

## Mid-Month Visit – October 2024

After many months of no interest in the 'Magaliesberg Introductory Tour', last weekend a couple of 'regulars' who hadn't done this tour requested a day in the Magaliesberg. The battlesites have obviously not changed, but the breakfast stop, which used to be a hidden gem, is now so busy, that one must queue. On the positive side, we have found a new stop for lunch where service certainly beats the old stop, and, at the final viewing, the Battle of Dwarsvlei, the Brauhaus has re-opened which enables the tour to round off with a well-earned beer.

On going through past newsletters, I see that I have not featured Sarel Oosthuizen, and he was the Boer Commandant who stopped the advance of Smith-Dorrien's force from reaching Rustenburg on 11 July 1900 – the Battle of Dwarsvlei. During the battle he was wounded, and although offered hospitalisation by the British, decided to stay with his people. He eventually died from the wounds he received in trying to capture the British guns. During the battle two Gordon Highlanders were awarded the Victoria Cross for actions of gallantry, with Lieutenant Younger losing his life in the act of bravery. Ironically Oosthuizen and Younger are buried just metres apart at the nearby Krugersdorp Cemetery.



*Picture: Veg Generaal  
Sarel Oosthuizen*

Sarel Oosthuizen was born on 22 March 1862 on the family farm at Sterkfontein, just miles from where he was eventually fatally wounded. After limited schooling he became a farmer. As a young man he fought in the 1<sup>st</sup> Boer war, and in 1896 was a member of the force that captured the Jameson Raiders. In 1899 he was elected Veld Kornet for Krugersdorp Commando and at the outbreak of the South African War in October of that year he left for Natal where he was slightly wounded at the Battle of Talana. He is credited with being at the Armoured Train incident in November when Winston Churchill was captured and of being involved in the capture of the guns at Colenso. He was certainly at the Battle of Spioenkop.

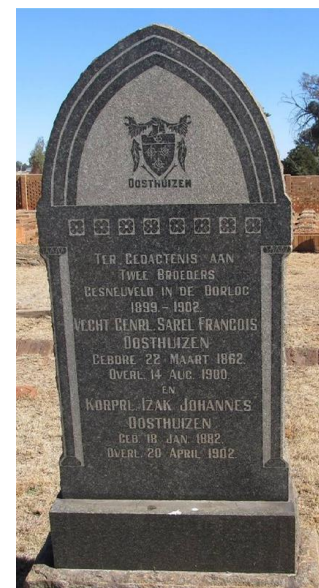
In February 1900 he was promoted to Veg Generaal (Combat General). After the Relief of Ladysmith, the British broke through the Biggersberg into the Transvaal and Oosthuizen and his men moved to the Southwest Transvaal. It was there that they became part of Boer General de la Rey's force and took part in the Battle of Doornkop on 29 May 1900. Oosthuizen and the Krugersdorp Commando were prominent at the Battle of Diamond Hill. After Diamond Hill he and his men moved to his hometown of Krugersdorp.

In the book 'Jan Smuts Memoirs of the Boer War', edited by SB Spies and Gail Nattrass, it is recorded (page 190) – *"He continued to fight bravely during the Boer retreat to Pretoria and was at the Battle of Donkerhoek (Diamond Hill) in June 1900. He proved to be a redoubtable opponent during the war of movement in the Western Transvaal thereafter."*



He and his men were involved in several skirmishes of varying sizes in the Krugersdorp District, with the Battle of Dwarsvlei being his last. Major-General Smith-Dorien was en route to Hekpoort with his army consisting of Gordon Highlanders, Shropshire Light Infantry, Imperial Yeoman, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Battery Royal Field Artillery when his advance was stopped on the farm Dwarsvlei by a contingent of Boers under the command of Oosthuizen. The battle lasted from mid-morning until sunset when Oosthuizen and his men decided to make a final attempt to capture the British guns, which were vulnerably placed in the open. During this attempt, Oosthuizen was injured, and with their leader being injured, the Boers retreated.

The British, on hearing of his serious injury, offered to send an ambulance for him, but he thought it would show weakness in front of his troops if he accepted. Oosthuizen died on 14 August 1900 from wounds received on 11 July. Oosthuizen's younger brother, Izak, is buried next to him. Izak was killed in action on 20 April 1902, just a few days before peace was declared.



*Picture: Headstone commemorating both Oosthuizen brothers in the Krugersdorp Cemetery*

SGIAN DUBH – THE BATTLE OF DWARSVLEI – 11 July 1900



In my July Mid Month Newsletter I wrote about a Sgian Dubh that I was having designed to commemorate the V.C.s of two Gordon Highlanders, Gordon and Younger, at the Battle of Dwarsvlei.

Well, it is now complete and is a collector's item – I have number 1. For those who are interested in finding out more about acquiring one of these collector's pieces, please be in touch with me.

Maybe, just maybe, Oosthuizen's name should have been added to this collector's piece.

*Picture: Sgian Dubh in commemoration of the Victoria Crosses awarded to two Gordon Highlanders at the Battle of Dwarsvlei*

**REMEMBER** to keep an eye on our website ([www.battletoursza.com](http://www.battletoursza.com)) for regular updates and news.

**Allan Gordon**