

Newsletter

March 2022

March 1900: Lord Roberts with over 30 000 Officers and men entered Bloemfontein on 13 March 1900 – the first capital of the two Boer Republics was now in the hands of the British. General de Wet sent the Free State Burghers home, with orders to report back, at positions to be communicated, on 25 March.

On 15 March Lord Roberts issued a proclamation where he offered all Burghers in the Free State, who had not played a significant role in the war, an opportunity to lay down their arms, and return to their farms, provided they took the Oath of Neutrality. With the arrival of so many men in Bloemfontein, together with limited infrastructure and unhygienic living conditions, the outbreak of enteric fever/typhoid saw nearly 400 soldiers being admitted to hospital on 17 March alone.

On 18 March a Boer force of over 6 500, under the command of Generals Lemmer, Grobler and Olivier arrived at Thaba’Nchu, and awaited orders from General de Wet. However, with the approach of Lieutenant-General French the Boers moved north and French occupied the town on 20 March.

March 1900 ended with the significant Battles of Karee Siding and Sanna’s Post – the former being a strategic railway supply station and the latter the water works that supplied water to Bloemfontein and surrounds.



Picture: Landscape in the vicinity of the Battle of Karee Siding

Other notable events during March 1900 were – Churchill’s escape from the Staats Model School in Pretoria on 16 March, the death of Lieutenant-General Woodgate on 23 March after being wounded at the Battle of Spioenkop, and the funeral of General Piet Joubert on 30 March.

March 1901 saw a number of guerrilla actions in the Western Transvaal. The attack on Lichtenburg on 3 March is best described by Johannes Meintjies in his book, ‘De la Rey – Lion of the West’ (page 211) – *“De la Rey stopped Smuts and du Toit’s men just outside Lichtenburg. As it was still dark he could not make out what had happened to Cilliers and told them to wait a while. When it was light enough, de la Rey established that Cilliers and Lemmer had been seriously wounded and that their men had withdrawn, leaving only Vermaas active in the middle of Lichtenburg and in danger of being cut off.”* That night the Boers retreated, having lost 14 killed

and 40 wounded. British losses were 14 killed and 20 wounded. Meintjies goes on – *"there were no major fights for some time, only attacks upon trains, ambushes and petty skirmishes."*

March 1901 ended with an action on the farm Wildfontein, 25 km east of the town Coligny, where de la Rey was forced to abandon stores, ammunition and two guns, having been surprised by Major-General Babbington. Over 100 prisoners were also taken.

March 1902 was nearing the end of the war and much of the action took place in the then Western Transvaal (now North West Province) in the area between Klerksdorp and Delareyville.



The Battle of Tweebosch (Battle of the Month – www.battletoursza.com) was fought on 7 March 1902, about 35 km north east of Delareyville, close to the Great Harts River.

General Methuen was injured in this battle, and thanks to de la Rey's compassion, was sent back to the British for medical treatment. It is recorded that de la Rey was court-martialled for freeing such a valuable prisoner, but after convincing the court that Methuen would withdraw from the war, he was let off. One has to ask the question – 'where would de la Rey have kept Methuen captive?' The Boers were leading a nomadic existence and having a wounded prisoner would certainly have been a restriction. After the Battle of Bergendal in August 1900, the Boers hardly ever took prisoners, but set those captured free, to find their own way 'home'.

March 1902 also saw the passing of Cecil John Rhodes – personality of the month in this Newsletter.

For those who might be interested, Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery died on 24 March 1976.

During two of the March months of the South African War (1900 & 1901), seven V.C.'s were awarded:

1900

Sgt. H.W. Engleheart	10 th Royal Hussars	Bloemfontein
Major E.J. Phipps-Hornby	Royal Horse Artillery	Koornspruit/Sannah's Post
Sgt. C.E.H. Parker	Royal Horse Artillery	Koornspruit/Sannah's Post
Gunner I. Lodge	Royal Horse Artillery	Koornspruit/Sannah's Post
Driver H.H. Glascock	Royal Horse Artillery	Koornspruit/Sannah's Post
Lieut. F.A. Maxwell	Indian Staff Corp	Koornspruit/Sannah's Post

1901

Lieut. F.B. Dugdale	5 th Lancers	Derby (Tvl)
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Victoria Cross of the Month

Sergeant H.W. Engleheart – 10th Royal Hussars (Prince of Wales Own)

Henry William Engleheart was born at Blackheath, Kent on 14 November 1863, and was the son of a stockbroker and grandson of the last of the Queen's Proctors.

Citation:

(on March 13, 1900) He was one of the party, under Brevet Major Aylmer Hunter Weston, that successfully destroyed the railway north of Bloemfontein. They had to charge through a Boer picquet, besides getting over four deep spruits, in order to creep back through the Boer lines. At the last of these spruits Sapper Webb's horse fell, and consequently he was left in a very dangerous position. Sergeant Engleheart went back to his assistance, through a deadly storm of shot and shell. He had to lose some time in getting Webb and his horse out of the spruit, and every moment the position became worse, owing to the rapid advance of Boers. At last he succeeded in getting Webb back to the party. Just before this Sergeant Engleheart had shown great gallantry in dashing into the first spruit, which could only be approached in single file, and was still held by a party of Boers.

(London Gazette – 5 October 1900)



The V.C. was presented to him on 15 December 1900, shortly before Queen Victoria died. Sergeant Engleheart was the centre man of the last five to receive his award from the hands of the Queen.

He retired in 1908 while serving with his regiment in Rawalpindi, India. From then until 1936 he was a lodge keeper at Windsor Castle.

Engleheart died at Datchet, Berkshire on 9 August 1939 and was cremated at Woking, Surrey.

In 1978 his twin sons, Geoffrey and Hugh, presented his medals to the Royal Hussars at Winchester.

Picture: Sergeant H.W. Engleheart V.C.

Acknowledgement – Ian Uys

Anniversary of the death of Cecil John Rhodes – 26 March 1902

Love or hate him, the name of Cecil John Rhodes recently came to the fore with the 'Rhodes must Fall' campaign in Cape Town in 2015, which spilt over to the removal of a statue of Rhodes from Oriel College, Oxford, in the U.K.

He was certainly a man with vision, a drive, and above all a dream. His dream of creating a 'British Empire' in Africa, linked by a 'Cape to Cairo' railway line was certainly foremost in all of his activities and agendas. After his death, in accordance with his will, the Rhodes Scholarship was established in 1903. It is the oldest graduate scholarship in the world, and is considered among the most prestigious international scholarship programmes in the world. Rhodes wanted to promote unity between English-speaking nations and instil a sense of civic-minded leadership and moral fortitude in future leaders, irrespective of their chosen career paths. Initially restricted to male applicants from countries within the Commonwealth, Germany and the United States, the scholarship is now open to applicants from all backgrounds and genders around the world. Since its creation, controversy has surrounded its initial exclusion of women, historical failure to select black Africans, and Cecil Rhodes' own standing as a British imperialist – Wikipedia.



Cecil John Rhodes was born on 5 July 1853 in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England and attended the local grammar school for five years before ill-health forced him into home schooling.

Rhodes was diagnosed with asthma from an early age. His father decided to send him to South Africa to a better climate for his condition.

After a brief period in Natal working on farms he travelled to Kimberley to work on the recently established diamond diggings in 1871.

Picture: Cecil John Rhodes

Over the next 15 years, with the help of locally obtained finance, he bought up a number of smaller claims, and in 1890, through a strategic partnership with the London-based Diamond Syndicate, created a monopoly which controlled the supply and price of diamonds to the world markets.

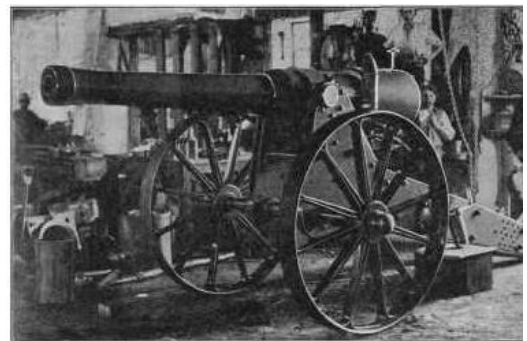
During these years, Rhodes formed a close association with John X. Merriman who was the last Prime Minister of the Cape Colony before the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. On 13 March 1888, Rhodes established De Beers Consolidated Mines after the amalgamation of a number of individual claims, acquired from the de Beers brothers, who owned the farm on which these more costly claims were developed.

Rhodes entered politics in 1880 and in 1890 he became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony. Many of his policies were instrumental in the development of British imperial policies in Southern Africa, however Rhodes had no influence on the direct political power in the independent Boer Republics to the north of the Cape.

In 1887, together with his friend, Charles Rudd, with his interests now expanded to the Witwatersrand after the discovery of gold, they registered the mining company, Gold Fields of South Africa Ltd in early 1887. There is no time to go into the politics of 'franchise' for foreigners, but it is safe to say that the formation of Gold Fields, with its London board unaware of most of the activities of Rhodes and Rudd, in conflict with the policies of President Kruger and the Boers, the seeds of the Jameson Raid were sewn. Rhodes supported the Jameson Raid which was an unsuccessful attempt to create an uprising in the Transvaal. The raid was a catastrophic failure and resulted in the forced resignation of Rhodes as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony.

The establishment of the old Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe and Zambia) is a subject on its own, and the creation of the British South African Company, and the British South African Police, partly to keep such institutions 'under his control' fits into this category as well. The 'Cape to Cairo' railway line dream also had its challenges with France, Portugal, Belgium and Germany also having interests in Africa.

At the outbreak of the South African War (1899-1902) Rhodes went to Kimberley and took up residence in the town. He was often in conflict with the commander of the garrison, Lieutenant Colonel Kekewich regarding matters relating to the defence of the town. However it was his company, de Beers, which manufactured the gun, the Long Cecil, which competed with the Boers Long Tom gun, provided water and refrigeration facilities, constructed fortifications and bunker facilities, and produced protective plates for the armoured train.



Picture: The Long Cecil

Rhodes was never a well man and from age 40 his heart condition returned with increasing severity until his death from heart failure in 1902 at the age of 48. He died at his Cape seaside cottage in Muizenberg. At the funeral procession in Cape Town, Rhodes' coffin was carried on top of the Long Cecil carriage. The Cape Government of the time arranged a journey by train for his body from the Cape to Rhodesia, with the funeral train stopping at every station to allow mourners to pay their respects. He was finally laid to rest at World's View, a hilltop near the town of Bulawayo, in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe.

REMEMBER to keep an eye on our website (www.battletoursza.com) - for regular articles, updates, etc.

Allan Gordon