**Second Boer War**

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*See also:* [*First Boer War*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Boer_War)*, and* [*South African Wars (1879-1915)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Wars_%281879-1915%29)

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| **Second Anglo-Boer War** |
| Part of the [Boer Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer_Wars) |
| Afrikaner Commandos2.JPG[Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) [guerrillas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla) during the Second Boer War |
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| --- | --- |
| **Date** | 11 October 1899 – 31 May 1902 |
| **Location** | South Africa, [Swaziland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swaziland)[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-0) |
| **Result** | [Treaty of Vereeniging](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Vereeniging) |
| **Territorialchanges** | [Treaty of Vereeniging](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Vereeniging) |

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| **Belligerents** |
| United Kingdom[British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire)* British Raj[British India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Raj)
* Australia[Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia)

Canadian and New Zealand volunteers | Flag of the Orange Free State.svg[Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State)Flag of Transvaal.svg[South African Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic)[Foreign volunteers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer_foreign_volunteers) (Dutch, German, Russian, French, American, Irish, Polish, Scandinavian, Italian and Australian volunteers) |
| **Commanders and leaders** |
| United Kingdom[Lord Milner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Milner%2C_1st_Viscount_Milner)United Kingdom[Sir Redvers Buller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redvers_Henry_Buller)United Kingdom[Lord Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener)United Kingdom[Lord Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Roberts%2C_1st_Earl_Roberts) | Flag of Transvaal.svg[Paul Kruger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kruger)Flag of Transvaal.svg[Louis Botha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Botha)Flag of Transvaal.svg[Schalk W. Burger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schalk_W._Burger)Flag of Transvaal.svg[Koos de la Rey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koos_de_la_Rey)Flag of the Orange Free State.svg[Martinus Steyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martinus_Theunis_Steyn)Flag of the Orange Free State.svg[Christiaan de Wet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christiaan_de_Wet)Flag of Transvaal.svg[Piet Cronjé](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Cronj%C3%A9) |
| **Casualties and losses** |
| 7,894 killed13,250 died of disease934 missing22,828 wounded[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-1)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-2) | 9,093 killed or died of disease[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-3) |
| **Civilian casualties**: 27,927 Boer women and children died in concentration camps, plus an unknown number of the black Africans (107,000 were interned).[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-4) |

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|  |  |
| [Kraaipan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Kraaipan) – [**Talana Hill**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Talana_Hill) – [Elandslaagte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Elandslaagte) – [**Battle of Ladysmith**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ladysmith) – [**Belmont**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Belmont_%281899%29) – [Modder River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Modder_River) – [**Stormberg**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stormberg) – [**Magersfontein**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Magersfontein) – [**Colenso**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Colenso) – [**Spion Kop**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Spion_Kop) – [Vaal Krantz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Vaal_Krantz) – [Kimberley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kimberley) – [Bloody Sunday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_%281900%29) – [**Paardeberg**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Paardeberg) – [**Siege of Ladysmith**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Ladysmith) – [**Tugela Heights**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Tugela_Heights) – [**Relief of Ladysmith**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relief_of_Ladysmith) – [Poplar Grove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Poplar_Grove) – [Sanna's Post](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanna%27s_Post) – [Mafeking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Mafeking) – [Diamond Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Diamond_Hill) – [**Bergendal**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bergendal) – [Bothaville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bothaville) – [Leliefontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Leliefontein) – [Nooitgedacht](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nooitgedacht) – [Groenkloof](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Groenkloof) – [Elands River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Elands_River) – [Blood River Poort](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Blood_River_Poort) – [Bakenlaagte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bakenlaagte) – [Groenkop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Groenkop) – [Tweebosch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tweebosch) – [Rooiwal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Rooiwal) |

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The **Second Boer War** ([Dutch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_language): *Tweede Boerenoorlog*, [Afrikaans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrikaans):*Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* or *Tweede Boereoorlog*), commonly referred to as **The Boer War** and also known as the **South African War** (outside South Africa), the **Anglo-Boer War** (among most South Africans) and in Afrikaans as the *Anglo-Boereoorlog* or *Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* ("Second War of Liberation"), or the **Engelse oorlog** (English War)[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] was fought from 11 October 1899 until 31 May 1902, between the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) and the two independent [Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) republics of the [South African Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic) (Transvaal Republic) and the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State).

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**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=1)**] Origins**

The origins of the war were complex, resulting from over a century of conflict between the [Boers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boers) and the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire).[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-5) During the [Napoleonic Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars), a British expedition landed in the [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) and defeated the defending Dutch forces at the [Battle of Blaauwberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Blaauwberg).[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-morris-6) After the wars, the British formally acquired the colony, and encouraged immigration by British settlers who were largely at odds with the Dutch settlers. Over subsequent decades, many Boers who were dissatisfied with aspects of the British administration elected to migrate away from British rule in what became known as the [Great Trek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Trek).[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-morris-6) The migration was initially along the eastern coast towards Natal and then, after [Natal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_of_Natal) was annexed in 1843, northwards towards the interior where two independent Boer republics (the Orange Free State, and the South African Republic - also called the Transvaal) were established. The British recognised the two Boer Republics in 1852 and 1854, but the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 led to the [First Boer War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Boer_War) in 1880 and 1881. After British defeats, most heavily at the Battle of [Majuba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majuba), Transvaal independence was restored subject to certain conditions, but relations were uneasy.

In 1871, diamonds had been discovered at [Kimberley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimberley%2C_Northern_Cape), prompting a diamond rush and a massive influx of foreigners to the borders of the Orange Free State. When gold was discovered soon after in the [South African Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic) in 1886, fresh waves of [*uitlanders*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uitlanders) (foreigners), mainly from Britain, came to the Boer region in search of employment and fortune. Gold made the Transvaal the richest and potentially the most powerful nation in southern Africa, but it also resulted in the number of uitlanders in the Transvaal eventually exceeding the number of Boers, and precipitated confrontations over the old order and the new. British expansionist ideas (led notably by [Cecil Rhodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes)) as well as disputes over uitlander political and economic rights resulted in the failed [Jameson Raid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jameson_Raid) of 1895. This raid led by (and named after) Dr [Leander Starr Jameson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leander_Starr_Jameson), the Administrator in [Southern Rhodesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Rhodesia) of the Chartered Company, was intended to encourage an uprising of the uitlanders in [Johannesburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg). However Johannesburg failed to rise and Transvaal government forces surrounded the column and captured Jameson's men before they could reach Johannesburg.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Thomas_Pakenham_p._1_-_5-7)

As tensions escalated from local to national level, there were political manoeuvrings and lengthy negotiations to reach a compromise ostensibly over the issue of "uitlander rights" but ultimately over control of the gold mining industry and the British desire to incorporate the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in a federation under British control. Given the number of British uitlanders already resident in the Transvaal and the ongoing inflow, the Boers recognised that the franchise policy demanded by the British would inevitably result in the loss of independence of the South African Republic. The negotiations failed, and in September 1899 [Joseph Chamberlain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Chamberlain) (the British Colonial Secretary) sent an ultimatum to the Boers, demanding full equality for those uitlanders resident in the Transvaal. President [Kruger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kruger), seeing no other option than war, issued his own ultimatum, giving the British 48 hours to withdraw all their troops from the border of the Transvaal, failing which the Transvaal, allied with the Orange Free State, would declare war against the British. The rejection of the ultimatum followed and war was declared.

In all that follows, it is important to remember that there was no single Boer, Afrikaner or Black African experience. A sense of the complexity of the political situation can be gathered from the fact that more Afrikaans-speaking whites lived in the British Cape Colony than in the Transvaal and Orange Free State combined and, crucially, that the vast majority did not give active support to the Afrikaans-speaking whites fighting the British.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-8) Similarly, by the end of the war, there were some 5,000 'joiners' -- Boers who had begun fighting against the British, and ended fighting with them; this represented about 20% of all Boers under arms.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-9)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=2)**] Phases**

The war had three distinct phases. First, the Boers mounted pre-emptive strikes into British-held territory in Natal and the Cape Colony, besieging the British garrisons of [Ladysmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Ladysmith), [Mafeking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Mafeking) and [Kimberley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kimberley). The Boers then won a series of tactical victories at [Colenso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Colenso), [Magersfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Magersfontein) and [Spionkop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Spionkop) against a failed British counteroffensive to relieve the three sieges. Second, after the introduction of greatly increased British troop numbers under the command of [Lord Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Roberts%2C_1st_Earl_Roberts), another, and this time successful, British offensive was launched in 1900 to relieve the sieges. After Natal and the Cape Colony were secure, the British were able to invade the Transvaal and the republic's capital, [Pretoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pretoria), was captured in June 1900.

Finally, beginning in March 1900, the Boers engaged a protracted hard-fought [guerrilla war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_war) against the British forces. This marked the beginning of the third phase of the war. It lasted a further two years, during which the Boers raided targets such as British troop columns, [telegraph](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telegraph) sites, [railways](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railways) and storage depots. In an effort to cut off supplies to the raiders, the British, now under the leadership of [Lord Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener), responded with a [scorched earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorched_earth) policy of destroying Boer farms and moving civilians into [concentration camps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camps).[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-10)

The campaign had been expected by the some parts of the British Press and British government to be over within months, and the protracted war gradually became less popular especially after revelations about the conditions in the concentration camps (where tens of thousands of women and children died of disease and malnutrition). The Boer forces finally surrendered on Saturday 31 May 1902, with 54 of the 60 delegates from the Transvaal and Orange Free State voting to accept the terms of the peace treaty.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-11) This was known as the [Treaty of Vereeniging](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Vereeniging) The two republics were absorbed into the British Empire, with the promise of limited self-government in the future. This came about shortly, and led to the establishment of the [Union of South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_South_Africa). The war had a lasting effect on the region and on British domestic politics. The war, known as the last British imperial war, was the longest (almost three years), the most expensive (over £200 million), and the most disastrous of all wars for Britain between 1815 and 1914.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-12)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=3)**] Background**





The geography of the region; the [South African Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic)/Transvaal (green), with the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State) (orange), the British [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) (blue), and the [Natal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natalia_Republic) (red)

The southern part of the [African continent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa) was dominated in the 19th century by a set of struggles to create within it a single unified state. While the [Berlin Conference](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Conference) of 1884-5 sought to draw boundaries between the European powers' African possessions, it set the stage for further scrambles. The British attempted to annex first the South African Republic in 1880, and then in 1899 both the South African Republic and the Orange Free State. In 1868, the British annexed [Basutoland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Lesotho) in the [Drakensberg Mountains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drakensberg) following an appeal from [Moshesh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshesh), the leader of a mixed group of African refugees from the [Zulu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulu) wars, who sought British protection against the Boers. In the 1880s, Bechuanaland (modern [Botswana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botswana), located north of the Orange River) became the object of dispute between the Germans to the west, the Boers to the east, and the British [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) to the south. Although Bechuanaland had no economic value, the "Missionaries Road" passed through it towards territory farther north. After the Germans annexed [Damaraland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Damaraland) and Namaqualand (modern [Namibia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namibia)) in 1884, the British annexed Bechuanaland in 1885.

The Boers of the Transvaal Republic had in the 1880-1881 war ("[First Boer War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Boer_War)") proved skillful fighters in resisting the British attempt at annexation, resulting in a series of British defeats. The British government of [William Ewart Gladstone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Ewart_Gladstone) had been unwilling to become bemired in a distant war, which required substantial troop reinforcement and expense, for what was at the time perceived to be minimal return. An armistice followed, ending the war, and subsequently a peace treaty followed with the Transvaal President [Paul Kruger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kruger).

However when, in 1886, a major [gold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold) field find was made at an outcrop on a large ridge some sixty kilometers south of the Boer capital at [Pretoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pretoria), it reignited British imperial interests. The ridge, known locally as the "[Witwatersrand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witwatersrand)" (literally "white water ridge"—a watershed) contained the world's largest deposit of gold-bearing ore. Although it was not as rich as gold finds in Canada and Australia, its consistency made it especially well-suited to industrial mining methods. With the 1886 discovery of gold in [Transvaal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic), thousands of British and other prospectors and settlers streamed over the border from the [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) (annexed by Britain earlier) and from across the globe.

The city of [Johannesburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg) sprang up as a [shanty town](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanty_town) nearly overnight as the [*uitlanders*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uitlanders) (foreigners) poured in and settled around the mines. The influx was such that the uitlanders quickly outnumbered the [Boers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) in [Johannesburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg) and along the Rand, although they remained a minority in the Transvaal as a whole. The [Boers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer), nervous and resentful of the uitlanders' growing presence, sought to contain their influence through requiring lengthy residential qualifying periods before voting rights were obtained, imposing taxes on the gold industry, and introducing controls through licensing, tariffs and administrative requirements. Amongst the issues giving rise to tension between the Transvaal government on the one hand, and the Uitlanders and British interests on the other, were:

(a) the established uitlanders including the mining magnates wanted political, social and economic control over their lives and hence rights including a stable constitution, a fair franchise law, an independent judiciary, and a better educational system. The Boers for their part recognized that the more concessions they made to the Uitlanders the greater the likelihood, with approximately 30,000 white male Boer voters and potentially 60,000 white male Uitlander, that the independence of the Transvaal would be lost and absorbed into the British Empire;

(b) the uitlanders resented the taxes levied by the Transvaal government, particularly where the monies raised were not expended on Johannesburg or uitlander interests but diverted to projects elsewhere in the Transvaal. By way of example, as the gold-bearing ore sloped away from the outcrop underground to the south, more and more blasting was necessary for extraction and mines consumed vast quantities of explosives. A box of dynamite costing five pounds included five shillings tax. Not only was this tax perceived as exorbitant but British interests were offended when President [Paul Kruger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kruger) gave monopoly rights for the manufacture of the explosive to a non-British operation of the Nobel company, which infuriated the British.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-13) The so-called "dynamite monopoly" became a major pretext for war.

(c) British imperial interests were alarmed when in 1894–95 Kruger proposed building a railway through [Portuguese East Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_East_Africa) to [Delagoa Bay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maputo_Bay), thereby bypassing British controlled ports in Natal and Cape Town and avoiding British tariffs.[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-14) At the time the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony was [Cecil Rhodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes), a man driven by a vision of a British controlled Africa extending from [Cape to Cairo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_to_Cairo_Road).

Certain self-appointed *Uitlanders* representatives and British mine owners became increasingly angered and frustrated by their dealings with the Transvaal government. A Reform Committee (Transvaal) was formed to represent the uitlanders.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=4)**] Jameson Raid**

*Main article:* [*Jameson Raid*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jameson_Raid)





A sketch showing the arrest of [Jameson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jameson_Raid) after the failed raid, in 1896

In 1895, a plan was hatched with the connivance of the Cape Prime Minister [Cecil Rhodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes), Johannesburg gold magnate [Alfred Beit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Beit) and Sir Alfred Milner (British High Commissioner for South Africa and Lieutenant Governor of the Cape) to liberate [Johannesburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg) from the control of the Transvaal government. A column of 600 armed men (mainly made up of his [Rhodesian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodesia) and [Bechuanaland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bechuanaland) policemen) was led by Dr [Leander Starr Jameson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leander_Starr_Jameson) (the Administrator in Rhodesia of the Chartered Company of which Cecil Rhodes was the Chairman) over the border from Bechuanaland towards Johannesburg. The column was equipped with six Maxim machine guns, two 7 pounder mountain guns, and a 12½ pounder field piece. The plan was to make a three-day dash to Johannesburg before the Boer [commandos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commando) could mobilise, and once there, trigger an uprising by the primarily British expatriate workers (uitlanders) organised by the [Reform Committee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg_Reform_Committee). However, the Transvaal authorities had advance warning of the [Jameson Raid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jameson_Raid) and tracked it from the moment it crossed the border. Four days later, the weary and dispirited column was surrounded near [Krugersdorp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krugersdorp) within sight of Johannesburg. After a brief skirmish in which the column lost 65 killed and wounded, and the Boers lost one man, Jameson's men surrendered and were arrested by the Boers.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Thomas_Pakenham_p._1_-_5-7)

The botched raid resulted in repercussions throughout southern Africa and in Europe. In Rhodesia, the departure of so many policemen enabled the [Matabele](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ndebele_people) and [Mashona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashona) tribes to rise up against the Chartered Company, and the rebellion, known as the [Second Matabele War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Matabele_War), was suppressed only at great cost. A few days after the raid, the German Kaiser sent a telegram ("[Kruger telegram](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kruger_telegram)") congratulating President Kruger and the South African Republic government on their success, and when this was disclosed in the British press, it generated a storm of anti-German feeling. In the baggage of the raiding column, to the great embarrassment of the British, the Boers found telegrams from Cecil Rhodes, and the plotters in Johannesburg. [Joseph Chamberlain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Chamberlain), the British Colonial Secretary, quickly moved to condemn the raid, despite previously having approved Rhodes' plans to send armed assistance in the case of a Johannesburg uprising. Subsequently, Rhodes was severely censured at the Cape enquiry and the London parliamentary enquiry, and forced to resign as Prime Minister of the Cape and as Chairman of the Chartered Company for having sponsored the failed [coup d'état](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coup_d%27%C3%A9tat).

The Boer government handed their raid prisoners over to the British for trial. Dr. Jameson was tried in England for leading the raid. However, the British press and London society inflamed by anti-Boer and anti-German feeling and in a frenzy of jingoism, lionized Dr. Jameson and treated him as a hero. Although sentenced to 15 months imprisonment (which he served in [Holloway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holloway_%28HM_Prison%29)), Jameson was later rewarded with Prime Ministership of the Cape Colony (1904–08) and ultimately anointed as one of the founders of the Union of South Africa. For conspiring with Jameson, the uitlander members of the Reform Committee (Transvaal) were tried in the Transvaal courts and found guilty of high treason. They were sentenced to death by hanging, but this sentence was later commuted to 15 years' imprisonment, and in June 1896, all surviving members of the Committee were released on payment of some ₤300,000 in fines, all of which was paid by Cecil Rhodes.

Jan C. Smuts wrote in 1906, "The Jameson Raid was the real declaration of war…And that is so in spite of the four years of truce that followed…[the] aggressors consolidated their alliance…the defenders on the other hand silently and grimly prepared for the inevitable." [[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-15)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=5)**] Escalation and war**





[Paul Kruger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kruger), leader of the [South African Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic), (Transvaal), issued an ultimatum of withdrawal in response to the British ultimatum by [Joseph Chamberlain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Chamberlain) for uitlander rights, which escalated the situation to a state of war

The Jameson Raid alienated many Cape Afrikaners from the British, and united the Transvaal Boers behind President Kruger and his government. It also had the effect of drawing the Transvaal and the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State) (led by President [Martinus Theunis Steyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martinus_Theunis_Steyn)) together in opposition to perceived British imperialism. In 1897, a military pact was concluded between the two republics. President [Paul Kruger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Kruger) proceeded to re-equip the Transvaal army, and imported 37,000 of the latest magazine [Mauser rifles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauser#Model_1894_and_Model_1895), and some 40 to 50 million rounds of ammunition.[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-16) The best modern European artillery was also purchased. By October 1899 the Tranvaal State Artillery had 73 guns, 59 of them new, including four 155-mm Creusot fortress guns, 25 37mm Maxim Nordenfeldt guns.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Andr.C3.A9_Wessels_2000_p.80-17) The Transvaal army had been transformed; approximately 25,000 men equipped with modern rifles and artillery could mobilise within two weeks. However, President Kruger's victory in the Jameson Raid incident did nothing to resolve the fundamental problem; the impossible dilemma continued, namely how to make concessions to the uitlanders without surrendering the independence of the Transvaal.

The failure to gain improved rights for uitlanders became a pretext for war, and to justify a major military buildup in the Cape Colony. The case for war was justified and espoused as far away as the Australian colonies.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-18) Several key British colonial leaders favoured annexation of the independent Boer republics. These figures included Cape Colony Governor Sir [Alfred Milner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Milner), Cape Prime Minister [Cecil Rhodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes), British Colonial Secretary [Joseph Chamberlain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Chamberlain) and mining syndicate owners or [Randlords](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randlord) (nicknamed the *gold bugs*) such as [Alfred Beit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Beit), [Barney Barnato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barney_Barnato) and [Lionel Phillips](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lionel_Phillips). Confident that the Boers would be quickly defeated, they planned and organised a short war, citing the uitlanders' grievances as the motivation for the conflict.

Their influence with the British government was, however, limited. Salisbury, the Prime Minister, despised jingoism and jingoists. He also distrusted the abilities of the British army. He led Britain into war for three main reasons: because he believed there was an obligation to British South Africans; because he thought that the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and the Cape Boers aspired to a Dutch South Africa, and that the achievement of such a state would damage Britain's imperial prestige around the world; and because of the Boers' treatment of Black South Africans.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-19) (Salisbury had referred to the London Convention of 1884, after the British defeat, as an agreement 'really in the interest of slavery'.)[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-20) Salisbury was not alone in this concern over the treatment of Black South Africans; [Roger Casement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Casement), already well on the way to becoming an Irish Nationalist, was nevertheless happy to gather intelligence for the British against the Boers because of their treatment of Black Africans.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-21) These liberal concerns were essentially used as a bargaining chip in negotiating the Boers' surrender; in agreeing the final peace terms, no account was paid to the rights or obligations owed to the Black Africans by the British.

Given this sense of caution among key members of the British cabinet and of the Army, it is even harder to understand why the British Government went against the advice of its generals (such as Wolsely) to send substantial reinforcements to South Africa before war broke out. One strong argument is that Lansdowne, Secretary of State for War, did not believe the Boers were preparing for war, and also believed that if Britain were to send large numbers of troops, it would strike too aggressive a posture and so prevent a negotiated settlement being reached or encourage a Boer attack.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-22)

President Steyn of the Orange Free State invited Milner and Kruger to attend a conference in [Bloemfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloemfontein) which started on 30 May 1899, but negotiations quickly broke down, despite Kruger's offer of concessions. In September 1899, Chamberlain sent an ultimatum demanding full equality for British citizens resident in Transvaal. Kruger, seeing that war was inevitable, simultaneously issued his own ultimatum prior to receiving Chamberlain's. This gave the British 48 hours to withdraw all their troops from the border of Transvaal; otherwise the Transvaal, allied with the Orange Free State, would declare war.

News of the ultimatum reached [London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London) on the day it expired. Outrage and laughter were the main responses. The editor of the *Times* laughed out loud when he read it, saying 'an official document is seldom amusing and useful yet this was both'. *The Times* denounced the ultimatum as an 'extravagant farce', *The Globe* denounced this 'trumpery little state'. Most editorials were similar to the *Daily Telegraph*, which declared: 'of course there can only be one answer to this grotesque challenge. Kruger has asked for war and war he must have!'.

It is important, however, to note how distant such views were from those of the British Government, and those in the Army. To most sensible observers, Army reform had been a matter of pressing concern from the 1870s, constantly put off because the British public did not want the expense of a larger, more professional army, and because a large home army was not politically welcome. Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, had had to explain to a surprised Queen Victoria that: 'We have no army capable of meeting even a second-class Continental Power.'[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-23)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=6)**] First phase: The Boer offensive (October – December 1899)**

War was declared on 11 October 1899 with a Boer offensive into the British-held Natal and Cape Colony areas. The Boers had no problems with mobilisation, since the fiercely independent Boers had no regular army units, apart from the *Staatsartillerie* (Afrikaans for 'States Artillery') of both republics. As with the First Boer War, the Boers, being civilian militia, each man wore what they wished, usually their everyday dark-gray, light-gray, neutral-colored, or earthtone khaki farming clothes such as a jacket, trousers and slouch hat. Only the members of the *Staatsartillerie* wore light green uniforms. When danger loomed, all the *burghers* (citizens) in a district would form a military unit called a commando and would elect officers. A full-time official titled a *Veldkornet* maintained muster rolls, but had no disciplinary powers. Each man brought his own weapon, usually a hunting rifle, and his own horse. Those who could not afford a gun were given one by the authorities.[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Andr.C3.A9_Wessels_2000_p.80-17) (See also the arms procurement mentioned above.) The Presidents of the Transvaal and Orange Free State simply signed decrees to concentrate within a week and the Commandos could muster between 30-40,000 men.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-24)

This is not to say that the average Boer was war-thirsty. Many did not look forward to fighting against fellow Christians and, by and large, fellow Christian Protestants. Many may have had an over-optimistic sense of what the war would involve, imagining that victory could be won as easily as in the First South African War.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-25) Many, including many generals, also had a sense that their cause was holy and just, and blessed by God.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-26)

It rapidly became clear that the Boer forces presented the British forces a severe tactical challenge. What the Boers presented was a mobile and innovative approach to warfare, drawing on their experiences from the First Boer War. The average Boers who made up their Commandos were farmers who had spent almost all their working life in the saddle both as farmers and hunters. They had to depend for the pot on their horse and their rifle and were skilled stalkers and marksmen. As hunters they had learnt to fire from cover, from a [prone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prone) position and to make the first shot count, knowing that if they missed the game would be long gone, or potentially kill them. At community gatherings, target shooting was a major sport and they practised shooting at targets such as hens' eggs perched on posts 100 yards (91 m) away. They made expert mounted infantry, using every scrap of cover, from which they could pour in a destructive fire using their modern, smokeless, [Mauser](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauser) rifles. Furthermore, in preparation for hostilities the Boers had acquired around one hundred of the latest [Krupp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krupp) field guns, all horse-drawn and dispersed among the various Commando groups, and several [Le Creusot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Creusot) "Long Tom" siege guns. The Boers' skill in adapting themselves to becoming first-rate artillerymen shows them to have been a versatile adversary.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-27) The Transvaal also had an intelligence service that stretched across South Africa, and of whose extent and efficiency the British were unaware.[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-28)





The [Siege of Mafeking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Mafeking) was to last 217 days. [Robert Baden-Powell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Baden-Powell%2C_1st_Baron_Baden-Powell) (pictured) commanded the defence of the town against the Boers' offensive

The Boers struck first on 12 October at [Kraaipan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Kraaipan), an attack that heralded the invasion of the [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) and [Colony of Natal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_of_Natal) between October 1899 and January 1900. With elements of both speed and surprise the Boer drove quickly towards the major British garrison at Ladysmith and the smaller ones at Mafeking and Kimberley. The quick Boer mobilisation resulted in early military successes against the scattered British forces.

Sir [George Stuart White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Stuart_White), commanding the British division at Ladysmith, had unwisely allowed Major-General Penn Symons to throw a brigade forward to the coal-mining town of Dundee (also reported as Glencoe) which was surrounded by hills. This became the site of the first engagement of the war, the [Battle of Talana Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Talana_Hill). Boer guns began shelling the British camp from the summit of Talana Hill at dawn on 20 October. Penn-Symons immediately counter-attacked. His infantry drove the Boers from the hill, but at the cost of 446 British casualties including Penn-Symons himself.

Another Boer force had occupied Elandslaagte which lay between Ladysmith and Dundee. The British under Major General [John French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_French%2C_1st_Earl_of_Ypres) and Colonel [Ian Hamilton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_Standish_Monteith_Hamilton) attacked to clear the line of communications to Dundee. The resulting [Battle of Elandslaagte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Elandslaagte) was a clear-cut British tactical victory, but Sir George White feared that more Boers were about to attack his main position and ordered a chaotic retreat from Elandslaagte, throwing away any advantage gained. The detachment from Dundee was compelled to make an exhausting cross-country retreat to rejoin White's main force.

As Boers surrounded Ladysmith and opened fire on the town with siege guns, White ordered a major sortie against the Boer artillery positions. The result was a disaster, with 140 men killed and over 1000 captured. The [Siege of Ladysmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Ladysmith) began, and was to last several months.

Meanwhile to the north-west at Mafeking, on the border with Transvaal, Colonel [Robert Baden-Powell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Baden-Powell%2C_1st_Baron_Baden-Powell) had raised two regiments of local forces amounting to some 1,200 men in order to attack and create diversions if things further south went amiss. Mafeking, being a railway junction, provided good supply facilities and was the obvious place for Baden-Powell to fortify in readiness for such attacks. However, instead of being the aggressor Baden-Powell and Mafeking were forced to defend when 6,000 Boer, commanded by Piet Cronje, attempted a determined assault on the town. But this quickly subsided into a desultory affair with the Boer prepared to starve the stronghold into submission and so, on the 13 October, began the 217-day [Siege of Mafeking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Mafeking).

Lastly, over 200 miles (320 km) to the south of Mafeking lay the diamond mining city of Kimberley, which was also subjected to a [siege](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kimberley). Although not militarily significant, it nonetheless represented an enclave of British Imperialism on the borders of the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State) and was hence an important Boer objective. From early November about 7,500 Boer began their siege, again content to starve the town into submission. Despite Boer shelling, the 40,000 inhabitants of which only 5,000 were armed, were under little threat as the town was well-stocked with provisions. The garrison was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel [Robert Kekewich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Kekewich), although [Cecil Rhodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_Rhodes) was also a prominent figure in the defence.

Siege life took its toll on both the defending soldiers and the civilians in the cities of Mafeking, Ladysmith, and Kimberley as food began to grow scarce after a few weeks. In Mafeking, [Sol Plaatje](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Plaatje) wrote, "I saw horseflesh for the first time being treated as a human foodstuff." The cities under siege also dealt with constant artillery bombardment, making the streets a dangerous place. Near the end of the siege of Kimberley, it was expected that the Boers would intensify their bombardment, so Rhodes displayed a notice encouraging people to go down into shafts of the [Kimberley Mine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Hole) for protection. The townspeople panicked, and people flowed into the mineshafts constantly for a 12-hour period. Although the bombardment never came, this did nothing to diminish the distress of the civilians. The most well-heeled of the townspeople, such as Cecil Rhodes, sheltered in the Sanatorium, site of the present-day [McGregor Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McGregor_Museum); the poorer residents, notably the Black population, did not have any shelter from the shelling.

In retrospect, the decision to commit themselves to sieges (Sitzkrieg) was a large mistake, and one of the best illustrations of the Boers' lack of strategic vision. Historically, it had little in its favour. Of the seven sieges in the First Boer War, the Boers had won none. More importantly, it handed the initiative back to the British and allowed them time to recover; which they then did. Generally speaking, throughout the campaign, the Boers were too defensive and passive, wasting the opportunities they had for victory. Yet that passiveness also testified to the fact that they had no desire to conquer British territory, but only to preserve their ability to rule in their own.[[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-29)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=7)**] First British relief attempts**





General [Redvers Henry Buller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redvers_Henry_Buller) (pictured) launched an offensive against the Boers in the early phases of the war, but after a series of defeats, culminating at [Colenso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colenso%2C_KwaZulu-Natal), he was replaced by [Earl Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Roberts%2C_1st_Earl_Roberts)

It was at this point that General Sir [Redvers Henry Buller](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redvers_Henry_Buller), a much respected commander, arrived in South Africa with major British reinforcements (including an Army Corps of three divisions). Buller originally intended an offensive straight up the railway line leading from [Cape Town](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Town) through [Bloemfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloemfontein) to [Pretoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pretoria). Finding on arrival that the British troops already in South Africa were under siege, he split his Army Corps into several widely spread detachments, to relieve the besieged garrisons. One force, led by Lieutenant General [Lord Methuen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Sanford_Methuen%2C_3rd_Baron_Methuen), was to follow the Western Railway to the north and relieve Kimberley and Mafeking. A smaller force of about 3,000 led by Major General [William Gatacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Forbes_Gatacre), was to push north toward the railway junction at Stormberg, to secure the [Cape Midlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cape_Midlands&action=edit&redlink=1) district from Boer raids and local rebellions by Boer inhabitants. Finally, Buller himself would lead the major force and relieve Ladysmith to the east.

The initial results of this offensive were mixed with Methuen winning several bloody skirmishes at [Belmont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Belmont_%281899%29) on 23 November, [Graspan](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Battle_of_Graspan&action=edit&redlink=1) on 25 November and a larger conflict at the [Modder River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Modder_River) on 28 November resulting in British losses of 71 dead and over 400 wounded. British commanders had trained on the lessons of the [Crimean War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_War), and were adept at battalion and regimental set pieces with columns manoeuvring in jungles, deserts and mountainous regions; what they entirely failed to comprehend was the impact of destructive fire from trench positions, and the mobility of cavalry raids both of which had been developed in the American Civil War. The British troops went to war with what would prove to be antiquated tactics, and in some cases antiquated weapons ,[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-30) against the mobile Boer forces with the destructive fire of their modern Mausers, the latest Krupp field guns and their innovative tactics.

The middle of December was disastrous for the British army. In a period known as [Black Week](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Week) (10 – 15 December 1899), the British suffered a series of devastating losses at [Magersfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Magersfontein), [Stormberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stormberg), and [Colenso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Colenso). At Colenso the British suffered over 1,100 casualties to the 8 Boer dead.[[32]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-31)

On 10 December, General Gatacre tried to recapture Stormberg railway junction about 50 miles (80 km) south of the [Orange River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_River). Gatacre's attack was marked by administrative and tactical blunders, and the [Battle of Stormberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stormberg) ended in a British defeat, with 135 killed and wounded, as well as two guns and over 600 troops captured.

At the [Battle of Magersfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Magersfontein) on 11 December, Methuen's 14,000 British troops attempted to capture a Boer position in a dawn attack to relieve Kimberley. This turned into a disaster when the [Highland Brigade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highland_Brigade_%28Scottish%29) became pinned down by accurate Boer fire. After suffering from intense heat and thirst for nine hours, they eventually broke in ill-disciplined retreat. The Boer commanders, [Koos de la Rey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koos_de_la_Rey) and [Piet Cronje](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Cronje), had devised a plan to dig [trenches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trench) in an unconventional place to fool the British and to give their riflemen a greater firing range. The plan worked and this tactic helped write the doctrine of the supremacy of the defensive position, using modern small arms and trench fortifications.[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-32) The British lost 120 killed and 690 wounded and were prevented from relieving Kimberley and Mafeking. A British soldier encapsulated the soldiers view of the defeat:

*"Such was the day for our regiment*
*Dread the revenge we will take.*
*Dearly we paid for the blunder -*
*A drawing-room General’s mistake.*
*Why weren’t we told of the trenches?*
*Why weren’t we told of the wire?*
*Why were we marched up in column,*
*May* [*Tommy Atkins*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tommy_Atkins) *enquire…."* [[34]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-33)

But the [nadir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nadir) of [Black Week](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Week) was the [Battle of Colenso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Colenso) on 15 December where 21,000 British troops commanded by Buller himself, attempted to cross the [Tugela River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tugela_River) to relieve Ladysmith where 8,000 Transvaal Boers, under the command of [Louis Botha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Botha), were awaiting them. Through a combination of artillery and accurate rifle fire, and a better use of the ground, the Boers repelled all British attempts to cross the river. After his first attacks failed, Buller broke off the battle and ordered a retreat, abandoning many wounded men, several isolated units and ten field guns to be captured by Botha's men. Buller’s forces lost 145 men killed and 1,200 missing or wounded. The Boers suffered 40 casualties.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=8)**] Second phase: The British offensive of January to September 1900**





British casualties lie dead on the battlefield after the [Battle of Spion Kop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Spion_Kop), 24th Jan. 1900

The British Government took these defeats badly and with the sieges still continuing was compelled to send two more divisions plus large numbers of colonial volunteers. By January 1900 this would become the largest force Britain had ever sent overseas, amounting to some 180,000 men with further reinforcements being sought.

While waiting for these reinforcements, Buller made another bid to relieve Ladysmith by crossing the Tugela west of [Colenso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colenso%2C_KwaZulu-Natal). Buller's subordinate, Major General [Charles Warren](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Warren), successfully crossed the river, but was then faced with a fresh defensive position centred on a prominent hill known as Spion Kop. In the resulting [Battle of Spion Kop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Spion_Kop), British troops captured the summit by surprise during the early hours of 24 January 1900, but as the early morning fog lifted they realised too late that they were overlooked by Boer gun emplacements on the surrounding hills. The rest of the day resulted in a disaster caused by poor communication between Buller and his commanders. Between them they issued contradictory orders, on the one hand ordering men off the hill, while other officers ordered fresh reinforcements to defend it. The result was 350 men killed and nearly 1,000 wounded and a retreat back across the Tugela River into British territory. There were nearly 300 Boer casualties.

Buller attacked Louis Botha again on 5 February at [Vaal Krantz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Vaal_Krantz) and was again defeated. Buller withdrew early when it appeared that the British would be isolated in an exposed bridgehead across the Tugela, and was nicknamed "Sir Reverse" by some of his officers.

By taking command in person in Natal, Buller had allowed the overall direction of the war to drift. Because of concerns about his performance and negative reports from the field, he was replaced as Commander in Chief by [Field Marshal Lord Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Roberts%2C_1st_Earl_Roberts). Roberts first intended like Buller to attack directly along the Cape Town - Pretoria railway but, again like Buller, was forced to relieve the beleaguered garrisons. Leaving Buller in command in Natal, Roberts massed his main force near the [Orange River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_River) and along the Western Railway behind Methuen's force at the [Modder River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modder_River), and prepared to make a wide outflanking move to relieve Kimberley.

Except in Natal, the war had stagnated. Other than a single attempt to storm Ladysmith, the Boers made no attempt to capture the besieged towns. In the Cape Midlands, the Boers did not exploit the British defeat at Stormberg, and were prevented from capturing the railway junction at [Colesberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colesberg). In the dry summer, the grazing on the veld became parched, weakening the Boers' horses and draught oxen, and many Boer families joined their menfolk in the siege lines and *laagers* (encampments), fatally encumbering Cronje's army.

Roberts launched his main attack on 10 February 1900 and although hampered by a long supply route, managed to outflank the Boers defending Magersfontein. On 14 February, a cavalry division under Major General [John French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_French%2C_1st_Earl_of_Ypres) launched a major attack to relieve Kimberley. Although encountering severe fire, a massed cavalry charge split the Boer defences on 15 February, opening the way for French to enter Kimberley that evening, ending its 124 days’ siege.

Meanwhile, Roberts pursued Piet Cronje’s 7,000 strong force, which had abandoned Magersfontein to head for Bloemfontein. General French’s cavalry was ordered to assist in the pursuit by embarking on an epic 30-mile drive towards Paardeberg where Cronje was attempting to cross the Modder River. At the [Battle of Paardeberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Paardeberg) from 18 February to 27 February, Roberts then surrounded General [Piet Cronje](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Cronje)'s retreating Boer army. On 17 February, a pincer movement involving both French’s cavalry and the main British force attempted to take the entrenched position, but the frontal attacks were uncoordinated and so were easily repulsed by the Boers. Finally, Roberts resorted to bombarding Cronje into submission, but it took a further ten precious days and with the British troops using the polluted Modder River as water supply, resulting in a typhoid epidemic killing many troops. General Cronje was forced to surrender with 4000 men.





The Relief of Ladysmith. Sir [George Stuart White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Stuart_White) greets Major [Hubert Gough](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hubert_Gough) on 28 February. Painting by [John Henry Frederick Bacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Henry_Frederick_Bacon) (1868–1914)

In Natal, the [Battle of the Tugela Heights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Tugela_Heights) which started on 14 February was Buller's fourth attempt to relieve Ladysmith. Despite reinforcements his progress was painfully slow against stiff opposition. However, on 26 February, after much deliberation, Buller used all his forces in one all-out attack for the first time and at last succeeded in forcing a crossing of the Tugela, and defeated Botha's outnumbered forces north of Colenso. The [Relief of Ladysmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relief_of_Ladysmith) occurred after a siege lasting 118 days the day after Cronje surrendered, but at a total cost of 7,000 British casualties.

After a succession of defeats, the Boers realised that against such overwhelming superiority of troops they had little chance of defeating the British and so became demoralised. Roberts then advanced into the Orange Free State from the west, putting the Boers to flight at the [Battle of Poplar Grove](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Poplar_Grove) and capturing [Bloemfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloemfontein), the capital, unopposed on 13 March with the Boer defenders escaping and scattering. Meanwhile, he detached a small force to relieve Baden-Powell, and the [Relief of Mafeking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relief_of_Mafeking) on 18 May 1900 provoked riotous celebrations in Britain.

On 28 May, the Orange Free State was annexed and renamed the Orange River Colony.

After being forced to delay for several weeks at Bloemfontein due to shortage of supplies and [enteric fever](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enteric_fever) (caused by poor hygiene, drinking bad water at Paardeburg and appalling medical care),[[35]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-34) Roberts resumed his advance. He was forced to halt again at Kroonstad for 10 days, due once again to the collapse of his medical and supply systems, then finally captured Johannesburg on 31 May and the capital of the Transvaal, [Pretoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pretoria), on 5 June. The first into Pretoria, was Lt. William Watson of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles, who persuaded the Boers to surrender the capital.[[36]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-35)(Before the war, the Boers had constructed several forts south of Pretoria, but the artillery had been removed from the forts for use in the field, and in the event the Boers abandoned Pretoria without a fight).

This allowed the Roberts to declare the war over, having won the principal cities and so, on the 3 September 1900, the South African Republic was formally annexed.

British observers believed the war to be all but over after the capture of the two capital cities. However, the Boers had earlier met at the temporary new capital of the Orange Free State, [Kroonstad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kroonstad), and planned a [guerrilla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_warfare) campaign to hit the British supply and communication lines. The first engagement of this new form of warfare was at [Sanna's Post](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanna%27s_Post) on 31 March where 1,500 Boers under the command of [Christiaan De Wet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christiaan_De_Wet) attacked Bloemfontein's waterworks about 23 miles (37 km) east of the city, and ambushed a heavily escorted convoy which resulted in 155 British casualties and the capture of seven guns, 117 wagons and 428 British troops.[[37]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-36)





General [Piet Cronjé](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Cronj%C3%A9) as a prisoner of war in Saint Helena, 1900-02. He was captured, along with the 2500 men under his command, after the loss of the [Battle of Paardeberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Paardeberg).

After the fall of Pretoria, one of the last formal battles was at [Diamond Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Diamond_Hill) on 11 – 12 June, where Roberts attempted to drive the remnants of the Boer field army beyond striking distance of Pretoria. Although Roberts drove the Boers from the hill, the Boer commander, Louis Botha, did not regard it as a defeat, for he inflicted more casualties on the British (totalling 162 men) while suffering around 50 casualties.

The set-piece period of the war now largely gave way to a mobile [guerrilla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla) war, but one final operation remained. President Kruger and what remained of the Transvaal government had retreated to eastern Transvaal. Roberts, joined by troops from Natal under Buller, advanced against them, and broke their last defensive position at [Bergendal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bergendal) on 26 August. As Roberts and Buller followed up along the railway line to [Komatipoort](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komatipoort), Kruger sought asylum in Portuguese East Africa (modern [Mozambique](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique)). Some dispirited Boers did likewise, and the British gathered up much war material. However, the core of the Boer fighters under Botha easily broke back through the [Drakensberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drakensberg) mountains into the Transvaal highveld after riding north through the bushveld. Under the new conditions of the war, heavy equipment was no use to them, and therefore no great loss.

There was much sympathy for the Boers on mainland Europe and in October, President Kruger and members of the Transvaal government left South Africa on the Dutch warship [*De Gelderland*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Gelderland), sent by the Queen of the Netherlands [Wilhelmina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelmina_of_the_Netherlands), who had simply ignored the British naval blockade of South Africa. Paul Kruger's wife however was too ill to travel and remained in South Africa where she died on 20 July 1901 without seeing Paul Kruger again. President Kruger first went to Marseille and then on to The Netherlands where he stayed for a while before moving finally to [Clarens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarens%2C_Switzerland), Switzerland, where he died in exile on 14 July 1904.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=9)**] POWs sent overseas**

The first sizable batch of Boer prisoners of war taken by the British consisted of those captured at the [Battle of Elandslaagte](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Elandslaagte) on 21 October 1899. At first, many were put on ships, but as numbers grew, the British decided they did not want them kept locally. The capture of 400 POWs in February 1900 was a key event, which made the British realise they could not accommodate all POWs in South Africa.[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-collint-37) The British feared they could be freed by sympathetic locals. They already had trouble supplying their own troops in South Africa, and did not want the added burden of sending supplies for the POWs. Britain therefore chose to send many POWs overseas.





A Transit camp for [Prisoners of War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoners_of_War) near Cape Town during the war. Prisoners were then transferred for internment in other parts of the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire).

The first overseas (off African mainland) camps were opened in [Saint Helena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Helena), which ultimately received about 5,000 POWs. About 5,000 POWs were sent to [Ceylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka)[[39]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-38) Other POWs were sent to [Bermuda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bermuda) and India. No evidence exists of Boer POWs being sent to the Dominions of the British Empire such as Australia, Canada or New Zealand.[[38]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-collint-37)

In all, about 26,000 POWs were sent overseas.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-39)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=10)**] Third phase: Guerrilla war (September 1900 – May 1902)**

By September 1900, the British were nominally in control of both Republics, with the exception of the northern part of Transvaal. However, they soon discovered that they only controlled directly the territory which their columns physically occupied. The Boer commanders adopted [guerrilla warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_warfare) tactics, primarily conducting [raids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raid_%28military%29) against infrastructure, resource and supply targets, all aimed at disrupting the operational capacity of the British Army.

Each Boer commando unit was sent to the district from which its members had been recruited which meant that they could rely on local support and personal knowledge of the terrain and the towns within the district thereby enabling them to live off the land. Their orders were simply to act against the British whenever possible. Their tactics were to strike fast and hard causing as much damage to the enemy as possible, and then to withdraw and vanish before enemy reinforcements could arrive. The vast distances of the Republics allowed the Boer commandos considerable freedom to move about and made it impossible for the 250,000 British troops to control the territory effectively using columns alone. As soon as a British column left a town or district, British control of that area faded away.





A surviving [blockhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockhouse) in South Africa. Blockhouses were constructed by the British to secure supply routes from Boer raids during the war.

The Boer commandos were especially effective during the initial guerrilla phase of the war because Roberts had assumed that the war would end with the capture of the Boer capitals and the dispersal of the main Boer armies. Many British troops were therefore redeployed out of the area, and had been replaced by lower-quality contingents of [Imperial Yeomanry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Yeomanry) and locally-raised irregular corps.

From late May 1900, the first successes of the Boer strategy were at Lindley (where 500 Yeomanry surrendered), and at Heilbron (where a large convoy and its escort were captured) and other skirmishes resulting in 1,500 British casualties in less than ten days. In December 1900, De la Rey and [Chistiaan Beyers](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chistiaan_Beyers&action=edit&redlink=1) mauled a British brigade at [Nooitgedacht](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nooitgedacht). As a result of these and other Boer successes the British, led by Lord Kitchener, mounted three extensive searches for De Wet, but without success. However, by its very nature the guerrilla war was sporadic, poorly planned and with little overall objective in mind except to harass the British. This led to a disorganised pattern of scattered engagements throughout the whole region.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=11)**] British response**

The British were forced to quickly revise their tactics. They concentrated on restricting the freedom of movement of the Boer commandos, and depriving them of local support. The railway lines had provided vital lines of communication and supply, and as the British had advanced across South Africa, they had used armoured trains and had established fortified [blockhouses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockhouses) at key points.[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Jones-40) They now built additional blockhouses (each housing 6-8 soldiers) and fortified these to protect supply routes against Boer [raiders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raid_%28military%29). Eventually some 8,000 such blockhouses were built radiating from the larger towns. Each blockhouse cost between 800 and 1,000 pounds and took 3 months to build. However, they proved very effective. Not one bridge where one of these blockhouses was sited and manned was blown.[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Jones-40)

The blockhouse system required an enormous number of troops to maintain. Well over 50,000 British troops, or 50 battalions, were involved in blockhouse duty, greater than the approximately 30,000 Boers in the field during the guerilla phase. In addition, up to 16,000 Africans were used both as armed guards and to patrol the line at night.[[41]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-Jones-40) The Army linked the blockhouses with barbed wire fences to parcel up the wide veld into smaller areas. "New Model" drives were mounted under which a continuous line of troops could sweep an area of veld bounded by blockhouse lines, unlike the earlier inefficient scouring of the countryside by scattered columns.





One British response to the guerrilla war was a 'scorched earth' policy to deny the guerillas supplies and refuge. In this image [Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) civilians watch their house as it is burned.

The British also implemented a "[Scorched Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorched_Earth)" policy under which they targeted everything within the controlled areas that could give sustenance to the Boer guerrillas with a view to making it harder and harder for the Boers to survive. As British troops swept the countryside, they systematically destroyed crops, burned homesteads and farms, poisoned wells, and interned Boer and African women, children and workers in [concentration camps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camp). Finally, the British also established their own mounted raiding columns in support of the sweeper columns. These were used to rapidly follow and relentlessly harass the Boers with a view to delaying them, and cutting off escape, while the sweeper units caught up. Many of the 90 or so mobile columns formed by the British to participate in such drives were a mixture of British and Colonial troops but also had a large minority of armed Africans and the total number of armed Africans serving with these columns has been estimated at approximately 20,000. The British also utilised armoured trains to deliver rapid reaction forces much more quickly to incidents (such as Boer attacks on blockhouses and columns) or to drop them off ahead of retreating Boer columns.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=12)**] The Orange Free State**





[Christiaan de Wet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christiaan_de_Wet) (pictured) was considered the most formidable leader of the Boer guerillas. He successfully evaded capture on numerous occasions and was later involved in the negotiations for a peace settlement.

While the British occupied [Pretoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pretoria), the Boer fighters in the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State) had been driven into a fertile area known as the Brandwater Basin in the north east of the Republic. This offered only temporary sanctuary, as the mountain passes leading to it could be occupied by the British, trapping the Boers. A force under General [Archibald Hunter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archibald_Hunter) set out from Bloemfontein to achieve this in July 1900. The hard core of the Boers under [Christiaan de Wet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christiaan_de_Wet), accompanied by President Steyn, left the basin early. Those remaining fell into confusion and most failed to break out before Hunter trapped them. 4,500 Boers surrendered and much equipment was captured, but as with Robert's drive against Kruger at the same time, these losses were of relatively little consequence, as the hard core of the Boer armies and their most determined and active leaders remained at large.

From the Basin, Christiaan de Wet headed west. Although hounded by British columns, he succeeded in crossing the Vaal into western Transvaal, to allow Steyn to travel to meet the Transvaal leaders. Returning to the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State), de Wet inspired a series of successful attacks and raids from the hitherto quiet western part of the country, though he suffered a rare defeat at [Bothaville](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bothaville) in November 1900. Many Boers who had earlier returned to their farms, sometimes giving formal parole to the British, took up arms again. In late January 1901, De Wet led a renewed invasion of [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony). This was less successful, because there was no general uprising among the Cape Boers, and de Wet's men were hampered by bad weather and relentlessly pursued by British forces. They narrowly escaped across the [Orange River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_River).

From then until the final days of the war, de Wet remained comparatively quiet, partly because the Orange Free State was effectively left desolate by British sweeps. In late 1901, De Wet overran an isolated British detachment at [Groenkop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Groenkop), inflicting heavy casualties. This prompted Kitchener to launch the first of the "New Model" drives against him. De Wet escaped the first such drive, but lost 300 of his fighters. This was a severe loss, and a portent of further attrition, although the subsequent attempts to round up De Wet were badly handled, and De Wet's forces avoided capture.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=13)**] Western Transvaal**

The Boer commandos in the Western Transvaal were very active after September 1901. Several battles of importance were fought here between September 1901 and March 1902. At Moedwil on 30 September 1901 and again at Driefontein on 24 October, General [Koos de la Rey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koos_de_la_Rey)’s forces attacked the British, but were forced to withdraw after the British offered strong resistance.

A time of relative quiet descended thereafter on the western Transvaal. February 1902 saw the next major battle in that region. On 25 February, Koos de la Rey attacked a British column under Lieutenant-Colonel S. B. Von Donop at Ysterspruit near [Wolmaransstad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolmaransstad). Koos de la Rey succeeded in capturing many men and a large amount of ammunition. The Boer attacks prompted Lord Methuen, the British second-in-command after [Lord Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener), to move his column from Vryburg to Klerksdorp to deal with Koos de la Rey. On the morning of 7 March 1902, the Boers attacked the rear guard of Methuen’s moving column at [Tweebosch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Tweebosch). Confusion reigned in British ranks and Methuen was wounded and captured by the Boers.

The Boer victories in the west led to stronger action by the British. In the second half of March 1902, large British reinforcements were sent to the Western Transvaal under the direction of Ian Hamilton. The opportunity the British were waiting for arose on 11 April 1902 at [Rooiwal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Rooiwal), where a commando led by General [Jan Kemp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Kemp_%28South_African%29) and Commandant Potgieter attacked a superior force under Kekewich. The British soldiers were well positioned on the hillside and inflicted severe casualties on the Boers charging on horseback over a large distance, beating them back. This was the end of the war in the Western Transvaal and also the last major battle of the war.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=14)**] Eastern Transvaal**

Two Boer forces fought in this area; under Botha in the south east and Ben Viljoen in the north east around Lydenburg. Botha's forces were particularly active, raiding railways and British supply convoys, and even mounting a renewed invasion of Natal in September, 1901. After defeating British mounted infantry in the [Battle of Blood River Poort](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Blood_River_Poort) near [Dundee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dundee%2C_KwaZulu-Natal), Botha was forced to withdraw by heavy rains which made movement difficult and crippled his horses. Back on the Transvaal territory around his home district of Vryheid, Botha attacked a British raiding column at Bakenlaagte, using an effective mounted charge. One of the most active British units was effectively destroyed in this engagement. This made Botha's forces the target of increasingly large and ruthless drives by British forces, in which the British made particular use of native scouts and informers. Eventually, Botha had to abandon the high veld and retreat to a narrow enclave bordering [Swaziland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swaziland).

To the north, Ben Viljoen grew steadily less active. His forces mounted comparatively few attacks and as a result, the Boer enclave around [Lydenburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydenburg) was largely unmolested. Viljoen was eventually captured.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=15)**] Cape Colony**

In parts of Cape Colony, particularly the Cape Midlands district where Boers formed a majority of the white inhabitants, the British had always feared a general uprising against them. In fact, no such uprising took place, even in the early days of the war when Boer armies had advanced across the Orange. The cautious conduct of some of the elderly Orange Free State generals had been one factor which discouraged the Cape Boers from siding with the Boer republics. Nevertheless, there was widespread pro-Boer sympathy.

After he escaped across the Orange in March 1901, de Wet had left forces under Cape rebels Kritzinger and Scheepers to maintain a guerrilla campaign in the Cape Midlands. The campaign here was one of the least chivalrous of the war, with intimidation by both sides of each other's civilian sympathisers. In one of many skirmishes, Commandant Lotter's small commando was tracked down by a much-superior British column and wiped out at [Groenkloof](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Groenkloof). Several captured rebels, including Scheepers (who was captured when he fell ill with appendicitis) and Lotter, were executed by the British for treason or for capital crimes such as the murder of prisoners or of unarmed civilians. Some of the executions took place in public, to deter further disaffection. Since the Cape Colony was Imperial territory, its authorities forbade the British army from burning farms and forcing Boers into concentration camps.

Fresh Boer forces under [Jan Christiaan Smuts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Christiaan_Smuts), joined by the surviving rebels under Kritzinger, made another attack on the Cape in September 1901. They suffered severe hardships and were hard pressed by British columns, but eventually rescued themselves by routing some of their pursuers at the [Battle of Elands River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Elands_River) and capturing their equipment. From then until the end of the war, Smuts increased his forces from among Cape rebels until they numbered 3,000. However, no general uprising took place, and the situation in the Cape remained stalemated.

In January 1902, Boer leader [Manie Maritz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manie_Maritz) was implicated in the [Leliefontein massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leliefontein_massacre) in the far [Northern Cape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Cape).

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=16)**] Surgery and medicine during the war**

*Main article:* [*Treatment of the wounded in the Second Boer War*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treatment_of_the_wounded_in_the_Second_Boer_War)

More than half of British casualties during the war were caused by illness, especially [typhoid fever](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhoid_fever), rather than enemy action.[[42]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-41)[[43]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-42)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=17)**] Concentration camps (1900 - 1902)**





Boer women and children in a [concentration camp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camp)

The term "[concentration camp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camp)" was first used to describe camps operated by the [British](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) in South Africa during this conflict.

The camps had originally been set up by the [British Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Army) as "[refugee camps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugee_camps)" to provide refuge for civilian families who had been forced to abandon their homes for one or other reason related to the war. However, when [Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener) succeeded Roberts as commander-in-chief in South Africa in 29 November 1900, the British Army introduced new tactics in an attempt to break the guerrilla campaign and the influx of civilians grew dramatically as a result. Kitchener initiated plans to

"flush out guerrillas in a series of systematic drives, organized like a sporting shoot, with success defined in a weekly 'bag' of killed, captured and wounded, and to sweep the country bare of everything that could give sustenance to the guerrillas, including women and children.... It was the clearance of civilians—uprooting a whole nation—that would come to dominate the last phase of the war."[[44]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-43)





[Lizzie van Zyl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lizzie_van_Zyl), visited by [Emily Hobhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Hobhouse) in a British [concentration camp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camp)

As Boer farms were destroyed by the British under their "[Scorched Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorched_Earth)" policy—including the systematic destruction of crops and slaughtering of livestock, the burning down of homesteads and farms, and the poisoning of wells and salting of fields—to prevent the Boers from resupplying from a home base many tens of thousands of women and children were forcibly moved into the concentration camps. This was not the first appearance of internment camps. The Spanish had used internment in the [Ten Years' War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Years%27_War) that led to the [Spanish-American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish-American_War), and the United States had used them to devastate guerrilla forces during the [Philippine-American War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine-American_War). But the Boer War concentration camp system was the first time that a whole nation had been systematically targeted, and the first in which some whole regions had been depopulated.

Eventually, there were a total of 45 [tented](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tent) camps built for Boer internees and 64 for black Africans. Of the 28,000 Boer men captured as [prisoners of war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoners_of_war), 25,630 were sent overseas. The vast majority of Boers remaining in the local camps were women and children. Over 26,000 women and children were to perish in these concentration camps.

The camps were poorly administered from the outset and became increasingly overcrowded when Kitchener's troops implemented the internment strategy on a vast scale. Conditions were terrible for the health of the internees, mainly due to neglect, poor [hygiene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hygiene) and bad sanitation. The supply of all items was unreliable, partly because of the constant disruption of communication lines by the Boers. The food [rations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ration) were meagre and there was a two-tier allocation policy, whereby families of men who were still fighting were routinely given smaller rations than others. The inadequate shelter, poor diet, inadequate hygiene and overcrowding led to malnutrition and endemic contagious diseases such as [measles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measles), [typhoid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhoid) and [dysentery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysentery) to which the children were particularly vulnerable. An additional problem was the Boers' use of [traditional medicines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_medicine) like a cow-dung [poultice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poultice) for skin diseases and crushed insects for convulsions.[[45]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-44) Coupled with a shortage of modern medical facilities, many of the internees died.

As many Africans became refugees as the war raged across their farms and with the destruction of their homes, they, like Boers, moved to the towns where the British army hastily created internment camps. Subsequently, the "Scorched Earth" policy was ruthlessly applied to both Boers and Africans; although most black Africans were not considered by the British to be hostile, many tens of thousands were also forcibly removed from Boer areas and also placed in concentration camps.

Africans were separately held from Boer internees. Eventually there were a total of 64 tented camps for Africans. Conditions were as bad as in the camps for the Boers, but although after the Fawcett Commission report conditions improved in the Boer camps, "improvements were much slower in coming to the black camps." It is worth noting that [Emily Hobhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Hobhouse) and the Fawcett Commission only ever concerned themselves with the camps that held Boer refugees. No one paid much attention to what was going on in the camps that held African refugees. It is thought that about 12% of all black African inmates died (about 14,154) but the precise number of deaths of Africans in concentration camps is unknown as little attempt was made to keep any records of the 107,000 black Africans who were interned.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=18)**] Public opinion and political opposition**

Although the [1900 UK general election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_election%2C_1900), also known as the "Khaki election", had resulted in a victory for the [Conservative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Party_%28UK%29) government on the back of recent British victories against the Boers, public support quickly waned as it became apparent that the war would not be easy and unease developed following reports about the treatment by the Army of the Boer civilians. Public and political opposition to Government policies in South Africa regarding Boer civilians was first expressed in Parliament in February 1901 in the form of an attack on the policy, the government, and the Army by the radical [Liberal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Party_%28UK%29) MP [David Lloyd George](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Lloyd_George).





[Emily Hobhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Hobhouse) (pictured) campaigned for improvement to the appalling conditions of the concentration camps. She helped to alter public opinion and to force the government to improve conditions in the camps, resulting in the [Fawcett Commission](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millicent_Fawcett).

[Emily Hobhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Hobhouse), a delegate of the South African Women and Children's Distress Fund, visited some of the camps in the Orange Free State from January 1901 and in May, 1901 she returned to England on board the ship, the *Saxon*. [Alfred Milner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Milner), High Commissioner in South Africa, also boarded the *Saxon* for holiday in England but, unfortunately for both the camp internees and the British government, had no time for Miss Hobhouse, regarding her as a Boer sympathizer and "trouble maker." [[46]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-45) On her return, Emily Hobhouse did much to publicize the distress of the camp inmates. She managed to speak to the Liberal Party leader, [Henry Campbell-Bannerman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Campbell-Bannerman) who professed to be suitably outraged but was disinclined to press the matter, as his party was split between the imperialists and the pro-Boer factions.

The more radical Liberals however such as [David Lloyd George](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Lloyd_George) and [John Ellis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ellis_%28Liberal_politician%29) were prepared to raise the matter in Parliament and to harass the government on the issue, which they duly did. [St John Brodrick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_John_Brodrick%2C_1st_Earl_of_Midleton), the Conservative secretary of state for war, first defended the government's policy by arguing that the camps were purely 'voluntary' and that the interned Boers were "contented and comfortable", but was somewhat undermined as he had no firm statistics to back up his argument so when that position proved untenable, he resorted to the "military necessity" argument and stated that everything possible was being done to ensure satisfactory conditions in the camps.

Hobhouse published a report in June 1901 which contradicted Brodrick's claim, and Lloyd George then openly accused the government of "a policy of extermination" directed against the Boer population. In June 1901, Liberal opposition party leader Campbell-Bannerman took up the assault and answered the rhetorical "When is a war not a war?" with "When it is carried on by methods of barbarism in South Africa," referring to those same camps and the policies that created them. The Hobhouse report caused uproar both domestically and in the international community.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=19)**] The Fawcett Commission**

Although the Government had comfortably won the parliamentary debate by a margin of 252 to 149, it was stung by the criticism and concerned by the escalating public outcry, and called on [Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener) for a detailed report. In response, complete statistical returns from camps were sent in July 1901. By August 1901, it was clear to Government and Opposition alike that Miss Hobhouse's worst fears were being confirmed - 93,940 Boers and 24,457 black Africans were reported to be in "camps of refuge" and the crisis was becoming a catastrophe as the death rates appeared very high, especially amongst the children.

The Government responded to the growing clamour by appointing a commission.[[47]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-46) The Fawcett Commission as it became known was, uniquely for its time, an all-woman affair headed by [Millicent Fawcett](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Millicent_Fawcett) who despite being the leader of the women's suffrage movement was a [Liberal Unionist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Unionist) and thus a government supporter and considered a safe pair of hands. Between August and December 1901, the Fawcett Commission conducted its own tour of the camps in South Africa. Whilst it is probable that the British Government expected the Commission to produce a report that could be used to fend off criticism, in the end it confirmed everything that [Emily Hobhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Hobhouse) had said. Indeed, if anything the Commission's recommendations went even further, the Commission insisted that rations should be increased and that additional nurses be sent out immediately, and included a long list of other practical measures designed to improve conditions in the camp. Millicent Fawcett was quite blunt in expressing her opinion that much of the catastrophe was down to a simple failure to observe elementary rules of [hygiene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hygiene).

Under pressure, the Colonial Secretary [Joseph Chamberlain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Chamberlain) in November 1901 ordered Alfred Milner to ensure that "all possible steps are being taken to reduce the rate of mortality". The civil authority took over the running of the camps from Kitchener and British Command and by February 1902, the annual death-rate in the concentration camps for white inmates dropped to 6.9% and eventually it dropped to 2%, which was a lower rate than pertained in many British cities at the time.

However, by then the damage had been done. A report after the war concluded that 27,927 Boers (of whom 24,074 [50% of the Boer child population] were children under 16) had died of [starvation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Starvation), [disease](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disease) and [exposure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypothermia) in the [concentration camps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camp). In all, about one in four (25%) of the Boer inmates, mostly children, died.

"Improvements [however] were much slower in coming to the black camps."[[48]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-47) It is thought that about 12% of black African inmates died (about 14,154) but the precise number of deaths of black Africans in concentration camps is unknown as little attempt was made to keep any records of the 107,000 black Africans who were interned.

“The main decisions (or their absence) had been left to the soldiers, to whom the life or death of the 154,000 Boer and African civilians in the camps rated as an abysmally low priority. [It was only] ... ten months after the subject had first been raised in Parliament…[and after public outcry and after the Fawcett Commission that remedial action was taken and] ... the terrible mortality figures were at last declining. In the interval, at least twenty thousand whites and twelve thousand coloured people had died in the concentration camps, the majority from epidemics of measles and typhoid that could have been avoided.”[[49]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-48)

Somewhat higher figures for total deaths in the concentration camps are given by S.B. Spies.[[50]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-49)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=20)**] Kitchener's policy and the post-war debate**

It has been argued that "this was not a deliberately genocidal policy; rather it was the result of disastrous lack of foresight and rank incompetence on part of the [British] military" .[[51]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-50) Fergusan also argues that "Kitchener no more desired the deaths of women and children in the camps than of the wounded [Dervishes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dervishes) after [Omdurman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omdurman), or of his own soldiers in the typhoid stricken hospitals of [Bloemfontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloemfontein)." .[[52]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-51)





[Lord Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener) (pictured) was one of the most controversial British generals in the war. Kitchener took over control of British forces from [Lord Roberts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Roberts%2C_1st_Earl_Roberts) and was responsible for expanding the British response to the Boers guerilla tactics.

However, to Kitchener and the British Command "the life or death of the 154,000 Boer and African civilians in the camps rated as an abysmally low priority" against military objectives. As the Fawcett Commission was delivering its recommendations, Kitchener wrote to [St John Brodrick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_John_Brodrick%2C_1st_Earl_of_Midleton) defending his policy of sweeps, and emphasizing that no new Boer families were being brought in unless they were in danger of starving. This was disingenuous as the countryside had by then been devastated under the "Scorched Earth" policy (the Fawcett Commission in December 1901 in its recommendations commented that: "to turn 100,000 people now being held in the concentration camps out on the veldt to take care of themselves would be cruelty") and now that the New Model counter insurgency tactics were in full swing it made cynical military sense to leave the Boer families in desperate conditions in the countryside.

According to writer S.B. Spies, "at [the Vereeniging negotiations in May 1902] Boer leader Louis Botha stated that he had tried to send [Boer] families to the British, but they had refused to receive them,". Spies quotes a Boer Commandant referring to Boer women and children made refugees by Britain's scorched-earth policy as saying "Our families are in a pitiable condition and the enemy uses those families to force us to surrender." Spies adds, "and there is little doubt that that was indeed the intention of Kitchener when he had issued instructions that no more families were to be brought into the concentration camps." [Thomas Pakenham](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Pakenham_%28historian%29) writes of Kichener's policy U-turn,

"No doubt the continued 'hullabaloo' at the death-rate in these concentration camps, and Milner's belated agreement to take over their administration, helped changed Kitchener's mind [some time at the end of 1901]. ... By mid-December at any rate, Kitchener was already circulating all column commanders with instructions not to bring in women and children when they cleared the country, but to leave them with the guerrillas... Viewed as a gesture to Liberals, on the eve of the new session of Parliament at Westminster, it was a shrewd political move. It also made excellent military sense, as it greatly handicapped the guerrillas, now that the drives were in full swing. . . . It was effective precisely because, contrary to the Liberals' convictions, it was less humane than bringing them into camps, though this was of no great concern to Kitchener."[[53]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-52)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=21)**] The end of the war**

Towards the end of the war, British tactics of containment, denial and harassment began to yield results against the guerillas. The sourcing and coordination of intelligence became increasingly efficient with regular reporting from observers in the [blockhouses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockhouses), from units patrolling the fences and conducting "sweeper" operations, and from native Africans in rural areas who increasingly supplied intelligence, as the [Scorched Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorched_Earth) policy took effect and they found themselves competing with the Boers for food supplies. Kitchener's forces at last began to seriously affect the Boers' fighting strength and freedom of manoeuvre, and made it harder for the Boers and their families to survive.

The Boers and the British both feared the consequences of arming Africans. The memories of the Zulu and other tribal conflicts were still fresh, and they recognised that whoever won would have to deal with the consequences of a mass militarisation of the tribes. There was therefore an unwritten agreement that this war would be a “white man's war”. At the outset, British officials instructed all white magistrates in the Natal Colony to appeal to Zulu [ama-khosi](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ama-khosi&action=edit&redlink=1) to remain neutral, and President Kruger sent emissaries asking them to stay out of it. However, in some cases there were old scores to be settled and some Africans, such as the [Swazis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swazi_people), were eager to enter the war with the specific aim of reclaiming land which had been confiscated by the Boers. As the war went on there was greater involvement of Africans, and in particular large numbers became embroiled in the conflict on the British side, either voluntarily or involuntarily. By the end of the war, many blacks had been armed and had shown conspicuous gallantry in roles such as scouts, messengers, watchmen in blockhouses, and auxiliaries.

And there were more flashpoints outside of the war; on 6 May 1902 at Holkrantz in the southeastern Transvaal, a Zulu faction had their cattle stolen and their people mistreated by the Boers as a punishment for helping the British. The local Boer officer then sent an insulting message to the tribe, challenging them to take back their cattle. The Zulus attacked at night, and in a mutual bloodbath, the Boers lost 56 killed and 3 wounded, while the Africans suffered 52 killed and 48 wounded.[[54]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-53) The official statistics of blacks who had served as combatants or non-combatants, and who died in the concentration camps, are unreliable. Many black combatants were dumped in unmarked graves, and most of the superintendents of the concentration camps did not record the deaths of black inmates. After the war the British government went to great lengths to attempt to conciliate Boer opinion to the extent of refusing to officially recognise the military contribution made by blacks by issuing campaign medals. It was felt that the Boers would already feel insecure and angry at the arming of blacks, and granting medals would have prejudiced the stability of the region. Boer insecurity and the British government’s favouring of Boer over African interests caused much bitterness, and did much to shape the racial politics of the region.

The British offered terms of peace on various occasions, notably in March 1901, but were rejected by Botha. The last of the Boers surrendered in May 1902 and the war ended with the [Treaty of Vereeniging](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Vereeniging) signed on 31 May 1902. Although the British had won, this came at a cost; the Boers were given £3,000,000 for reconstruction and were promised eventual limited self-government, which was granted in 1906 and 1907. The treaty ended the existence of the [South African Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic) and the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State) as independent Boer republics and placed them within the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire). The [Union of South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_South_Africa) was established as a member of the Commonwealth in 1910.

In all, the war had cost around 75,000 lives; 22,000 British soldiers (7,792 killed in battle, the rest through disease), between 6,000 and 7,000 Boer fighters, and, mainly in the concentration camps, between 20,000 to 28,000 Boer civilians (mainly women and children) and perhaps 20,000 black Africans (both on the battlefield and in the concentration camps). During the conflict, 78 [Victoria Crosses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Cross) (VC) — the highest and most prestigious award in the British armed forces for bravery in the face of the enemy — were awarded to British and Colonial soldiers. See [List of Boer War Victoria Cross recipients](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Boer_War_Victoria_Cross_recipients).

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=22)**] Aftermath and analysis**





Memorial to soldiers from [Quebec](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quebec) who fell in the Second Boer War, [Quebec City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quebec_City)

The Second Boer War cast long shadows over the history of the South African region. The predominantly agrarian society of the former [Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) republics was profoundly and fundamentally affected by the scorched earth policy of Roberts and Kitchener. The devastation of both Boer and black African populations in the concentration camps and through war and exile were to have a lasting effect on the demography and quality of life in the region. Many exiles and prisoners were unable to return to their farms at all; others attempted to do so but were forced to abandon the farms as unworkable given the damage caused by farm burning and salting of the fields in the course of the scorched earth policy. Destitute Boers and black Africans swelled the ranks of the unskilled urban poor competing with the "uitlanders" on the mines.[[55]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-54)





Lord Alfred Milner (pictured) was the British [High Commissioner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Commissioner) of [Southern Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Africa). Milner was partly responsible for the start of the war and was to have a role in the eventual peace process and the future creation of the [Union of South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_South_Africa).

The postwar reconstruction administration was presided over by [Lord Milner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Milner) and his largely Oxford trained [Milner's Kindergarten](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milner%27s_Kindergarten). This small group of civil servants was to have a profound effect on the region, eventually leading to the [Union of South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_South_Africa). “In the aftermath of the war, an imperial administration freed from accountability to a domestic electorate set about reconstructing an economy that was by then predicated unambiguously on gold. At the same time, British civil servants, municipal officials, and their cultural adjuncts were hard at work in the heartland of the former [Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) Republics helping to forge new identities—first as "British South Africans" and then, later still, as white "South Africans." Some scholars, for good reasons, identify these new identities as partly underpinning the act of union that followed in 1910. Although challenged by a [Boer rebellion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maritz_Rebellion) only four years later, they did much to shape South African politics between the two world wars and right up to the present day”.[[56]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-55)

The counterinsurgency techniques and lessons (the restriction of movement, the containment of space, the targeting of anything and everything that could give sustenance to guerrillas, the relentless harassment through sweeper groups coupled with rapid reaction forces, the sourcing and coordination of intelligence, and the nurturing of native allies) learned during the Boer War were used by the British (and other forces) in future guerrilla campaigns including to counter [Malayan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Malaya) [communist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist) rebels during the [Malayan Emergency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malayan_Emergency).

Many of the Boers referred to the war as the second of the *Freedom Wars*. The most resistant of Boers wanted to continue the fight and were known as "*bittereinders*" (or *irreconcilables*) and at the end of the war a number of Boer fighters such as [Deneys Reitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deneys_Reitz) chose exile rather than sign an undertaking such as the following to pledge allegiance to Britain:[[57]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-56)

The bearer, *<prisoner name>* has been released from prison of war camp *<Camp name>* on signing that he acknowledge terms of surrender and becomes a British subject.

Over the following decade, many returned to South Africa and never signed the undertaking. Some, like Reitz, eventually reconciled themselves to the new *status quo*, but others could not.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=23)**] Union of South Africa**

*Main article:* [*Union of South Africa*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_South_Africa)

One of the most important events in the decade after the end of the war was the creation of the [Union of South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_South_Africa) (later the [Republic of South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_South_Africa)). It was to prove a key ally to Britain as a [Dominion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Dominions) of the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) during the World Wars. At the start of [First World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_World_War) a crisis ensued when the South African Government led by [Louis Botha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Botha) and other former Boer fighters such as [Jan Smuts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Smuts), declared support for Britain and agreed to send troops to capture and take over the German colony of [German South-West Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_South-West_Africa) (Namibia).

Many Boers were opposed to fighting for Britain, especially against Germany which had been sympathetic to their struggle. A number of bittereinders and their allies took part in a revolt known as the [Maritz Rebellion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maritz_Rebellion). This was quickly suppressed and in 1916, the leading Boer rebels in the Maritz Rebellion got off lightly (especially compared with the fate of leading Irish rebels of the [Easter Rising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Rising#Men_executed_for_their_role_in_the_Easter_Rising)), with terms of imprisonment of six and seven years and heavy fines. Two years later, they were released from prison, as Louis Botha recognised the value of reconciliation. Thereafter the bittereinders concentrated on political organisation within the constitutional system and built up what later became the [National Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Party_%28South_Africa%29) which took power in 1948 and dominated the politics of South Africa from the late 1940s until the early 1990s, under the [apartheid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid) system.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=24)**] Effect of the war on domestic British politics**

Many [Irish nationalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_nationalist) sympathised with the Boers, viewing them to be a people oppressed by British [imperialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism), much like themselves. Irish miners already in the Transvaal at the start of the war formed the nucleus of two [Irish commandos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_commandos). The Second Irish Brigade was headed up by an Australian of Irish parents, Colonel [Arthur Lynch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Alfred_Lynch). In addition, small groups of Irish volunteers went to South Africa to fight with the Boers — this despite the fact that there were many Irish troops fighting with the British army.[[58]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-frederickroberts-57) In Britain, the "Pro-Boer" campaign expanded,[[59]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-stopthewar-58) with writers often idealizing the Boer society.

The war also highlighted the dangers of Britain's policy of non-alignment and deepened her isolation. The [1900 UK general election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_general_election%2C_1900), also known as the "[Khaki election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khaki_election)", was called by the [Prime Minister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom), [Lord Salisbury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Gascoyne-Cecil%2C_3rd_Marquess_of_Salisbury), on the back of recent British victories. There was much enthusiasm for the war at this point, resulting in a victory for the [Conservative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Party_%28UK%29) government.

However, public support quickly waned as it became apparent that the war would not be easy and it dragged on, partially contributing to the Conservatives' spectacular defeat in 1906. There was public outrage at the use of [scorched earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorched_earth) tactics — the forced clearance of women and children, the destruction of the countryside, burning of [Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) homesteads and poisoning of wells, for example — and the conditions in the [concentration camps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concentration_camp). It also became apparent that there were serious problems with [public health](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_health) in Britain: up to 40% of recruits in Britain were unfit for [military service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription), suffering from medical problems such as [rickets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rickets) and other poverty-related illnesses. This came at a time of increasing concern for the state of the poor in Britain.

Having taken the country into a prolonged war, the electorate delivered a harsh verdict at the first general election after the war was over. Balfour, succeeding his uncle [Lord Salisbury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Gascoyne-Cecil%2C_3rd_Marquess_of_Salisbury) in 1903 immediately after the war, took over a Conservative party that had won two successive landslide majorities but led it to a landslide defeat in 1906.

The war and its aftermath reverberated across the Empire. The importing to South Africa and use (especially on the gold mines) of Chinese labour, known as [*Coolies*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coolies), after the war by the governor of the new [crown colonies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_colony), [Lord Milner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Milner%2C_1st_Viscount_Milner) as cheap labour to repress local workers and break strikes, also caused much revulsion in the UK and Australia. The Chinese workers were themselves often kept in appalling conditions, receiving only a small wage and isolated from the local population — revelations of [homosexual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality) acts between those forbidden contact with the local population and the services of [prostitutes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution) led to further public shock. Some believe the Chinese labour issue can be seen as the climax of public antipathy with the war.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=25)**] Horses**





A horse destined to serve in the war, being offloaded in [Port Elizabeth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Elizabeth)

The number of horses killed in the war was at the time unprecedented in modern warfare. For example, in the [Relief of Kimberley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kimberley), French's cavalry rode 500 horses to their deaths in a single day. The wastage was particularly heavy among British forces for several reasons; overloading of horses with unnecessary equipment and saddlery, failure to rest and acclimatise horses after long sea voyages and, later in the war, poor management by inexperienced mounted troops and distant control by unsympathetic staffs.[[60]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-59) The average life expectancy of a British horse, from the time of its arrival in Port Elizabeth, was around six weeks.[[61]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-hayes-213-60)

Horses were on occasion slaughtered for their [meat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_meat). During the [Siege of Kimberley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kimberley) and [Siege of Ladysmith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Ladysmith), horses were consumed as food once the regular sources of meat were depleted.[[62]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-davis-34-61) The besieged British forces in Ladysmith also produced *Chevril*, a [Bovril](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bovril)-like paste, by boiling down the horse meat to a jelly paste and serving it like *beef tea*.[[63]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-62)[[64]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-63)

The [Horse Memorial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse_Memorial) in Port Elizabeth is a tribute to the 300,000 animals that died during the conflict.[[65]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-horses-viii-64)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=26)**] Empire involvement**

*See also* [*History of the British Army*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_British_Army#South_Africa)





Stretcher-bearers of the Indian Ambulance Corps during the war, including the future leader [Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohandas_Karamchand_Gandhi) (Middle row, 5th from left).

The vast majority of troops fighting for the British Army came from the United Kingdom. However, a large number did come from other parts of the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) and later the [Commonwealth of Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations). These countries had their own internal disputes over whether they should remain tied to the United Kingdom, or have full independence, which carried over into the debate around the sending of forces to assist the United Kingdom. Though not fully independent on foreign affairs, these countries did have local say over how much support to provide, and the manner in which it would be provided. Ultimately, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand all sent volunteers to aid the United Kingdom. Australia provided the largest number of troops followed by Canada. Troops were also raised to fight with the British from the [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) and the [Colony of Natal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_of_Natal). Some Boers fighters such as Jan Smuts and Louis Botha were technically British subjects as they came from the Cape Colony and Colony of Natal respectively.

There were also many volunteers from the Empire who were not selected for the official contingents from their countries and travelled privately to South Africa to form private units such as the Canadian Scouts and Doyle’s Australian Scouts. There were also some European volunteer units from [British India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Raj) and [British Ceylon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Ceylon), though the British Government refused offers of non-white troops from the Empire. Some [Cape Coloureds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Coloureds) also volunteered early in the war, but later some of them were effectively conscripted and kept in segregated units. As a community, they received comparatively little reward for their services. In many ways, the war set the pattern for the Empire's later involvement in the two [World Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_war). Specially raised units, consisting mainly of volunteers, were dispatched overseas to serve with forces from elsewhere in the British Empire.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=27)**] Australia**





A memorial in [Queanbeyan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queanbeyan) [New South Wales](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_South_Wales) unveiled in 1903, dedicated to Australians who served in the conflict (over 20,000).

*See also* [*History of the Australian Army*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Australian_Army#Boer_War_1899.E2.80.931902)

From 1899 to 1901 the six separate [self-governing colonies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-governing_colony) in Australia sent their own contingents to serve in the Boer War. Much of the population of the colonies had originated from Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland) and the desire to support [Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) during the conflict appealed to many. After the colonies formed the [Commonwealth of Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Australia) in 1901, the new [Government of Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Australia) sent "Commonwealth" contingents to the war.[[66]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-65) The Boer War was thus the first war in which the Commonwealth of Australia fought. However it must also be noted that a few Australians fought on the Boer side.[[67]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-66) The most famous and colourful character was Colonel [Arthur Alfred Lynch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Alfred_Lynch), formerly of [Ballarat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballarat), Victoria, who raised the Second Irish Brigade.

The Australian [climate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_of_Australia) and [geography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Australia) were far closer to that of South Africa than most other parts of the empire, so Australians adapted quickly to the environment, with troops serving mostly among the army's "mounted rifles". Enlistment in all official Australian contingents totalled 16,463.[[68]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-67) Another five to seven thousand Australians served in "irregular" regiments raised in South Africa. Perhaps five hundred Australian irregulars were killed. In total, 20,000 or more Australians served and about a 1,000 were killed. A total of 267 died from disease, 251 were killed in action or died from wounds sustained in battle. A further 43 men were reported missing.[[69]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-68)

When the war began some Australians, like some Britons, opposed it. As the war dragged on some Australians became disenchanted, in part because of the sufferings of Boer civilians reported in the press. In an interesting twist (for Australians), when the British missed capturing President Paul Kruger, as he escaped Pretoria during its fall in June 1900, a [*Melbourne Punch*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melbourne_Punch), 21 June 1900, cartoon depicted how the War could be won, using the [Kelly Gang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelly_Gang).[[70]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-69)

The convictions and executions of two Australian Lieutenants, [Breaker Morant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaker_Morant) and [Peter Handcock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Handcock) in 1902, and the imprisonment of a third, [George Witton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Witton), had little impact on the Australian public at the time despite later legend. The controversial [court-martial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Court-martial) saw the three convicted of executing [Boer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boer) prisoners under their authority. After the war, though, Australians joined an empire-wide campaign that saw Witton released from jail. Much later, some Australians came to see the execution of Morant and Handcock as instances of wrongfully executed Australians, as illustrated in the 1980 Australian film [*Breaker Morant*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breaker_Morant_%28film%29).

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=28)**] Canada**

*See also* [*Military history of Canada*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_Canada#Boer_War)

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| [**History of Canada portal**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3AHistory_of_Canada) |





The unveiling of the *South African War Memorial* in [Toronto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto) Canada in 1908

At first, Canadian Prime Minister [Sir Wilfrid Laurier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilfrid_Laurier) tried to keep Canada out of the war.[[71]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-70) The Canadian government was divided between those, primarily [French Canadians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Canadian), who wished to stay out of the war and others, primarily [English Canadians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Canadians), who wanted to fight. In the end, Laurier compromised by agreeing to support the British by providing only volunteers, equipment and transportation to the war.[[72]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-civilization.ca-71) The United Kingdom would be responsible for paying the troops and returning them to Canada at the end of their service. The Boer War marked the first occasion in which large contingents of Canadian troops served abroad (individual Canadians had served in the Crimean War and a Canadian contingent was sent to the [Nile Expedition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_Expedition)). The 1st Canadian Contingent was composed of 1000 men recruited from the [Canadian Militia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Militia) to form the 2nd (Special Service) Battalion of [The Royal Canadian Regiment of Infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Royal_Canadian_Regiment). This contingent served under the command of the Permanent Force officer [William Dillon Otter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dillon_Otter). As a Major, and Lieutenant Colonel [Arthur Victor Seymour Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Victor_Seymour_Williams) commanded `B`Squadron, Canadian Mounted Rifles, South Africa in 1900.

The [Battle of Paardeberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Paardeberg) in February 1900 represented the second time Canadian Troops saw battle abroad, the first being the Canadian involvement in the [Nile Expedition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile_Expedition) of 1884-85.[[73]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-72) Canadians also saw action at the Battle of Faber's Put on 30 May 1900.[[74]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-73) On 7 November 1900, the [Royal Canadian Dragoons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Canadian_Dragoons) engaged the Boers in the [Battle of Leliefontein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Leliefontein), where they saved British guns from capture during a retreat from the banks of the [Komati River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komati_River).[[75]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-74)

The Canadians had four [Victoria Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Cross) recipients in this war: [Lieutenant Turner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Ernest_William_Turner), [Lieutenant Cockburn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hampden_Zane_Churchill_Cockburn), [Sergeant Holland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_James_Gibson_Holland) and [Arthur Richardson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Herbert_Lindsay_Richardson).[[76]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-75) Ultimately, over 8,600 Canadians volunteered to fight in the South African War.[[72]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-civilization.ca-71) However, not all saw action since many landed in South Africa after the hostilities ended while others (including the 3rd (Special Service) Battalion, [The Royal Canadian Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Royal_Canadian_Regiment)) performed garrison duty in [Halifax](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Halifax), [Nova Scotia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nova_Scotia) so that their British counterparts could join at the front. Later on, contingents of Canadians served with the paramilitary South Africa Constabulary. Approximately 267 Canadians died in the War.[[72]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-civilization.ca-71) 89 men were killed in action, 135 died of disease, and the remainder died of accident or injury. 252 were wounded.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=29)**] New Zealand**

*See also* [*Military history of New Zealand*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_history_of_New_Zealand#Second_Boer_War_1899.E2.80.931902)

When the Second Boer War seemed imminent, New Zealand offered its support. On 28 September 1899, Prime Minister [Richard Seddon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Seddon) asked [Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_Parliament) to approve the offer to the imperial government of a contingent of mounted rifles thus becoming the first British Colony to send troops to the Boer War. The British position in the dispute with the Transvaal was 'moderate and righteous', he maintained. He stressed the 'crimson tie' of Empire which bound New Zealand to the Mother-country and the importance of a strong British Empire for the colony's security.[[77]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-76)

By the time peace was concluded two and a half years later, ten contingents of volunteers, totalling nearly 6,500 men from New Zealand, with 8,000 horses had fought in the conflict, along with doctors, nurses, veterinary surgeons and a small number of school teachers.[[78]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-77) 70 New Zealanders died from enemy action, with another 158 killed accidentally or by disease.[[79]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War#cite_note-78)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Second_Boer_War&action=edit&section=30)**] South Africa**

During the war, the British army also included substantial contingents from South Africa itself. There were large communities of English-speaking immigrants and settlers in [Natal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_of_Natal) and [Cape Colony](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Colony) (especially around [Cape Town](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Town) and [Grahamstown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grahamstown)), which formed volunteer units which took the field, or local "town guards". At one stage of the war, a "Colonial Division", consisting of five light horse and infantry units under Brigadier General [Edward Brabant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Brabant), took part in the invasion of the [Orange Free State](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Free_State). Part of it withstood a siege by Christiaan De Wet at [Wepener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wepener) on the borders of [Basutoland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesotho). Another large source of volunteers was the [*uitlander*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uitlander) community, many of whom hastily left [Johannesburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannesburg) in the days immediately preceding the war.

Later during the war, [Lord Kitchener](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Kitchener%2C_1st_Earl_Kitchener) attempted to form a Boer Police Force, as part of his efforts to pacify the occupied areas and effect a reconciliation with the Boer community. The members of this force were despised as traitors by the Boers still in the field. Those Boers who attempted to remain neutral after giving their parole to British forces were derided as *"hensoppers"* (hands-uppers) and were often coerced into giving support to the Boer guerillas. (This was one of the reasons for the British ruthlessly scouring the countryside of people, livestock and anything else which the Boer commandos might find useful.)

Like the Canadian and particularly the Australian and New Zealand contingents, many of the volunteer units formed by South Africans were "[light horse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_horse)" or [mounted infantry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mounted_infantry), well suited to the countryside and manner of warfare. Some regular British officers scorned their comparative lack of formal discipline, but the light horse units were hardier and more suited to the demands of campaigning than the overloaded British cavalry, who were still obsessed with the charge with lance or sabre. At their peak, 24,000 South Africans (including volunteers from the Empire) served in the field in various "Colonial" units. Notable units (in addition to the Imperial Light Horse) were the South African Light Horse, [Rimington's Guides](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rimington%27s_Guides), Kitchener's Horse and the Imperial Light Infantry.