

Newsletter

March 2023

As I have done for the past few months, I am going to quote selected headlines from the book 'The War Reporter – The Anglo-Boer War through the Eyes of the Burghers', by J.E.H. Grobler. Again, this is a book that anyone who has an interest in the South African War (1899-1902) needs to have in their Library.

March 1900 – from the Editor's Comments (page 48) – *"It is not for us to criticise the tactics of the Republican forces. We do wonder however, if there is any sense in continuing with our relatively limited and extremely demoralised and war-weary force of burghers to confront the overwhelming might of the enemy force. Their morale is high after their successive victories of the last weeks, and to halt them would be extremely difficult. Perhaps we should target their major weakness, namely their dependence on supply trains for food and fodder, without which their tens of thousands of soldiers and horses cannot survive."*

After the Relief of Kimberley, and the fall of Bloemfontein, where the British force had little chance to rest and/or re-group, the Editor's Comments recorded (page 50) – *"The best news of the past week is that the British are exhausted after the campaign of the last month, and will be unable to resume the offensive soon."*

On 2 March 1900 a Council of War at Poplar Grove gave Danie Theron, one of the more famous Boer scouts, permission to form a Scout Corps, consisting of about 100 men, to be called the 'Theron se Verkenningskorps' better known by the initials TVK. I am not sure why I haven't featured him as my 'Personality of the Month', as he was one of the Boer heroes – but it will happen.

'The War Reporter' recorded (page 53) – *"In the meantime the burghers of Captain Danie Theron's Scout Corp are making life all but easy for adventurous British soldiers. It is good that the Khakis are left in no doubt that the burghers are far from surrendering in the war."*

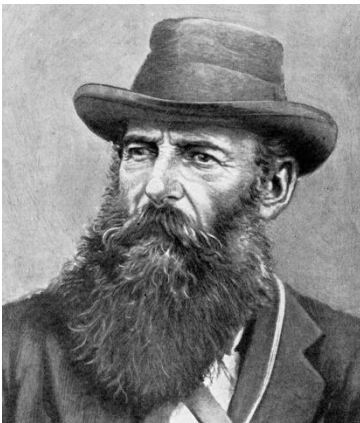
Picture: Danie Theron



March 1901: As was reported in last year's Newsletter, nothing much happened during this month, other than General de la Rey's biggest defeat in the war. I have travelled that part of the world often, and unfortunately cannot find any trace of where the Battle of Wildfontein (or as the Afrikaners call it – Stompies) took place. According to my information, it happened south of the road from Ventersdorp to Coligny, almost in the middle of the 60 km which separates the towns. The result of the exciting British chase on de la Rey's Boers, was the capture of 140 burghers, two

15-pounder guns, one pom-pom, six maxims, 160 rifles, 53 wagons, and plenty of ammunition. The Boers suffered about 50 casualties, whilst the British had two killed and seven wounded.

The Editor's Comments (page 111) records – *"Another month has gone, and it seems as if the British government is even less prepared than Lord Kitchener is to end the war. Commandant-General Louis Botha's opinion that the British government will not be satisfied with anything less than the complete eradication of the Afrikaner people seems entirely justified. In the meantime, they are destroying their own national pride and honour by waging war on women and children. From reports in this issue, however, our readers will take note that neither the burghers in the veld, nor the prisoners of war, nor the women in the concentration camps are prepared to submit to that easily. The pride of the Afrikaner people is much tougher than the Khakis had ever dreamed to find it."*



Picture: Koos de la Rey

March 1902: The Editor's Comments has a great summary of events in South Africa in March 1902, bearing in mind that the war only had two months to go (page 139) – *"General Koos de la Rey exalted the name of the Republican forces by inflicting a defeat on Lord Methuen's Khakis at Tweebosch. With that victory he not only showed that the Republican commandos are far from a spent force, but through the magnanimous way in which he treated the wounded Methuen after the battle, he gave the Khakis a lesson in humanity and manliness that should force them to bow their heads in shame about the brutal mentality that they usually reveal towards the Boers."*

The news that serious negotiations to bring an end to the war might take place was greeted with scepticism by many Boers, but at the same time it fills them with hope. Unfortunately, there is no indication that the British have abandoned their overriding demand that the war can only end if the Republics cease to exist. The Boers are not prepared to bow to that demand: burghers have specifically sacrificed their lives and their property for freedom, and under the British yoke there cannot be any freedom. On the other hand, the fact that the British government has dispatched copies of the correspondence between it and the Dutch government on the possible termination of the war and requested the Republics to state proposals on the possible conclusion of peace, is very encouraging. This means two things:

In the first place, as President Steyn points out, the British army and the British people are tired of this war. The troops no longer have the heart to go on fighting and Kitchener has had enough. The cost of the war is rising every day and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find recruits. Secondly, the requests to the Republican governments indicate that the British authorities are not demanding an unconditional surrender. The opportunity is there now to gain numerous concessions from the British by wise negotiations. Even though the chances seem minimal, there is a much better opportunity now than at any other time during the past year or two to negotiate from a position of strength, since even though they would want to control it, the fact that the

British leaders have initiated these negotiations, means that they are suddenly the embarrassed party. All is not lost."

The story of Methuen being wounded after the Battle of Tweebosch is a fascinating story. In the book 'De la Rey, Lion of the West' by Johannes Meintjies, the meeting between the two men is recorded (page 236) – *"Good day, Lord Methuen' he greeted his enemy and scrutinised the wound. 'I'm sorry to make your acquaintance in such a condition!' Methuen sighed. 'This is the fortune of war.' His gaze swept over the famous sunburned face, the nose, the eyes, the beard. 'But, de la Rey, you are a better man. We've been fighting for nearly 3 years and now you have got me down. Incidentally, that was a magnificent charge. If those are going to be your tactics in future, you still have a chance to win the war.'"*



Picture: Lord Methuen

De la Rey's men certainly didn't want to release him. At one point, de la Rey is reported to have said to his men, *"If you want to kill a wounded man and act like barbarians, there he is, shoot and kill him."* And when Methuen left the battlefield for medical treatment at Klerksdorp, de la Rey's wife prepared a plump chicken for him to take on his journey saying, 'that she wanted to show Methuen that, notwithstanding the devastation and destruction caused by the British, she still had a plump chicken to slaughter and prepare.'

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

Lieutenant F.B. Dugdale – 5th Lancers (Royal Irish)



Picture: Lieutenant Dugdale V.C.

Frederick Brooks Dugdale, the son of Colonel James Dugdale VD, was born at Burnley, Lancashire, on 21 October 1877. After an education at Marlborough and Oxford he was commissioned in the 5th Lancers. On arrival in South Africa his regiment took part in the Relief of Ladysmith.

Dugdale continued serving with the relieving force under General Buller and was promoted to Lieutenant in May 1900. He then served under General French in the Cape.

His V.C. engagement took place at Derby, east of Krugersdorp, Transvaal.

Citation:

On 3 March 1901, Lieutenant Dugdale who was in command of a small outpost near Derby, having been ordered to retire, his patrol came under a heavy fire at a range of about 250 yards, and a sergeant, two men and a horse were hit. Lieutenant Dugdale dismounted and placed one of the wounded men on his own horse; he then caught another horse, galloped up to a wounded man and took him up behind him, and brought both men safely out of action.

(London Gazette – 17 September 1901)

Dugdale then caught enteric fever. On regaining his health, he served with General French in the Cape. He returned to England in July 1902 and in October was decorated with the V.C. by King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace. On 13 November 1902, while hunting in the North Cotswolds, his horse fell at a fence and crushed him so severely that he died within two hours, without regaining consciousness. He is buried at Longborough, Gloucestershire.

Acknowledgement – Ian Uys

The book 'The Fifth (Royal Irish) Lancers in South Africa 1899-1902' by Walter Temple Wilcox, records (page 278) – *"On the 3rd of March a small force under Major King was ordered out to forage for supplies. During the retirement of this detachment Lieutenant Dugdale's outpost was severely handled, and he greatly distinguished himself by bringing in some wounded men of the 19th Hussars who were with him. For his gallantry on this occasion Lieutenant Dugdale was awarded the V.C."*

Anniversary of the birth of Major-General Arthur Henry Fitzroy Paget – 1 March 1851

Paget was born in Berkeley Square, London, on 1 March 1851, and was educated at Wellington College. He was a page of honour to Queen Victoria which entitled him to a free Guard's commission. His father was Lord Alfred Paget, a prominent Politian of his time, and his mother was the heiress of George Thomas Wyndham, of Cromer Hall in Norfolk.

Paget's first posting was as a Lieutenant in the Scots Fusilier Guards in 1869 and he was promoted to Captain in July 1872. Late in 1873 he was selected for special service on Sir Garnet Wolseley's expedition in West Africa. In April 1882 he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in the 2nd Scots Guards and saw service in the Sudan and Burma. Outside of the military he owned racehorses and under the pseudonym of 'Mr. Fitzroy' he wrote a number of novels.



Picture: Major-General Paget

At the outbreak of the South African War (1899-1902) Paget was put in command of the 1st Battalion Scots Guards and was present at the Battles of Belmont and Modder River. After the Battle of Modder River, he took temporary command of the 1st Guards Brigade in Lord Methuen's 1st Division, and in that capacity, saw action at the Battle of Magersfontein. On 1 April 1900 he was promoted to Major-General and was put in command of the newly formed 20th Brigade – part of the 1st Division.

After the Relief of Kimberley Paget saw service in the Free State and was 'blamed' for General de Wet being able to escape from the Brandwater Basin, which, 'theoretically' had been surrounded by British Forces. The Times History describes the incident (Vol IV, page 321) – *"After dark on July 15 Paget reached the farm Sebastopol. During the afternoon he had seen a small laager in Slabbert's Nek, but he apparently took no precautions on this account. The Nek was not reconnoitred, nor were pickets sent to any distance from his bivouac during the night. De Wet was thus able to pass unchallenged. Paget, therefore, though undoubtedly sent out too late, cannot escape some share of the responsibility for de Wet's escape."*

During the Guerrilla Phase of the War Paget saw action in the Northern Transvaal, around the Magaliesberg, and the Eastern Transvaal where after the Battle of Rhenoster Kop, many of Paget's Australian and New Zealand volunteers were disenchanted with his style of leadership, blaming him for a costly frontal attack on the superior Boer position, and they wanted to go home before the expiry of their one-year term of service.

Wikipedia records the following, but I can't find any reference to what was recorded in any of the books I have, including the Times History – *"In June 1901, Paget resigned his command, intending to give up his career, after quarrelling with his superior, the Hon. Neville Lyttelton. Paget was*

persuaded by Edward VII, whom he knew well, to continue, Lord Roberts suggesting Paget was 'difficult with those above him'. Paget wrote to Sir John French praising his leadership in South Africa and claiming that respect for him had been his reason for remaining in the Army."

Irish Home Rule was due to become law in 1914 and the Ulster Volunteers wanted no part of this decision by the English. This 'agitation' was being sensed in England and the British Cabinet were beginning to contemplate some kind of military action against those who were secretly planning against the decision of Home Rule. Paget started protecting arms depots in case of an uprising. The Buffs Regimental History records – *"The famous Curragh Incident was brought about mostly by Paget's hot-headedness. This was when Irish Home Rule was about to become law in 1914 and trouble was expected from the Ulster Volunteers. Paget, whilst planning to invade the six counties of the north, unnecessarily provoked army officers with Ulster connections causing a good deal of trouble. The writer Violet Bonham-Carter described him as 'a stupid, arrogant, quick-tempered man' and Harold Nicholson wrote that 'he was not a man of measured language or meek act'.*

Paget relinquished Irish Command on the outbreak of World War I. He continued to serve during the war, although not in France. Edmonds later claimed that Paget had been the best candidate to command III Corps in September 1914 (it went to Pulteney) but that French passed him over having had a row with him on manoeuvres in 1913. However, French tried to obtain an Army command for him in June 1915 (Richard Holmes writes that French remained fond of him but insisted on his suitability despite 'impressive evidence to the contrary'). From April 1916 to February 1918, he commanded Southern Army charged with the defence of South-East England while French, having been replaced in France by Haig, was Commander-in-Chief of Home Forces. Sir Arthur Paget was Colonel of the Buffs from 6 Nov 1914 until his death."

Paget retired from the military in 1918.

He then spent most of his time in at Cannes on the French Riviera.

He died on 8 December 1928 at his villa in Cannes and was buried in Le Grand Jas Cemetery in Cannes, in the 'English Square' – the resting place for many Brits who made Cannes their home.

Picture: Sir Arthur Paget's Grave



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

Allan Gordon