

# SECOND BOER WAR

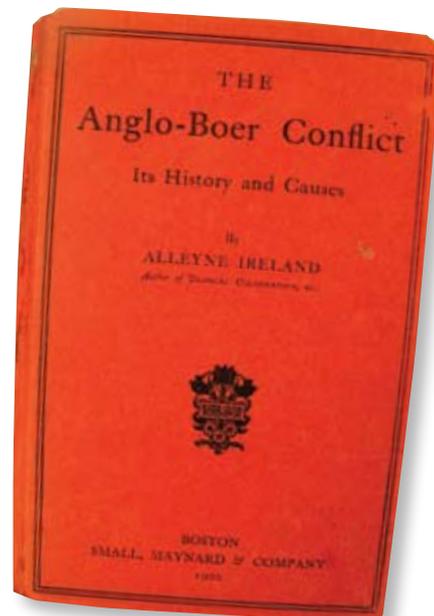
Text and Photos: James H. Hillestad

Collector extraordinaire James H. Hillestad kicks off this month's special section by outlining the history of the Second Anglo-Boer War, which pitted a mighty empire against a nation of farmers from 1899-1902

**B**oers came to South Africa's Cape of Good Hope, a Dutch colony, in the latter half of the 1600s as religious refugees from Holland. They established farms with slave labor and lived in what they considered a land of milk and honey.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain feared a disruption in its sea routes to India and Australia, so it annexed the Cape Colony and proceeded to outlaw slavery.

The Boers moved out and north, founding the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. Both actions were recognized and approved by the British government.



Book published in 1900 while the war was still in progress.

A British paperboy hawks newspapers reporting the outbreak of war in South Africa in 1899. Figure by Trophy.



## GOLD & DIAMONDS

In 1854, gold and diamonds were discovered in the Boer region, and Britain sought to gain control. This resulted in the First Anglo-Boer War, which Britain lost. Despite the 1881 Treaty of Pretoria, tensions remained.

Britain's Queen Victoria expressed the view, "There would be disastrous results from such a humiliating peace made on the heels of a military defeat."

The riches of the area

attracted foreigners in increasing numbers. Spurred on by Cecil Rhodes, the imperialistic prime minister of Cape Colony, the "quiet" invasion imperiled a peaceful coexistence.

With the support of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and High Commissioner for South Africa Sir Alfred Milner, Britain pushed the envelope with unrealistic demands for a complete surrender of Boer independence. What would become known as the Second Anglo-Boer War was declared Oct. 11, 1899.

One week later, an unabashed Chamberlain told the House of Commons, "In the interests of the British Empire, Great Britain must remain the paramount power in South Africa."

## THREE PHASES OF WAR

What the British thought would be a short-lived, glorious conflict turned into a protracted war involving more than a half-million combatants.

The British were ill-prepared and ill-equipped. Moreover, their supply line stretched 6,000 miles from home.

The Boers made the strategic mistake of

British "Off to the Front" set by Potsdammer Tin Soldiers.



concentrating their attentions on the railroad towns of Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith, instead of seizing the port of Durban. The latter would have given them access to the sea and an avenue for receiving much-needed supplies and armaments. As it was, they were landlocked.

The Second Anglo-Boer War can be broken down into three phases:

1. October 1899 to February 1900: The Boer Republics launched offensives and began sieges of Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith. The Boers scored victories at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso Dec. 10-15, 1899, during what was termed Black Week by the humbled British.

2. February to July 1900: British forces raised the sieges of Kimberley and Ladysmith. The British captured Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria. Organized Boer resistance collapsed.

3. August 1900 to May 20, 1902: The Boers waged guerilla



Kingcast set depicting the "Wolf Gun," a 4.5-inch howitzer made from a drainpipe used by the British during the defense of Mafeking.

## BOER PRISONERS OF WAR

Inasmuch as the British were fighting in a hostile territory during the Second Anglo-Boer War, it was felt that security for prisoners would be better managed if they were transported to remote, escape-proof facilities.

As a result, 24,000 Boer men and children were interred on the islands of St. Helena, Bermuda and Ceylon, as well as in India. The youngest POW was 6 years old; the oldest 80.

To pass the time and to earn pocket money to supplement their diet or to buy tobacco, the POWs were allowed pocket knives with which to make curios and toys for sale in local shops to tourists. For materials, the Boers used bone, ivory and wood.

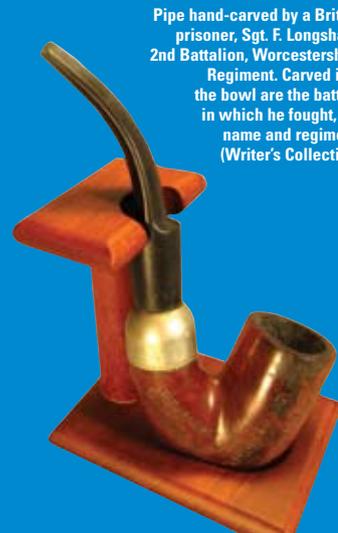
--James H. Hillestad



Hand-carved napkin rings made by Boer prisoners. The one in the middle from St. Helena is of cow bone. The two wooden ones are marked Bermuda (left) and Ceylon. (Writer's Collection)



British soldiers guard Boers of all ages at a POW camp in Bermuda. Figures by Trophy and OzMade.



Pipe hand-carved by a British prisoner, Sgt. F. Longshaw, 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. Carved into the bowl are the battles in which he fought, his name and regiment. (Writer's Collection)

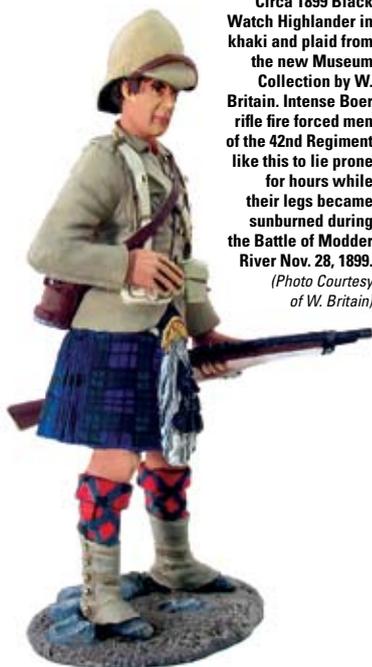
# SPECIAL SECTION: SECOND ANGLO-BOER WAR

warfare. The British responded with a scorched earth policy coupled with the establishment of concentration camps and the erection of a chain of blockhouses to contain the Boers.

The war lasted almost three years. It is symbolic in that it overlapped two centuries. The earlier part of the campaign was fought in traditional, static-style warfare. The latter part was a preview of mobile, 20th-century tactics, including guerrilla warfare.

Circa 1899 Black Watch Highlander in khaki and plaid from the new Museum Collection by W. Britain. Intense Boer rifle fire forced men of the 42nd Regiment like this to lie prone for hours while their legs became sunburned during the Battle of Modder River Nov. 28, 1899.

(Photo Courtesy of W. Britain)



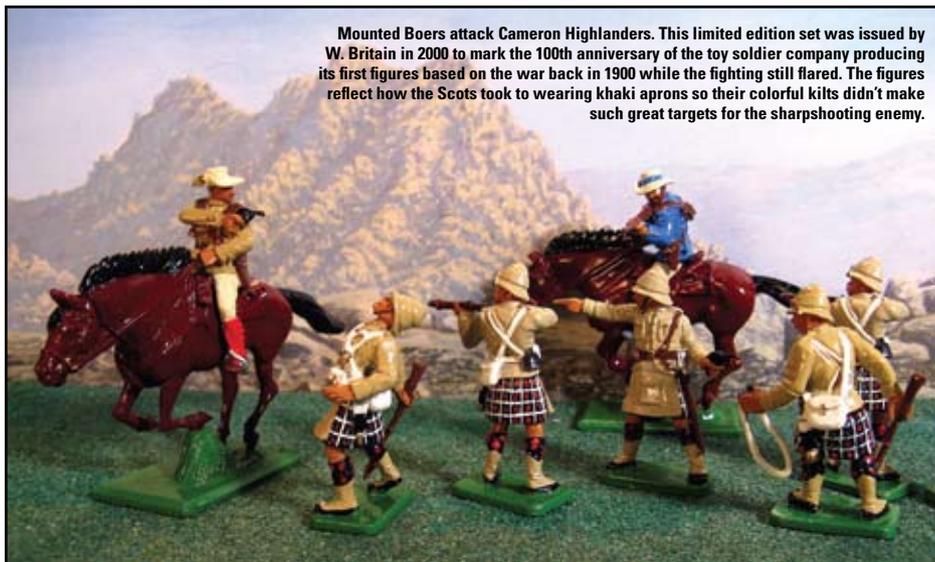
## HEAVY CASUALTIES & SUFFERING

More than 22,000 British troops, 25,000 Boers and 12,000 Africans lost their lives during the war. Wounds and disease accounted for an additional 100,000 casualties.

Some 20,000 more Boers died in the concentration camps -- mostly women and children.

The British employed 450,000 troops to subdue an army of farmers numbering at most 88,000.

Despite these horrific statistics, the Second Anglo-Boer War was called by military historian J.F.C. Fuller "The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars" because of the compassion and chivalrous conduct shown by leaders on both sides. The war witnessed Christmas truces, armistices to retrieve wounded and a complete confidence that the wounded would be well-



Mounted Boers attack Cameron Highlanders. This limited edition set was issued by W. Britain in 2000 to mark the 100th anniversary of the toy soldier company producing its first figures based on the war back in 1900 while the fighting still flared. The figures reflect how the Scots took to wearing khaki aprons so their colorful kilts didn't make such great targets for the sharpshooting enemy.

“The Anglo-Boer War was exactly like every other war in that it was unlike any other war.” --W.E. Davies, *British Rifle Brigade*



Boers in action by Quartermaster Corps.

cared for by the other side.

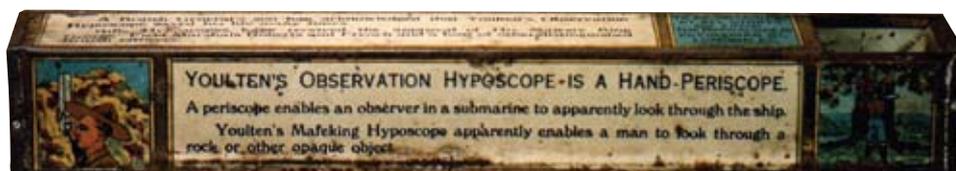
After one battle, British Gen. Horatio Herbert Kitchener courteously returned to Boer commander Louis Botha his Bible and hymn book.

## WARTIME INNOVATIONS

The Second Anglo-Boer War is considered to be the forerunner of modern warfare. Some of its historical "firsts" and groundbreaking techniques

included:

- Trench warfare was initiated.
- Armored trains were used.
- Guerilla warfare was waged.
- Observation balloons and carrier pigeons were used for communications.
- Wireless transmission of messages was introduced.



The Hyposcope was a forerunner of the World War I trench periscope. It afforded a measure of protection to the British soldier as he remained out of sight of the Boers. (Writer's Collection)

# THE MAFEKING MAIL

## Special Siege Slip.

ISSUED DAILY, SHELLS PERMITTING

TERMS: ONE SHILLING PER WEEK, PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.

No. 115

Wednesday, April 11th, 1900.

181st Day of Siege

THE Mafeking Mail.

WEDNESDAY, 11th APRIL, 1900.

### MEMOS.

According to the Cape Times 240 wagons and 2,400 mules are required to convey two days' supplies for a division.

The same article, Jan. 24, says: "How utterly unprepared we were is evident from an article in The Times upon the question of transport difficulties at the front. It is all very well to send out division after division, and to perform feats in mobilisation of Army Corps which are declared to be an object-lesson to the world; but unless the army on its arrival in South Africa is provided with the means of moving independently."

### MAFEKING GARRISON.

#### GENERAL ORDERS

By Colonel R. S. S. Baden-Powell, Commanding Premier Force.

MAFEKING, 11th April, 1900.

**Court of Summary Jurisdiction.**—The Court of Summary Jurisdiction will meet on Thursday, the 13th April, at the Court House, at 10-15 A.M., for the examination of such prisoners as may be brought before it.

**Appointments.**—Lieut. McKennis, B.T.D. to be extra A.D.C. to the Colonel Commanding.

J. H. Elmes, Esq., M.B.E.R. C.B. to be Assistant Surgeon, Victoria Hospital, with pay at the rate of 30s per diem from the 10th inst. inclusive.

Pay.—Increase of Sergeant F. Pitt, in charge of the Guard, 10s a

week, to receive increase of pay at the rate of 90s per diem, to date from the 15th February, inclusive.

**By order,**  
R. H. CECIL, Major,  
Chief Staff Officer.

### LIST OF WINNERS.

#### LAST SUNDAY'S SPORTS.

##### 1-100 YARDS FLAT RACE:

1st, McLaughlin

2nd, Carr

##### 2-500 YARDS FLAT RACE:

1st, Gower

2nd, Wolcher

3rd, Harry

##### 3-QUARTER MILE FLAT RACE:

1st, Low

2nd, Cronhill

##### 4-THREE LEAGUE RACE:

1st, Stewart

2nd, Newton

##### 5-HORSE AND MAN RACE:

1st, Cronhill

2nd, Kennedy

##### 6-BICYCLE TREAD THE NEEDLE RACE:

1st, Mitchell

2nd, Leish, McKennis

3rd, Moss

##### 7-LEGGED LADDER:

1st, Debonhant Rifles

2nd, Cape Police, D. 2

##### 8-WRESTLING ON HORSEBACK:

1st, Swann

2nd, Gower

3rd, Howles

##### 9-100 YARDS FLAT (CARRY COALS):

1st, Howles

2nd, Kennedy

##### 10-DOLATER SPORT ON PULS:

1st, Howles

2nd, Kennedy

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF Colonel R. S. S. Baden-Powell and Officers of the Garrison, A GYMKHANA MEETING Organized by Capt. E. W. Cowan and Officers of the Independent Coy. WILL BE HELD ON Sunday, April 15, 1900, ON THE RECREATION GROUND, AT 2-30 P.M.

JUDGES:—Col. Horn, Major Godley, Col. Wallard, Lieut. Brown. REFEREE:—C. G. H. Bell, Esq., C.G. and R.M. STARTER:—Capt. E. W. Cowan. HANDICAPPER:—Capt. Schofield.

### PROGRAMME:

1-BICYCLE RACE: 1 Mile Handicap (Open). 1st prize; 2nd prize (Sports Fund).

2-400 YARDS FLAT RACE: Open Handicap. 1st prize; 2nd prize (Sports Fund).

3-MOTORCYCLE RACE: 1st prize; 2nd prize (Sports Fund).

4-WATER DOCKERY RACE (Sports Fund).

5-MOUNTED FANCY DRESS RACE: Open to Priv. Regt. B.A.P. 1st prize given to lady who dresses prettiest in most unique costume. (Presented by Officers Buchanan & Bell).

6-COCK FIGHTING: in sections.

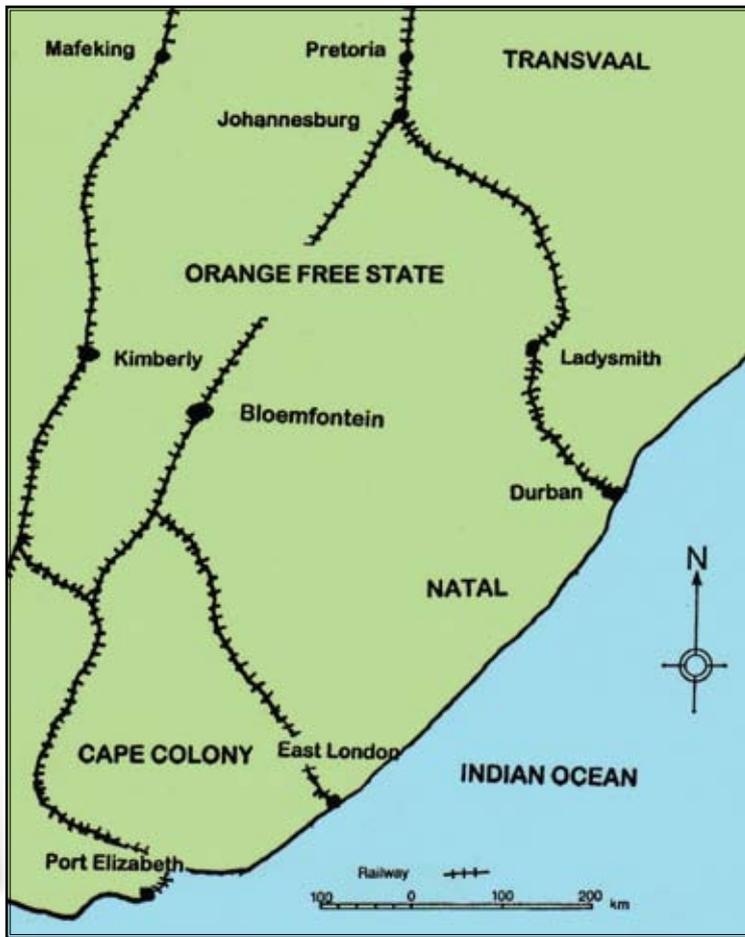
7-As a Test. 1st prize (Sports Fund).

8-DOLATER SPORT. Open to Colonel Commanding, Capt. Watch, Abram's Scouts, Walker's Fusiliers, Howland's Lighter Bnys.

1st prize; 2nd prize (Sports Fund).

9-DOLATER RACE. Open to members of Cavalry Corps. Riders to be in full uniform. (Presented by Officers Bell & Bell).

Miss Hill has kindly consented to give money the Prize.



Map of the area of conflict.

Reproduction of The Mafeking Mail issue No. 115 from April 11, 1900, the 181st day of the siege. It was "issued daily, shells permitting."

## A PRESENT FROM QUEEN VICTORIA

When soldiers went off to war, it was common for friends and relatives to send them gifts to supplement their meager rations. Most notably Queen Victoria sent tins of chocolates to all the British troops fighting in the Second Anglo-Boer War as a New Year's gift in 1900.

It was a prodigious undertaking. There were 120,000 soldiers in South Africa in 1899, which called for 20 tons of the best vanilla chocolate.

To fulfill the order, three chocolate manufacturers were enlisted: Fry, Cadbury and Rowntree.

The three firms had a problem, however, because they were all owned by Quakers. The creed of the Society of Friends abhors war, so to participate in this effort would put them at odds with their beliefs. Nevertheless, they felt an obligation to the Queen.

Thus the candy makers declared that they would oblige the Crown, but would take no profit from their efforts. Also their company names would not appear on the tins, though their names were embossed on the chocolate bars -- a subtle marketing touch!

The tin was to be of a size and shape, with rounded edges, such that it would easily fit into a soldier's knapsack.

The tins containing the chocolates were shipped in December 1899 and were

enthusiastically received by the troops. The tins combined "trophy value" with an act of sentiment from a solicitous woman, their Queen.

At the sight of the tins, all the men who could do so stood at attention!

--James H. Hillestad



Queen Victoria chocolate tin with the original chocolates. (Writer's Collection)

# SPECIAL SECTION: SECOND ANGLO-BOER WAR

British Infantry Firing 1890s  
by Wm. Hocker Toy Soldiers.  
(Photo Courtesy of Bill Hocker)



- Blockhouses, barbed wire and concentration camps were added to the inventory of "defensive measures."
- The new illustrated press and cinematograph films brought the war home to the man on the street.

Quartermaster Corps, William Driscoll, Trophy Miniatures of Wales Ltd., John Eden Studios, OzMade, Walter Dineen,

Marlborough Military Models, and The Toy Soldiers of Wm. Hocker, Proprietor.  
For the collector, the subject

## TOY SOLDIERS

The Second Anglo-Boer War was not a colorful conflict. The uniforms on both sides were drab and the landscape was relatively featureless.

Nevertheless, it was a monumental war that has attracted the attention of a large number of modern era makers of painted metal toy soldiers. Among them have been W. Britain, All the Queen's Men, Potsdammer Tin Soldiers, Drill Square, British Bulldog, W.C. Stanton, Sarum Soldiers, Military Pageant and Kingcast.

Some of the other makers of Boer War items through the years have included HM of Great Britain, Imperial Productions, Les Miniatures,

## GOODBYE, DOLLY GRAY



British infantry march off to war to the popular music hall song "Goodbye, Dolly Gray." Figures by Trophy.



The Queen's and King's South African medals with campaign bars for service in the Boer War. (Writer's Collection)

*Good-bye Dolly I must leave you,  
Though it breaks my heart to go,  
Something tells me I am needed,  
At the front to fight the foe.  
See the soldier boys are marching,  
And I can no longer stay.  
Hark! I hear the bugle calling,  
Good-bye Dolly Gray.*

--From "Good-Bye, Dolly Gray,"  
a popular tune during the Boer War.



British Royal Horse Artillery 1890s set from the Boer War series by Wm. Hocker Toy Soldiers. (Photo Courtesy of Bill Hocker)

opens a new door to displaying the transition from the 19th century to the 20th century in uniforms, tactics and weaponry. Many illustrious individuals who took part in the war have been modeled in miniature as well.

Collecting figures based on the Second Anglo-Boer War captures a uniquely exciting snapshot of history.

## EPILOGUE

The Peace Treaty at Vereeniging signed May 31, 1902, formally ended the war.

The British were magnanimous in the terms, which included more than £16 million for reconstruction and resettlement. With the peace came the Coronation of British King Edward VII Aug. 9, 1902.

Boers held in overseas prison camps were required to take an oath of allegiance to the

British Crown before they were allowed to return to South Africa. Of the 24,000 held captive, only 1,000 refused to take the oath and settled elsewhere after liberation.

At the conclusion of the war, it became clear to other European powers that it had taken the entire British regular army to deal with a comparatively small number of determined

and mobile Boer irregulars. Germany in particular took note of the crack in Britain's "invincibility," which gave encouragement to those in power in Germany in 1914, the year World War I erupted. ■



British Naval Brigade 4.7-Inch Gun and Team. This magnificent, 29-piece set is available from Wm. Hocker Toy Soldiers. (Photo Courtesy of Bill Hocker)

Ambushed British supply wagon by Quartermaster Corps.



## SUGGESTED READING

- Barthorp, Michael; "The Anglo-Boer Wars: The British and the Afrikaners 1815-1902."
- Belfield, Eversley; "The Boer War."
- Farwell, Byron; "The Great Boer War."
- Kandyba-Foxcroft, Elisaveta; "Russia and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902."
- Lee, Emanoel; "To the Bitter End."
- Pretorius, Fransjohan; "The Anglo Boer-War 1899-1902."

## ABOUT THE WRITER

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum and shop in Cresco, Pa., USA.