

# The Boer War



In the 1870s there had been a move by Europeans to claim land in Africa. This was known as the "Scramble For Africa".

Britain became involved in this and by the end of the 19th century had outstripped the other countries.

Britain wanted to have a line of unbroken territory that ran from the north to the south of Africa.

There were two small, independent countries that stopped Britain having an unbroken line



Orange Free State      Transvaal





# The Boer War



In the Boer War, the British and Boer forces fought for control of what is now South Africa.

There were two Boer wars, one ran from 16 December 1880 - 23 March 1881 and the second from 9 October 1899 - 31 May 1902.



## Background

In 1652 the Dutch East India Company founded a settlement near the Cape of Good Hope in Africa.

The company encouraged Dutch farmers, called Boers, to settle the area. The Dutch territory eventually covered a large area of southern Africa.

In the early 1800s Great Britain took over the Dutch land, known as the Cape Colony.

The Boers were unhappy with British rule.

In the 1830s many left the Cape Colony in the Great Trek. They formed two republics: the Orange Free State and the Transvaal (later the South African Republic [SAR]). The British accepted the Boer republics' independence in the 1850s.

Diamonds and gold were soon found in the Boer republics. British settlers and other outsiders moved in to seek their fortunes. Britain took over the SAR in 1877.

# The Boer War



## Boer Life

Life for the Boers on their farms on the veld was pretty hard. The nearest village or farms might be several days' journey away, so they had to be tough and self-reliant. The farms themselves varied from two-roomed cottages built of earth to bigger buildings of stone or wood. The floor might be of wood or simply beaten dung. The furniture would be plain and hard wearing as replacing things was difficult.

The Boer farmer had to be his own butcher, doctor, carpenter and decorator. Apart from looking after the children, doing the housework and cooking the meals, the Boer housewife had to bake her own bread, make the family clothes and tend the crops and animals while her husband was out hunting.



Families who lived near a village could make shopping trips fairly often, but people on the remoter farms had to make do with getting supplies two or three times a year.

Most families made their own music but singing was mostly hymns as Boers took their religion very seriously. Often the only book they owned was the Bible.

All in all it was a Spartan existence but the Boers liked that way of life. They were happy to live in isolation because nobody interfered with them and did not go against their way of life or their religion.

No wonder they were prepared to fight for their independence.



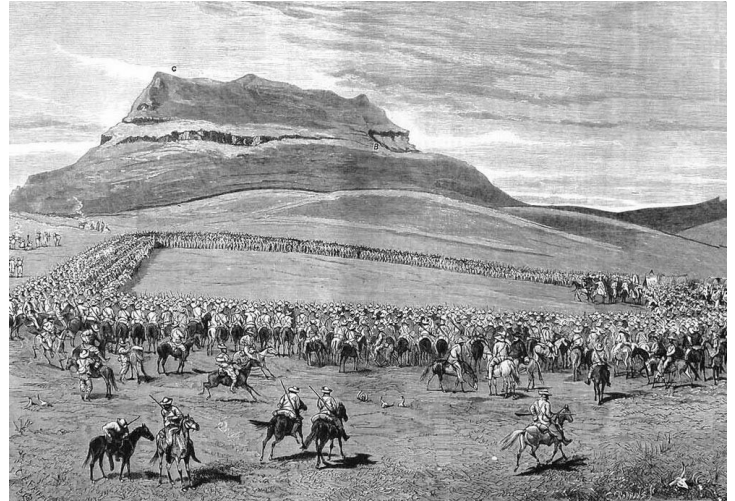


# The Boer War



In 1880 Boers in the SAR rebelled against the British government. The conflict became known as the First Boer War. The Boers defeated the British at the Battle of Majuba Hill in 1881. The SAR then regained its independence.

More gold was soon discovered in the SAR. A British force invaded in 1895. The raid failed, but Britain continued to send troops to the region. In response, Boers in the SAR and in the Orange Free State built up their armed forces. The Boer republics declared war on Britain in October 1899.



Boer forces quickly attacked the Cape Colony and the British colony of Natal. The Boers captured several British towns. But the British soon recovered. They won back the captured towns in early 1900. British troops then took over the Boer cities of Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, and Pretoria.

# The Boer War

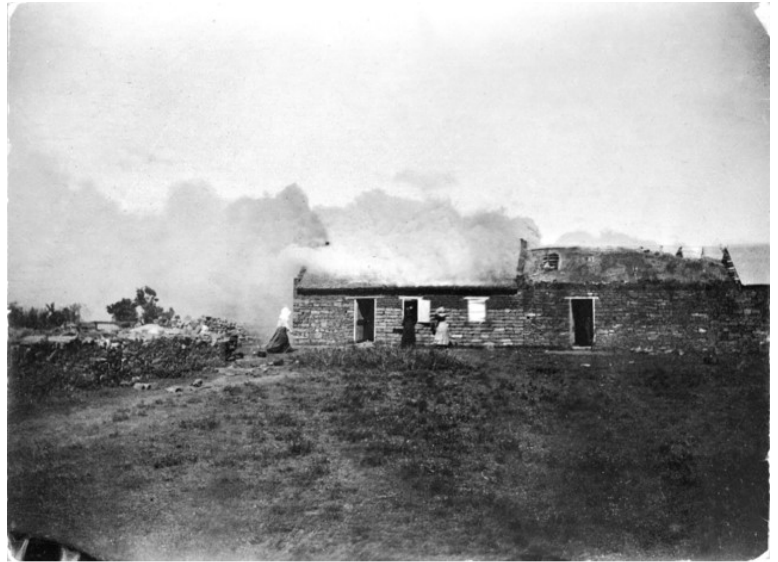


Near the end of the war the Boers practiced guerrilla warfare. Small groups in rural areas carried out sudden attacks on British bases.

The British struck back by burning Boer farms. They also put thousands of Boer women and children into concentration camps.

By 1902, Britain had destroyed the Boer forces.

The Peace of Vereeniging ended the South African War on May 31, 1902. The Boer republics became British colonies. In 1910 the colonies became provinces of the independent country of South Africa.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Nearly 100,000 people died in the war. More than 20,000 British and 14,000 Boer troops were killed. More than 26,000 Boer women and children died from starvation and disease. There is no record of how many black Africans died, but it is estimated that thousands lost their lives.

Tension between white English speakers (British descendants) and white Afrikaans speakers (Boer descendants) lasted for many years. Nevertheless, white politicians worked together to keep black South Africans out of the new country's government.

The white-run government lasted until the election of 1994.





# The Boer War



The British invented concentration camps in order to put civilians and to deprive the Boer guerrillas of bases from which to attack.

These camps were built by British soldiers amid the Boer War, during which the British rounded up Dutch Boers and native South Africans and locked them into cramped camps.

Conditions in the camps were terrible. They were poorly organised with a lack of food and medical supplies. Diseases spread and thousands died.

This is where the word "concentration camp" was first used - in British camps that imprisoned more than 115,000 people and saw at least 25,000 of them die.

They were started with good intentions. The camps were originally set up as refugee camps, meant to house the families that had been forced to abandon their homes to escape the ravages of war.



# The Boer War



The Boers quickly launched attacks on British territory and were successful. They surrounded places called Ladysmith and Mafeking.

They also inflicted costly defeats on the British such as at Spion Kop.

When war was declared the British confidently predicted that it would be over by Christmas, but in the first few months of the war Britain suffered great losses at the hands of the Boers.

After what became known as 'Blackweek', during December 1899, the Government called for volunteer soldiers to be enlisted to swell the ranks of the regular soldiers.

The heavy losses in South Africa seemed to ignite rather than diminish patriotic pride back at home and thousands of British men willingly volunteered to fight.

As with other regiments the Volunteer companies of the Royal Welch Fusiliers, answered the call for volunteers.





# The Boer War



This is the infantry uniform of the Boer War.

The famous British scarlet tunic had been finally abandoned for a new khaki uniform in 1897.

The khaki uniform had first been "invented" more than thirty years previously when white uniforms were dyed with river mud in India to give a sand coloured appearance by the Corps of Guides, a famous Indian Army regiment.

The adoption of the khaki uniform was a very important step forward and undoubtedly the precursor of modern camouflage. The white foreign service helmet was covered with a loose khaki

This type of helmet was introduced to give protection from the sun.

You can see this at the RWF Museum.





# The Boer War



The 1st Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, sailed on the "Oriental" on 22nd October 1899, and arrived at the Cape about 13th November. From there they were sent on to Durban.

On the 24th they came under very heavy shell-fire and rifle-fire.

In April 1900 they were brought round to Cape Colony and concentrated at Kimberley. For their work in the very arduous pursuit of De Wet, in August 1900, the Welsh Fusiliers as well as the Scots Fusiliers were highly praised by Lord Methuen.

During 1901 the battalion remained in the Western Transvaal and took part in the very successful operations of General Babington.



Boer water bottle with  
leather holder  
1899-1902

# The Boer War



The Royal Welsh Fusiliers in Africa.

This photo is of some of the First Battalion. You will notice many have a moustache. It was actually the law! From 1860 to 1916, the British Army imposed mandatory dress regulations on their soldiers, including the requirement to have a moustache (unless you could not grow one!).

The RWF were in action: Nov 1899 - May 1902

Around 680 RWFs were lost.

You can research them here:

<https://www.angloboerwar.com/unit-information/imperial-units/656-royal-welsh-fusiliers>



# The Boer War



This is an RWF observation post with a Maxim machine gun team in South Africa around 1900.

During the Boer Wars the 1st Battalion saw action in a series of battles, including Horse Shoe Hill and the Relief of Ladysmith.

After this, their main job was to protect the army supply lines from guerrilla attack.

# The Boer War



In 1899 Queen Victoria decided to send a gift of tin boxes of chocolate to her troops serving in South Africa. It was intended that every soldier and officer should receive a box with the inscription 'South Africa 1900' and in the Queen's handwriting 'I wish you a happy New Year'.

In order to carry out this project, the Queen commissioned the country's three principal chocolate manufacturers, J S Fry & Sons, Cadbury Brothers Limited and Rowntree and Company Limited, to undertake the order for what amounted, by the end of 1900, to 123,000 tins. As Quakers, all three manufacturers refused to accept payment for the order and, not wishing to profit from the War, they offered to donate the chocolate instead.

The manufacture of the tin boxes themselves was funded personally by the Queen. They were based on a design by Barclay and Fry Limited of Southwark, but since each of the chocolate manufacturers used different firms to supply the tins, there are variations in their dimensions, the shade of colouring and the printing of the portrait medallion of the Queen. The tins had rounded corners for ease of storage in a soldier's knapsack and each contained a half-pound of vanilla chocolate.



# The Boer War



The memorial was erected by Hugh Jones, mason, of Caernarfon, early in the twentieth century. It takes the form of a tall stone wheel-headed Celtic cross mounted on a stepped granite plinth, set on Twthill and overlooking the town of Caernarfon; on the south west facing side of the plinth is the following inscription:

THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION IN MEMORY OF THOSE FROM THIS COUNTY WHO DIED SERVING THEIR COUNTRY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR 1899-1902.



A brass memorial plaque commemorating, Denbigh Hussars Imperial Yeomanry and the Royal Welsh Fusiliers 3rd Volunteer Battalion, who fought, returned & died in the South African Boer War. Located within The town Hall foyer, Llandudno.

# The Boer War



Among the most modern weapons available to the Boer armed forces at the beginning of the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), were some 55,000 Mauser rifles. These had been purchased from the German company Deutsche Waffen-und Munitionsfabriken by the Governments of the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State.

This Mauser —————→ was captured by Lieutenant W. Hatherley Jones, 1st RWF on 25th October, 1900. He was one of the many who volunteered for service in South Africa.



Bandoliers were worn across the chest. Each pouch contained rifle ammunition.





# The Boer War



7083 Private William Fern from Caernarfon.  
1st Battalion

Survived Boer War but later killed in WW1.



Lieutenant Evan  
Pritchard, Royal Welch  
Fusiliers, at Natal,  
South Africa, 1899



Peter David Casey . Photo taken slightly  
before he went out to South Africa  
with the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

# The Boer War



The Royal Welch Fusiliers in Africa.





# The Boer War



*Soldiers returning from the Boer War.*



Soldiers of the Old Rhyl Volunteers, 1st RWF, returning from the Boer War, marching to Rhyl Town Hall, 11 May 1901