

## Mid-Month Visit / Newsletter – April 2025

Another slant on a mid-month visit. On the tours that I run, one of my differentiators is to show a medal to my visitors, of a person who was at the battle. These medals could be a Queen's South Africa (QSA) and/or a King's South Africa (KSA) medal, issued to British/Colonial soldiers who fought in the Boer War against the Boers, or an Anglo Boere Oorlog Medalje (ABO) medal which the Boers who fought in the war, could apply for. These medals are passed around, after I have given a brief description of the medal and how it was 'awarded', and how the 'personalisation' of the medal and its recipient can be identified. A lot of interest is shown in the ABO medal and its history, so I have decided to explain its history in writing.



Picture: An example of a QSA & a KSA

I am very fortunate to have met with Henk Loots, the absolute 'guru' on Boer War medals (from both sides) and battles fought during the course of the war. Henk was one of my mentors when I started collecting medals. He has written many articles, and I am going to quote from one these articles, the history of the medals awarded to the Boers.

Henk records – *"The two Boer Republics never had any official awards for gallantry or military service. Notices, however, did appear in the ZAR Government Gazette in May 1900 about an intended post-war bravery award for Boer soldiers: for obvious reasons the issue of this decoration, as well as that of an associated service medal, never materialised.*

*The first move to institute awards to Boer Officers and Burghers was made in 1913 by Colonel Skinner, the Commandant of the Military School at Bloemfontein. He noticed that ex-Republican Officers, who attended a course, were without medal ribbons, while their fellow officers who had served on the British side were well beribboned. He consequently suggested to Defence Head Quarters that this discrepancy should be addressed, but due to the outbreak of the First World War, nothing was done until 1920.*

*In the Government Gazette of 21 December 1920 (Notice 2307) regulations were published for the award of a Decoration for Devoted Service 1899-1902 (Dekorasie voor Trouwe Dienst or DTD), a Medal (Anglo Boere Oorlog Medalje or ABO) and a Wound Riband (Lint voor Wonden or LVW). The gazetted notice restricted the awards to South African citizens who were serving in the Union Defence Forces or were liable to serve if called up under the provisions of the S.A. Defence Act and who did true and faithful military service during the Anglo Boer War and actually served with the Republican forces in the field between 11 October 1899 and 31 May 1902. The published regulations per sé excluded many men who had fought on Boer side, e.g. the members of the*



various foreign units like the Irish Brigade, Hollander Corps, etc. and potentially also the Natal and Cape rebels.

*In later years the regulations were less stringently enforced and the eventual qualification action for the award of the medal was proof that the applicant had fought against the British without surrendering or taking either parole or the oath of allegiance prior to 31 May 1902. The original closing date for applications (30 June 1921) was also not adhered to."*

This meant that nearly 20 years after the war had ended those Boers who had fought against the British and their allies, now had to apply for their medals, by way of completing an application form. Information required, apart from personal details, included the Commando for which they fought; their dates of service; name of Officer under whom they had served; names of battles in which they fought; and three witnesses which included two being Officers. After 20 years, life had changed for many – they had moved to another part of the country, possible witnesses had died, etc., etc. Also, many Boers saw this award as 'an English inspired initiative' so didn't want anything to do with it. Whatever the reason, of the ± 65 000 Boers, and their 'allies', who took up arms, a mere 13 764 applied for their medals. During COVID I went through the Medal Roll, compiled by D.R. Forsyth, line by line, and that is where I calculated the total number issued.

The most 'popular' ABO issues, by medals issued are (top five in the three categories):

Transvaal		Orange Free State		Officers	
Commando	No.	Commando	No.	Officer	No.
Potchefstroom	804	Heilbron	345	Cronje	295
Pretoria	596	Kroonstad	243	de la Rey	239
Rustenburg	559	Bethlehem	195	de Wet	199
Heidelberg	474	Boshoff	169	Smuts	108
Middelburg	465	Vrede	167	Beyers	91



Picture: An example of an ABO

Medal collectors, mainly in the U.K., who collect QSA medals, are often aware in which battles their men fought. However, they are probably unaware of the significance of the ABO, as they could match up a Boer who was at the same battle as the recipient of the QSA they might have in their collection – the ABO Application Form might very well have an indication that the recipient fought in the same battle. And I hope that Henk doesn't take exception to the fact that the magnificent auction of most of his Boer War collection, in December 2023, chased the price of an 'ordinary' ABO medal from ± R1 800 to ± R4 500.

The ABO medal deserves a special place in any serious medal collector's collection.

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**Allan Gordon**