



MONUMENTALLY SPEAKING

NSW BOER WAR MEMORIAL
PROJECT COMMITTEE
OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER V.1 No.1 March 09

Circulation: registered Descendants and Relatives of NSW Boer War soldiers, Donors and people who have expressed an interest in ensuring that all service personnel from Australia who fought in the 1899 –1902 Boer War are commemorated with a monument on the site dedicated in Anzac Parade, Canberra.

Chairman’s Report

Much has been done since 2005 when the then Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, indicated his support for the establishment of a memorial for the Boer War in Canberra.

The site for the memorial was dedicated on the 31 May 2008. Many descendants, relatives and their friends attended. A design competition is now being prepared.

Support and donations have been received from individuals, organisations and RSL clubs. So far in NSW we have received \$34,517 of the national total of \$100,127. This is well short of the \$3M needed to complete the monument. We will continue to seek financial support from government at all levels and businesses. Vietnam veterans have given us great support.

Of the 23,000 Australian men and women who served both before and after Federation, about one third came from NSW. We are trying to reach their descendants and relatives in the hope that they may wish to contribute in some way to the

project. We have to convince the Federal Government that we have the support of Australians across the nation.

This occasional newsletter is being sent to all those who are already known.

Can you help?

The NSW Committee has lists of soldiers’ names on every known Boer War monument in NSW. It would be most helpful if you could take a list and look for the same names in local phone books and electoral rolls for relatives and descendants.

The Secretary will be delighted to receive your list to send out Relative and Descendant forms. By all means give the enclosed form to your friends

Of course download the form from the Boer War Memorial website and help friends who have a Boer War veteran relation to get it back to us.

Lt Col Tony Larnach-Jones

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The site for the proposed memorial

Canberra residents know Anzac Parade well as the great avenue that runs from the War Memorial down to Lake Burley Griffin. The site for our memorial is at the lake end, second on the left when heading for the War Memorial.



Visitors

There is no parking in Anzac Parade itself because of major roadworks. Park in the road behind the BWM site, Anzac Park West, at the Constitution Avenue end.

Can you help?

Imagine what sort of memorial would be fitting on this beautiful and evocative site.

We will pass your views to the National Committee, which is responsible for the kind of monument to be erected.

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Website

<http://www.bwm.org.au/>

No doubt that you have all logged on to the website to see what's there. If you go through the site page-by-page under each heading you may find new material.

Note that the website is maintained voluntarily by Webmaster John Howells for the National Committee of the BWM project.

It may inspire you to send photos or a story of your own. Perhaps your research has come across BW information about NSW soldiers – Commonwealth or Colonial – in the dusty archives of hospitals or schools, in country newspapers found under the lino or in local libraries.

Please remember that we are specifically interested in the soldier's time at the Boer War, although brief mention can be made of other biographical information that you think is relevant to his or her Boer War service.

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Genealogists – shake the family tree?

Many people have already done extensive research into their family's history. Maybe someone with BW service has turned up?

Although the NSW BWM project committee is specifically interested in NSW soldiers, it is realised that once in South Africa, soldiers were posted from unit to unit, units were absorbed into larger ones and, after Federation in 1901, all of the colonial units became Commonwealth of Australia.

Many British migrants may also be descendants of the vastly greater number of men and women in UK regiments. It is also likely that immigrants from New Zealand, Canada and Sri Lanka may have found a BW soldier amongst their ancestors.

We would be delighted to add all Descendants and Relatives to the national database. We also cooperate with all other State committees.

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The Badge

NSW Branch has produced a badge for the project featuring an image of Adelaide's Boer War Memorial's horse statue.



Can you help?

As a fundraiser it will take thousands of them to make a difference, but Committee members have found them great conversation-starters in the battle to help raise awareness and to broaden knowledge about the project.

Would you like one? Maybe you could sell them to family and friends?

Contact BWM Secretary Brian Walters by email at _____

or write to; **Secretary, NSW Boer War Memorial Committee, Building 96, Victoria Barracks, Paddington NSW 2021** to get your order at \$5 plus postage.

Artefacts

In several tributes to “Soldiers” on the website there are photos of memorabilia. For example, in the Tribute to Trooper William Luff, 1st Australian Horse, there is a photo of his Queen Victoria’s Chocolate Tin, and one of his Queen’s Medal with three clasps. Sitting on top of the ribbon is the back of the missing clasp awarded to Tpr Luff for his service in the battle at Modder River. Just underneath the medal there is a small badge – The South Africa Soldiers Association was the forerunner of the RSL.

It was much easier for returning soldiers to bring back to Australia odds and ends as war mementos in the earliest years of the 1900s than it would be today!

There are even stories about captured artillery pieces arriving as passengers’ luggage. Not that you’d expect to find a field gun in the attic when you’re cleaning up when great grandfather died, but maybe you’ve come across something that makes you wonder....

Don’t throw it out!!! Contact the Australian War Memorial immediately. The curators wish to add to their small collection of Boer War memorabilia to have as many diaries, letters, pipes, small arms, uniforms, medals, everything whether the soldier’s own, captured, souvenired or “borrowed”.

<http://www.awm.gov.au/>

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News from the front

(being in the form of a diary which might have been written by a trooper in the 1st Australian Horse. The factual material is mainly from RWF Droogleever, *From the Front – Banjo Paterson’s Dispatches from the Boer War*. Macmillan Australia, 2000)

13 Dec 1889. The Cape Town wharfies had us off the Langton Grange in no time and we went into camp. Horses had lost a lot of condition. All 143 of us survived the voyage, and we’re all set

to get up to the front. We’re camped close to dozens of English and Scottish regiments we’ve read about, and they do look pretty flash in their fancy uniforms. We look fine in our green dress uniforms, not bad for bushies. But their cavalry horses are great chargers, much bigger than our Walers.

18 Dec 1899. Loaded onto a train with the Scots Greys for the northern border of the Cape Province to join General French’s cavalry division. Will be with the Sydney boys in the NSW Lancers and the NSW Medical Corps.

14 Jan 1900. Arundel, a small railway town about 18 miles south of Colesberg. We’ve done a lot of patrolling and been in a lot of skirmishes and got a look at the Boers. They don’t come out in the open for a fight, but they’re good riders. We haven’t been able to keep up with them because our horses didn’t get enough time to come good after the ship.

24 Jan 1900 It’s hellishly hot on the veldt. There isn’t much feed or water for the horses, like summer in Australia really. Very dusty, red, like ours, that seeps into everything. No shade. Wood for fires is scarce so we cook over fires made from horse manure. It makes all the food stink and the smoke hangs around.

Banjo Paterson, of The Man from Snowy River fame, is the War Correspondent that’s travelling with us, came to our camp to have a look at the horses that were sent to replace the tired, sick, underfed and overworked ones we brought with us. Like us humans, need a bit of time to recover.

30 January 1900. I got a dose of something and have been sent into a camp to rest and recuperate. Our troop commander, Lt Osborne, has been sick too. He brought us to this camp area that the 5,000 troops in French’s column have just left, so it’s flat, but the ground is broken up and dusty. The food’s a lot better in this camp. The healthier blokes are put on picket duty up and down the railway line next to our camp. We’ll be back into action soon, joining the other two troops out patrolling. They’ve had a few skirmishes so far.

We want to catch the Boers who trapped Lt Dowling's troop a couple of weeks ago at Norval farm near Slingsfontein [16th January 1900]. His half of the troop had been to the farmhouse and hadn't seen anything suspicious.

On the way out of the farm they were riding on the flat between small kopjes (hills) when about 100 mounted Boers who had been hiding in the hills galloped towards them firing as they rode to surround them. Our mob tried to get onto some high ground but the Boers were already there too. Our Lee Metford carbines aren't that accurate at picking up the Boers hiding in the rocks. And they couldn't get near enough to swing swords. The Lancers had the same problem using their nine-foot sticks. The Boers wouldn't come out and fight, just stayed behind their rocks picking our lot off with their Mauser rifles. Some of our men just dropped their swords and lances and used their pistols.

Trying to back out they got tangled up in a 7-strand wire fence, the top one barbed, and had to run along it to escape.

The Boers got Sgt Major Griffen, and Cpl Fred Kilpatrick died of his wounds next day even though the medical mob found him and got him back in an ambulance. Their stretcher-bearers got a lot of others back to the hospital too.

The Boers captured 16 including Lt Dowling as well as killing or maiming thirteen of our horses. Our men who got back said that Lt Dowling "fought like a lion". They saw him pick up Tpr Arlett when his horse got shot from under him. Then Dowling's horse went down and he was wounded but kept firing. Where they found his helmet there was a lot of blood and spent cartridge cases.

Ed. What we **now** know about the action at Slingsfontein is: Early in the morning of 17 January 1900, an ambulance party of the NSW Army Medical Corps guarded by an Australian Horse/NSW Lancers patrol led by Lt Heron, and accompanied by the war correspondent Banjo Paterson, found Troop Sgt Major George Allman Griffen's body. Griffen, from Gundagai, was the first Australian soldier to be killed in action in South Africa. They buried him where he fell, high up on the kopje among the rocks.

The party went on to find Cpl F. I. Kilpatrick still alive. Kilpatrick had been a schoolteacher at Carlingford and Leichhardt, where there are memorials to the bravery of this young man. He died of his wounds and was buried on the veldt, the service attended by the three NSW army units and the New Zealanders camped nearby.

Lt Willoughby Vincent Dowling had been wounded in several places, losing his right thumb, the sight in his right eye and had a nasty bullet wound in the thigh. The Boer medics had treated him and sent him to their Volks Hospital in Bloemfontein. He was still in hospital there when the British took the city. Despite his wish to rejoin the 1st Australian Horse he was promoted to Captain and repatriated to Sydney.

Although this was a minor action it provided the first solid evidence about Boer military tactics, the uselessness of swords and lances, the management of horses, and the value of the NSW Medical Corp's ambulances and stretcher bearers in close proximity to action.

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Publicity

We are having trouble getting our message out. Perhaps it's our fault for not coming up with stories that editors think readers want.

Can you help?

Three ways:

- keep your eye open in all of the media you use for any mentions of the work of the BWM project or the Boer War itself, and please email us, maybe send a clipping or photocopy
- tell us what aspects of the work of the committee would interest you as readers, listeners, viewers; and
- write your own letter to the editor of your local paper about some aspect of the Boer War, including comments on articles you may read/hear/see in other media.

The next Monumentally Speaking will feature an article on Lt Gideon Grieve.