

## Newsletter

**November 2024**

The major battles that took place during the months of November 1899, 1900 and 1901 in the South African War (1899-1902) have been covered in previous newsletters. This newsletter will record other interesting aspects of the war, together with other notable 'November' events.

**November 1899:** Although I am a medal collector, the story of one of the rarest coins in the world, which is a direct result of the South African War (1899-1902), is worth recording in this newsletter, as I am sure little is known of the '1899 Kruger Single 9' by most readers.

Google records – *"The story of the Single 9 begins in 1899 at the start of the second Anglo-Boer War. Amidst the struggle to maintain their independence, President Paul Kruger of the South African Republic ordered that new gold coins be minted. Without the means to create the dies needed to strike new coins, the government ordered that new dies be made in Germany for 1899 coinage. However, the shipment of dies was intercepted and confiscated by the British on its way from Germany to the Transvaal.*

*Picture: The 1899 Kruger Single 9*



*The Boer government was not to be deterred from making new coins. Instead of the new dies, they decided to use the old ones from 1898 and punch a 9 on the obverse of the coin to signify the year 1899. However, when the first pond (Dutch for pound) was struck, they realized that the 9 was too large and protruded onto the bust of President Kruger. Consequently, no further coins were minted using that punch. This particular pond was put aside and came to be known as the 'Single 9'. The rest of the coins in this batch, of which there were 130, were stamped using two smaller 9s, and subsequently came to be known as the Double 99.*

*The Single 9's first owner was United States Consul General, C.E. Macrum. He was given the coin in a ceremony by the Kruger government in order to establish the republic's identity as an independent country with its own coinage. Macrum scratched an 'm' on the bust of President Kruger to mark his ownership of the coin.*

*For the next 50 years, the coin's whereabouts are unknown. It resurfaced in 1954 when it went on sale at the 'Palace Collections of Egypt' auction in Cairo – the sale of King Farouk's famed coin*

collection. The King is alleged to have acquired the coin in Paris some years earlier. At the auction, the coin was sold to Dr. Froelich of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, for 655 Egyptian Pounds.

*Since then, the Single 9 has changed hands five times. It was sold at an auction in 1969 for R2,530, and then again in 1983 for R132,000. In 1999, the coin was sold in a private deal for R4.65 million. In 2001, it was sold again privately for R9.8 million. Finally, in 2010, the Single 9 was sold to a private buyer for over R20 million."*

The '1899 Kruger Single 9' is regarded as one of the world's Top 5 most expensive and most rare coins – there is only one.



Previous newsletters have dealt with the three sieges and the battles that had taken place, mainly in the Cape and Natal, by forces trying to defend and/or to relieve these sieges.

General Buller, who had arrived in Cape Town late in October as Commander in Chief of all British forces in South Africa, had a 'plan'. However, after spending a few days in Cape Town, and reviewing all updates from the front, he decided to divide his force into two.

*Picture: General Buller*

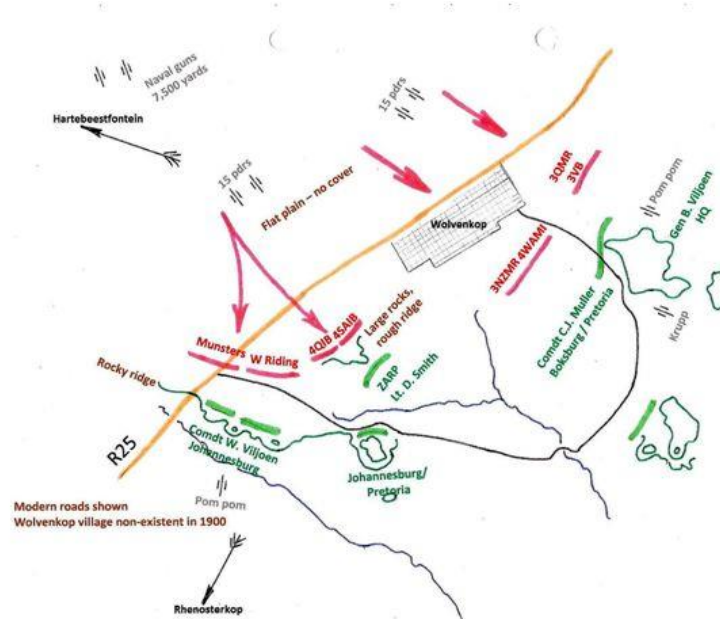
The book 'Buller's Campaign' by Julian Symons records (page 137) – *"At the time he wrote to his brother, he still meant to stick to the original plan of driving for Bloemfontein. 'I shall be sorry if Kimberley and Ladysmith go, but I cannot help them better.' Within a couple of days however, he had decided to split up the Army Corps as it arrived, sending Lord Methuen (whom Milner had wanted to see as Commander-in- Chief) to relieve Kimberley, and himself taking charge of the main force, which would go to the Relief of Ladysmith. He regarded this splitting of the Army Corps as a temporary measure. He thought that Methuen would relieve Kimberley and that he would join hands with White at Ladysmith, in a matter of days rather than weeks, and that they could then turn to attack Bloemfontein."*

How terribly wrong this proved to be.

**November 1900:** Many writers, historians, and followers of the South African War (1899-1902) believe that the last set piece battle of the war was the Battle of Bergendal, fought at the end of August 1900.

However, there are recordings that suggest that the last set piece battle of the war was the Battle of RhenosterKop, fought on 29 November 1900.

Boer General Ben Viljoen chose a strategic defensive position to await the advancing British force, under the command of Major-General Paget, and although totally outnumbered, inflicted heavy casualties on the British. British casualties were 16 killed and 71 wounded. The battle lasted a day, and before British reinforcements arrived, Viljoen, having sent his supply wagons to a position of safety, evacuated his position overnight.



Picture: Map of the Battle of Rhenosterkop

The end of November also saw Lord Kitchener succeed Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief of all British forces in South Africa.

**November 1901:** As was recorded in last month's newsletter, Emily Hobhouse was waiting for deportation back to the U.K., having been refused rights to land. However, at the beginning of the month, whilst on board ship, she wrote two letters, one to Lord Kitchener, where amongst other things she stated – *"Your brutality has triumphed over my weakness and sickness"* and to Lord Milner – *"Your brutal orders have been carried out and thus I hope you will be satisfied"*.



Early in November Lord Kitchener mounted an effort in the North-Eastern Free State to round up as many Boer commandos as was possible to decrease the number operating guerrilla tactics against the British. 15 000 Men in 12 columns were deployed and at the end of the exercise not a single Boer commando had been captured. There were isolated incidents where Boers were engaged and casualties suffered on both sides, and there were several Boers who 'laid down arms', but this again was a Boer 'victory' in forcing large numbers of the British in counter measures against the 'hit and run' tactics employed by the Boers.

Picture: Lord Kitchener

### Other interesting events during the month of November:

- **30 November 1874** – Birth of Winston Churchill. He fought on the North-West Frontier in India, rode with the British Lancers in the Sudan, escaped from Boer captivity in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War, fought in the Trenches during World War 1 and became the British Prime Minister during World War 2.
- **15 November 1899** – armoured train incident, Chieverley, where Winston Churchill was captured by the Boers.
- **17 to 22 November 1899** – troop ships arrived in Cape Town with 22 000 British troops.
- **28 November 1899** – Boer General Piet Joubert was thrown from his horse and sustained abdominal injuries which led to his eventual death.
- **14 November 1914** – Field Marshal Frederick Sleigh Roberts died in St. Omar, France, from pneumonia.
- **22 November 1963** – John F. Kennedy, the 35<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, was assassinated while riding in a presidential motorcade through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas.



*Picture: President John F. Kennedy*

During two of the three November months of the South African War (1900 and 1901), five V.C.s were awarded, strangely none were awarded in 1899:

#### 1900

Lt. H.Z.C. Cockburn	Royal Canadian Dragoons	Komati River (near Belfast)
Lt. R.E.W. Turner	Royal Canadian Dragoons	Komati River (near Belfast)
Sgt. E.J.G. Holland	Royal Canadian Dragoons	Komati River (near Belfast)
Pvt. C.T. Kennedy	Highland Light Infantry	Dewetsdorp

#### 1901

Lt. L.C. Maygar	Victoria Mounted Rifles	Geelhoutboom – Natal
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## Victoria Cross of the Month

(My November Mid-Month Visit addressed my recent visit to the battle-site of Leliefontein/Witkloof, and this month's V.C. features Sergeant Holland. The book 'Painting the Map Red' by Carman Miller, records (page 273) – "*Morrison had not reckoned on Holland's courage and intelligence. Standing off his pursuers until they were within two hundred yards of his Colt, he had then simply unscrewed the barrel from its carriage, put it under his arm, and galloped off.*"

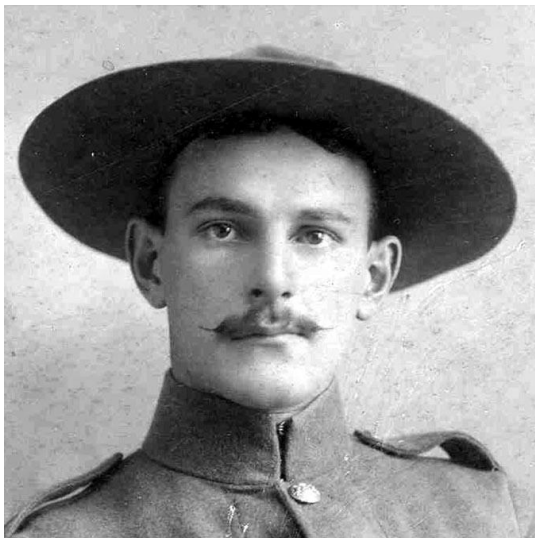
### Sergeant Edward James Gibson Holland – Royal Canadian Dragoons

Edward James Gibson Holland was born in Ottawa, Canada, on 2 February 1878. He was with the Royal Canadian Dragoons at Komati River when the guns were threatened.

#### Citation:

Date of act of bravery 7 November 1900. Sergeant Holland did splendid work with his colt-gun, and kept the Boers off the two 12-pounders by its fire at close range. When he saw the enemy were too near for him to escape with the carriage, as the horse was blown, he calmly lifted the gun off and galloped away with it under his arm.

*(London Gazette 23 April 1901)*



*Picture: Sergeant Holland V.C.*

Holland had waited until his pursuers were within 200 yards of his Colt, then unscrewed the barrel from its carriage, put it under his arm and galloped off. His exploit occurred shortly before Lieutenant Turner set up his ambush.

Holland returned to Canada and from 1909 prospected for gold, taking part in the Gillies Limit Rush three years later. He later became Major with the 13<sup>th</sup> Canadian Dragoons and took a battery of mounted machine-guns to France in September 1915, returning to Canada in October 1916 as a Lieutenant-Colonel, where he served in the Reserves.

As a businessman he sold typewriters and cash registers in the Pacific and served as a postman in Cobalt, Ontario.

Holland married Dora Knapp and had two sons and a daughter. One of his sons, William, was killed in a plane crash in British Columbia. Holland died in Cobalt on 18 June 1948, and his ashes were scattered on Island 17, Lake Temagami, Ontario.

## **Anniversary of the death of Major John Hulke Plumbe, Royal Marine Light Infantry – 25 November 1899**

Major John Hulke Plumbe, Royal Marine Light Infantry, was killed in action at Graspan, on 25 November 1899. The third son of the late Dr. S.A. Plumbe, of Maidenhead, he was born in 1858 and educated at the Oxford Military College. He entered the Royal Marines in 1877, was promoted Captain in 1880, and Major in 1885, and is stated to have been a highly qualified officer, being a specialist in gunnery, fortification, torpedoes, and other subjects.

He served in the Royal Marine Battalion in Egypt in 1882 and was present at every action in which it was engaged from the occupation of Alexandria to the actions of Tel-el-Mahuta, Kassassin, 28 August, Kassassin, 9 September, and Tel-el-Kebir, where he was slightly wounded in the hand and hip. He received the medal with clasp and bronze star.



*Picture: Major John Hulke Plumbe*

In the Battle of Graspan, Major Plumbe was in command of the Royal Marines belonging to the Naval Brigade. In this action their losses amounted to 43%, due to the 'unflinching and self-sacrificing heroism of the troops that led the assault'. Three Officers and 72 men of the Royal Marines were killed or wounded out of a total of five Officers and 190 men. In the Naval Brigade, Major Plumbe, Commander Ethelston, Captain Senior, and Midshipman Huddart were killed, and almost all the petty and non-commissioned officers were struck down.

Just before he was killed Major Plumbe said 'rush for the hills, men,' and when mortally wounded his last words were, 'forward, never mind me.' A pet dog he took into action with him watched by his body for six hours, until the arrival of the ambulance.

Major Plumbe was at first buried on the battlefield, but on the morning of 26 November, his body was moved, and he now lies close to Enslin Station beside Commander Ethelston and Captain Senior. Their graves are marked by a large cross.

Major Plumbe's servant, Private Doran, died of wounds. The names of Major Plumbe and his servant are inscribed on the monument erected in the Cambridge enclosure, St. James' Park, by the Officers and men of the Royal Marine Artillery and Light Infantry, in memory of their comrades who fell in South Africa and China.

(Acknowledgement: Alexander Palmer, 'The Boer War Casualty Roll')

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

**Allan Gordon**