

## Newsletter

September 2025

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

**September 1900:** I am sure that there are many readers who have never heard of the Paardekraal Monument – I would be very surprised if any of the readers of my newsletter, residing outside South Africa have. The Monument is in the town of Krugersdorp and commemorates the original site of the vow made by the Transvaal Boers on 13 December 1880, prior to the armed rebellion known as First Boer War, when the Boers vowed to regain their independence from the British Empire.

The Transvaal (ZAR) Boers had 'lost' their independence in January 1877, when a small British force of mounted policemen crossed into the ZAR and based themselves in its capital, Pretoria.



*Picture: Paardekraal Monument*

During the course of the next three years, although plagued by internal struggles to elect a President, by the end of 1880, the Boers had had enough of British governance and were ready to take back their land. A mass gathering of the Boers was proposed for 8 January 1881 at Paardekraal for the Transvaal Boers, where a decision was to be made as to how they should proceed, if at all to independence. However, this date was brought forward to 8 December 1880. From that date until 13 December 1880, 8 000 to 10 000 Boer men, women and children gathered at Paardekraal. The meeting declared the restoration of the old Volksraad, and the Government of the Republic to be managed by three men, Paul Kruger, Piet Joubert and Marthinus Pretorius.

At the conclusion of the gathering, and subsequent meetings, a monument, in the shape of a cairn, was made of thousands of stones representing the gathered burgers' vow to commemorate their independence from Great Britain.

In September 1900 Roberts decided that the Paardekraal Monument 'needed some attention'. The book 'Methods of Barbarism' by S B Spies records the following (page 130) – *"One further aspect of this phase of clearing the country is of interest. The Krugersdorp district was believed to be deeply antagonistic to British rule. Roberts stated that the prolonged resistance of the inhabitants of this area was mainly due to and fostered by the belief held by the 'ignorant Boer farmers' that the independence of the South African Republic would continue as long as the cairn of stones under the Paardekraal monument, commemorating the outbreak of the first Anglo-Boer War in*

*1880, remained in position. He suggested that the stones should be removed and Barton, who had previously wished to do this on the plea of looking for arms, gave orders for the operation to be carried out. On the night of 16<sup>th</sup> September 1900, the stones were packed in flour bags and taken to Johannesburg. It would appear, from the orders which Roberts had earlier issued to the director of railways, that they were taken to Durban and thrown into the sea."*

Wikipedia records that – *"During the occupation of the Transvaal by the British forces during the Second Boer War, original cairn stones in the gated chamber were looted by British soldiers and thrown into the Vaal River. The monument became a heritage listed site on 17 April 1936."*

**September 1901:** In past newsletters I have written about the railway line between Pretoria and Pietersburg, relating to its perceived strategic importance to the British, and as a 'lifeline' for the Boers in their pursuit of much needed supplies. Lord Kitchener saw the increase in attacks on this line as a concern, more so with the loss of lives to the British troops on the trains, with the incident on 31 August where over 40 casualties (17 deaths) were recorded almost being the final straw. 'Methods of Barbarism' records (page 262) – *"A stringent measure introduced, or rather re-introduced, by Kitchener, to which the British government did not object, was the use of civilians as hostages to accompany trains to prevent Boer attacks on the railway."* Spies carries on (page 263) – *"On 9<sup>th</sup> September 1901 British newspapers carried reports from Pretoria, datelined 7 September 1901, stating that Prominent Boer civilians would be selected to accompany trains on the Pretoria-Pietersburg line."*



*Picture: Lord Kitchener*

*Kitchener informed Botha on 3 September 1901 that he accepted that destruction of railway and telegraph lines was in accordance with the customs of war if the intention was to prevent the advance of an enemy or to cut his lines of communication. He argued that the interruption should form part of a military operation and should be effected by troops intending to hold the communication as long as possible. The Boer practice of sending a small, unsupported party to place mines on the line, and then to pour volleys into the occupants when the train was derailed, he regarded as achieving nothing definite in a military sense and to be marauding of the worst form, which resulted in murder. Unless he received prompt assurance from Botha that these practices would stop, he would be forced to take steps (which he did not define)."*

Those who have the book can read what happened on both sides. The British identified a list of prominent individuals (Boers), from which a choice would be made, and the Boer leaders certainly

had no intention of halting the practice of attacking the trains. However, there were a number of 'disciplinary warnings' given to some Boers regarding their excessive actions during past incidents.

**Other notable events during the month of September:**

- **12 September 1901** – The most southerly engagement of the Boer War – a skirmish at Stilbaai. A small Boer commando under Jan Theron led his troops to meet the town's District Mounted Troops and the Riversdale Town Guards, both under the command of Lieutenant Smalberger
- **15 September 1914** – The death of Boer General, Koos de la Rey.

During the two September months of the Boer War (1900 and 1901), five V.C.s were awarded:

**1900**

Lt. G.G.E. Wylly	Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen	Warmbaths
Tpr. J.H. Bisdee	Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen	Warmbaths

**1901**

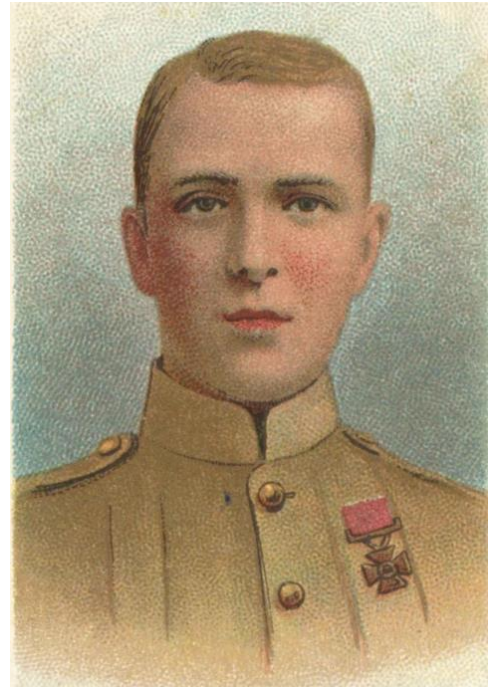
Lt. L.A.E. Price-Davies	King's Royal Rifle Corp.	Blood River Port
Dvr. F.H. Bradley	Royal Field Artillery – 69 Batt.	Itala
Pte. W. Bees	Derbyshire Regiment	Moedwil

## Victoria Cross of the Month

### Lieutenant L.A.E. Price-Davies – King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Llewellyn Alberic Emilius Price-Davies was born at Chirbury, Shropshire, on 30 June 1878. He was educated at Marlborough and Sandhurst. He joined the KRRC in February 1898 and in South Africa was wounded three times in the earlier part of the war and mentioned in despatches. In April 1901 Lieutenant Price-Davies was created a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order.

In September that year he was at the Battle of Blood River Poort, west of Vryheid, Natal, where the Blood River emerges from the Schurweberg. His commander, Gough, impetuously attacked a Boer encampment only to find some 500 mounted Boers emerge from the Poort. It was the vanguard of General Louis Botha's invasion of Natal.



*Picture: Lieutenant Price-Davies V.C.*

#### Citation:

At Blood River Poort, on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1901, when the Boers had overwhelmed the right of the British column, and some four hundred of them were galloping round the flank and near the guns, riding up to the drivers (who were trying to get the guns away) and calling upon them to surrender, Lieutenant Price-Davies, hearing an order to fire upon the charging Boers, at once drew his revolver and dashed in amongst them, firing at them in a most gallant and desperate attempt to rescue the guns. He was immediately shot and knocked off his horse, but was not mortally wounded, although he had ridden to what seemed to be almost certain death without a moment's hesitation.

*(London Gazette 29 November 1901)*

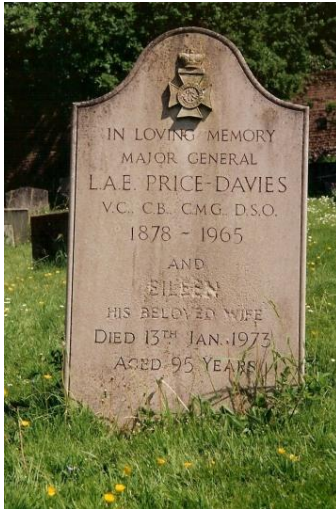
Six Officers and 38 men were killed or wounded, while six Officers and 235 men were taken prisoner by the Boers.

Price-Davies was promoted Captain in January 1902. General Kitchener presented him with the V.C. in Pretoria on 8 June 1902.

In 1906 he married Eileen Wilson from Ireland. He served as Adjutant to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Mounted Infantry South Africa until 1907, then, after studying at Camberley, he became Brigade Major, 13<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Irish Command.

From 1912-14 Price-Davies was GS03 at the War Office and thereafter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions. He commanded a brigade in France from December 1915 to November 1917. In January 1918 he

was created a CMG. From April to December 1918 he was employed on special duties in Italy as a Major-General.



From 1920-30 he was ADC to the King, 1920-4 Assistant Adjutant General at Aldershot and commanded 145th Infantry Brigade until 1927. He was QMG in Gibraltar until 1930 and from 1933-48 a Member of the Honorary Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms. During the Second World War he commanded the Upper Thames Patrol (Home Guard).

He died in Sonning-on-Thames, Berkshire, on 26 December 1965. His wife, Eileen, died in January 1973, aged 95 years.

His medals are in the Royal Green Jackets Museum in Winchester.

*Picture: The tombstone of both Lieutenant Price-Davies and his wife*

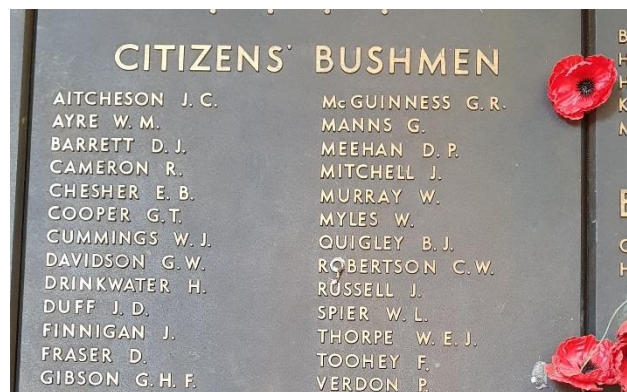
### Anniversary of the birth of Captain Claude William Robertson – September 1868

Captain Claude William Robertson, Royal Marine Light Infantry, serving with the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Australian Bushmen, was killed in action at Selous River, on 22 July 1900. The third son of Mrs. Robertson, of Meadow House, Godalming, he was born in September 1868. He was educated at Charterhouse, and entered the Royal Marines in September 1889, being promoted Lieutenant in July 1890, and Captain in January 1898. He served as Lieutenant in the Royal Marines Battalion landed from the squadron on the West Coast of Africa to punish the King of Benin for the massacre of the Political Expedition in 1897, which ended with the capture of Benin City, on 18 February of the same year. For this service he was mentioned in despatches and received the medal with clasp.

He afterwards served on the Australian Station, and on the outbreak of war, being at Sydney, volunteered for active service. Being accepted, he proceeded to South Africa in command of B Company of the Australian Bushmen under Colonel Airey and landed at Beira. He was then sent to Bulawayo and served with the force for the relief of Mafeking. He afterwards moved towards Rustenburg and was killed near Magato Pass as stated. Captain Robertson is buried at Rustenburg. His name is inscribed on the monument in the Cambridge enclosure, St. James's Park, erected by all ranks of the Royal Marine Artillery and Light Infantry to the memory of their comrades who fell in South Africa and China; also on the tablet in the War Memorial Cloister at Charterhouse.

(Reference – The Boer War Casualty Roll 1899-1902 by Alexander Palmer)

*Picture: Captain Robertson's name is also inscribed on the Australian War Memorial, Campbell, Canberra, Australia*



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

**Allan Gordon**