

Boer War Day 2016

Commemoration Service

Sunday 29 May 2016

Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne



Souvenir

Programme



Special themes for 2016 are :
'FATHERS OF THE ANZACS'

'THE DISASTER AT WILMANSRUST'

*Night of 12 June 1901 when the 5th Vic. Mounted Rifles
lost 18 killed and 42 wounded*
115TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR

SOUTH AFRICA 1899—1902





His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Boer War Day 2016

It is sometimes said that the Boer War is a forgotten war in Australia's military history.

Well this should never be the case and, on this day in particular, we remember those soldiers, including indigenous soldiers, and those nurses, who were the first to serve our new nation in conflict.

They were the forebears of the ANZACs, volunteering to fight alongside the British—serving empire, serving Australia and fulfilling their sense of duty and honour.

The courage, resilience and bushcraft of the Australians were well suited to the conditions they encountered, and they were soon recognised as an invaluable asset against a mobile and evasive adversary.

Sadly, the price we paid was high; this war remains our third worst conflict in terms of casualties. It also marked the death of an Australian nurse, Frances Hine, who became the first Australian woman to die in war.

The Boer War was a significant moment in our military history and in our fledgling nation's development. The service and sacrifices made will always be acknowledged and revered. The proud traditions we have today, began on the plains of South Africa more than a century ago.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Peter Cosgrove'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'P' and 'C'.

NATIONAL BOER WAR MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION



Patron
Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC
Chief of the Defence Force



1899

1902

Boer War Memorial Association Committee Victoria

Mail: P.O. Box 2006, Blackburn South, Victoria 3130 - Tel: (03)98902465 - Web: www.bwm.org.au

We warmly welcome you all here to honour the memory of those Australians who served our country in South Africa between 1899 and 1902 and especially the nearly one thousand who paid the supreme sacrifice. We specially welcome our distinguished guests....

Ms Lizzie Blandthorn, MP *Representing*
the Minister for Veterans

Cr Susan Riley, *Deputy Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne*

Mr John Geary, *Deputy Commissioner, Victoria,*

Department of. Veterans Affairs

LTCOL Neil Smith, AM *Master of Ceremonies*

Chaplin Russell Adams, *Salvation Army Chaplin*

Colonel Marcus Fielding, *Military History & Heritage, Vic.*

Don Kinsey, AM

Mr Tony Bowden, OAM , JP *President, Box Hill RSL.*

Major Maggie More, RFD *Shrine Governor,*

representing the Shrine Trustees

Major General J.E. (Jim) Barry, AM, MBE, RFD, ED

Past President, Defence Reserves Association

Mr Dean Lee, *CEO, Shrine of Remembrance*

Mr Louis Laumen, *Sculptor for the National Memorial*

Brigadier Peter D. Alkemade, RFD, ADC

Brigadier Neale Bavington, RFD ED,

Reserve Forces Day Council

Mr Graeme Plumridge, *President, Melbourne Legacy*

LTCOL Graham Lockwood RFD, ED

The Hon Michael Baden-Powell , *representing Scouts Aust.*

The Hon Wendy Baden-Powell

Mrs Mary Sadler

Mrs Lyn Emblin, *Victorian State Commissioner, Girl Guides*

ORDER OF SERVICE

12.15 pm— The march will commence at the lower end of the Shrine forecourt. The order of march will be:-



5VMR Wilmansrust Memorial

Mounted Infantry Section (Creswick Light Horse)
Rats of Tobruk Pipes & Drums
Boer War Banner
BWM Association & Distinguished Guests
SASA Banner
Descendants of Boer War Veterans
Cadets, Scouts & Guides

The march will proceed to the Eternal Flame where the service will take place

Master of Ceremonies ... *Lieutenant Colonel Neil Smith AM*

Welcome to Shrine *Major Maggie More, RFD, Shrine Governor*

Welcome ... *The Hon Michael Baden-Powell*

“We welcome all descendants of our Boer War soldiers and nurses, their families and members of the public that wish to commemorate this day. We are gathered to honour their service, and all it has meant to Australia and especially to remember those who paid the supreme sacrifice.”

Mounting of the Catafalque Party

Messages... *His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC*
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC

Chief of the Defence Force

read by Don Kinsey, AM

The Hon John Eren, Victorian Minister for Veterans,

represented by Ms Lizzie Blandthorn MP

Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne,

represented by Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Susan Riley

COMMEMORATION ADDRESS

delivered by

Colonel Marcus Fielding

President, Military History and Heritage, Victoria

WILMANSRUST HONOUR ROLL
& Banjo Paterson's comments on Australian MI
read by **Don Kinsey, AM**

Royal Hymn ... 'God Save Our Gracious Queen'

The Lord's Prayer ... *Chaplin Russell Adams*

Band Piece - *Rats of Tobruk Pipes and Drums*

Wreath Laying

The Ode ... *Tony Bowden, President, Box Hill RSL*

*"They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old,
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning*

Response: *We will remember them.*

The Last Post

(One minutes silence)

Response ... *Lest we forget*

Rouse

Closing prayer ... *Chaplin Russell Adams ... 'The Soldiers Prayer'*

Australian National Anthem

*"Australians all let us rejoice, for we are young and free,
We've golden soil and wealth for toil, our home is girth by sea.
Our land abounds in nature's gifts, of beauty rich and rare,
In history's page let every stage, Advance Australia Fair,
In joyful strains then let us sing, Advance Australia Fair."*

Dismounting of the Catafalque Party

Announcements *MC Lieutenant Colonel Neil Smith, AM*

CLOSE OF SERVICE

AUSTRALIA AT WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Boer War was the first full commitment of troops by all the Australian Colonies to a foreign war and with the formation of the Commonwealth on 1 January 1901 it became the Nation's first military involvement.

It is now more than 110 years since 23,000 young Australians served with distinction in the South African War. About 1,000 were killed in action or died on service—our greatest loss after the two World Wars of the 20th Century. Our Boer War dead exceeded in number the total losses in all conflicts since World War II.

The early volunteer contingents to the war were sent by the six colonies but after Federation in 1901 the first Commonwealth troops, Australian Commonwealth Horse and medical units were sent to the front. The contribution made by our fledgling Nation, of small population, was staggering

Australian contingents fought in the early engagements on the Kimberley front and rode with General French in the epic ride which lifted the siege of the diamond mining town. They were engaged in the battle of Paardeberg which forced the surrender of Boer General Cronje's army of 4,000 and cleared the way to the capture of Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State. In the later guerrilla phase of the war they quickly adjusted to the tough gruelling conditions against an enemy mostly indistinguishable from civilians - so often the case in this type of campaign.

Australians, whether in our own contingents or in other colonial or irregular units were engaged in every theatre of the war and generally drew the highest praise from their commanders and the troops of our allies in the conflict.

FATHERS OF THE ANZACS

The President of the RSL in NSW, R.D.White AM RFD, sent out a circular dated 23 March 2016 about this. The following extract deserves the attention of all Australians.

A Boer War Memorial and the Centenary of ANZAC

“Some historians have argued that we should not over rate the importance of the Boer War. However, this year we mark the Centenary of ANZAC and it is right that the National Boer War Memorial Fund’s theme for the year is the Fathers of ANZAC. What do we mean by that phrase, “The Fathers of ANZACs”. Quickly there are three parts to that answer.

Firstly it is important to understand that the problems experienced in the Boer War forced debate at our new National level in the years before the First World War, as to if and how we would be involved in a future major war on Britain’s side. The Boer War was fought across the birth of our Nation in 1901. Sir Edmund Barton’s explanation of Federal involvement in 1902 makes it very clear what Australia’s decision would be when he said the following “An attack on any part of the Empire is an attack on all of the Empire”.

Secondly, the British Empire was our first strategic alliance. However, without the Boer War, Australia’s role in World War One would have been very different indeed. There would not necessarily have been an AIF as we know it. It is likely that Australia would have just been a vast recruiting ground for British forces and if there were Australian units they would have been submerged in British formations. There would have been no AIF at Gallipoli, perhaps even no ANZAC legend as such. National figures like Monash and Chauvel might not have emerged.

As a result of the Boer War, Australia insisted that Australian troops were to be kept together in Australian formations, commanded by Australians where practicable, and that senior Australian Commanders would have automatic right of access to the Australian Cabinet over any issue. The Australian Government, since the Boer War, has retained ultimate control over what happened to Australian soldiers. This fact cannot be underestimated.

Finally, after Morant and Handcock, no Australian soldier could be executed for a military crime. (68 British soldiers executed in the Boer War and 300 in WW1). These are things today that we would take as self-evident, but they were not so to British commanders in 1914. They constantly chaffed at such restrictions.

All the Boer War VCs would serve again in World War 1 including three on Gallipoli. Two would be wounded there (Howse and Rogers). Three Boer War veterans (Shout, Newland, Whittle) would be awarded the Victoria Cross in World War 1 including one at Gallipoli (Shout). A fourth would be awarded the VC (posthumously).

The final aspect of the war we should consider today is our special relationship with New Zealand. New Zealand probably had the highest per capita commitment to the Boer War. Australian troops served closely with more than 6000 New Zealanders, and frequently fought alongside them, truly anticipating the first ANZACs.

What recognition has all the service by Australian Boer War veterans in World War 1 been shown in the ANZAC Centenary? Nothing - and apparently nothing happened in Australian military history before 25 April 1915.

The Memorial Fund's aim is to make Australians aware of this our first war as a Nation. We have helped to create sufficient awareness to have Boer War Days held throughout the Country. The main purpose of our Canberra Boer War Memorial is to remember the 23,000 men and women who served all those years ago and have been forgotten."

R. D. White AM RFD

WILMANSRUST 12 June 1901

The 12th June 1901 was indeed a dark day in our history. The left wing of the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles had made a temporary camp for the night on the farm 'Wilmansrust', 11 miles from Middleburg in the Transvaal, when it suffered a surprise attack in the dark by a Boer Commando. We suffered by far our greatest losses in that attack.

The Imperial Officer in charge had ordered out an inadequate cavalry picket to warn the camp of impending danger; a fact which was criticised by the subsequent enquiry. The Victorians were in their bunks or preparing for a very early start next morning and their rifles and ammunition were with their saddlery a short distance away, when the attack began. They were mercilessly cut down by the enemy but many did manage to get their weapons and defend in the poor light. A "cease fire" order, later known to have originated from an English speaking Boer, brought the attack to an end.

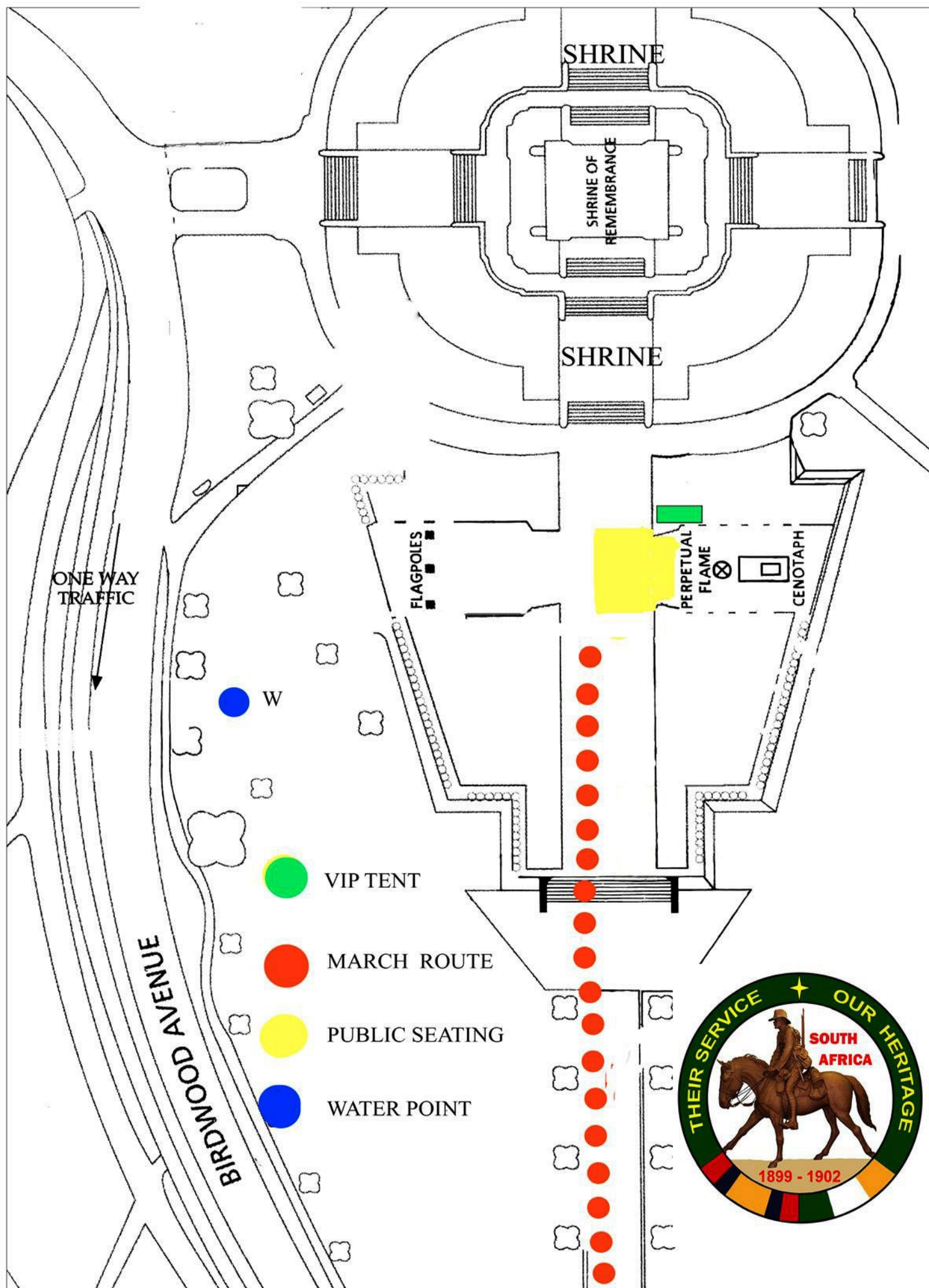
18 of the Victorians were killed in the action and 42 were wounded. The column commander, Colonel Beatson, doubtless in haste, was critical of the Victorians. He later recanted and apologised but it was too late. A mutinous situation developed for which three Victorians were court-martialled and sentenced to death for "inciting mutiny". Lord Kitchener commuted the sentences to terms of imprisonment but, following intervention by the Australian Government and our Governor General, the men were released and returned to Australia.

The 5th VMR went on to demonstrate their real worth and Beatson later wrote that his promotion to General was due in large part to the 5th VMR working under him.

One of the two Boer War Victoria Crosses to Victorians was to Lieutenant Maygar of the 5th VMR.

The Regiment lost 6 officers and 48 men killed in action or died on service in South Africa.





Boer War 1899 - 1902

MAFEKING

KIMBERLEY

LADYSMITH

ELANDS RIVER

CAPE COLONY

RHODESIA

RHENOSTER KOP



PINK HILL

TRANSVAAL

ONVERWACHT

KOSTER RIVER

WILMANSRUST

WITTEBERGEN

PIETERSBURG

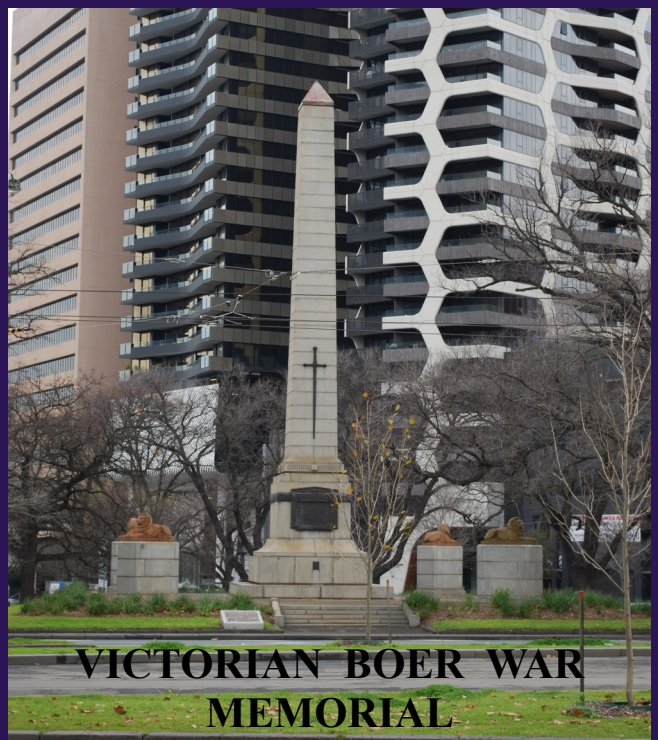
6 VICTORIA CROSSES TO AUSTRALIANS

These two banners are used in Victoria by Boer War interest groups and can be seen at various related functions including the ANZAC Day march. The banner below is a copy of the one used by veterans after the Boer War. The original is now held at the Australian War Memorial.





WILMANSRUST
The 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles
Memorial



**VICTORIAN BOER WAR
MEMORIAL**

The National Boer War Memorial Association is grateful to the Veteran's Council, Department of Premier and Cabinet for assisting with funding for this Service



We are grateful for the interest and support of:

SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE
CRESWICK LIGHT HORSE
RATS OF TOBRUK MEMORIAL
PIPES AND DRUMS
AUSTRALIAN GREAT WAR
ASSOCIATION
HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT
SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA
SCOUTS VICTORIA
GUIDES VICTORIA
SALVATION ARMY

