in the Graaff-Reinet area he had a small piece of his ear clipped by a bullet. As he raised his head to have a look, the other ear was clipped. His son, Henry, said the pieces missing from the ears looked as if his father had been born like that as they were a matching pair.

On another occasion, Capt. McCabe had his hat removed by a Mauser bullet. Pure luck to survive such close encounters! He went on to receive a Military Cross in the First World War.

When Ants Get Angry by Andrew McNaughton

Only a youth!
Scarce one and twenty years
Of summer sunshine and of wintry tears
Had o’er him passed!....
Only a youth!
His friends in sullen mood
Around him stood, as once before men stood
At Slagtersnek!

The Rebel by Anna Purcell 20 July 1901

Then they marched them through the township,
For their friends and foes to see;
They were ‘ignorant bywoners’, (squatters)
Rich in neither land nor fee:
But they marched with head uplifted,
Men of upland veld and farm,
With their bearded country faces,
And their air of stately calm.

The Last March of Lötter’s Commando by Alice Greene
Drummer Hodge by M. Van Wyk Smith 1999

On 5 September 1901 Commandant Lötter and his commando of Cape Boers were captured near Cradock and brought to Graaff-Reinet for trial. The group consisted largely of poor whites, and was no more than a marauding gang.

DID YOU KNOW!

• 9 700 Rebels were found guilty of treason in the Cape.
• 201 Boers were sentenced to death in Graaff-Reinet. Most were later commuted to life sentences which were reduced to only a few years prison sentence after the war.
• The Boers employed over 10 000 black and coloured people mainly in non-military roles.
• Due to the shortage of Martini-Henry cartridges, the Boers wrapped the Lee-Enfield cartridges in brown paper and fired them from Martini-Henry rifles. Dr Beattie of the Midland Hospital reported that the bullet tumbled causing the worst kind of wound - a keyhole wound where the bullet enters sideways and continues to tumble in the body.

When Ants Get Angry by Andrew McNaughton
The invasion of the Cape Colony in November 1899 by the republican commandos did not result in a general rebellion by the Afrikaners. The sympathy of the Afrikaners was with the republics as was abundantly clear from the way the invading commandos were received in Aliwal North, Colesberg, Burgersdorp, Jamestown, Lady Grey, Venterstad, Barkly East and Dordrecht.

A considerable number of Afrikaners joined the commandos. In the first invasion of the colony the commandos did not advance much beyond Colesberg in the direction of Graaff-Reinet, and the area covered by the proclamations of the invaders did not extend beyond Noupoort to the north of Graaff-Reinet, or Stormberg Junction.

In Graaff-Reinet there was no movement to join the rebels, and although young men did leave home to join the commandos, especially from the Aberdeen district, the number of rebels from Graaff-Reinet was minimal.

Graaff-Reinet chose sides largely along language lines, and the possibility of a clash between the English and Afrikaans speaking communities was never far below the surface. Tensions at times threatened to break out into open hostilities, as when the loyalists held a fireworks display to celebrate the relief of Ladysmith.

On the other side the wearing of the Transvaal and Free State colours by Afrikaners gave offence to the loyalists.

As the war progressed in favour of the British so the loyalists of Graaff-Reinet became more arrogant. They were particularly incensed by the revelations concerning their local MP, Dr Te Water. From letters found in Bloemfontein after its capture in March 1900 it appeared that on 27 May 1899 Dr Te Water had written to President Steyn of the OFS sending him the private telegraphic code of the Cape Colony’s cabinet. Te Water’s rationale for this action was that Steyn might need to communicate with the Cape government. Te Water was overseas at the time of the discovery of the letters as there were calls for him to be tried for treason.

At the end of March 1900, 350 officers and men of the Sherwood Foresters (Derbyshire Regiment) arrived in Graaff-Reinet. Although feelings about the war were high, the hospitality of the community did not fail them, and at least one Forester wrote home to say:

“the Dutch people are very kind indeed, and offer us coffee on their stoeps and a feast of fruit in their gardens”.

The troops were camped for a short time and left Graaff-Reinet on 20 May 1900.

The second invasion of the Cape by the Boers began with the crossing of the Orange River in December 1900. The activities of Hertzog from December, and of DeWet from February 1901, were of little effect in Graaff-Reinet, which was far removed from the scene of their operations.

Of greater consequence were the activities of the Boer commandos under Kritzinger, Scheepers, Fouché, Malan, Lötter, Lategan and Naudé, who spread out across the midland plains. The commandos visited towns for provisions and wandered about sabotaging the British
war effort, destroying rail links, attacking trains, and burning farmhouses as a retaliatory measure against British actions in the north. The commandos harassed the British troops constantly, capturing their trains and wagon convoys, taking what they needed - horses, weapons, ammunition, blankets, saddlebags, riding breeches, boots and hats - and destroying the rest. British troops remained close on the heels of these commandos, and a number of skirmishes took place. Whenever the pace of pursuit became too hot, the commandos escaped to the mountainous areas around Cradock, Graaff-Reinet and Middelburg.

The second invasion differed from the first in that there was no extended occupation of any town; the highly mobile commandos were content to leave after obtaining provisions in town and remounts from the surrounding countryside. By early April 1901 Nieubethesda, Murraysburg, Aberdeen, Pearston and Petersburg had all been briefly occupied by the commandos. Murraysburg fared badly as it was occupied on several occasions. While there was no chance of bringing districts into revolt, the number of rebels, as opposed to those who quietly helped the republicans, was relatively smaller than in the first invasion. But as far as the area around Graaff-Reinet was concerned, where there were virtually no rebels during the first invasion, the presence of Boer commandos in the district caused numbers of men to join them. This was particularly true of the towns which were visited by the commandos. When Herholdt addressed his constituents in Murraysburg in July 1900, he was able to congratulate them on their behaviour:

“Zij waren ook wel opgewonden en hartzeer, maar niemand heeft de wet overstreden, en niemand is in den tronk gezet.”

(Although you have experienced excitement and sadness, at least nobody has disobeyed the law, and nobody has been jailed.)

During the second invasion, however, a considerable number of Murraysburgers joined the commandos, and Herholdt, the voice of moderation, himself became the victim of the passions of war when his home was burnt down by Scheepers.

Of the 3,437 rebels who laid down their arms at the end of the war; 112 came from Murraysburg, 94 from Aberdeen, and only 47 from Graaff-Reinet were among the rebels who surrendered. Of the 114 men of Lötter’s commando captured on 4 September 1901, three were from Graaff-Reinet. Had Graaff-Reinet been occupied by Boer commandos, the number of rebels would undoubtedly have been much greater.
The occupation of Graaff-Reinet appears to have been a near thing. There was some consternation in the town at the end of 1900 with the news that Kritzinger was in the neighbourhood of Middelburg, with his further movements uncertain. Kritzinger in fact, with a commando of approximately 400 men made for, and occupied, the village of Nieu Bethesda in the district, north of the town, but any plans he may have had for occupying the town of Graaff-Reinet were forestalled by the arrival at midnight on Old Year’s Night 1900, of 600 of the Coldstream Guards. By 7 January 1901 there were some 2 000 troops, mainly mounted, encamped on the slopes of Magazine Hill and on Van Ryneveld’s Square.

By the middle of January the whole of the colony, with the exception of the ports and the Transkei in the Eastern Cape, was under martial law. Within a few days of the arrival of troops in Graaff-Reinet, a Town Guard, about 100 strong, rising to about 220 by the end of March 1902, had been formed.

On 7 January 1901, after rifles and ammunition had been handed out, they elected their officers. The commanding officer was Commandant J. Gardner, assisted by Capt. F. Rubidge as adjutant. Lieuts. Watermeyer and Cinnamon, Sergeants Heaven and Tilbrook together with the surgeon, Dr W.E. de Korte (assisted by Drs Rubidge and Hudson) made up the rest of the officers. The raising of a town guard allowed the Imperial troops to concentrate on tracking down the Boer commandos active in the district.

Later in the year, a district defence force was organised with the aim of helping to drive the Boer commandos out of the district. This force did not exceed 100 men and had no effect on the course of events. The task was made that much more difficult as the isolated valleys of the Sneeuberg and adjoining mountain ranges were an ideal retreat where the Boer commandos could recuperate after sorties into the plains to derail or hold up trains and commandeered supplies from shops and stores in the villages of the surrounding districts.

The first patrols of Imperial troops in the district began on 3 January 1901 and on 4 January Boers were sighted in the Wellwood Mountains. Soon after this Kritzinger with 400 men entered Nieu Bethesda and stayed for two days looting the stores. British troops were soon in the vicinity and Kritzinger found himself being pursued by Col. Grenfell’s troops in the direction of Murraysburg. On 11 January Kritzinger was involved in a sharp skirmish with Lt.-Col. Byng’s column in the hills just north of Murraysburg, but on 15 January they invaded Aberdeen. By 18 January Kritzinger with about 400 men had reached Willowmore. The British troops were fast learning of the extreme mobility characteristic of all the Boer commandos.

On 27 February Scheepers and Fouché were in a skirmish with Col. Parsons’ column and were forced out of the Willowmore district towards the north.
On 6 March they attacked Aberdeen but were repulsed by the town guard and retreated into the Koudevelt Mountains (a lower range of the Sneeuberg) north-east of Aberdeen village. These commandos were a constant thorn in the flesh of the British forces and Scheepers in particular stood out for his daring and elusiveness. (A reward of £250 was eventually placed on him for his capture). He constantly clashed with the columns of Cols. Parsons, Grenfell and Scobell, who were hoping to capture him by encircling movements.

On 15 March Scheepers was in a contact with Maj. Mullin’s troops west of Graaff-Reinet losing 9 killed and 7 wounded after which he moved south. After blowing up the railway line at Marais Siding he and Fouche headed for Jansenville during 17, 18, and 19 March but were pursued by Col. Scobell (later joined by Col. Grenfell and Kitchener’s Fighting Scouts) who, after a forced march, occupied Jansenville denying the Boers access. Scheepers then took refuge in the Sundays River basin below Jansenville laagering at Blaauwkrantz. It was around this time the British troops attacked the Boers at Blaauwkrantz and after a severe skirmish 14 Boers were killed and 4 prisoners taken while the rest managed to escape although they left behind more than 100 horses in good condition (including 50 lame ones).

The many kloofs of these mountains situated between Graaff-Reinet and Aberdeen made direct British attacks impossible, as was proved by a number of futile assaults, but as the Boer commandos had to remain constantly on the move the British continued with their tactic of encirclement. Early in April Gen. Settle endeavoured to deal with them by driving the Camdeboo Mountains from west to east with the columns of Grenfell and Scobell, while mounted men from Aberdeen and Graaff-Reinet watched the eastern exits. The plan miscarried and on 6 April Scheepers overwhelmed and captured 75 men and the 5th Lancers and Imperial Yeomanry at Zeekoegat near Aberdeen. A few days later, in the same area, Malan also trapped a large patrol of Brabant’s Horse sent out from Aberdeen on Probart’s farm, Newlands. April was an active month for the commandos in the Midlands with numerous cases of derailments on the Cape Colony railway lines, the commandos being troublesome in the neighbourhood of Graaff-Reinet and Cradock. As a result the night service of trains had to be suspended.

The Boers continued to move about the countryside much as they willed and any small patrol which came their way was sure to be overwhelmed. No commando stayed in one place for long. They split up under different leaders and re-grouped for action; by night they were constantly on the move. They kept moving in wide circles, so that they could leave horses to recover, and pick them up again later, on their return to the same hidden valley or flat-topped mountain.

The activities of the Boer commandos caused farming activities to suffer severely. Loyalist farmers, fearing the visits of commandos, came into town with their families.
Other Dutch families were brought in from the farms on the Sneeuwberg to live in the town of Graaff-Reinet, so they could not supply the men of the commandos. All horses had to be registered and all bicycles had to be handed in to the authorities.

On 18 June 1901 police went round the district with a notice for all farmers to report at the courthouse on 21 June at 10h00 to form a District Defence Force (DDF). But few attended the meeting. However, on 28 June a DDF was officially formed which incorporated the already established Town Guard and a second section, the District Mounted Troops (DMT).

By 9 July the DMT under Capt. Fred McCabe had about 80 men signed up and on 15 July the first patrol was sent out. On the same day this patrol had its first skirmish with the Boers at the stables on the farm of Johan Theron where W. Biggs and W.J. Calverley were wounded by the Boers while Capt. Moore was accidentally shot and killed by one of his own force when the DMT rushed the shed. This was not an auspicious start but the DMT, although never more than 100 men, provided a valuable service, with their local knowledge of the district by serving as scouts for the Imperial troops in their efforts to track down Boer commandos in the district.

Fences were removed to facilitate troop movements, and A.A. Kingwill later recalled that an Australian garrison camped at Oudeberg had used fencing poles at the campfire concerts which they had invited the neighbouring farmers. Farm servants too, showed a tendency to seek refuge in the town of Graaff-Reinet, as blacks were often harshly treated by the Boer commandos if there was the least suspicion that they were acting as spies for the British.

Farming was further hampered by the attempts of the military authorities to deprive the Boer commandos of provisions. The Martial Law Notice of the 28 May 1901 ordered that:

ʼall forage, including Lucerne, Hay, Oathay, Chaff, Wheat, Rye or Barley, dried, in bundles or in the form of Chaff, is to be brought into Graaff-Reinet at once.ʼ

Those who could not bring these commodities into town were to burn them. While many farmers suffered heavy losses, G.H. Maasdorp later said in the Legislative Council that there were people who had made fortunes out of the war. A.A. Kingwill, for example, made a good profit from hiring out transport and oxen to the military.

The martial law regulations were not severe, but their application depended much on the military commanders administering them. Many loyalists were hardly affected by the regulations, and some of them welcomed martial law, as it prevented Afrikaners from openly making statements in favour of the republics. Certain loyalists, it would appear, were able to embarrass their Afrikaner townsmen by acting as informers.

For those Afrikaners who were suspected of sympathising with the republics, martial law often meant harassment, imprisonment or banishment. According to the Rev Radloff the evidence of loyalist witnesses against the supporters of the republics was invariably believed. If no witnesses were forthcoming, those people who were thought to be a bad influence on others were sent to Port Alfred as
‘undesirables’. This fate overtook a number of Afrikaner town councillors. Although discussions of any consequence in the town council were held behind closed doors, Neser, an Afrikaner loyalist, forced his fellow councillors into awkward positions, by proposing motions such as that approving of Milner’s policy. By July 1901 three of the councillors were in Port Alfred as ‘undesirables’, while others were wary of offering themselves as candidates. The east end of town dominated the town council for the duration of the war, but even among them there was not a great deal of enthusiasm for municipal affairs.

Graaff-Reinet was also made aware of the war by the trials of the rebels which took place in the town. From April 1901 the trial of rebels was in the hands of the military authorities; two of the best known trials held in Graaff-Reinet were those of Lötter and Scheepers. Although many rebels were sentenced to death in Graaff-Reinet, the sentences were actually carried out elsewhere; the death sentences on eight men, including Gideon Scheepers, were carried out at Graaff-Reinet.

With the return of peace, the wearing of the colours of the former republics was again in evidence, and hats in imitation worn by Scheepers were also in vogue. The passions aroused by the war found expression in the erection of a monument to those executed in the town. But the manner in which the Dutch Reformed Church and the town council refused to give the project official support by refusing to make available a site for the erection of the monument did much to reduce ill-feeling, and was at the same time evidence of a desire to conciliate rather than antagonise those opposed to the erection of such a monument.

On 2 December 1908 the bodies of seven of the men executed at Graaff-Reinet were laid to rest in proceedings attended by some 2 600 people.

The events leading up to the Union of South Africa in 1910 were marked by unanimity among the community, and Graaff-Reinet had a special interest in the National Convention, as G.H. Maasdorp was one of the twelve Cape delegates.

A large gathering on Church Square on 31 May 1910, saw Graaff-Reinet’s entry into a united South Africa.
The 4-Star Cypress Cottages Guesthouse offer a ‘genuine Karoo experience’, few can make the claim quite as truthfully as Cypress Cottages. After a hot drive to this historic Karoo town, it is an immense relief to be welcomed by people as easy going as the staff at Cypress Cottages, and to be installed in the beautiful early 1800’s Cape Dutch cottages which are exclusively guest accommodation...and to find yourself minutes later, cold beer in hand, on a stoep with magnificent mountain views. The bedrooms in the cottage are decorated with a taste for the natural and comfortable. Guests can swim in the bore-hole fed reservoir, now a swimming pool. The magnificent garden is a pleasure to enjoy. Breakfast is laid outside on the terrace - free-range eggs, homemade preserves and fruit from the orchards.

The Historical Homestead has one en-suite bedroom with double bed. The house has a further 5 x bedrooms, one with Double Bed, and four with Twin Beds. There are two additional separate Bathrooms off the passage. The house can accommodate ten single people or six couples.

Toerboer, Graaff-Reinet. Cell: 083 538 2865. email: dawid@toerboer.co.za
Toerboer Cottages: Self-catering accommodation in the heart of historic Graaff-Reinet. Toerboer Tours: Immersive experiences in the Karoo, which include Hiking, Cycling, Exploring and Camping. Experience waking up to a glorious Karoo morning with the birdsong and a breakfast prepared in the traditional bush style over hot coals in a boma. Then a brisk walk or stroll in the Karoo.
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF GRAAFF-REINET AND ABERDEEN DURING THE BOER WAR.

From top left: Agterryers - small black boys used by the British forces; Confiscated Boer furniture; a selection of rifles used by the Boer; Boers with rifles; Boer POWs at Graaff-Reinet prison.

The perfect circular layout of Graaff-Reinet from the Toposcope.

Photo: Gerald Hoberman.
In January there will be two issues; Issue 2.2 will feature additional information on Graaf-Reinet and Issue 3 will continue with the Eastern Cape featuring the 1820 Settlers, and the Frontier Wars.
If you have any additional articles you would like to include - please do not hesitate to send them.

If you have a product or property you wish to advertise in any of the Issues the cost is only SA Rands 200,00 (Two Hundred Rands) per slot 79mm x 45,5mm.

The journals are fast becoming of readable interest by many who have commented and to the number of persons who have asked to be included in the future Issues.

If you require your ‘family history’; or your relatives ‘war record or story’ to be researched and in book form with images and photos - all professionally produced - then printed and hardcover bound - than I am in a position to produce the book for you.
Contact tony@southernafricanhistory.com

The following is an extract from a family history book produced by Tony Westby-Nunn. Each month an extract from a family history will be featured.

**The Life of Walter Douglas Roughton**

Walter Douglas Roughton was born in Liverpool, and attended the Liverpool College for Boys. He was interested in the military and volunteered for service in the Second Anglo-Boer War. He was appointed as a 2nd Lieutenant in the King’s Liverpool Regiment. After the war he returned to South Africa and became Drill Instructor at Grey School. He served in the Prince Alfred’s Guard during the First World War. During the Second World War he was promoted to Captain and later was invited by the Royal Family to attend a number of functions during their visit to SA. Wendy van Schalkwyk (née Scott) is his grand-daughter. He ended his days in Port Elizabeth. (A .pdf copy of the book of his family history can be obtained for SARands 100,00.)