



NATIONAL BOER WAR MEMORIAL

Patrons

Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC
Governor – General of the Commonwealth of Australia
Air Chief Marshall Angus Houston AO, AFC
Chief of Defence Force



MONUMENTALLY SPEAKING

- Queensland Edition -

Vol 1. No.2
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Newsletter of the Boer War Memorial Project Committee – Queensland

Qld Chairman's Report

Welcome to the second Queensland National Boer War Memorial Newsletter. In each newsletter I will continue to provide a brief of what is happening with the project.

The Queensland Committee has recently expanded, having now gone from the "steady" 5 to 7 in number, with a possible 8th member to join us soon. We now have a dedicated Treasurer in John Parnell, so welcome aboard John. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bill Cross, who has until now been wearing the two hats of Secretary and Treasurer. Bill will continue on his role as Secretary. Dr Noel Wallis will be joining the committee at our next meeting.

What have we, as a State committee, achieved in the last three months?

On June 20th we held a display during the Queensland RSL State Conference at Maroochydore selling memorabilia, providing information. A successful undertaking, we registered a number of new descendants and raised awareness of our project.

On August 15th there was a Boer War history afternoon at the Sherwood Indooroopilly RSL Sub-Branch, where we had 55 in attendance. Generous donations were gratefully received.

Where are we now nationally?

Since my first report: The Design Brief is into its final stage with copies being issued to all States. Discussions have been held with the Project Manager, who previously managed the Design Competition for the Volunteers Memorial. It is proposed to engage this company to do the same management process for the BWM.

The funds collected to date will be committed to this initial process.

The Future

We are planning two major events in 2010. Firstly, a ceremony is to be held at Fort Lytton on 31st May, with a vision of this becoming a national event to commemorate the Boer War. Secondly, we are planning a formal reception at the temporary City Hall in Brisbane, once again to raise awareness and funds for our Project. Both of these projects are in the planning stage.

Why a Data Base?

Why are we pursuing a National Descendants' Register? Unlike the Peace Keepers, and WW1 and WW2 proposed memorials, the BWM has not been granted any funding assistance to commence the project. We have to prove community backing and pursue a large range of funding from the public and the corporate sector. The backing will be demonstrated by the Descendants Register.

Feedback from our first edition has been positive, and I hope you find this edition just as entertaining. My congratulations to Colleen O'Leary for her wonderful effort in producing this newsletter.



Ron McElwaine
Chairman

Merchandise

Polo Shirts

Available from the Queensland Branch are embroidered black BWM polo shirts. Ranging in sizes from Small to 4XL, polo shirts are \$30 [short sleeved] or \$36 [long sleeved] each [+ Postage].

Badges

Produced by the NSW Branch, these lapel badges are available at \$5 each [+ Postage].



Can You Help?

If you know anyone who is interested in our project, who may wish to register their ancestor, or who may be prepared to make a donation [Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible – ABN 49 709 547 198] – we can be contacted at:

BWM Project, P.O. Box 165,
Fortitude Valley Q 4006.

Editorial

Welcome to our second newsletter. As you would have read in Vol.1 No 1, we featured a Queensland soldier Colonel Percy Ricardo. This issue will feature Major General Sir T.W. Glasgow.

This issue also features what we plan to be a regular historical section. In this case, the article is written by Mr Mike Hanslow, who comes from South Africa but is now living in North Queensland. Mike is very knowledgeable in all things about the Boer War. I hope you enjoy his article about the 'Blockhouses'.

As you may be aware, one of my other duties as a member of this committee is coordinating the Descendants' Register. It is coming along in leaps and bounds, and to prove we have your support it is very important that we register as many descendants as possible.

So, even if you have nominated yourself as the descendant on our data base, we need as many of your family to also be registered along with you as a descendant. So please contact me and let me know their name, address and relationship to the Boer War soldier in question.

I receive so many wonderful letters, photos and documents. I would like you to know they are valued and kept safe, but please only send photocopies of valuable family photos and documents.

It was so nice to finally meet so many of you at our Boer War Function on August 15th. I am just sorry I was so busy that I didn't get to chat very long to any of you. I am sure as time goes on, we will meet again.

Colleen O'Leary
Editor

Website www.bwm.org.au

Feature Article

Sir Thomas William Glasgow
CB CMG DSO
(1876 - 1955)

Date of Birth: 6 June 1876, Tiaro, Qld
Date of Death: 4 July 1955, Brisbane, Qld
Occupation/s: Army Officer, Colonial Militia (Australia), Grazier, High Commissioner, Liberal/Conservative Politician, Member of Upper House

**Sir Thomas William Glasgow**

[Source: Australian War Memorial; Artist: George Bell]

GLASGOW, Sir THOMAS WILLIAM (1876-1955), soldier, politician and diplomat, was born on 6 June 1876 at Tiaro, near Maryborough, Queensland, fourth child and third son of Samuel Glasgow, a farmer from Northern Ireland, and his wife, Mary Margaret Trotter, née Anderson, an Englishwoman of Scottish descent. 'Bill' Glasgow was educated at the One-Mile State School, Gympie, and Maryborough Grammar School. In 1893 he started work as a junior clerk in the office of a mining company at Gympie and later became a clerk in the Queensland National Bank there. (Sir) Brudenell White, a clerk in a rival bank, was among his friends.

While still in his teens Glasgow joined the Wide Bay Regiment, Queensland Mounted Infantry, giving up most of his week-ends to soldiering. In 1897, with nineteen other volunteers he represented Queensland at the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria in London. He served in the South African War as a lieutenant with the 1st Q.M.I.

Contingent, participating in the relief of Kimberley, the capture of Cronje's laager on the Modder and the occupation of Bloemfontein in 1900; on 16 April 1901 he was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

Back in Australia Glasgow formed a partnership with his younger brother Alexander, and took over his father's Gympie grocery store. However, his dedication to military service continued: in 1903 he organized the 13th Light Horse Regiment at Gympie; he was promoted captain in the Australian Military Forces (militia) in 1906 and major in 1912.

Having relinquished storekeeping, Glasgow had just bought a cattle station in central Queensland when World War I broke out. However he immediately enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and was appointed major in the 2nd Light Horse Regiment. Three of his six brothers also enlisted. He embarked for Egypt on 24 September 1914 and landed at Gallipoli on 12 May 1915. He succeeded Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. Rowell as acting commandant of Pope's Hill and from there on 7 August he led 200 New South Wales Light-horsemen in an attack on Dead Man's Ridge. All but 46 were killed or wounded. Glasgow was among the last to retire, carrying with him one of his wounded troopers. Next day he was given command of the 2nd Light Horse and held that appointment, as lieutenant-colonel, until after the evacuation.

In March 1916 when the 4th and 5th Divisions were formed, Glasgow was promoted temporary brigadier and given the task of raising and commanding the 13th Infantry Brigade. He led his men in many important actions including those at Pozières, Messines, Passchendaele, Mouquet Farm and Dernancourt. He was appointed C.M.G. in June 1916 and C.B. in December 1917.

On 25 April 1918 the 13th Brigade, together with Harold Elliott's 15th Brigade, recaptured the town of Villers-Bretonneux after the Germans had overrun the 8th British Division under General Heneker. It was a feat subsequently described by Lieutenant-

General Sir John Monash as the turning-point of the war, and there was disappointment in 1938 when Glasgow was not present at the opening of the memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. Before the counter-attack Glasgow, having reconnoitred the position, demurred at British orders to attack across the enemy's front. 'Tell us what you want us to do Sir', he said to Heneker, 'but you must let us do it our own way'. He refused to attack at 8 p.m.: 'If it was God Almighty who gave the order, we couldn't do it in daylight'. They attacked successfully at 10 p.m.

On 30 June Glasgow was promoted major general and appointed commander of the 1st Division in Flanders. On 8 August, the fourth anniversary of Glasgow's enlistment, his division rejoined the Australian Corps on the Somme and participated in the massive offensive in August and September. He led the 1st Division with distinction in its major successful engagements at Lihons, Chuignes and Hargicourt.

Glasgow remained with the 1st Division until the end of the war, embarked for Australia on 6 May 1919 and was demobilized on 19 August. He was appointed K.C.B. in recognition of his outstanding war service and was nine times mentioned in dispatches; the French government awarded him the Légion d'honneur and the Croix de Guerre; he also won a Belgian Croix de Guerre. Back in Queensland Glasgow continued on the reserve of officers of the 1st Military District with command (from 1921) of the 4th Division. Then he became honorary colonel of the 5th Light Horse and the 1st Battalion. For twenty years he led the Anzac Day parade in Brisbane as general officer commanding the parade.

Charles Bean described him as 'the most forcible of the three strong brigadiers of the 4th Division. With keen blue eyes looking from under puckered humorous brows as shaggy as a deer-hound's; with the bushman's difficulty of verbal expression but sure sense of character and situations; with a fiery temper, but cool understanding and a firm control of men; with an entire absence of vanity, but translucent honesty and a standard of rectitude which gave confidence

both to superiors and subordinates, he could—by a frown, a shrewd shake of the head, or a twinkle in [the eye] ... awaken in others more energy than would have been evoked by any amount of exhortation'. According to Monash, 'Glasgow succeeded not so much by exceptional mental gifts, or by tactical skill of any very high order, as by his personal driving force and determination'. (Sir) Robert Menzies later described Glasgow as 'the complete personal embodiment of the A.I.F.'.

Glasgow was a stern man in his military views. He joined Brigadier General William Holmes in 1917 in requesting an amendment of the Defence Act to bring it into line with British and New Zealand law so that it would be possible to inflict the death penalty in a few flagrant cases of desertion. In 1918, when 119 men of the 1st Battalion were found guilty of desertion, he refused to recommend remission of the sentences which were, however, not exacted because the war ended. But he was at the same time a great battler for the welfare of his men. Just before the end of the Gallipoli campaign he took 'French leave' from Lemnos, where he had been sent for a few days' rest, to return to Gallipoli to take away the remnants of his regiment; his inspiring voice and wise guidance were valued during those anxious hours. After the war he was an equally stern fighter for the rights of soldiers, though he deprecated extravagant claims to privileges.

In 1919 Sir William Glasgow was elected to the Senate as a Nationalist. He was no orator but his rugged common sense was appreciated and he quickly made his mark in Melbourne. In February 1923 he reluctantly refused the leadership of the non-Labor forces in Queensland with the prospect of becoming premier. He succeeded (Sir) George Pearce as minister for home and territories in the Bruce-Page government on 18 June 1926. From April 1927 until October 1929 he was minister for defence. In 1928 Glasgow led an Australian delegation to the Empire Parliamentary Association conference in Canada and visited England to study modern war methods. In this period the government completed its five-year defence programme which increased the

citizen army to 45,000 and modernized and expanded the Royal Australian Air Force. During the Scullin government Glasgow was deputy leader of the Opposition in the Senate, losing his seat in the Senate in 1931. Next year he resumed his pastoral interests in Queensland where he became a director of several companies and, in January 1936, a member of the Queensland board of advice of the National Bank of Australasia Ltd. President of the Queensland branch of the United Australia Party, he stressed the necessity for unity among the parties opposed to 'extremists'.

On 24 December 1939 Glasgow was appointed first Australian high commissioner to Canada where he arrived late in March 1940. His work included negotiation on matters of policy regarding the Empire Air Training Scheme and he regularly visited the far-flung camps and schools in Canada where Australians were training or awaiting embarkation. He made sure the airmen had good conditions and that mail and other amenities were promptly distributed. He established Anzac clubs in Ottawa and Halifax and during his tours publicized the Australian war effort. In 1942, the University of Manitoba awarded him an honorary LL.D.

Glasgow's direct and frank approach won the trust of Prime Minister Mackenzie King and the ministers for external affairs, defence, and munitions and supply. From the time of his arrival he advocated much closer liaison on Pacific strategy and dispositions. He was not so successful in enlisting Mackenzie King's support for Prime Minister John Curtin's idea of a British Commonwealth Council and secretariat. In March 1944 an agreement was concluded for 'mutual aid' between Australia and Canada and a mission set up under Glasgow's supervision. The Canadians provided two merchant ships, one of which, the *Taronga Park*, was launched by Lady Glasgow. In August 1943 and September 1944 Glasgow attended the Quebec conferences between Churchill and Roosevelt to be briefed by Churchill and his staff and to register Australian interests. Canadian government advisers recommended Glasgow for consideration as governor-general.

He returned to Australia in 1945 and resumed his pastoral and business interest in Queensland. His last years were spent in Brisbane where he died on 4 July 1955, survived by his wife and two daughters. He was given a state funeral after a service at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, and was cremated. In 1966 a bronze statue of Glasgow by Daphne Mayo was unveiled at the junction of Roma and Turbot streets in Brisbane, [it has since been relocated to Post Office Square]. At the ceremony Sir Arthur Fadden described him as 'one of the most distinguished soldiers of our age and generation'.



Registered Descendant: Angus McDowall

Based on an extract from: Ralph Harry, 'Glasgow, Sir Thomas William (1876 - 1955)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp 21-23.

Historical Article

“British Blockhouses of the South African War 1899-1902”

Author: Mike Hanslow

Introduction

The tactic of building a chain of forts came from the American war in Cuba in 1898. This campaign, which had settled down to a series of inconclusive actions, had demonstrated effectively that forts could not prevent guerrilla action. But it was the blockhouse and the concentration camps that were to be major factor contributing to ending of the war.

Lord F. S. Roberts had set up a series of forts to guard the railway, when Gen C. R de Wet started systematically blowing up his lines of communication in June 1900. The railway line was the only effective and fastest means of communication. The forts were a series of trenches reinforced with stone walls or *sangers* surrounded by barbed wire. The reason being that the Boers still possessed a few artillery pieces capable of destroying any fixture that might be built. As the war lingered on the Boers discarded their artillery pieces paving the way for more permanent structures to protect railway bridges and the railway itself.

Roberts handed over the command of the British Army in South Africa to Lord H. Kitchener on 29 October 1900 thinking the war was over and only a few rebels roaming the country. It was during November and December that wrecking of the railways had reached its maximum during the war and construction of the masonry blockhouses started in December that year. Each masonry blockhouse took up to three months to erect costing between £800 and £1 000 each. Realising that thousands of blockhouses would be needed Kitchener resorted to prefabricated forts. Kitchener being a military engineer had found his *métier*! Several prototypes were constructed but the one developed by Major S. R. Rice was to be adopted.

Kitchener's strategy was to divide the country into small areas by fortified lines preventing the Boers from crossing from one area to the next. It would be possible to move British columns by train into areas of Boer activity and attack them with precision and rapidity. Later on Kitchener started his “*Land Clearance*” policy were his columns could completely clear an area and deny the Boer commando's food and rest. As the war dragged on the hunted Boer would have three choices. To try and break through the blockhouse line, to break back through the mounted infantry pursuing them or to give up the hopeless struggle and voluntary pay the toll to the bag.

In the end there were over 8 000 blockhouses of all different types constructed during the war. Some 50 000 men were deployed to guard all the blockhouses. The length of blockhouse lines covered up to 6 000 KM. The whole cost of erecting the blockhouses with all their entanglements, was over £1 000 000. Gen de Wet called Kitchener's blockhouse system the blockhead system.



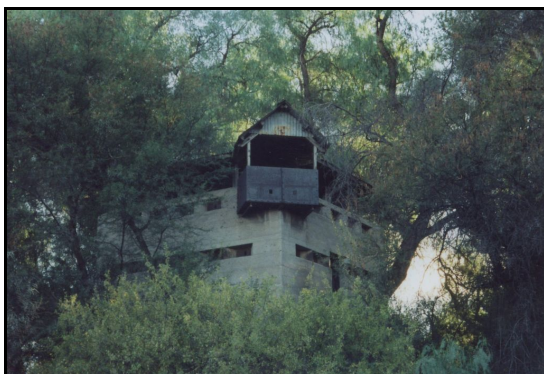
Hexagonal pattern Blockhouse Aliwal North (Dewetsville)

Masonry Blockhouses

Most of the 441 masonry blockhouses were constructed between December 1900 and the early part of 1901. They were mostly built to the standard three-storied blockhouse design by Major-General E. Wood (Chief Engineer) using mortared stonework or reinforced concrete. They were erected at important points such as railway bridges, railway stations and towns.

The standard three storey masonry blockhouse housed between seven and forty men, commanded by a subaltern (Army officer below the rank of Captain) or senior NCO. The use of the ground floor was for storage, the first floor as a living area and the second floor for observation over the countryside. The gap between the eaves of the pyramid shaped timber and corrugated iron roof and the top of the parapet wall on the second floor was closed by canvas "drops" during foul weather. Two steel machicouli galleries were placed at two diagonally opposite corners to allow flanking fire along the walls in case of an attack. They could also be used as a mounting platform for a machine gun. Access to the blockhouse was by means of a ladder to a steel stable type door situated on the first floor. The ladder could be drawn up inside in an event of an attack. Trap doors were situated in the middle of each wooden floor and access to the next floor was by means of a wooden ladder. The interior walls and woodwork were lime whitened, this increases light and preserves the timber and makes for cleanliness.

Each loophole was numbered to facilitate the speedy dispersal of each soldier to his post in an event of an attack. The roof was fitted with galvanised gutters, which discharged rainwater through internal downpipes to circular corrugated iron water tanks on the ground floor. The tanks were topped up regularly in dry weather by train or water cart. Food, water, ammunition and mail was also delivered by train or cart.



Standard pattern concrete blockhouse (Kromriver)

Corrugated Iron Blockhouse

The first metal blockhouse was built at Nelspruit, January 1901. This was a rectangular building that consisted of an inner and outer corrugated iron supported by wooden poles imbedded in the ground. The inner and outer skins of corrugated iron were separated by 25 centimetres filled with stone and sand. Small loopholes were made by cutting openings in the wall. This provided sufficient protection from rifle fire.

By February Major Rice had developed his circular corrugated iron blockhouse. He retained the idea of two corrugated iron skins to be separated by shingle sufficiently to stop rifle fire. The circular design provided good all round visibility and the lack of corners did away with the need for wooden posts. Wood rots and splinters when hit by bullets or shrapnel putting the occupants at greater risk. The steel door to the blockhouse was sheltered by another piece of corrugated iron. The Major Rice blockhouse could be erected in six hours by six trained men. The only change to his successful design was the replacing of the square gabled roofs by a circular one that gave rise to the name of "*Pepperpot blockhouse*". With mass production the cost to build a blockhouse dropped from £44 down to £16.



Rice Blockhouse Bloemfontien

Each blockhouse was surrounded by a stone wall about 0,6 meters high. Circular and radiating trenches were dug and stone sangers erected. This allowed the garrison to get in and out and fight from the prepared defensive position. Barbed wire entanglements were fashioned to provide a

seemingly impregnable defence. A typical corrugated blockhouse garrison consisted of seven men, one junior NCO and six men. A lieutenant would have charge of three to four blockhouses and a captain ten to twelve. A battalion could occupy up to 60 blockhouses. Stores and food were kept in the space under the roof.

Kitchener's Maginot Line

Blockhouses were at first put up at 2,5 Km intervals on the main railway lines. This had an effect in stopping the disruption of the railway lines and bridges. The large intervals between blockhouses did not stop Boer commandos from crossing the railway lines at night. As the war progressed the interval between blockhouses was reduced and on the Ermelo - Standerton line the interval was reduced down to 700 meters. The longest protected line was the 280 Kilometre Komatipoort to Wonderfontein railway line. Kitchener also resorted to building 34 cross-country blockhouses. Though independent of the blockhouse system, some Royal Engineer companies fitted up shields on ox-wagons and thus converted them into *mobile blockhouses* for use with convoys, or for "stopping" some point where the Boers crossed the line.

Barbed wire fortifications were placed between adjacent blockhouses. Later on stronger annealed wire was used which could not be severed by simple wire cutters. Bells and various noisy items were placed on the fence to sound an alarm when being tampered with. Even loaded rifles that fired automatically by trip wire and chemical alarms producing a flare were being employed by the end of the war. Blockhouses were arranged with their loopholes angled away from each other so that rifle fire from one blockhouse would be directed away from its neighbours. When a number of blockhouses opened up with rifle and machine gun fire, the whole surrounding area would be swept systematically with bullets. Under such conditions it was almost impossible for Boers to slip between the Blockhouses. This made it difficult for Boer leaders to unite their commandos for co-ordinated action.

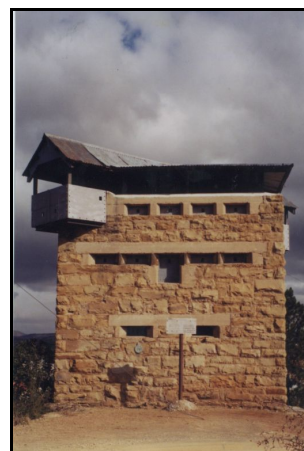
Tommy Adkins

Apart from sentry duty, there was nothing to do, and Tommy Adkins the ordinary British soldier became jumpy and ill tempered. They made the best of the blockhouse. They planted petunias in Bully-Beef tins. They chalked up the usual facetious names like *Krugers Castle*, *Rundle's starving eight* and *Chamberlain's innocent victims*. And they wrote letters for the weekly mail wagon to take back home. There was little gossip about on the telephone that connected every blockhouse to its neighbours. There were pets to be looked after, dogs, goats, pigs and lizards. There were the convoys that passed from time to time.

A summer night storm would rattle all those tin cans connected on the trip wires. This caused Tommy Adkins to fire a fusillade of shot into the darkness. When one of the automatic flares was tripped, all blockhouses that saw the signal began to fire even when nothing was visible in the dark. Unfortunately the flares could be activated by animals wandering into the fence. In one such occasion the firing spread up and down the line for about 160 Kilometres.

The English poet and author Rudyard Kipling (1869-1936) of the *Jungle Book* fame describes the men manning the blockhouse in his poem *BRIDGE GUARD IN THE KARROO*.

No, not combatants - only details guarding the line.



Standard pattern Blockhouse (Burgersdorp)