



# THE ANGLO-BOER WAR (1899-1902)



Uniforms & Equipment of the NSW Troops



## THE SIX COLONIES ANSWERED THE 'CALL TO WAR'



NSW...



South Australia...  
South Australia: Col. Maximo gun collection



.303 Maxim Machine Gun

Queensland...



Tasmanian John Bisdee VC's homecoming

Tasmania...



Victoria...



Western Australia...

*Souvenir of the National & NSW Launch of Reserve Forces Day 2012 at NSW Parliament House Sat 26th Nov 2011*

In 2012 the Reserve Forces Day Council will acknowledge the 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the Boer War and the "Reservists" who fought in the war, our current Reservists and all those serving overseas today.

**The Boer War remains the only major conflict not recognised by a National Memorial in Anzac Parade Canberra. The Reserve Forces Day Council will support The National Boer War Memorial Association Committees with their fund raising efforts for the planned National Memorial.**



# THE ANGLO - BOER WAR



## 1899 - 1902



The NSW Lancers...

Britain entered the twentieth century in the grip of war. Between 1899 and 1902, she placed nearly half a million men in the field, the biggest force ever sent overseas throughout her history.

The principal aim was to add South Africa and its immense riches to the Empire, which was then huge, together with a feeling amongst the people of staunch Imperialism.

### A Small 'Colonial Campaign'

The conflict in South Africa began as a small Colonial campaign, but soon accelerated into a large-scale National Effort involving Colonial forces, including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India and the South African Colonies.

For Australia, the Boer War was significant for many reasons, but mainly for the following:

- We had brave and resourceful soldiers who likewise, fought a brave and resourceful Foe in the Boer soldier.



- It is estimated that some 23,000 Australians (including 60 Army Nurses) served in the conflict. This total comprised approximately 16,600 who were recruited from Australia direct and some 6,400 who were either in South Africa at the time or travelled to South Africa to take part in the war. Over 6,000 New Zealanders also served.
- Of those approximately 1,000 Australians 232 New Zealanders, paid the 'Supreme Sacrifice'. Apart from WWI and WWII, as a Nation we lost more soldiers than in any other conflict including Vietnam. They were really the *first* ANZACS.

It was the first conflict in which Australian forces were engaged as a Nation, with the Federal Government after 1901, sending Commonwealth Contingents to the war.

### The 'NSW Lancers'

Prior to 1901, all States, as separate Colonies of the day, sent their own Contingents to the war.

They of course, all have their own separate stories, but we will focus on the New South Wales Lancers. They were significant as they were the first to be in the thick of the Boer War battles.

### Training in England in 1899

All were volunteers who paid their own way to the United Kingdom in 1899 to further their professional training at Aldershot. Whilst in England, war broke out and on the way home they were given approval by the NSW Colonial Government to disembark at Cape Town, South Africa on the 2nd November 1899 and commenced duties as our first fighting unit to go into combat on horses provided by the British. Their first Battle was at Belmont on the 23rd November 1899, just twenty-one days later.



## Trooper Frederick Avard

A typical example of a 'Soldier of the Line' was one of these young Lancers, Trooper Frederick Avard, from Maitland, NSW, who was one of the famous 'Fighting 29'. They were amongst the first into the fighting at the engagement at Belmont Station.

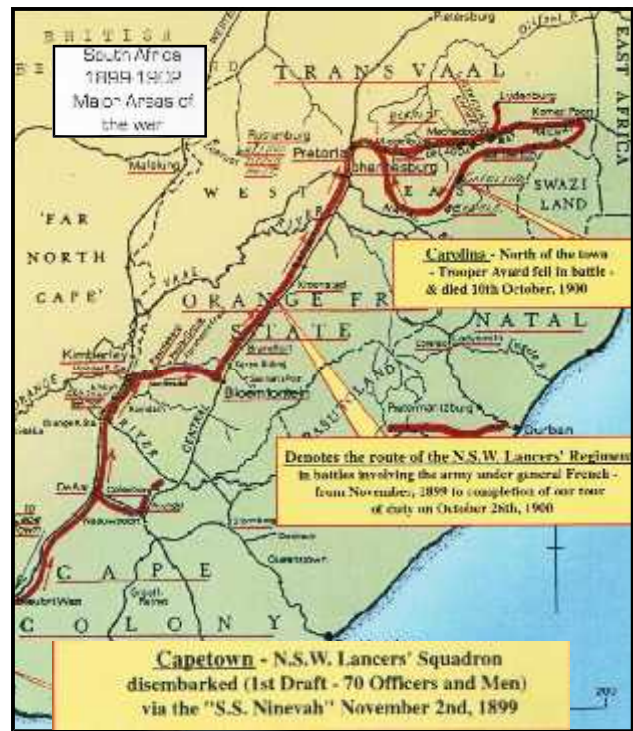
Trooper Avard was a skilled rider and good shot. In 1898 he was the Lancers "Best Shot" in a tournament.

In the fighting that ensued, Trooper Avard received his 'Queen's Medal' and eight Battle Clasps for continuous fighting with the Lancers up until his death, at an engagement at Carolina in the Transvaal on 10th October 1900 at just 21 years of age.



*The NSW Lancers 'Baptism of Fire' by J Finnemore*

The Lancers fought in 35 major engagements. These were fought over vast distances in terrain similar to areas of outback Australia. Most of the troops deployed were mounted. The weapons used on both sides were in most cases the latest weapons available with adequate ammunition. For example belt fed Maxim machine guns, rapid fire Pom Pom guns with exploding rounds, magazine fed rifles and breech loading artillery. The Boers made extensive use of telegraph and telephone communications and were experimenting with radio, while



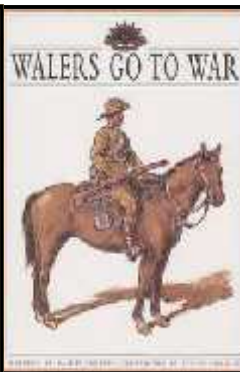
the British used tethered observation balloons with a communications line to the ground. Trains were used to move men and equipment.

The war progressed from 1899 with major battles being fought until the final year when it became more of a guerrilla war. On 31 May 1902 the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed in Melrose House Pretoria bringing about the end of hostilities.

After the war the troops returning were welcomed back to the towns and cities in fine style and it was the first time that monuments were built with public donations recording the names of members who did not return and those who served. A wonderful example can be seen in Gundagai NSW where the memorial was erected in front of the Court House.

For more details please visit the excellent 'Boer War Memorial Website' at [www.bwm.org.au](http://www.bwm.org.au) and 'The Anglo-Boer War' by LH Perrett, care of PO Box 119 Balgowlah, NSW, 2093.





Australian & New Zealand Troops charge the Boers at Klerksdorp 1901



**“The Boer War marked the birth of an Australian military reputation.”**

The British first saw the Colonial contributions as a token (in total 440,000 British troops served in the Boer War) of Empire support but soon came to value their presence. Lord Roberts, then commanding the British Force said *‘they were intelligent and they had what I want our men to have, more individuality.’*

Undoubtedly the experience gained in South Africa contributed materially to the success of Australian troops in World War I, for the majority of senior officers and instructors in the early stages of the AIF had seen their first action in South Africa. Names such as Cox, Howse, Elliot and Glasgow - all citizen soldiers - and Chauvel, who by now was a permanent officer, went onto serve with distinction and gained senior rank in WWI.

Reserve members of the Navy, Army and Air Force now carry on the proud traditions established by the Boer War Militia members. At the present moment they are serving alongside full time members overseas and in operations in Australia. They have recently finished assisting in security operations for the CHOGM conference held in Perth WA.

Battle honours were awarded to Australian Units throughout Australia. In NSW Units these honours are shown on the Guidons and Colours paraded on special occasions by these Reserve Units, 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers, 12th/16th Hunter River Lancers, and Battalions of the Royal New South Wales Regiment. In addition the Royal Australian Artillery NSW, Scottish Rifles and Royal Australian Army Medical Corps were presented Banners in 1904 by ‘His Most Gracious Majesty the King Emperor ... in recognition of services rendered to the Empire in South Africa’.

