



BOER WAR MEMORIAL



MONUMENTALLY SPEAKING

NSW BOER WAR MEMORIAL PROJECT
COMMITTEE

OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER No.2, May 09

Circulation: registered Descendants, Relatives of NSW Boer War soldiers, Donors and Friends interested in ensuring that all Australians who fought in the 1899 –1902 Boer War are commemorated with a memorial on the site dedicated in Anzac Parade, Canberra.

Chairman's Report

The date chosen – 31 May, 2009 – for the rededication ceremony of the memorial to Lt Gideon Grieve (see elsewhere in this issue for details) marks the 107th anniversary of Peace in South Africa. The Boer leaders, Generals Bortha, De Wet and Smuts met the British High Commissioner Lord (Alfred) Milner and Lord Kitchener late at night on 31 May 1902 to sign the Treaty of Peace, 32 hard months for both sides after the war began.

To historians, this date is as significant in Australia's evolving nationhood as WW1's 11 November 1918, and WW2's VE and VP days – 8 May and 15 August 1945 – became.

Australia was already a multicultural society in 1899 as attested by the surnames of our soldiers and nurses. It isn't known how many miners, jobless because of the depression, were working in South African diamond and gold mines and got caught up in the social and political causes of this war. These men's names are poorly recorded. Occasionally evidence appears in South African hospital records, or in British records of the irregular and private units, which helps explain the apparent discrepancies in the killed and wounded statistics quoted in the various official Australian records.

At the time of publication the preparation for the Grieve memorial ceremony is proceeding well. Rev Cliff Parish, the Rector of St Peters Anglican Church, Watsons Bay, will rededicate the small memorial at Watsons Bay in the presence of Gideon Grieve's grandchildren and other descendants and relatives from both Grieve and Robinson (Gideon's wife's side) extended families.



Photo: Grandson Hamish (L) and granddaughter Roslyn Sweetapple (R) with Hamish's daughter Nicola Grieve and her daughter, Isabella Grieve Starr

Mayor of Woollahra, Andrew Petrie, and the Council's staff have been most helpful. Their expertise and enthusiasm has made this ceremony possible.

By all reports the first number of this newsletter has been well received. Several readers have suggested that it should be available on the BWM website, though several others have commented that it was good to have it posted. Please email me to let us know what you think.

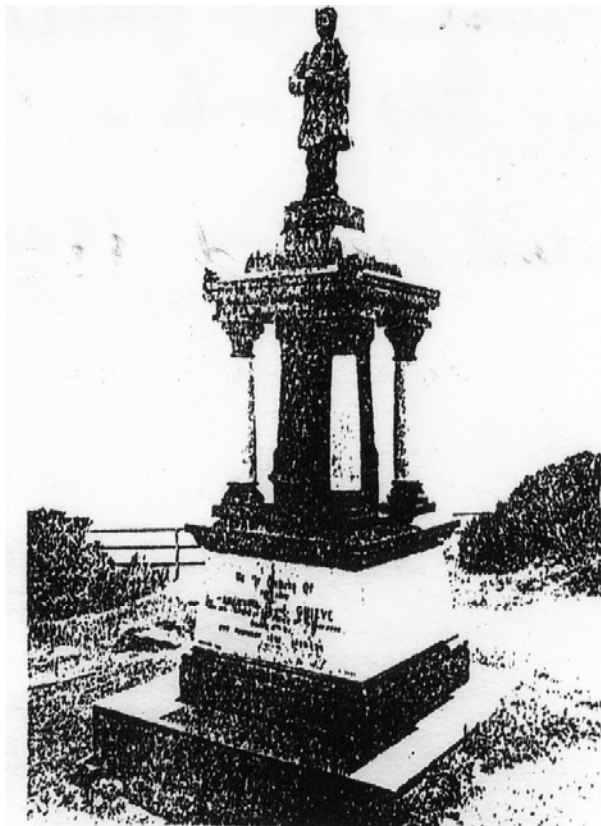
Tony.Lanarch-Jones@bwm.org.au

Lt Col Tony Larnach-Jones (Retd), Chairman of the NSW BW Memorial Committee

Lt Gideon Grieve 1864 - 1900

The ceremony to rededicate the memorial to Lt Grieve is an opportunity to examine a life well lived. Gideon James Grieve, married with three children, was killed in his 36th year. His legacy to them and later generations was his fine reputation as well as his genes.

For the benefit of people unable to attend the ceremony the addresses will be posted on the Boer War Memorial website.



Memorial at Watson's Bay, Sydney, 'TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE LIEUTENANT G. J. GRIEVE WHO FELL FIGHTING AT THE BATTLE OF PAADERBERG, SOUTH AFRICA, 18TH FEBRUARY 1902, AGED 36'. By the stonemasons' firm Andrews Bros. The figure wears the uniform of the New South Wales Scottish Rifles, including a forage cap.

Photo: As the memorial was in 1900.

Lt Grieve's Scottish connections

Born in Edinburgh where his father was a gunsmith, Gideon, at 17, joined, the Midlothian Field Artillery, a citizen soldier unit of the famous professional Royal Scots Regiment. He trained with them for some months before his father decided that it was not what he wanted for his son and withdrew him. Ironically, the Royal Scots were sent to South Africa in the British army, playing a significant infantry role.

Turning 21, he left home, parents and four sisters for Sydney. He got a job with the Scottish family company John Sands, beginning his interest in stationery, which resulted in him eventually setting up his own wholesale paper business in King Street, Sydney.

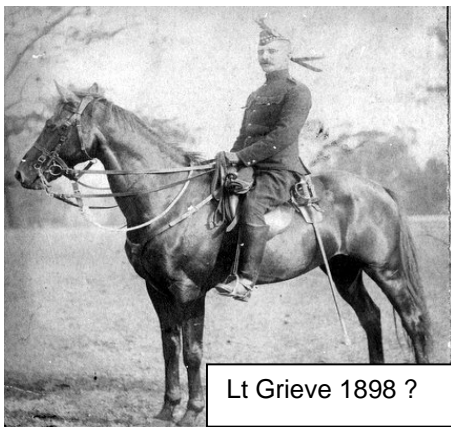
Gideon's inclination towards the military soon had him enlisting as a private soldier in the NSW Scottish Rifles, a militia unit officially called the Fifth Regiment NSW Infantry. The Rifles claimed an historic association with the famous Black Watch, although, at the time the Black Watch did not acknowledge this link so the NSW unit could not wear their tartan. But so strong was the desire to emulate the original that the NSW Scottish Rifles design had only an additional fine red line woven into the parent overall dark green.

Grieve's progression through the ranks was routine for a committed and talented part-time soldier in peacetime; rapid because of his interest and ability, restricted by needing to balance his business and a family with weekend and evening parades at Victoria Barracks. He was promoted from Sergeant Major to Second Lieutenant in October 1895.

After a short time Gideon was selected to be a Special Services Officer (SSO), with training shifted to Headquarters and emphasising tactics and command. Ultimately it qualified an officer for virtually any high-level duties of co-ordination or leadership. Another SSO selected

at about the same time, also a Scot, was Major William Throsby Bridges, later a WW1 hero who as Commander of the First Division, was killed in action at Gallipoli. Bridges (1861-1915) had been the first commandant of the Royal Military College, Duntroon 1911-1914; but that is another story.

Although sent to South Africa as an SSO, Lt Grieve joined the 85 members of the NSW Scottish Rifles who had enlisted in the NSW



Infantry Company on the *SS Aberdeen* – the name of the ship another connection with Scotland – departing on the 28 November, arriving on 6 December 1899.

He was posted as Railway Staff Officer in Cape Town to help organise transporting the thousands of British and colonial troops disembarking with their horses and equipment from an armada of ships and getting them all to the front as expeditiously as possible.

While this was happening to Lt Grieve in Cape Town, the British Gen Andrew Wauchope, commanding the Scottish Brigade, which included the 2nd Bn the Black Watch, was fighting to reach the Modder River. Boer intelligence knew about their movements. On the 28 November 1899 the British attempted a frontal assault on Boer soldiers in deep trenches hidden behind bushes and rocks, targeting officers easily identified because of the insignia that clearly distinguished them from the ranks. The Highland Brigade suffered badly.

After this victory The Boers spent the next week moving to the slopes of a hill called

Magersfontein Kop. They repeated the tactic of digging deep trenches, this time setting white-painted rocks and tins down the hill to mark ranging points.

Sadly the British also repeated their tactic of a frontal assault at dawn on 11 December 1899. Here the attack was across bare, flat ground approaching the hill. Gen Wauchope was among the first to be killed by such dense rifle fire that it seemed like machine guns. Advance was impossible. Worse, the featureless ground offered no refuge from bullets fired low. Killed troops pinned down and being wounded along the body suffered the additional agony of sunburn in their wounds as the day went on. Again officers were particularly targeted, so that headquarters sought replacements by promotion from within their own ranks and existing officers from other units.

Lt Grieve was selected despite being a colonial, untried in battle, and only of junior rank. Exactly a week after landing in South Africa he was posted to lead his former countrymen in T Company, 2nd Bn Black Watch. In the following week Grieve showed the qualities that justified his appointment in skirmishes in the relief Kimberley and in a considerable battle at Koodoesberg where he was mentioned in dispatches for his leadership.

On the morning of 18 February 1900, Lord Kitchener ordered yet another frontal attack on a large Boer laager protected again by deep trenches at Paardeberg Drift, also on the Modder River. Lt Grieve led T Company into fierce rifle fire. Seeing one of his soldiers wounded Lt Grieve, now wounded himself, attempted to recover the man, but in doing so both became exposed and were killed instantly.

He was buried with 12 others on a nearby farm.

Col John Haynes OAM National BWM Chairman

The NSW BWM committee would like to thank Col John Haynes and the Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association for initiating the project to have a Boer War memorial erected in Canberra.



John Haynes is pictured at the 2008 dedication of the Anzac Parade site, is the President of the RAACA and Chairman of the National Boer War Memorial Committee.

RAACA publishes its magazine "Armour". John has ensured that every edition included articles about the Boer War Memorial project.

RAACA became interested because most of the military units sent to South Africa were various forms of cavalry or mounted infantry.

The Royal Australian Armoured Corps traces its history from the earliest mounted troops. When the Boer War began in 1899 the NSW Lancers – the first Australian troops to arrive in South Africa – carried long cavalry swords, a pistol, a Metford-Lee .303 carbine and a metal-tipped wooden lance nine feet long.

It is a matter of principle that those who served in South Africa were not forgotten.

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The Badge

We ran out! Secretary Brian Walters bought a new batch.

Maybe you could sell them to family and friends?



As a fundraiser it will take thousands to make a financial difference, but Committee members

have found them top conversation-starters in the battle to help raise awareness and to broaden knowledge about the project.

The number we can sell is another signal to our national politicians as evidence that there is public interest in commemorating those who answered the call between 1899 and 1902.

Contact BWM Secretary Brian Walters by email at Brian.Walters@lancers.org.au or write to **Secretary, NSW Boer War Memorial Committee, Victoria Barracks, Building 96, Paddington NSW 2021** \$7.50 each including postage.

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The proposed Memorial, Canberra

On 31 May last year we dedicated the Anzac Parade, Canberra site. 157 people attended the ceremony. It remains empty.

However, the good news is, that despite lack of any government commitment to the project, the National Committee is optimistically preparing a design competition brief, which must be approved by the Federal government.



The next *Monumentally Speaking* will feature the Battle of Elands River, possibly the single most significant engagement from an Australian perspective, of the whole Boer War.