

National Boer War Memorial Association

**Patron-in-Chief : Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC
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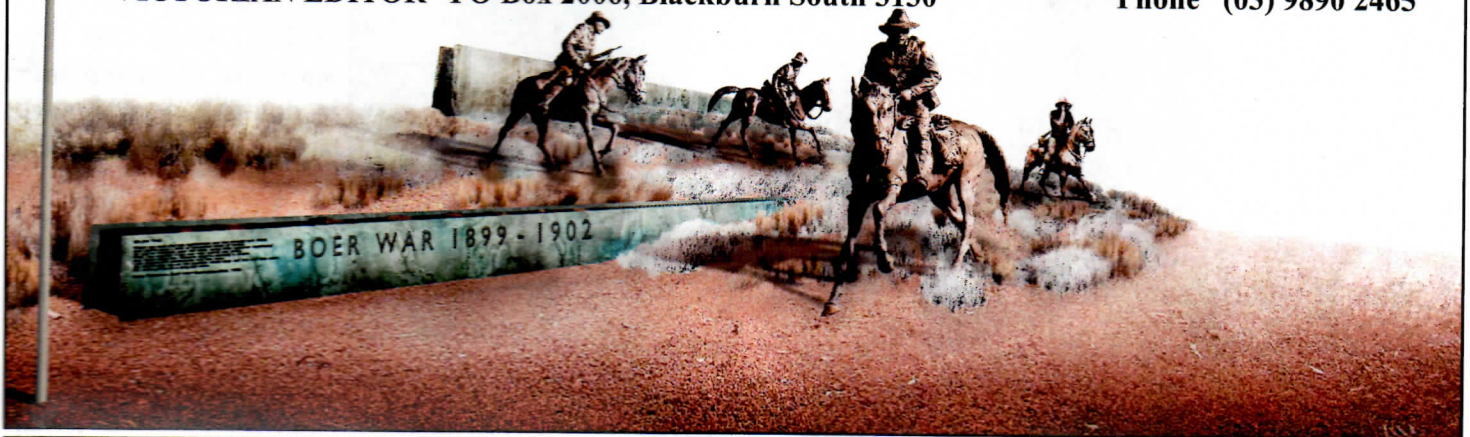
**National Patron : General David Hurley AC DSC
Chief of the Defence Force**

BOER WAR DESPATCHES

OCTOBER 2013 - VICTORIA & TASMANIA

VICTORIAN EDITOR PO Box 2006, Blackburn South 3130

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FIRST AUSTRALIAN KILLED IN THE BOER WAR

After our previous article on this matter we now believe we have identified beyond doubt that George Nethercott, serving with the Rhodesia Regiment, was the first Australian KIA in the Boer War. George Hodgskin Nethercott was born in Beechworth, Victoria, in 1866 and was educated at Melbourne Grammar School. He resided for a period in South Yarra, Victoria and later was Town Clerk in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

He enlisted as a Private in D Company of the Rhodesia Regiment on 12th August 1899. In July 1899 Colonel Baden-Powell had been sent out to Rhodesia to raise two regiments to protect the borders of that country and of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in the event of war. These regiments, the Rhodesian, commanded by Colonel Plumer, and the Protectorate, commanded by Colonel Hore, were raised, trained, and equipped before war broke out. Baden-Powell left Colonel Plumer with the Rhodesian Regiment, and some of the British South Africa Police, to watch the northern and north-western borders of the Transvaal, and if possible to keep the railway from Bulawayo to Mafeking open.

Colonel Plumer and his regiment went to Tuli. Between 11th October and 25th November the Tuli force had about 1,700 Boers opposing them and were frequently engaged. There was a lot of firing at watering parties and it was during one of these skirmishes that George Nethercott was killed in action at Rhodes Drift near Tuli on the 21st October 1899.

This was only about 9 days after the Boer declaration of war and their invasion of British territory. In 'The Australians at the Boer War. Wallace states that the very first fatal casualty on the British side occurred on 20th October so it is most unlikely that any Australian was killed before Nethercott.

THEME FOR BOER WAR DAY 2014

The Australian Bushmen and the Mafeking Defence and Relief will be the theme for next year. Australians served in both the defence and the relief of Mafeking and the immediate task of the various Australian Bushmen contingents, that entered South Africa via Beira in Portuguese East Africa and Rhodesia, was to assist in the relief of the besieged town.

While 110 of the 3rd Queenslanders actually received the bar "Relief of Mafeking" on their QSA, many other Bushmen, especially the NSW Citizens Bushmen were just outside the arbitrary line and had to return the bar. Most of the Australians serving in the Defence were in the Protectorate Regiment and the Town Guard. Australians were also well represented in Colonel Mahon's relief force coming up from the south.



THE HORSE MEMORIAL

This moving memorial in Port Elizabeth, South Africa was erected to the memory of some 350,000 horses that perished serving the British and allied cause during the Boer War. Australia sent 43,000 horses to South Africa and none were returned home.

The bronze and granite memorial depicts a British soldier giving his horse a well earned drink of water. The pigeon looking on is not bronze—its live.

The Memorial was designed by Joseph Whitehead and cast in bronze by Thomas Dillon Works in Surrey UK. It is life-sized (the horse is 16 hands 2 inches) on an inscribed granite rock base and was unveiled on 11 February 1905

PRESENTATIONS TO YOUR CLUB OR COMMUNITY GROUP

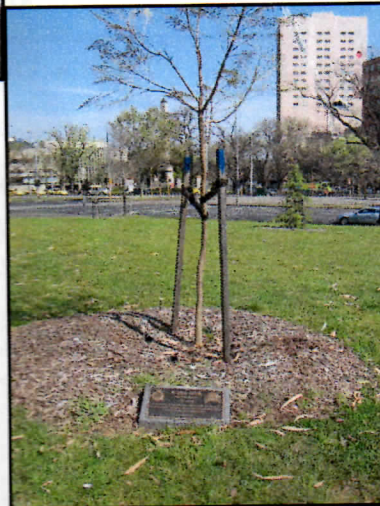
The Association can provide a most interesting presentation for your social group. This covers Boer War history, where to find information on family veterans who served, details of the new memorial etc.

If you belong to Rotary, Lions, RSL, sporting club etc. and would like to have a presentation (speaker, DVD etc) at one of your meetings please contact us at the address or phone number on the front of this newsletter or 9802 0926

BOER WAR MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION TIES

These quality ties in the colours of the Queens South Africa medal ribbon are available at \$25 each plus postage. Please contact Paul Lenehan 02 94273781 or by email

paul.lenehan@bwm.org.au



The memorial Jacaranda tree for the Boer War behind (south of) the Shrine of Remembrance is doing well and even had some flowers last season.

If you are visiting that area of the Shrine precinct the tree is just across the pathway from the Fromelles memorial and is on the St Kilda

Road side of the McRobertson Fountain near the corner of Commercial Road.

THE AUSTRALIANS AT THE BOER WAR by R. L. WALLACE

It has taken us a long time but at last we have been able to bring this excellent book to you. No family with Boer War veteran descendants should be without one. It is a most readable book for all ages. Page 8 of this newsletter has an order form for your use and if you had family members serving in the Boer War a FREE Certificate will accompany your copy.

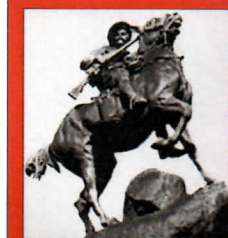
The first orders for the book have been despatched over the past weeks. If you have already received your book and certificate we suggest you affix the certificate to the front blank page facing the inside front cover using a line of 'gluestick' along the top back of the certificate. This tends to leave a cleaner and tidier job as liquid glue can leave paper a little uneven.

THIS BOOK WILL MAKE A GREAT PRESENT FOR BIRTHDAYS OR CHRISTMAS. ORDER TODAY AND BE CERTAIN OF YOUR COPY OUT OF THE FIRST PRINT RUN.

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Africa

1899
to
1902



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Rank:.....

Regimental number:

Unit:

Second tour if applicable

Rank:.....

Regimental number:

Unit:

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I would like to donate -

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Public Recognition of Donors

To recognise larger donations certificates will be awarded as follows -

Bronze	\$1,000 to \$9,999
Silver	\$10,000 to \$49,999
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Platinum	\$100,000 and above

Recipients will be permitted to use that level of donor logo on their stationery. Gold and Platinum donors will also have their logo placed on future BWM promotional materials and the National website.



TASMANIAN'S DANGEROUS FIGHT TO SAFETY

**Trooper V.S. Peers
1st Tasmanian
Mounted Infantry**

On the Colesburg front in the Cape Colony on 9 February 1900 a patrol comprising 30 Victorians, 18 Tasmanians, Hales—a Western Australian journalist and Lambie—correspondent for the Melbourne 'Age' set out to determine Boer strength to the south of Rensburg. They encountered more than they expected and Bill Lambie was an early casualty—shot through the temple. The patrol scattered and it became a case of 'every man for himself' The story of Tasmanian Trooper Peers is best told by the late Bob Wallace in 'The Australians at the Boer War'....

"Trooper V. S. Peers who had enlisted from the mining town of Zeehan in Tasmania, fought his way back to camp. When he was stopped by a wire fence his horse was shot from under him by Boers coming up not far behind. With the bullets flying around Peers made a dash for the rocky side of a kopje. He was soon followed up the kopje by two Boers. In a close fight amid the rocks Peers shot them both. He then went looking for the Boer horses. Suddenly he came face to face with a third Boer. Both men fired simultaneously. The Boer fell severely wounded and Peers received a grazing wound on the neck. Almost immediately he shot dead a fourth Boer near a low bush. Although forced to lie low for long intervals because of the enemy in the vicinity Peers trudged on slowly through the night, walking more than five miles. He finally reached camp at 3am in a weakened condition from the effects of his wound"

A SAGA OF THE BOER WAR

**Corporal Rowland Edward 'BEN' HARKUS
New South Wales Lancers**

Bloemfontein, South Africa, April 5th 1900 ... At sunset a solemn funeral procession makes its way to a newly dug graveside. There is no coffin; the body is on a stretcher and is wrapped in a blanket. The five pall bearers read like a 'Who's Who' of the



Australians in Bloemfontein at the time – Major Lee, commander of the NSW Lancers, Major Fiaschi of the NSW Army Medical Corps, Mr A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson, correspondent for the 'Sydney Morning Herald', the Melbourne 'Argus' and 'The

Bulletin', Lieutenants Allen and Osborne of the NSW Lancers completed the list.

The body in the blanket was the legendary horseman and military athlete, Corporal 'Ben' Harkus of the NSW Lancers who had succumbed to the dreaded enteric fever (typhoid) at 1.30 am on 4th April, ending one of the saddest personal sagas arising out of Australia's involvement in the Boer War.

After the body was laid to rest to the prayers led by the senior Church of England Chaplain, and the ceremony had concluded with the firing of a salute by the 12 man firing party under Sergeant Dooley of the Lancers, it was a much saddened group which left the cemetery in the failing light. They spoke in hushed tones of the great military horseman who had been hounded to his death by lesser people. Back home in Australia there would be heated words in the NSW parliament. Men would be moved to write poetry about him and a song 'The Return' was composed and the sheet music published in his honour....

*"I hear the drum but it beats for me,
Despair and grief's tattoo;
But I'd be so glad if our only lad,
Our Ben, poor Ben marched too.
They left him there where the weeping winds
Sing dirges faint and few, and they're home!
God's light how grand the sight!
If Ben, poor Ben marched too"*

'A Saga of the Boer War' The life and death of Ben Harkus, from which the above extract is taken will be available in booklet form soon

RELIEF OF MAFEKING

ADVANCE PATROL 16 May 1900

Major Walter Karri DAVIES was the most prominent Australian in South Africa before and during the Boer War. He was born in Adelaide, South Australia, on 14 June 1867, son of Maurice Coleman Davies (1835-1913) and his wife Sarah. Maurice Davies had migrated to Van Diemensland (Tasmania) with his parents when he was 5 years old. He moved to Melbourne and on to the early gold diggings when he was about 16 and later took himself to South Australia. He became a giant of the timber industry in the south western corner of Western Australia and specialised in milling jarrah and karri timbers as well as holding interests in shipping and pastoral enterprises. When he died in Perth on 10 May 1913 he was survived by six sons and two daughters. All except Walter worked in their fathers various companies. In 1893, at the age of 24, Walter went to South Africa where a timber starved country needed the timber of Western Australia for mine and railway development. His business activities tied in well with the family interests in Western Australia and at this time he adopted the name 'Karri'.

Walter Karri Davies became a wealthy man and an icon on the Witwatersrand goldfields. He inevitably became involved in the politics of the Transvaal and was a prominent member of the Uitlander Reform Committee. He also commanded the 'Australian Corps', an 800 strong revolutionary militia unit in Johannesburg prior to the Jameson Raid in 1896. Following the defeat of the 'Raid' the Boer government rounded up the members of the Reform Committee and imprisoned them along with the men who rode with Jameson's force and were taken prisoner at Doornkop. The following article appeared in the 'West Australian' newspaper on Friday 1st May 1896:

A WEST AUSTRALIAN AMONG THE SENTENCED.

Amongst the names of those upon whom sentence was passed, at Pretoria, for complicity in the recent attempt to overthrow the Transvaal Republic, appears that of a gentleman well-known in this colony, Mr. Walter Davies. Mr. Davies, who is a son of Mr. M. C. Davies, of Karridale, went to Johannesburg about three years ago, and has since been engaged in business, both on his own account, and as representative of the firm of M. C. Davies & Co. Mr. Davies is a young man of 27 years of age. During the recent crisis he commanded the Australian contingent of the "rebels," which did much to preserve order in the town before the restoration of Boer authority. The sentence imposed upon Mr. Davies, in common with most of his comrades, was two years' imprisonment, a fine of £1,000, and banishment for three years from the Transvaal. The fact of the sentence has been notified to Mr. Davies' relatives in Perth by cable. It is probable that the Government of this colony will take some action in respect of a gentleman who is looked upon as a Western Australian.

The prisoners were later offered their freedom on payment of a 2000 pound fine each and signing an undertaking not to engage in Transvaal politics. All were released except Wolls Sampson and Karri Davies who both refused to sign the undertaking. While the fine would have been of little consequence to a man like Karri Davies they were not prepared to sign the document. They were finally freed as a special gesture for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

As war began to look more and more likely in 1899 there was a mass exodus of 'Uitlanders' from the Rand. They crowded all the trains leaving for Cape Town or Durban and on arrival many joined one of the irregular units then recruiting. Karri Davies and Woolls-Sampson formed what was to become the most honoured regiment in South African military history, the Imperial Light Horse. All but one squadron (A SQN) of the ILH were trapped in Ladysmith during the long siege of the town and their gallant service gained the highest praise.



(2) Major Walter Karri Davies

A great story is told about the fight on top of Wagon Hill during the siege of Ladysmith. The British and Boer lines were only a few yards apart and locked in a bitter battle. Knowing the Boer hatred of the bayonet Karri Davies shouted to his men to "fix bayonets and charge the buggers"

knowing full well that the Imperial Light Horse were not equipped with bayonets. The Boers were not aware of this and melted away.

Following the relief of the Ladysmith siege the South African Commander in Chief, Lord Roberts, honoured the ILH by giving them the opportunity to relieve the siege of Mafeking. One hundred men from the Regiment were taken to Durban, shipped to Cape Town, then railed up to Kimberley where they joined the relief column assembling at Barclay West under Colonel Brian Mahon. Major Walter Karri Davies was one of the officers of the relief column.

As the column neared Mafeking Col Mahon sent out patrols to reconnoitre the way in to Mafeking and it was one of these, a nine man officers patrol commanded by Major Walter Karri Davies which actually entered the town and arrived at Colonel Baden-Powell's headquarters on the evening of 16 May 1900, a day ahead of the relief column.

Major Walter Karri Davies was 'Mentioned in Despatches' on a number of occasions - twice by General White in Ladysmith, in his despatches of 2 December 1899 and 23 March 1900, and again by Lord Roberts in his despatch of 2 April 1900, and by Lord Kitchener in his despatch of 23 June 1902. He earned the Queen's South Africa medal with clasps 'Relief of Mafeking, Elands-laagte, OFS, Defence of Ladysmith' and the King's South Africa medal with clasps 'South Africa 1901 and South Africa 1902'. He respectfully turned down any special honours or awards for his service during the war. The picture below is of a plaque organised by the other eight men of the patrol and presented to Major 'Karri' Davies.



**NOW
AVAILABLE**

National Boer War Memorial Edition of 'THE AUSTRALIANS AT THE BOER WAR'

In response to numerous requests for information about the Boer War and Australia's part in it, the National Boer War Memorial Association has secured permission to reprint this excellent and most readable book by the late Bob Wallace. First published by the Australian War Memorial in 1976, it has been out of print for many years and has become most difficult to acquire.

The Australians at the Boer War has long been a bible for Australian Boer War historians, militaria collectors and descendants of veterans and we are proud to be able to bring it back for our descendants and supporters.

The book covers the causes and background to the conflict and Australia's commitment to join with Britain and other parts of the Empire - Canada, New Zealand, Cape Colony, Natal, India and Ceylon, together with other smaller outposts.

It then follows the call to arms and the recruitment of the Australian contingents before following their distinguished service around the southern parts of the African continent from the Cape to the Zambesi River.

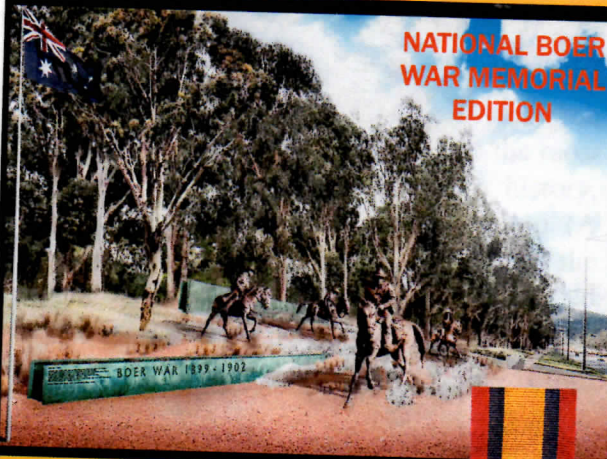
It should not be forgotten that about a third of the Australians who served in South Africa between 1899 and 1902 did not serve in Australian contingents. Many had been lured to the Rand goldfields during the tough financial times of the 1890s and, due to the oversupply of volunteers for the Australian contingents, large numbers were balloted out and then made their own way to South Africa and joined the various Colonial and Irregular Imperial units recruiting there.

465 pages crammed with absorbing history.

MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE for the inside cover of the book can be supplied free of charge to any of our Registered descendants of veterans. The Certificate is half A4 size (21cm X 15cm). Please advise ancestor's necessary details when ordering. Your copy of 'The Australians at the Boer War' will become a permanent tribute to your family's service in South Africa.

The Australians at the **BOER WAR**

R.L. WALLACE



*THE STORY OF THE
AUSTRALIANS WHO
SERVED IN THE
SOUTH AFRICAN WAR
1899 to 1902*



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Memory
of



207 Pte John Citizen

who served with

NSW Citizens Bushmen

during the

South African War
1899 — 1902



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