



MONUMENTALLY SPEAKING WEST AUSTRALIAN EDITION FEBRUARY 2016

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National Boer War Memorial Association. National Patron:
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WA Committee of NBWMA Inc
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The Controversy over the death of Lt Anthony Forrest

Anthony Alexander Forrest was born 20 November 1884 in Perth, Western Australia. He was the son of Alexander Forrest, a politician who had been twice Mayor of Perth and a nephew of John and David Forrest, both politicians. His uncle, John Forrest, had been Premier of Western Australia and was currently Federal Defence Minister. All the Forrests had gained fame for the exploration of the interior of WA.

Anthony Forrest by the time of the Boer War had already an impressive record. At Hale School in Perth he had represented the school in cricket, AFL and rowing. He was a school prefect and had captained in the AFL side. At 15 years 257 days, he became the second youngest WAFL debutante when he represented Perth in the 1900 season. At the same time he joined the Perth Artillery Volunteers, a militia unit. Reports at the time indicated that he passed the gunnery course in the top half dozen students.

Some elements of the Western Australian Press went into overdrive when he was appointed as an officer to the 5th Western Australian Mounted Infantry in early 1901 only just after his 16th birthday. Favouritism and incompetence being the words thrown freely about by many in the press. Yet we have many examples of 15-year-olds being officially on active service in South Africa. One paper rather fatuously argued that people should not be appointed officers until at least the age of 45.



Forrest was killed in action at Grobelaars Recht near Carolina (although official reports cited it as Brakpan) on 15 May 1901 at just 16 years of age and some elements of the Press immediately took the opportunity yet again to vilify the Forrests. 15 May 1901 became a 'bad day at the office' for the 5th and 6th WAMI. During 10 days operating under the command of Major

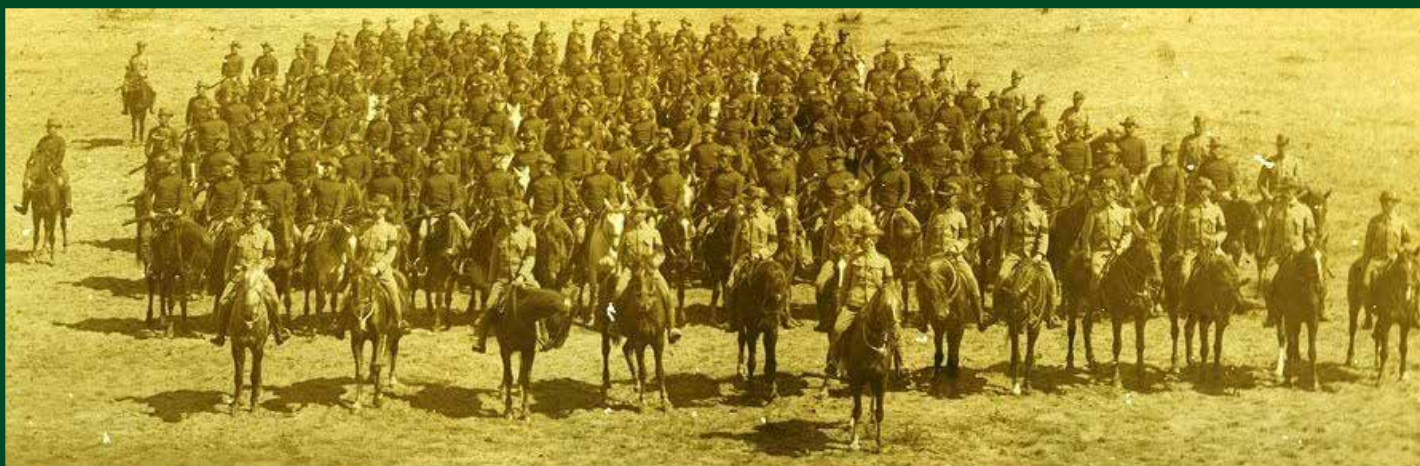
General Walter Kitchener in the Middleburg area of the Transvaal the West Australians had been capturing cattle, chasing small parties of Boers but in reality had seen little action. On 15 and 16 May all that changed with two days of extremely heavy swirling action. On the evening of the 14th a British Liaison Officer had advised several Boer families (women and children) that they would be moved on the following morning. This of course led to the inevitable consequence when the West Australians went to collect them the following morning. On arrival at the farmhouse one group was sent to collect some Boer wagons a little way off. This group was immediately ambushed. Lt Reid (a Presbyterian clergyman and former AFL player with Fitzroy, on his second tour) directed Forrest to deploy his command to protect the wagons and then took two troops to block the Boers. Forrest had been promoted recently to command of the troop or division of his company, surely in itself a recommendation as to his ability.



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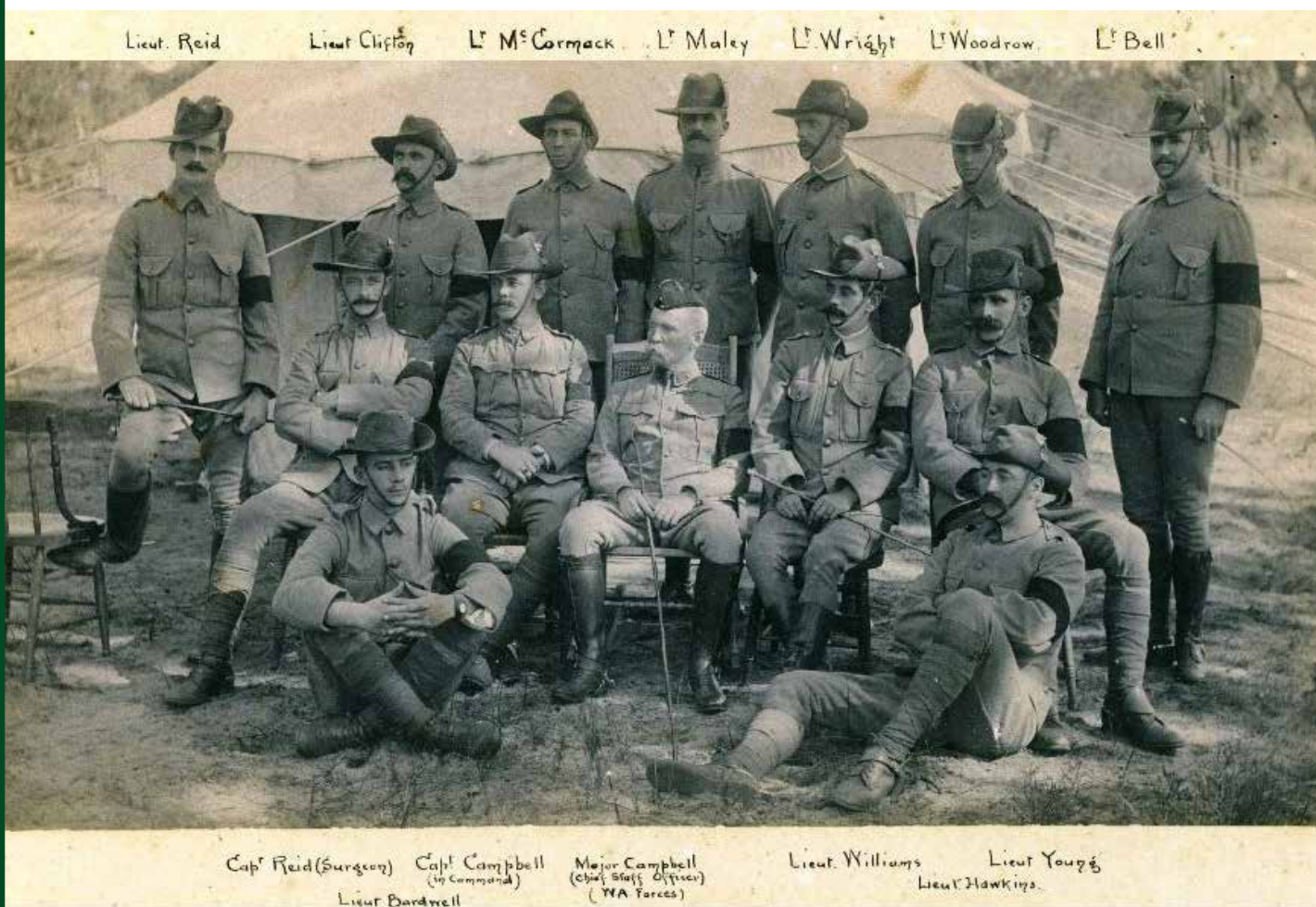


6th Western Australian Mounted Infantry on parade

The Boers were present in overwhelming numbers. Forrest was advised by an Afrikaner scout to run but chose to stay and deploy his troop to protect the wagons as ordered. Forrest, Sergeant Edwards, Corporal Bollinger and Trooper Blanck were all killed. The location of the wounds indicate that they were fighting from a prone

(lying) position and were shot by mounted Boers as they galloped up. The casualty tally from both units was eight killed and another seven including Lt Reid wounded. Following the funerals the next morning General Kitchener felt it necessary to impress on the Australians the need not to take vengeance on the civilian population. Clearly feelings

were running high. The 16th also saw further heavy fighting, from which Lt Frederick Bell was awarded the Victoria Cross. Both Forrest and Reid (who although badly wounded refused to leave his post) were Mentioned in Dispatches (MiD). He is buried in Middleburg Cemetery, South Africa.



Officers of the 6th Western Australian Mounted Infantry

Perth Boer War Day for 2016 is Sunday 29 May

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