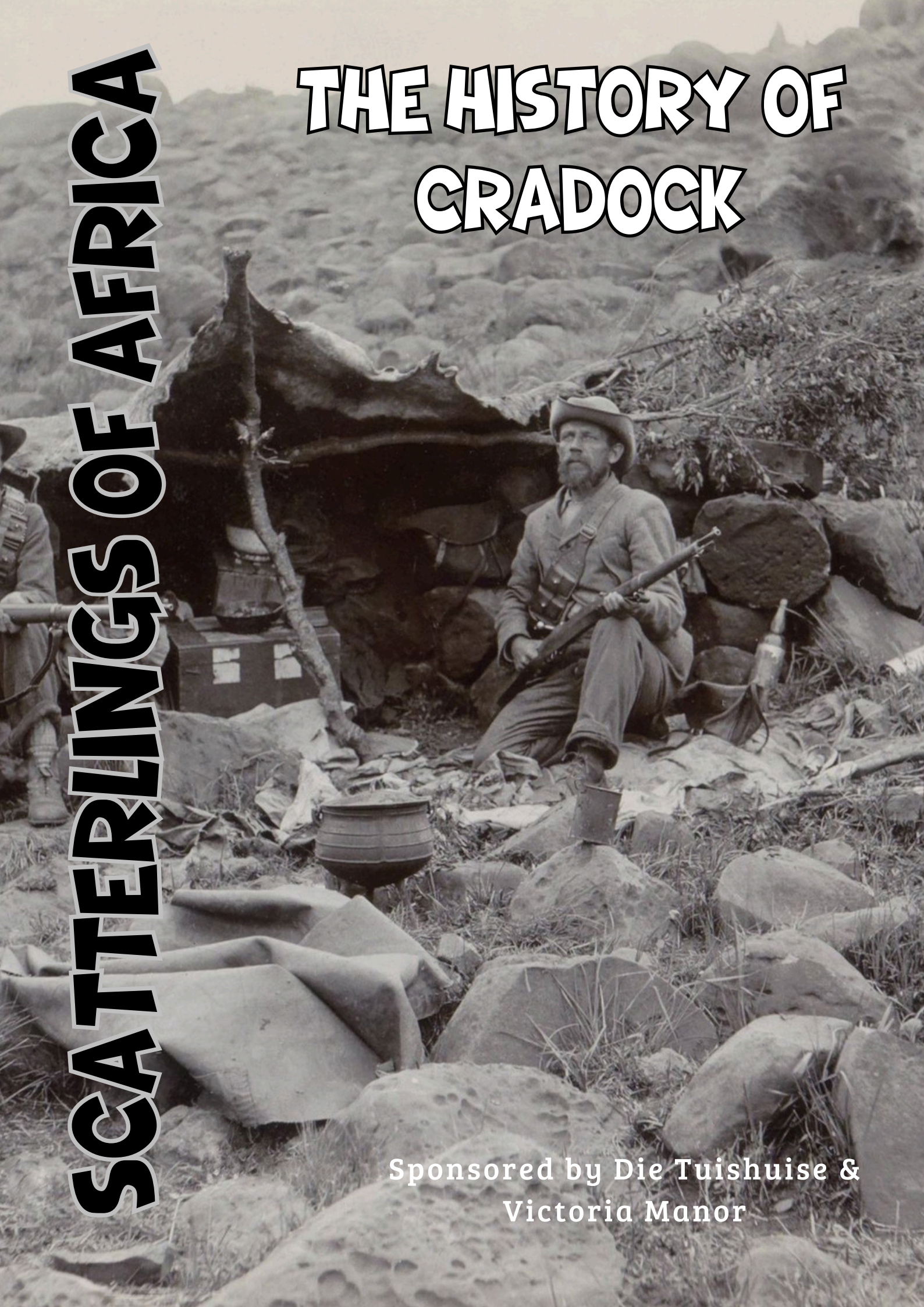


SCATTERINGS OF AFRICA

THE HISTORY OF CRADOCK



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Victoria Manor

History of Cradock



Cradock is steeped in history and it goes further back than the Anglo Boer War.

In 1678 the Dutch East Indian Company expanded settlement of the Cape through granting cattle posts and grazing rights in the hinterland. From 1770 settlers of Cape Dutch origin came into what is now the Cradock district. It was inhabited by nomadic Bushmen/San people. In those early days, settlers lived in ox wagons or wooden huts and their daily meal consisted of meat, milk, honey and wild fruit. In 1786 a separate district was declared with Graaff-Reinet at its centre. Because they had to travel to Cape Town to marry and resolve business matters, in 1788 the settlers applied for a local school, a church and a landdrost.

James Arthur (JA) Calata, 1895 to 1983

JA Calata was the longest serving Secretary General of the ANC. He was an Anglican clergyman and African nationalist. He lived in the township of Lingelihle just outside Cradock. Although St. James Mission served a large area, Calata found time to be involved in several activities. He traveled all over the district and, apart from his work at Cradock, visited outstations, supervised the work of 30 lay preachers and, until 1953 when the Bantu Education Act removed authority for mission schools from the churches, he also supervised six schools. His work with young people led to Calata's involvement with the Pathfinders ~ the African Boy Scouts. From 1933 to 1960 he took a leading role as district pathfinder master for the Eastern Cape (A 1729/B6.1). Calata was a central figure in the social and political life of the Eastern Cape. Another of his interests was the Order of St. Ntsikana, a Xhosa society dedicated to the memory of the first Christian Xhosa, which had been founded in 1912. Calata's political activities were rooted in his Christian faith. He was an African nationalist who desired African unity. To this end he participated in the Joint Councils of Europeans and Africans in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1930 Calata joined the African National Congress when the Cradock Vigilance Association became a branch of that organization. From 1930 to 1949 he was President of the Cape branch of the ANC. In 1935 he was elected Chaplin of the organization. When he became secretary-general, he worked with two ANC presidents ~ Z. R. Mahabane (1937 ~ 1940) and A. B. Xuma (1940 ~ 1949). Calata was instrumental in getting Xuma elected as President because he saw that Xuma would be able to attract more educated people to the movement. Calata retired from the ministry in 1968 when his banning order expired. When he died in June 1983 5000 mourners followed his coffin which was draped with an ANC flag.

The Cradock Four, killed in 1985, contributed in a large part to the end of Apartheid. Fort Calata was JA Calata's grandson.

Dr. Reginald Koettlitz's (Scott of the Antarctic's Senior Medical Officer on his 1st Antarctic expedition) is buried in the Cradock Cemetery.



CRADOCK HISTORY

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The Eastern Frontier of 1770 – 1814 saw the confrontation of two cultures, the Boer and the Xhosa. Both regarded cattle as their wealth, both coveted the grazing areas. At the Fish River, migrating settlers met Xhosas who were moving South. This resulted in a succession of Frontier wars that were to last for 100 years.



When Sir John Cradock was appointed governor of the Cape Colony in 1811, he tried to restore order in the district. The Fourth Frontier War aimed to dislodge the Xhosa from the Fish and Sundays River area. Some 20 000 Ndlambis and Gunkwebes were removed. Sir John Cradock built a series of forts along the lower Fish River up to what is now Cradock to contain the Xhosa to the East of the Fish River (the proclaimed boundary). The Cradock fort was built at van Stadens Dam farm (now called Easterstead) in 1812. Andries Stockenström was put in charge. He chose van Heerden's farm instead (the site of present-day Cradock).

Cradock was established on 21 January 1814, making it the fourth oldest town in the Eastern Cape after Grahamstown, Uitenhage and Graaff-Reinet. Sir John Cradock offered 2000 Morgan quitrent farms to encourage farming in the area, but because of the cattle raids from across the Fish River, 90 of the 140 families who accepted the offer abandoned the district by 1817. The first prison was built, and the Fifth Frontier war broke out because farmers wanted to retrieve their stolen cattle. The Xhosa were driven back to the area between the Keiskamma and Fish River.

Lord Charles Somerset succeeded Sir John Cradock and invited the 1820 Settlers to South Africa to act as a buffer between the Xhosa and the rest of the Cape Colony.



In 1820 about 5000 settlers arrived on the beaches of Algoa Bay where there was only a score or two of huts. They were given land throughout the Eastern Cape (including Cradock). They were not very successful, and many abandoned their farms, setting up as craftsmen and traders as far afield as Graaff Reinet. The 1820 Association established the Tarka Training Farm to equip young settlers with agricultural skills and this remained in operation until recent years. By 1834, the Boers were ready to turn their backs on British rule and the frontier wars. This resulted in the Great Trek (1835 – 1846).

In 1848, the explorer/ painter Thomas Baines, passed through Cradock and said that it had a population of about 9000 persons (4300 whites and 4490 coloureds). He was impressed with the great buildings of both English and Dutch architecture.

Die Tuishuise capture the period of Thomas Baines's visit as they were built circa 1840 – 1870 in both English and Dutch style and housed the harness makers and wainwrights who made a living from the wagons and oxen and horses that passed through to the Great Northern line.

As progress caught up with Cradock (first the Railway line in 1881 and then the motor car in 1908 – 1920) the skills of blacksmiths, farriers and harness makers were no longer in demand. Poverty descended on the inhabitants of Market Street. There was less spare cash for homes to be modernized. Market Street is one of the few places in the country that can boast houses that have stood virtually unaltered for nearly 200 years.



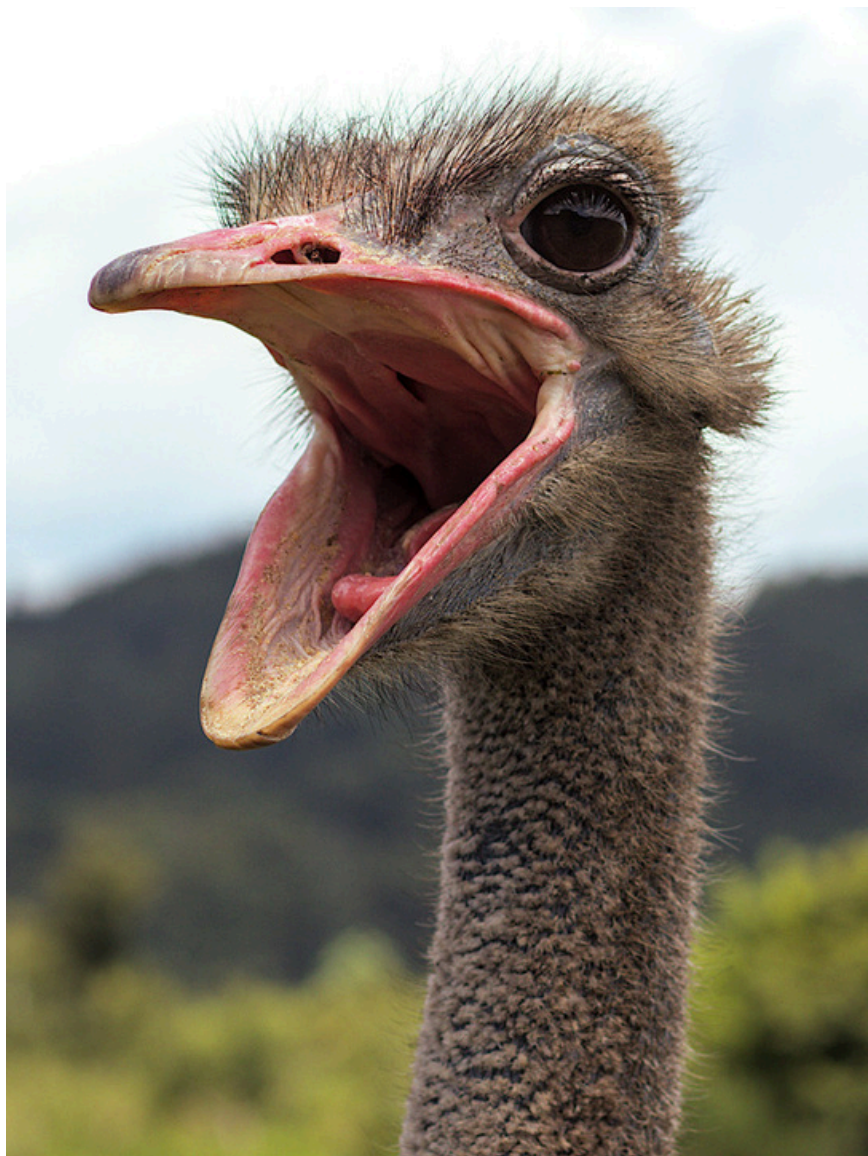
Today Cradock is a thriving town, the capital of the Cape Midlands. The permanent water from the Great Fish River (augmented by the Orange River) has kept the devastation of drought at bay and given continuity that the other rural areas lack. Lucerne and maize and winter grazing are all grown under irrigation. Diversification includes ostrich and vegetable farming.

During the ostrich boom of 1900 – 1914 prime feathers fetched £50 and male birds sold for £1 000. Irrigation weirs and furrows were established to grow Lucerne for the ostrich. The outbreak of the First World War and the prohibition of luxury articles on ships saw the collapse of the ostrich feather industry. We are enjoying a revival today due to the demand for leather and low cholesterol meat.

Our prosperity is more diversified now. Sports has been promoted on a major scale. Cradock hosts the annual Great Fish River Canoe Marathon which attracts many paddlers. Prestige athletics events are hosted on a tartan track and there are excellent cricket, rugby, golf and bowls facilities, as well as major tennis tournaments for the younger generation. It also has Round Table, Rapportryers and various other organizations.

Cradock has a healthy climate, with hot summers, bracing cold winters and low rainfall. It is the lack of rain that provides the magnificent view of the stars at night and the glorious sunrises and sunsets one associates with a desert.

Tourism prospers in Cradock because of its historical past and its geographical position makes this an ideal stop-over for those en-route to the major centers.



SOUTH AFRICAN (ANGLO-BOER) WAR

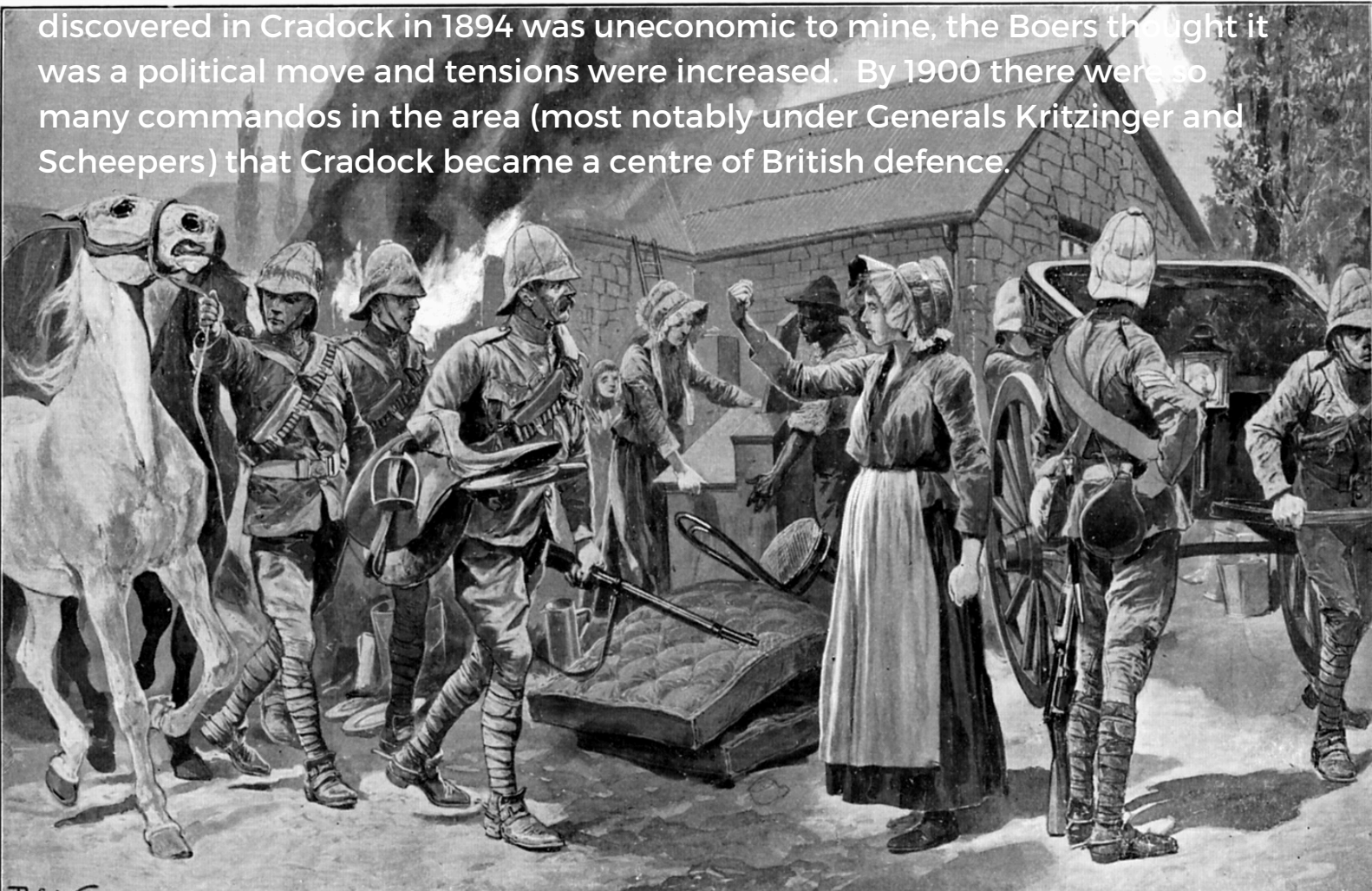
1899 - 1902 IN CRADOCK

To subdue 50-60 000 Boers, Britain needed half a million men - the largest British army assembled since the Crimean War and the Battle of Waterloo. Dutch, French, German and Irish troops came to South Africa to support the Boers. Sir Winston Churchill worked as a reporter for the Morning Post during the war.

The 'gutter press' was born in England as most of the British were literate. It was also the first war where a movie camera was used. Guerrilla warfare had originated in Spain in 1809 and was perfected in this country especially in the second phase of the war from 1901 when Boer Forces invaded the Cape Colony. It was to be the method used in revolutionary conflicts during the 20th Century.

Trench warfare was also encountered by the British. Probably first used in the American Civil War of 1864, it was extremely effective in the Anglo-Boer War at Colenso and Magersfontein. Hundreds of men in the Cradock area joined the "Boere Kommandos". When a report written in 1899 stated that the gold

discovered in Cradock in 1894 was uneconomic to mine, the Boers thought it was a political move and tensions were increased. By 1900 there were so many commandos in the area (most notably under Generals Kritzinger and Scheepers) that Cradock became a centre of British defence.



Forts were erected above Oukop and at night all access points to the town were monitored. No one was allowed to leave town without a permit. The steeple of the Moederkerk was also used as a lookout post with the church bell warning of impending danger.

An inscription on a rock on Oukop, written by one of the British soldiers reads, "What avails a man if he gains the whole world, but he loses his own soul". Another relic of that time is a chessboard etched on a chunk of ironstone atop Saltpeterskop. Names and ranks of British soldiers are also etched on the rock. There was a heliograph on Saltpeterskop, used by soldiers to relay chess move to their peers on other mountaintops. A Mr and Heerden said, "What I thought might be messages of murder, often turned out to be moves in a game with logical rules. It is great to think of those Tommies playing chess across great distances."

When a Boer commando arrived at their homestead, Mrs van Heerden would play her organ for a sing-a-long ending with the national anthem of the Transvaal. When the British arrived it was the same except it ended with "God save the Queen".

Lord Kitchener's concentration camps and his scorched earth policy produced a reaction among Boers and their sympathisers throughout the country, General Malan, Kritzinger, Commandant Fouché and others invaded the Cape and 10 000 Cape citizens went into rebellion. The British imposed harsh sentences: 16-year-old Johannes Coetzee was condemned to death at a court martial on Market Square, Cradock. He was later hanged at the town gaol. Cradock was the last place where arms were laid down at the end of the war: Commandant Fouché finally and reluctantly laid own arms four days after the Peace of Vereniging was signed.





There were only two battles of note in the Cradock District. The first on 23 February 1901 when General Kritzinger and a force of 400-500 attacked a small British post on the railway north of Cradock at Fish River station. The Boers aimed to break the iron bridge over the river. There were two small forts on either end of the bridge protected by a 35-man detachment of the 4th Lancaster Regiment under Lieutenant Hunt. During the attack, Hunt was painfully wounded in the neck by a splinter but continued to lead his men. After four hours an armoured train from Rosmead steamed into the station with automatic weapons blazing. The Boers fled leaving one dead man: the double-agent Olivier (he had posed as a loyalist, supplying the British troops with dairy products, and then led the Boer forces to Fish River.)

The second battle took place on 21 June 1901. Captain Spandau of the Midland Mounted Rifles had been sent with 80 men to where Kritzinger and Malan had appeared, west of Cradock. At Waterkloof near Swaershoek, the Boers attacked them. One Boer was killed and one wounded. The British lost 9 men and 12 were wounded (including Spandau). The Boers captured and disarmed 66 men and Kritzinger sent a Tommy to Cradock to fetch an ambulance. The Boers helped to collect the wounded troops, chatting and sipping whisky with the British while they waited for the ambulance.

Daniel Scheepers was among Kritzinger's men at Swaershoek. There was a reward of £250 for his capture. He finally surrendered in Cradock and was charged with high treason, appearing in court 25 times (23 times in Cradock) The Kimberley tribunal court sent home. Later the magistrate from Cradock sent for him because the tribunal had failed to disenfranchise him. Scheepers won his appeal; the only Boer who played a prominent part in the war and yet retained his vote.

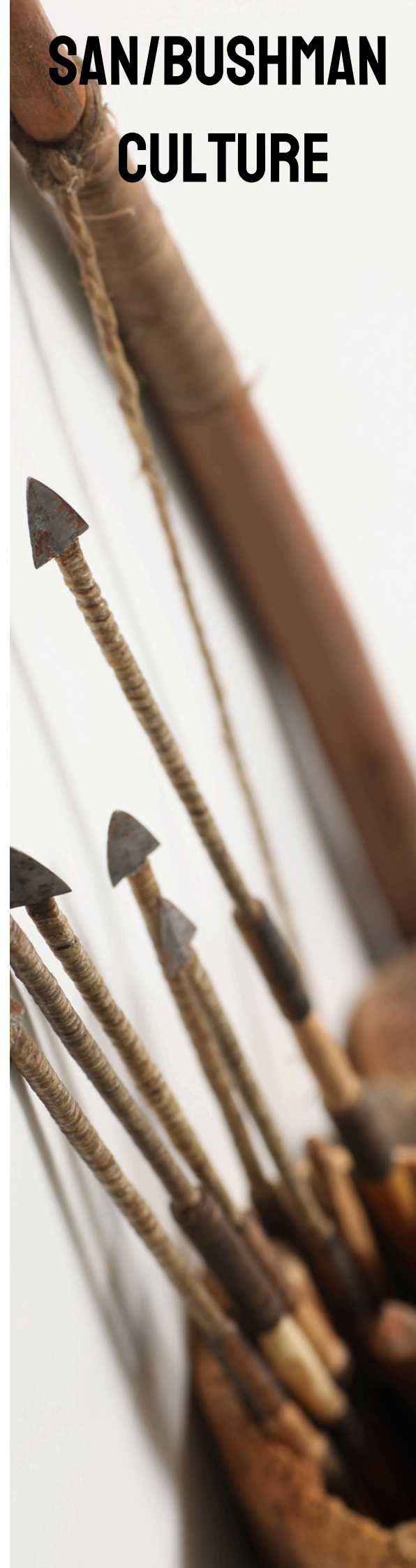
SAN/BUSHMAN CULTURE

A remarkable race of South Africans inhabited our Karoo area for 16 to 20 000 years, perishing only once the rifle and gun powder arrived here. Katkop, Spielmanskop, Normanskop and Kaptein are a few farm names that remind us that this was once Bushmen country.

The San (or Bushmen as the early Dutch settlers called them) led a completely self-sufficient hunter/gatherer lifestyle, using only Stone Age tools. They owned nothing, they neither sowed nor reaped. They hunted with a simple bow, priming their arrows with snake venom and the juices of toxic plants.

Their eyesight was remarkable; they could see the moons of the planets with the naked eye. They sent smoke signals as messages using the thinnest column of smoke, and their drawings always depict animals in motion. The eland is most frequently depicted, and it had great ritual significance. As hunters they were the best. They would track their prey for days on end, following the faintest of spoor. Mobility was the key to survival: to survive, they had to keep up with migrating game. The old and infirm were left to die. Twins were killed at birth. If a mother died, her baby would be buried with her.

Caves gave them a roof over their heads and shelter from the elements. Seashells were used as adornment, yet the sea was hundreds of kilometres away. Their paintings and etchings prompt dozens of unanswered questions. The images were quite possibly made while the Bushmen were in a trance. The trance or curing dance was the central unifying force in Bushman life. It provided the central focus of religious beliefs, cosmology and folklore. Everyone was drawn into the dance although only half the men and one third of the women were shamans who entered the trance state.



While game was abundant, the Boer and the Bushmen lived together amicably, but conflict erupted over domestic animals which the Boers owned and the Bushmen preyed on, having no concept of ownership in their culture. The Bushmen's last stand in the Cradock district came in 1850. The Boer made mobile shields of bushes and coats and advanced towards the caves, and, one by one, Boer sharpshooters picked off the Bushmen marksmen. No Bushmen ever surrendered, they would fight to the end or slink away over steep precipices that baboons would find difficult to negotiate. The whole tribe, men women and children would disappear.

SAN ETCHINGS/ROCK ENGRAVINGS - (PETROGLYPHS)

Bushman paintings are found on walls of rock shelters under sandstone cliffs and often on freestanding boulders. Human figures appear more frequently than animal figures.

Etchings are often found on small, isolated rocks.

Dolerite and database have a very dark weathered outer skin or patina and when parts of this are removed, a strong contrast with the heart material results. Three techniques were used to remove the patina:

- Pecking at the patina with another stone
- Cutting through or incising it with a sharp stone
- Scraping it away with another stone.

The freshly engraved surface weathers, forming a patina of its own, which after many years approaches that of the original patina, so some engravings are difficult to see. The images are best viewed when the morning sun is between 10 and 11am. The afternoon sun will highlight others not easily seen in the morning. It takes 10 000 years for the patina of the rock to turn black and as the engravings have turned black, scientists and archeologists have estimated the Petroglyphs to be between six and ten thousand years old



PREHISTORIC CRADOCK

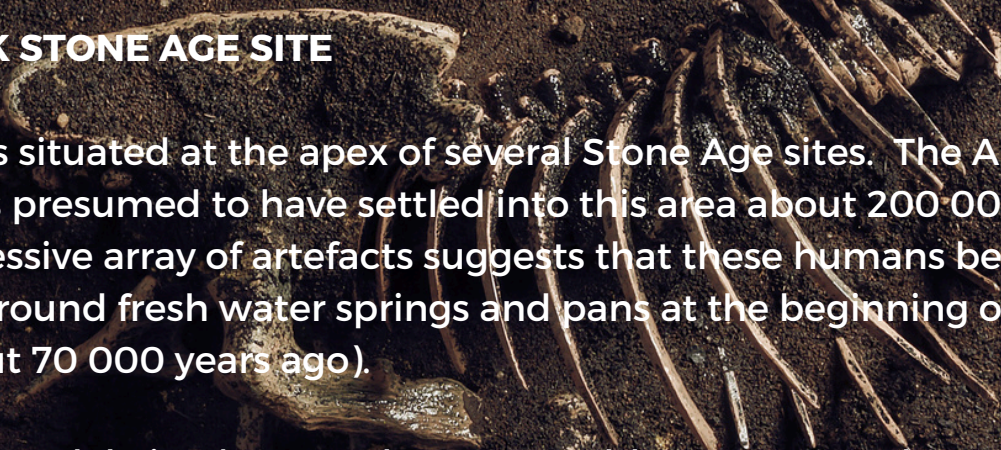


FOSSILS IN THE CRADOCK DISTRICT

In 1993, some important palaeontological discoveries that form part of the original link between mammals and reptiles were made on the farm, Lobardsrus in the Cradock district. The first discovery was of various fossilised remains of the herbivore, Lystrosaurus that lived about 220 million years ago.

The second discovery, however, was even more exciting. When Kassie Blignaut came upon a fossil, he contacted the authorities in the Department of Minerals and Energy. The fossil was identified as a specialised Synapsida, the first complete Hewittia skull ever to be found. Synapsida fossils are mainly found in South Africa and attract researchers from abroad.

CRADOCK STONE AGE SITE



Cradock is situated at the apex of several Stone Age sites. The Archaic homo sapiens, is presumed to have settled into this area about 200 000 years ago. The impressive array of artefacts suggests that these humans became isolated around fresh water springs and pans at the beginning of the last Ice Age (about 70 000 years ago).

The 'Michausdal Site' (next to the N10 South) suggests an above average development of industry during the Stone Age period. Although no extensive research has been done, it is presumed that humans were settled around several springs, which are still evident. The main settlement area is in a natural amphitheatre formed by volcanic activity. Large deposits of debris in mounds around small flat boulders suggest extensive tool making. The stone artefacts found in the Cradock area are manufactured out of a material called 'Lydianite' that is found in the hot impact zones between mudstone and dolerites.

Traces of early agriculture include a field laid out with stone, and irrigation ditches cut from one of the springs into a 'garden'. Other drainage ditches appear to have been widened to lead water away from the marsh that would form around the spring heads. There is also a very prominent earthwork not linked to water control – presumably it was a gathering place.

CRADOCK AND THE ANGLO BOER WAR



The early stages of the Anglo-Boer War did not touch Cradock, the beautiful town in the upper valley of the Great Fish River. There was, in fact, never a fight in this town named after Sir John Cradock, 1st Baron Howden, a British peer, politician, soldier, governor of the Cape Colony and commander of the Forces in South Africa from 1811 to 1814. The British army, however, garrisoned the town and outlooks were posted on the surrounding hills, which offer breath taking views.

Within the town there are many reminders of the War. Victoria Manor, one of the oldest hotels in South Africa, was often at the centre of things. Lord Herbert Horatio Kitchener, Commander of the Forces, General John Denton Pinkstone French and General Douglas Haig, all stayed in the hotel while the British flying columns were tracking the commandos in this area. The hotel was also occupied from time to time by rowdy British troopers who allegedly kept Boer prisoners in the cellar below the main dining hall. It was also the central venue for concerts, ceremonies and functions, like the Queen's birthday celebrations.

Four rebels were once buried near the front of the hotel, but their graves were washed away in the 1974 flood. About 70 soldiers are buried in the local graveyard, where a stately tombstone marks the grave of Boer commander, Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger, the "gentleman's general". His, however, is only one of the interesting graves in this cemetery. (see list of ABW graves.)

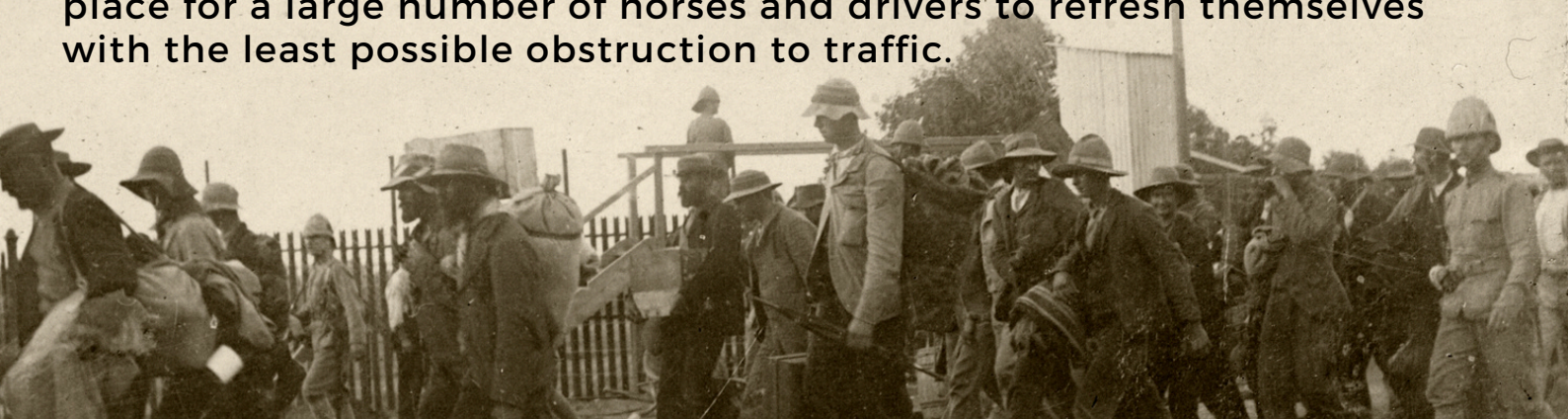
Olive Schreiner, feminist, author, anti-war campaigner and intellectual, is also buried here, but on Buffelskop, one of the koppies outside of town with a spectacular view across the plains. Reaching her grave site is but one of the challenging, but well worthwhile, hikes for outdoor enthusiasts. Olive lived in one of the hotel's Tuishuise (town houses – specially built by farmers of yesteryear, to be used when they came into town for church, communion and to shop.). All of the houses in this street were carefully restored by the Antrobus family, owners of this hotel complex. The houses were initially occupied by craftsmen who worked on wagons, most had stabling for horses.

The histories of the Cradock Club and Dutch Reformed Church are closely woven into the story of Cradock during the Anglo-Boer War.

The Club

As with many other little towns, Cradock was garrisoned. The 4th Battalion Sherwood Foresters were stationed there, and their senior officers were invited to use the facilities at the club. This was greatly appreciated, and they used it for dinners, get-togethers and drinks. At the time of the outbreak of war, the Club had already had a steady membership of 150. This building was erected in about 1850, but only established as a Club in 1881, the year in which the railway reached town. The Club has a very old upper-class English atmosphere - stained glass doors, dark wood, antique bentwood coat and hat hooks. Portraits of British Royalty, as well as paintings of the English countryside, horses and hunting scenes adorn the lounge and reading room. A small cross carved into the bar counter by one of the Sherwood Foresters homesick for England, shows true north. But this is only one of the memories of the Foresters in Cradock. They donated their leather-topped Burmese Teak mess table and a dozen chairs to the Club as a gesture of their gratitude when they left. There's also a magnificent snuff "box" made from the horn of a Highland sheep in the reading room. It has a silver band and is decorated with amethysts. It was donated by Lieutenant HS Anderson, Captain EM Wilmot and Captain WG Johnson. The presence of the "Foresters" added a zing to village life. Towns people loved to watch the regiment drilling, listen to their band and invite the officer to tea or for sundowners. The officers were always available to make up numbers at dinner and contribute interesting snippets to the conversation.

Cradock Club members recently arranged for the town's Horse Drinking Trough to be restored and moved to the club grounds for safe keeping. It was severely damaged in 2017 when a vehicle drove into it and destroyed two of the back legs which supported the trough causing it to collapse. The crown light from the top was then also stolen. This beautiful fountain, ordered from Walter Macfarlane & Company's Saracen Foundry in Glasgow was erected at the intersection of Durban and Frere Streets to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII on 26 June 1902. The aim of the fountain, commissioned by the Cradock Town Council, was to provide farmers, soldiers and visitors with a convenient, central place to water their horses. It was the 12 ft 6 (3,85 m) high drinking fountain which sat on an octagonal plinth, was advertised as suitable for Street Crossings, Squares, Market Places, and the like as it afforded ample place for a large number of horses and drivers to refresh themselves with the least possible obstruction to traffic.



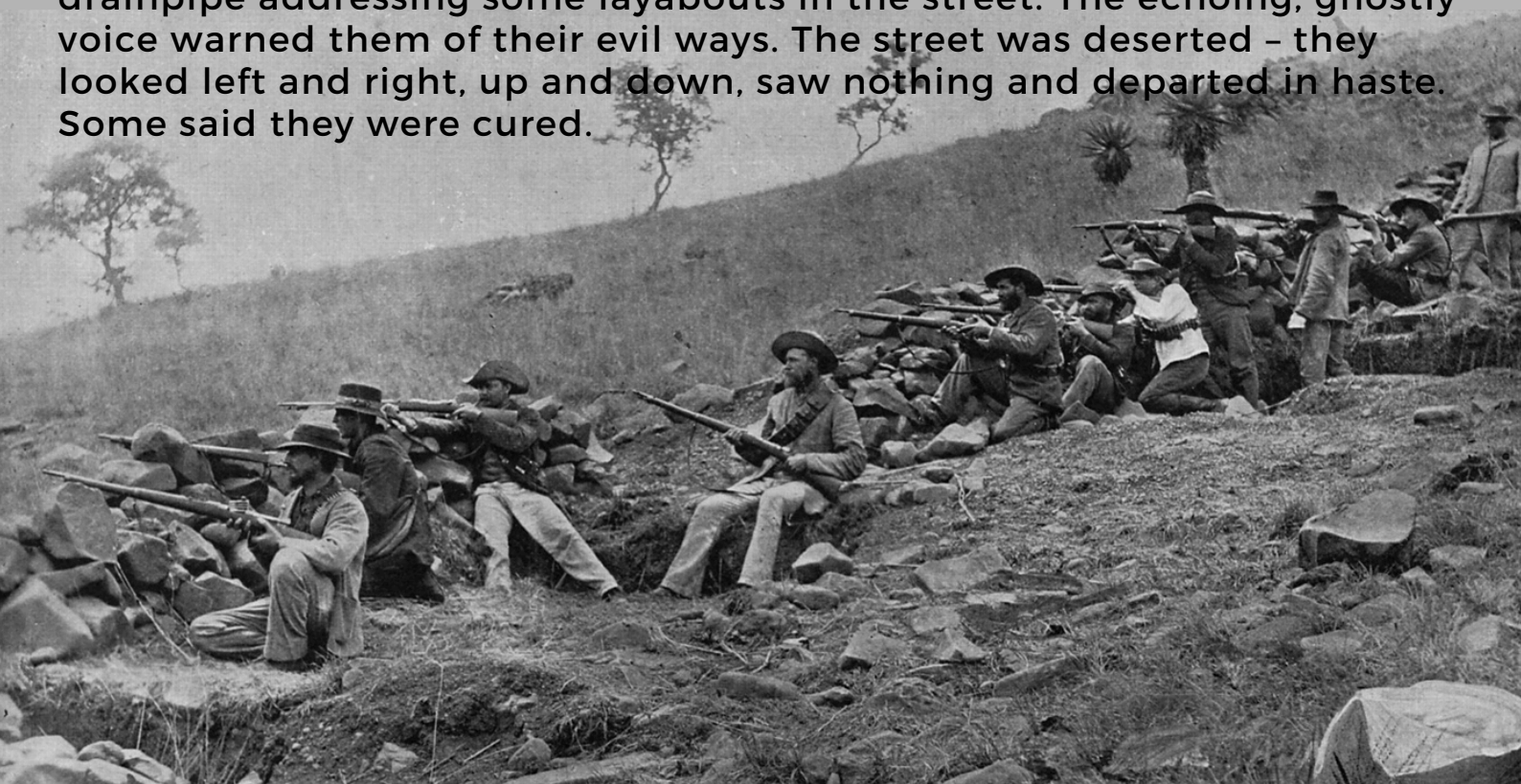
The fountain had a circular 6'6" (almost 2 m) in diameter circular cast iron basin supported on legs in the form of horses' hooves. This provided ample space for horses to drink. Small basins at ground level allowed dogs to drink and four slim projecting consoles originally held cups to allow humans to drink from the spouting water. The central stanchion supported a column with flared bases and pilasters. The dedication shield was positioned on the fluted shaft. At the top was an acanthus and rosette with a dog tooth frieze which supported a central lamp with mesh cage. The original lamp was roofed in with scales of opal glass which allowed the lantern to cast the light downward. Above this was the crown.

In the front garden of the club stand two Quercus Ilex (Holly) Oak trees, said to be among the oldest trees in the world. These densely green and thick-stemmed oaks were planted in 1850 by Charles Scanlan, a relative of the first mayor of Cradock. One was mysteriously burnt down in a fire in 2006.

The Church

The roof of the Dutch Reformed "Moederkerk" (mother church) - the DRC. was used as a lookout post by the British troops. The Daily Mail war correspondent, Edgar Wallace, said that shortly after he arrived in Cradock he had wondered about the significance of the sandbags on the roof of the church. One day while shopping a resident said: "There's no gainsaying the beauty of the church, but British soldiers have learned to use its beauty. The top of the church is sand bagged, the steeple is an observation post. When the "hooter" goes, flags wag from its summit and yellow-clad men in puttees take their stations on the roof."

Another delightful tale is linked to this church relates to a prankster on the roof who one day in a low and ominous voice spoke into the drainpipe addressing some layabouts in the street. The echoing, ghostly voice warned them of their evil ways. The street was deserted - they looked left and right, up and down, saw nothing and departed in haste. Some said they were cured.





The first DRC was built in 1824, but its congregation outgrew it so, the present church building was completed on the same site in 1868, ten years after the town received its name. The design of this church was loosely based on London's St. Martins-in-the-Field in Trafalgar Square. The opening ceremony, designed to be attended by thousands of people, almost didn't take place because the builder refused to hand over the keys until certain outstanding contract monies were paid to him. This dilemma was solved by hurriedly appealing for donations. Enough was raised to cover only part of the outstanding amount, but the builder was satisfied, and the ceremony continued.

A love story is also linked to this church. Apparently the dominee's wife was English and missed her beautiful London church, so as a gesture of love he had a copy built in Cradock.

The Outlooks

Several lookout posts were also created on the kopjes outside of town. Today outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy visiting these. The most difficult one to reach is at the top of Salpeterkop, then there is one on Oukop and another on Eerstekrans. One of the soldiers on guard duty is said to have carved "What avail it a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul" into a rock on Ouklip.

This old lookout post on the 1514m high Salpeterkop, 20km north-west of the town and now within the Mountain Zebra National Park, is an unusual place to visit. The site is reached by a 4.8-km loop trail and 420m climb. It is not an easy walk, and it takes over two hours to complete, yet the truly fit, who are up for the challenge, will find the hike well worth the effort. The view from the top is exceptional. This koppie got its name because there once was a cave there where saltpetre (potassium nitrate), an essential substance in the manufacture of gunpowder, could be obtained.

There's a chessboard carved into a slab of flat dolerite at the top of the koppie. When they had nothing better to do the soldiers played heliograph chess against lookouts on the other hills. The names and ranks of the players were also carved into the rocks. Among them were Corporal Pegram of the 1st Coldstream Guards, Corporal Hutchinson and Private W. Chambers of the 5th Lancaster Fusiliers. There's a local story that states that a farmer picked up the signals and joined the game.

The visit to Oukop is an easy 10-minute scenic walk along a dirt road, which is in poor condition. The third, Eerstekrans, is also a most impressive site, but more difficult to reach. This walk takes 20 minutes and it's an uphill slog along a series of footpaths. Again, for the fit this journey is worthwhile. There's an engraving of a Bible verse done by a British soldier who once guarded the road to Hofmeyr. Both Oukop and Eerstekrans are on municipal ground and therefore there is no need to obtain keys or permission.

The town saw quite some action during the later stages of the war, particularly when the guerrilla phase came into play. Boer commandos then swirled through this district in a cat and mouse game with the Imperial Army. Also, there were the horrors of the military courts set up in town to try the colonial rebels for high treason. Some of these men were publicly hanged and this seriously affected the morale of the village.

Background to the War

When war was declared on October 11, 1899, most people in Britain thought it would be over by Christmas, but this was not to be. The British quickly found that they had underestimated the Boers by thinking them to be unsophisticated, incompetent, backward, countrified, rural people. The Boers proved to be a formidable enemy and, at times, embarrassed the British Army, yet, after the war there was many a British soldier who saluted the bravery of the commandos and the courage of the Boers.

Initially, the conflict was confined to the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) – the Transvaal – and the Orange Free State, as well as to the specific towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafikeng, which were besieged.



The first phase was one of the set-piece battles, but British troops were stretched to the limit. They were then badly hit during Black Week - 10 to 17 December 1899. The British Army suffered devastating defeats at Stormberg (December 10, 1899), Magersfontein (December 11, 1899) and Colenso (December 15, 1899). A total of 2,776 British soldiers were killed, wounded or captured. The Boer threat was suddenly very real as things seemed to be going their way.

A huge enlistment drive followed Black Week. The British Army sent for reinforcements calling for men who could ride and shoot straight. New units began arriving with Lord Frederick Sleigh Roberts and Major-General Lord Kitchener from 10 January 1900. They moved quickly inland, defeating the Boers as they went.

As the tide turned. The Boers changed their tactics. The large cumbersome commandos were split up into smaller, highly mobile, rapid response units that could easily dart about across terrain with which they knew so well. The British troops, particularly in the Cape Midlands and Cradock area, quickly learned the effectiveness of these commandos. A very efficient guerrilla war followed during which the Boers kept nearly 500 000 British troops occupied until 1902.

In the long run, to quell the Boers, Britain had to mobilise a total of 450 000 troops, the largest fighting force until then sent into the field. As the war progressed the Empire came to Britain's aid and raised 52 000 men. They came from Ireland, Wales, America, Canada, Germany, France, Scandinavia, The Netherlands and many other countries in Europe. Some sent hospitals and medical men. Australia sent 15 715 (606 died), 6 495 came from New Zealand (229 died), and 6000 from Canada (270 died). The South African constabulary raised 8 500.

The British Army then also raised several local regiments. Among these was one raised by Charles George Dennison, who was born 21 November 1844, at Cradock. He was the son of George Dennison, a local farmer and his wife, Mary (née Webber). His father, a volunteer in the Frontier War of 1851, died of wounds.





Charles was educated at Grahamstown, and his boyhood wish was always to be a soldier because almost all of his forefathers were military men. Charles first saw action at the age of 19 as a trooper in the Free State War of 1865. He went on to become a highly experienced soldier.

When Thomas Burgher, was President of the Transvaal, Charles was in command of his bodyguard. He was Second-in-Command of the Border Horse, under Colonel Weatherley, under Colonel Sir E Wood in Zululand in 1879. Their unit was practically wiped out. Both Colonel Weatherley and his son fell. Charles served under Sir Garnet Wolseley during the First Boer War and in several other meaningful engagements that followed.

At the outbreak of the Anglo Boer War, he raised Dennison's Scouts, an Irregular Mounted Force. He received the Queen's Medal with five clasps, and the King's Medal with two clasps; was mentioned in Despatches and created a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order. He rose to the rank of Major. He was a friend of Major F C Selous, DSO and, like him, was a great hunter. His wife was Annie M Hoffman, a descendant of the De Villiers family of French Huguenots. They had 7 children.

The Kimberley Light Horse, which was captained by Cradock-born Sir Joseph Robinson. And a Cradock man Norman Hugh Collett served as a trooper in a unit raised in Graaff-Reinet, only 142 km away, by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir George Frederick Gorringe on January 5, 1901. As political passions were aroused Norman rode over to enlist on 12 January 1901. This unit was often referred to as Gorringe's Flying Column and, sometimes because of its rapid action, was nicknamed "Gorringe's Light Oxen".



The flying columns usually had the strength of two battalions of infantry, a battery of artillery and a squadron of cavalry. This was said to be almost half of a mixed brigade.

Initially, the Boers were estimated to have raised 65 000 men, including loyalists from the Cape and Natal – both British colonies. As the Boers needed more support, they solicited support in both areas. The British war machine kept rolling. When Bloemfontein and Pretoria fell, about 13 900 Boers just laid down their arms. They were so demoralized, they felt it hopeless to continue. Staunch Boers, however, refused to surrender, they joined commandos led by men such as Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger, Jan Smuts, Gideon Scheepers, Johannes Cornelius Lotter and Wynand Charl Malan. Those who joined up made themselves rebels, guilty of high treason and liable to execution.

Foreign nationals also came to the aid of both armies and lives were lost on both sides. This was the bloodiest, longest and most expensive war that Britain engaged in between 1815 and 1915. It cost more than £200 million and more than 22 000 men were lost. The Boers lost over 34 000 people. More than 15 000 black people were killed.

Newspapers carried daily reports. The British Press, however, found it difficult to keep abreast of the many small skirmishes that erupted in the areas around places like Cradock. This was mainly because the place names were unfamiliar, and much action took place on farms not shown on the map. They were also often confused as to which commando was involved in what action.

War Rolls On

Karoo towns like Cradock were drawn into the war. They were garrisoned. Foreign regiments with men who spoke a language that many most did not understand rode riding into town. Men like Lieutenant-Colonel Gorringe, Colonel Eyre Macdonnell Stewart Crabbe (Grenadier Guards), Lieutenant-Colonel AH Henniker (Coldstream Guards), Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Jenner Scobell (The Greys), Lieutenant-Colonel Walter Robert Butler Doran and Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Toler MacMorrough Kavanagh (Royal Hussars) performed an intricate devil's dance and, like dust devils, whirled across the plains chasing the commandos.

The 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen (TIB), saw quite some action in the Cradock area. The TIB was the most highly decorated Australian unit to serve in the Boer War. It won two of the six Victoria Crosses awarded to Australians. The 2nd TIB sailed from Hobart under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Edwin Thomas Watchorn and arrived in Port Elizabeth on 24 April. Trooper PA Emery kept a daily diary and in it states that on landing they were immediately despatched to Cradock. On detraining they went straight to a camp on the eastern side of town. There they learned that the Boers were about 18 miles (29 km) away.

They were issued with new saddles as the ones they had brought had been “condemned on landing” and their kit. As they settled in, a small detachment (about 150 men) of Cape Mounted Rifles (CMR) rode out in search of Boers.



Soon the first 30 horses arrived from Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha). On 28 April they practised guard duties and camp routine: 05:30 Reveille; 06:00 feed horses; 08:00 breakfast; 09:00 water the horses; 09:30 clean up; 12:00 feed horses; 13:00 lunch; 14:30 parade; 16:00 water the horses; 17:00 feed the horses; 18:00 tea (supper); 21:00 feed the horses; 22:00 lights out. A full-dress parade was held on 29 April.

The men could hardly wait to go out to scout for Boers, but they were kept in camp for a few days. They then trekked down the line for about 8 km to guard a pass at Orange Grove then, after a few days, were ordered on to Mortimer station about 31 km south of Cradock, to protect the line as Boers had wrecked a train

Emer wrote: "Boers were expected to attempt to cross the line, so we were placed 'to block' them. The Midland Mounted Rifles (MMR) engaged and defeated the Boers. Then 30 men were posted along the road with orders to fire on sight, but nothing happened."

Colonel Scobell's Column was in the Cradock area on May 1. On 2 May Emery was sent to an outpost for a 24-hour stint of duty. He was thrilled, but nothing happened. On 3 May they were posted on a high kopje and saw several columns in the distance. Seven men raided a Boer farm and "were told off" because Boers frequently visited there. The TIB returned to camp at 22:45, turned in, but were roused at 23:30, to saddle up and escort a convoy. "It was an all-night job until the MMR took over the next day. A railway line blown up about 10 miles (16 km) away and a CMR patrol got into trouble. A corporal was killed, and five men wounded, wrote Emery.

The TIB were sent to repair the railway line on 5 May. They met an Australian farmer at Limebanks station who "treated us like a gentleman." On 6 May the TIB visited four Boer farms, looking for rebels, without success. "The country is very rough and hard on the horses." Six Cape Cyclist Corps (CCC) joined them as despatch riders. They captured a Boer, but let him go. The Boers simply didn't have the capacity to feed and harbour prisoners. Mostly POWs would have been stripped of their belonging and let loose a few miles from home – normally barefoot. This made struggling home across the stoney Karoo veld extremely painful.





He reported that about 180 Boers passed in the distance and, 60 more were seen on a kopje three miles (5 km) away, but there was no action. Scobell's main column passed through Cradock to try to head off Boers, without success, so the TIB dug trenches round the camp, and posted, extra guards.

The Boers cut the telegraph lines to Cradock on 7 May. A 300-man strong commando had crossed and camped for about two hours in a gully just below the TIB outpost, without their knowledge. The troop was given 200 rounds of extra ammunition and marched to the top of a kopje which had a good view of the road and railway line, but again there was no action.

On 9 May the TIB camped at Drennan, about 43 km from Cradock. Early next morning they were summoned to the aid of Lieutenant Blyth who had ridden into an ambush. "Scottish Sharpshooters were ordered to search the kopjes at the back of the station. They rode into a long valley between two kopjes, into a belt of scrub and a dry watercourse (donga).

Corporal Eric Lindsay Douglas Brownell was ordered to take four scouts and move out on the right flank from the main column. The main patrol entered the scrub and crossed the donga without seeing the Boers, lying there. When the patrol got to within 200 yards a force of about 22 Boers opened fire, wounding three horses and one man, Trooper George E Saunderson. The patrol retired, but the scouts were not so fortunate. Two got clear away, but two Tasmanians, Private 252 John Warburton, from Westbury, Meander Valley, and Corporal Brownell, 22, a former station assistant in Moonah, were cut off. Instead of surrendering they decided to make a stand. They dismounted and took shelter behind some rocks. Returning fire at about 50 yards they tried to repulse the Boers. They even shot their horses and used them as cover. Suddenly Warburton was shot in the head and Brownell in the shoulder. He fired until his ammunition was done, then he was captured. stripped of his clothing, and then set free.

George Saunderson wrote to his family and friends in Penguin saying: "All went well until there was a sharp crack of rifle fire. Our leader found we were in a trap and gave the order to retire. We made a dash and, oh, my word how their rifles cracked, and bullets whistled." He stated that all of a sudden, he was pitched out of the saddle, even though his little mare was doing her best. "I struck the ground very hard. However, I lay there only until my senses returned and I found my rifle. Then, I heard sound of a horse and on looking round I saw an old grey retiring on his own. As he could go faster than me, I thought it was a good idea to get hold of his back. When we mustered there was a good many of ours and the Tommies missing. I was ordered back to camp."

Trooper Archibald Woohey of the New Zealand Rough riders was killed while trying to escape after being made prisoner, reported The Australian Town and Country Journal of 1 June 1901.

Saunderson said it was almost dark before Brownell got back. He was stripped, but he went out with an ambulance wagon to get Jack. The ambulance took Warburton to Cradock Hospital, where he died. He was barely out of his teens. He had six dependents, his mother, grandmother and four siblings under the age of ten.



Saunderson said: "Jack had a soldier's funeral. We are going to have a headstone and have a fence made for his grave." Brownell distinguished himself in this campaign and afterwards received a commission in the Imperial Army.

There's a poignant story relating to Warburton's death. After he died a little book inscribed "To Jack from Janie" was found in his pocket by Boer Commandant Judge Hugo. He kept it, but when he was killed in April 1902, a Scot named Kemp acquired the book. After he surrendered the book came into the possession of Lieutenant Stoker who arranged for it to be returned to Warburton's family. Inside were pencilled notes made by both Hugo and Kemp.

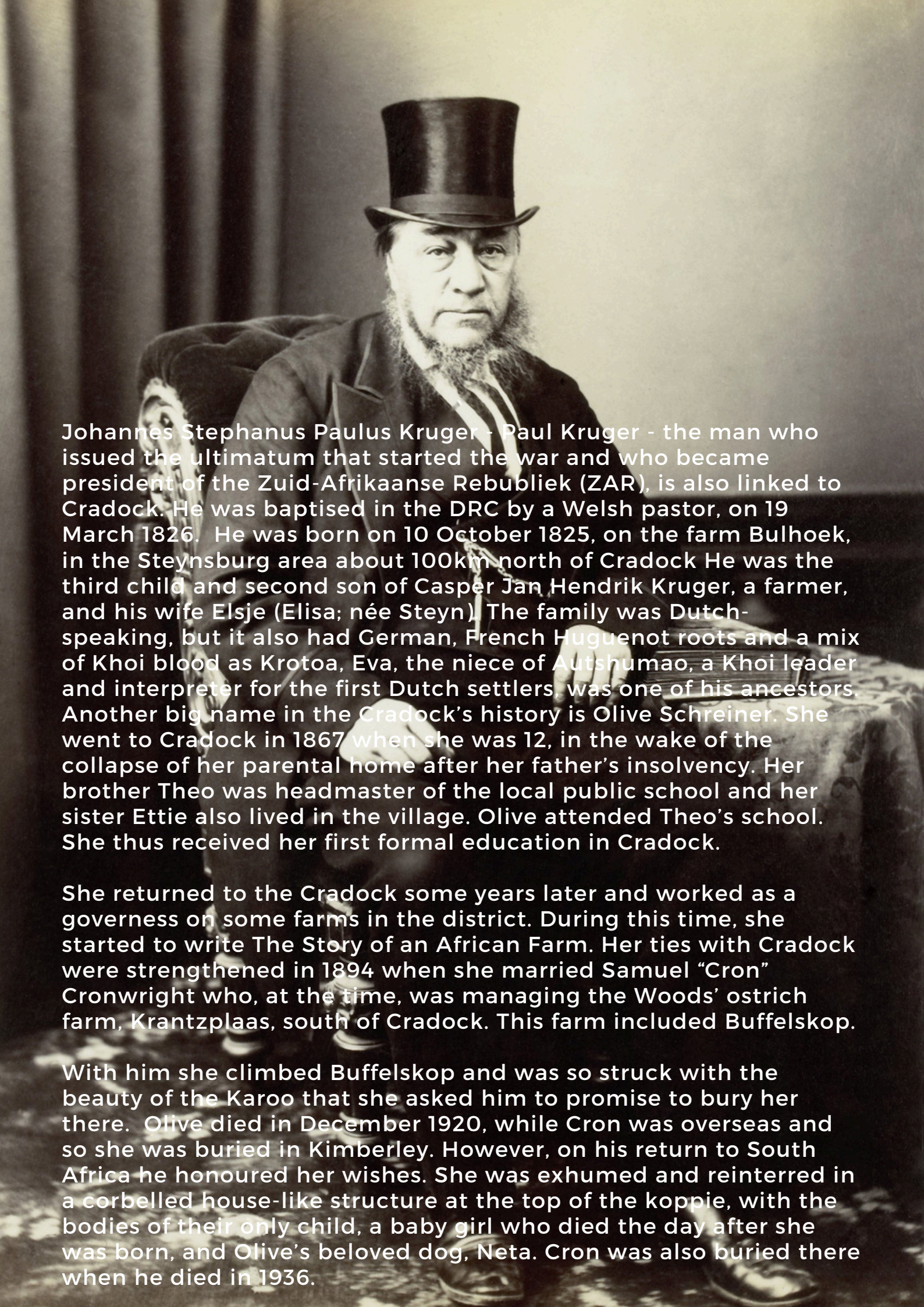
A few days later the TIB found Boers about three miles (5 km) out of Dassedue, engaged them, but they retired. The TIB was then attached to Scobell's column and trekked up and down the line with them before moving out of this region, wrote Emery.

Great Heroes of the War

The names of some big war heroes are woven into the history of Cradock. One of these is Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger, who was well-known throughout the district and a frequent visitor to some of the farms around Cradock before the war. He is buried in Cradock.

He became a hero of at the Battle of Stormberg, which took place about 200 km to the north east of Cradock. On the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War Kritzinger was farming in the Free State, so he joined the Rouxville Commando under General JH Olivier and took part in one of the battle of Stormberg on December 10 1899. At the time, Kritzinger was engaged to Olivier's daughter. (Olivier was the victor of that battle during which 135 British soldiers were killed and 696 captured. This led to the humiliating defeat over Lieutenant-General William Forbes Gatacre, the hero of the Battle of Omdurman in Sudan. He was totally humiliated; his reputation was in tatters, and he returned to England.

Kritzinger was Commander-in-Chief of the Boer Rebel Forces in the Cape Colony and a noted guerrilla commander for precisely a year after he invaded the Cape. This period stretched from the start of the second invasion on December 16, 1900, to his capture during his personal drive into the Cape on December 16, 1901. However, during this time he was driven back into the Orange Free State for about four months. His next invasion of the Cape took him into the Cradock area. In this area the Battle of Waterkloof is considered to be one of his greatest victories.



Johannes Stephanus Paulus Kruger - Paul Kruger - the man who issued the ultimatum that started the war and who became president of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR), is also linked to Cradock. He was baptised in the DRC by a Welsh pastor, on 19 March 1826. He was born on 10 October 1825, on the farm Bulhoek, in the Steynsburg area about 100km north of Cradock. He was the third child and second son of Casper Jan Hendrik Kruger, a farmer, and his wife Elsje (Elisa; née Steyn). The family was Dutch-speaking, but it also had German, French Huguenot roots and a mix of Khoi blood as Krotoa, Eva, the niece of Axtshumao, a Khoi leader and interpreter for the first Dutch settlers, was one of his ancestors. Another big name in the Cradock's history is Olive Schreiner. She went to Cradock in 1867 when she was 12, in the wake of the collapse of her parental home after her father's insolvency. Her brother Theo was headmaster of the local public school and her sister Ettie also lived in the village. Olive attended Theo's school. She thus received her first formal education in Cradock.

She returned to the Cradock some years later and worked as a governess on some farms in the district. During this time, she started to write *The Story of an African Farm*. Her ties with Cradock were strengthened in 1894 when she married Samuel "Cron" Cronwright who, at the time, was managing the Woods' ostrich farm, Krantzplaas, south of Cradock. This farm included Buffelskop.

With him she climbed Buffelskop and was so struck with the beauty of the Karoo that she asked him to promise to bury her there. Olive died in December 1920, while Cron was overseas and so she was buried in Kimberley. However, on his return to South Africa he honoured her wishes. She was exhumed and reinterred in a corbelled house-like structure at the top of the koppie, with the bodies of their only child, a baby girl who died the day after she was born, and Olive's beloved dog, Neta. Cron was also buried there when he died in 1936.

An interesting fact about the Bulhoek house, which not many know, is that the Orange-Fish Tunnel passes directly below it.

Guerrilla War

The war entered a second phase, a guerrilla war, after the British annexed the Transvaal in October 1900. Commandos rode into the Cape bringing the war closer to towns like Cradock, as they sought support. The British controlled the towns and railway lines, but the Boers were supported by local families, they knew the terrain and its features well, used these to their advantage, So, they were almost impossible to catch on the open veld. Kitchener, then instigated a new strategy of using mobile “flying” columns to hunt down the Boers.

In an attempt to deprive the commandos of support the British commandeered horses, mules and donkeys. as well as fodder. Whatever could not be transported they burnt.

The British troops were fast learning of the power and efficacy of the Boer commandos as they darted easily about, overwhelming small patrols. No commando stayed in one place for long mainly because of the problem of fodder and food but also to make them difficult to chase. They constantly split up under different leaders and regrouped for action. Also, they often moved at night. They kept moving in wide circles, so that they could leave tired horses in some hidden valley or on a flat-topped mountain to recover and so that they could pick them up again later. Cradock at times was central to the action.

Kritzinger moved into the Eastern Cape where his actions between December 1900 and April 1901 led to the escalation of the war and the intervention of an increasing number of mobile columns. Such action caused great problems for loyalist farmers, most of whom moved with their families into the town, where they at least had the protection of the Imperial garrisons. Farming was greatly hampered by both armies as products and produce was taken. Farm servants also sought refuge in the town as blacks were often harshly treated by the Boers. A number were summarily shot on suspicion of being British spies.



By June the main Boer force under Kritzinger was concentrated in the Cradock district and "it was clear that some large enterprise was afoot," wrote Conan Doyle in *The Great Boer War*. This soon took shape early when he rode towards Jamestown and Barkly East hundreds of miles away, caused chaos and captured hundreds of horses.

In the Cradock and Tarkastad districts Kritzinger was forced to divide his commando and one half retreated back into the Orange Free State.

Town Guard and DMT

By 17 January 1901 martial law had been declared throughout the Cape. After the declaration of Martial Law most able-bodied men in Cradock, joined the Town Guard or District Mounted troops. (See attached lists) The DMT provided a valuable service. Their local knowledge of the district served the scouts and Imperial troops very well. Later many who did not join Colonial outfits came forward to join the Midlands Mounted Rifles (MMR) or the Cradock Commando, both of which also served with distinction during the German South West campaign.

Units like the MMR allowed the Imperial troops to concentrate on tracking down marauding commandos. This unit was first mentioned by Lord Kitchener. In a despatch he wrote: "On the 21st of June a party of 60 Midland Mounted Rifles - a local corps - was surrounded and captured by Kritzinger between Cradock and Graaff Reinet; 9 men were killed, and 2 officers and 10 men wounded". According to the published casualty lists the number of killed and wounded was slightly larger. Captain HJ Spandow died of his wounds; Lieutenant AP Robertson was severely wounded. It is satisfactory that the detachment made a very good fight, and that there was no surrender until the losses became out of all proportion to the end to be gained in holding out."



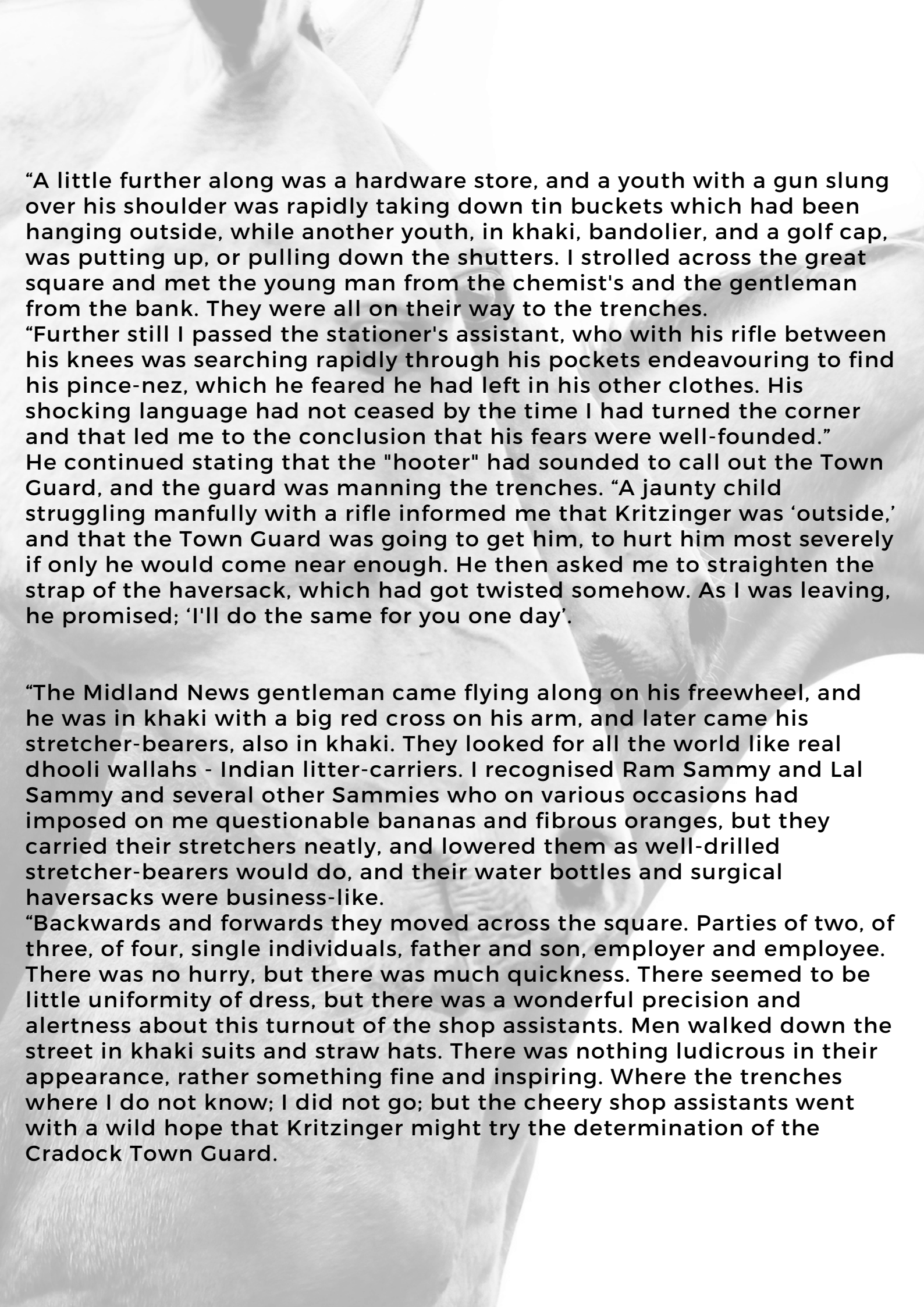
One of the local men who enlisted to serve with honour in the Cradock Town Guard was 34-year-old Lieutenant John Deary. John's father came to South Africa and settled in Grahamstown in 1864. They didn't stay long before moving to Cradock where they established themselves as grocers. An accountant by profession, he initially joined the 6th Dismounted Midland Rifles, enlisting as a Corporal but was soon promoted to the commissioned rank of Lieutenant and Quartermaster of the Cradock Town Guard. He claimed to have had prior service with the 1st City (Grahamstown) Volunteers and he confirmed his next of kin was his wife, Ellen L Deary. After the war he took over as officer commanding of the Cradock High School Cadets. he was known as an officer and gentleman much devoted to sports of all kinds.

The men who served in the Cradock Town Guard left a rich legacy and some wonderfully interesting stories. Few realise that the world-famous Comrades Marathon, an approximately 89 kilometres ultramarathon, annually run between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, has a link with the Cradock Town Guard.

This marathon, the oldest and longest race of its kind, is the brainchild of WWI veteran Vic Clapham, great-grandson, Antony Clapham was only 13 years old when he enrolled as an ambulance man in the Cradock Town Guard. After the war he moved to Natal and at the outbreak of WWI enlisted with the 8th South African Infantry. His idea was to commemorate the bravery and stamina of South African soldiers killed during the war. The constitution of the race states that one of its primary aims is to "celebrate mankind's spirit over adversity".

Edgar Wallace described how the Town guards were constituted: "One day as I walked into the store the shop assistant groped for a moment in a dark corner and produced a gun. It wasn't a gun in the military sense of the word, but really a Lee-Enfield rifle. He then reached for a bandolier, then a haversack. As I recovered my equanimity, he had got himself into a khaki jacket. Then, I understood - he was a Town Guardsman.





“A little further along was a hardware store, and a youth with a gun slung over his shoulder was rapidly taking down tin buckets which had been hanging outside, while another youth, in khaki, bandolier, and a golf cap, was putting up, or pulling down the shutters. I strolled across the great square and met the young man from the chemist's and the gentleman from the bank. They were all on their way to the trenches.

“Further still I passed the stationer's assistant, who with his rifle between his knees was searching rapidly through his pockets endeavouring to find his pince-nez, which he feared he had left in his other clothes. His shocking language had not ceased by the time I had turned the corner and that led me to the conclusion that his fears were well-founded.” He continued stating that the "hooter" had sounded to call out the Town Guard, and the guard was manning the trenches. “A jaunty child struggling manfully with a rifle informed me that Kritzinger was ‘outside,’ and that the Town Guard was going to get him, to hurt him most severely if only he would come near enough. He then asked me to straighten the strap of the haversack, which had got twisted somehow. As I was leaving, he promised; ‘I'll do the same for you one day’.

“The Midland News gentleman came flying along on his freewheel, and he was in khaki with a big red cross on his arm, and later came his stretcher-bearers, also in khaki. They looked for all the world like real dhooli wallahs - Indian litter-carriers. I recognised Ram Sammy and Lal Sammy and several other Sammies who on various occasions had imposed on me questionable bananas and fibrous oranges, but they carried their stretchers neatly, and lowered them as well-drilled stretcher-bearers would do, and their water bottles and surgical haversacks were business-like.

“Backwards and forwards they moved across the square. Parties of two, of three, of four, single individuals, father and son, employer and employee. There was no hurry, but there was much quickness. There seemed to be little uniformity of dress, but there was a wonderful precision and alertness about this turnout of the shop assistants. Men walked down the street in khaki suits and straw hats. There was nothing ludicrous in their appearance, rather something fine and inspiring. Where the trenches where I do not know; I did not go; but the cheery shop assistants went with a wild hope that Kritzinger might try the determination of the Cradock Town Guard.

The Bradford Observer of Wednesday, 9 January 1901, in one of the first write-ups on the town guards wrote: "The Cradock Town Guard now numbers 200 men, but there is no further news as to the exact whereabouts of the invading commando, but it is believed to have broken up into small bodies. The vanguard of the commando is said to be wearing yellow puggarees and neckties. The enemy do not appear to be soliciting the assistance of the colonials. But they commandeer poultry, bread and other foodstuffs. Otherwise, they have done no great damage. They intimidate the people by threats against anyone who gives information or assistance to the British troops."

The Lancashire Daily Post of Friday, 27 September 1901, stated that: "A mounted patrol of the Cradock Town Guard surprised five Boers early on Wednesday morning. They captured 10 horses and 14 saddles. Two Boers were wounded. The pace of things was definitely speeding up." The Gloucester Journal of Saturday, 25 January 1902 under the headline "British Patrol Surprised - 50 men missing" informed its readers that "A Reuter message from Cradock reports that on Sunday a patrol of 50 men of the Cradock Town Guard went out from the Tarkastad Road and were surprised in the early morning by Wessels' Commando who number about 200 and have been moving about the neighbourhood for some days. One guardsman was wounded, a few returned to town and the rest are missing."

Wallace said that after the DRC a man waved the flag businessmen shut up their shops and ran 'pull-throughs' through their rifles. "A man who at 9 o'clock was serving out butter, was now at 10 o'clock serving out ammunition, The 'boots' became a bugler, the young man from the soft goods department developed into a martinet of a sergeant and ordered about and swore at young men from the hardware department. Shouting out 'Shun' shop assistants were now the power of the land. Kritzinger evidently knew - for he did not come."





The Boer side of the story

Loyalists in the area were given a very bad fright when Kritzinger, moved into the area. He was a serious thorn in the British side. He moved into the Midlands and his commandos were seen in the Cradock surrounds. The aim of the Boers with the second invasion of the Cape was to make things as difficult as possible for the British by destroying morale, giving courage to the still persevering Boers, encouraging rebels to join, disrupting their lines of communication, attacking columns, blowing up railway lines and bridges, wrecking trains and burning down the houses of Afrikaners loyal to the enemy. Small parties from Cradock and Middelburg joined the rebel forces, some of them who wanted to be in at the fight and others to avoid arrest, like Jan Stapelberg of Grootkom, Cradock who was wanted for forgery.

The commandos constantly harassed the British troops capturing convoys, taking what they needed - horses, weapons, ammunition, blankets, saddlebags, riding breeches, boots and hats - and destroying the rest.

The excitement of this time is detailed in several articles in the Military History Journal. In one, entitled Commandant PH Kritzinger in the Cape, Neville Gomm, writes: "What always impresses one about the South African War is the enormous distances that were covered on horseback. Many horses were lost as a result of fatigue alone. These sturdy animals played an enormous part in the guerrilla phase of the war which commenced in the Cape in September 1900." Gomm's article describes the travels of a Commando under Commandant (later General) Pieter Hendrik Kritzinger from 15 December 1900 until 16th December 1901 when Kritzinger was wounded and taken prisoner."



Towards the end of February, a serious offensive was launched against Boers. On 23 February 1901, Kritzinger sent Lotter to blow up an important railway bridge at Fish River, north of Cradock. Because of Lotter's inexperience the attack was foiled by a handful of Cape Police and the Lancaster's. Gorringer caught up with Kritzinger on the evening of the 25th at Wolwevallei, one of the chief bases of the Boer guerrillas in the Midlands and shelled him. Kritzinger trekked east towards Fish River Station, intending to launch a second attack. But finding heavy troop concentrations in his path, he swung north towards Conway where he was engaged by General A Hunter, so he turned west to Wolwevallei. He released a number of prisoners and headed for Spitskop, the farm of P Troskie, a prominent Boer supporter and a leading figure in the Midlands area.

From there Kritzinger gave the British the slip, galloped south, and with Lotter crossed the Tandjiesberg and Coetzeesberg to capture Pearston about 91 km away on 3 March. The Boers surrounded the village, overwhelmed the town guard, looted the town taking 61 prisoners and capturing 80 horses, 60 rifles and between 15 and 20 000 rounds of ammunition. He then moved northwards and divided his commando leaving 300 men under Commandant GHP van Reenen. He and Lotter based themselves between Tarkastad and Cradock.

April was a particularly active month for the commandos. They were especially troublesome around Cradock. The night service trains were suspended. Kritzinger derailed a train on the Cradock line on 8 April 1901 and looted the village of Conway (67 km away) next day.

Scheepers raced through the area causing havoc, firing on trains, burning buildings, and disappeared back into the hills. He and Malan were tracked by Scobell and Henniker to Pearston where they split up. Fouche rejoined Kritzinger near Cradock, however, as a result of operations by Colonel D Haig, Kritzinger crossed back into the OFS on 29 April 1901.

On 1 May Malan were engaged a troop of west of Cradock Diamond Fields Horse, led by Lieutenant Matthews. He shot most of the horses. He captured 8 and wounded 12, Matthews was among the wounded. He later blew up the line at Mortimer.

Scheepers remained in the Midlands operating around Daggaboer's Nek in the Baviaansberg, only about 50 km from Cradock. The nearby village of Bedford, 82 km from Cradock, lived in fear of him. On 7 May 1901 he had a brush with the Bedford Town Guard, on 8 May clashed with Henniker, on 9 May was involved in a skirmish at Gannashoek near Mortimer and later another at Swaershoek about 20 km from Cradock. Swanepoel was killed and the remnants of his commando joined Scheepers who moved south-westwards passing through Pearston and Jansenville.

On the night of the 19 May Scobell almost captured Malan. He surprised the Boers at rest before dawn, killing 4 and capturing the 40 horses. The men escaped on foot or rode out bareback. Malan fled to the west. On 27 May Major Mullins, with some of Brabant's Horse, caught Malan's commando between Cradock and Maraisburg. Lieutenant Cloete was wounded and taken to hospital at Cradock. Scheepers was relentlessly pursued by Henniker and Scobell. His commando went down to 100 men. Early one morning his commando was cornered on the farm Onbedacht. One of his more serious losses was 18-year-old Lieutenant Izaak Bartholomeus Liebenberg, who was captured by Scobell in a barn

Liebenberg was executed on 11 January 1902, at Aliwal North. Other members of his commando who were executed were: Petrus Jacobus Fourie, 40, Jan van Rensburg, 22, Lodewyk Francois Stephanus Pheiffer – all executed in Graaff-Reinet on 19 August 1901; Ignatius W Nel, 17 years old and Daniel F Olwagen, 18, both executed in Graaff-Reinet on 26 August, 1901; Hendrik Petrus van Vuuren, 27, Fredrick Toy, and Hendrik Veenstra, 22, executed at Colesberg on 4 September, 1901. Jan D Momberg was sentenced to death but then he turned crown witness to save his own life.

A few months later Gideon Scheepers was also captured, tried and he was executed at Graaff-Reinet. after being falsely accused as a Cape rebel, and on alleged war crimes. Scheepers has since achieved martyrdom status and an imposing monument was erected in his memory outside Graaff-Reinet.

The expanding activities of the Boer commandos forced the British to deploy troops to guard the railway lines. Kitchener was forced to divert troops to help deal with the commandos. The guerrilla campaign proved difficult for the British to defeat, due in part to British unfamiliarity with the terrain Boer support from the civilian population, so in June 1901 Kitchener gave General JDP French supreme command of combating guerrilla warfare in the Colony.

Counter-measures against the commandos were tightened up. All horses had to be registered and all bicycles had to be handed in to the authorities. Regardless of these efforts the commandos continued to wreak havoc, eluding the “flying columns” and raiding villages to replenish supplies.

Waterford

On 21 June Kritzinger captured by a British patrol at Waterkloof near Swaershoek killing 9, wounding 12 and taking 66 prisoners. He had learned that Captain Spandau had ridden out with a small group of about 90 men and was operating in the district, about 20 miles from Cradock. Since this was not a formidable group he decided to go after them. He was confident that capturing such a small group would be neither difficult nor dangerous. He thus mustered 40 of his men and his best horses and he set off at midnight. By dawn he was six miles (9,5 km) from the British camp.

To prevent the British from escaping Kritzinger took 12 men and the least tired horses and rode ahead to outflank the British unit. He left the rest of his men and their exhausted horses to get some rest. The plan was for him to engage the British and for the rest of his men to ride up and support him.





About half an hour after sunrise he came across the pickets and the British where they had camped for the night on Waterkloof farm. The pickets were charged and captured. Kritzinger then took up a position about 200 yards from the British who had off-saddled close to a wall.

Brisk firing from both sides followed. The wall provided good cover for the British and they fired volley after volley. The Boers, nevertheless, managed to gain ground and eventually a few burgers passed the wall, thus destroying the British advantage. During this move one of Kritzinger's men, a 13-year-old lad, named Hugo was shot and killed, two others were wounded. However, as the British were then exposed to crossfire from the Boers, they suffered heavily and "dropped either dead or wounded," wrote Kritzinger in his biography. "When I saw how untenable their position was becoming, I sent a flag of truce asking them to surrender to avoid any further bloodshed. One of the officers sent word that as Captain Spandau had fallen and that their losses were so great that further resistance was useless."

In addition to Spandau 15 men had been killed and 14 wounded. Six of the wounded died soon after their surrender. One of the British men was sent back to Cradock to fetch an ambulance. The Boer lost one man and two were wounded. "This encounter exposed the myth that Colonial alertness is greater than that of regular troops," stated Conan Doyle.

The men that the commando had left behind had off saddled and so arrived only after the British had surrendered. A British officer asked where Kritzinger who had engaged them and where all his men were. "When I told him we were 13 and that 3 had been taken out almost as soon as the firing started, he just shook his head."

The British had numbered 84 in total. After this encounter the Boers acquired 105 horses and a good supply of ammunition. Later still Fouche also cornered a British patrol unit here and took 150 prisoners. As a reminder of all this action there are 14 graves alongside the wall."

Engagement at Garstland

Leaving Kritzinger, Malan moved westwards, then turned eastwards and rode south of Graaff-Reinet over Petersburg and to the north of Cradock up to Maraisburg. From July 1901, blockhouses were built, all the way down to Wellington.

Kritzinger surprised on Crabbe's column on 17 July at Garstland Kloof near Waterkloof, in the very mountains west of Cradock, but the Boers were strong enough to hold their own, said Conan Doyle. Leaving the guns and transport in Garstland's Kloof, the column had climbed over the mountains on 16 July and sometime after nightfall reached the farm Jackalsfontein, which Kritzinger's men had just left. The Boers had not ridden far and at dawn they crept back, shot two of the pickets and seized a commanding ridge only 700 yards from the column's bivouac.

As a result of the heavy Boer fire, most of the column's horses broke their lines and stampeded down the road and straight into the hands of the Boers. The fight continued all day in extreme heat. Water was scarce. Kritzinger, who had been reinforced by Lotter's commando, called on the column to surrender but the British stood their ground. At nightfall the men, led by Captain Dick of Grahamstown, fixed bayonets and marched some 25 miles (40 km) to Mortimer. The column suffered seven casualties.

On 2 September Malan was attacked by Doran at Garstland Kloof. He then proceeded to Spitzkop south of the Bankberg pursued by Scobell. On 3 September he was sighted at Strick's Farm near Swaershoek making for the hamlet, Petersburg. Wessels got away, but later near Cradock clashing with Warren. Several of the enemy horses were shot and some men wounded. This encounter happened so suddenly, and the British soldiers had to turn around so rapidly that many lost their helmets. "However," wrote Kritzinger, "No one showed any inclination to turn and pick them up."



Brave, charming and good-looking Johannes Lotter, another burr under the British saddle, led many daring commando raids. During one of the worst winters the Karoo had had in years Lotter, 35, led 154 men through Pearston, Cradock, Middelburg and Graaff Reinet, hotly pursued by Scobell. On the night of 4 September Lotter and his men reached P du Toit's farm Groenkloof near Petersburg, about 50km south from Cradock. A fierce storm was raging. The men and horses were totally exhausted, so believing himself safe Lotter and his men bunkered down in a shed and old stone kraal. It was too cold to station guards, and this enabled Scobell to secure all approaches and surround the commando of 114 men. At dawn, a British officer is said to have shouted: "Hands up, Khaki is not late this morning."

A merciless attack followed. The Boers The threw fought desperately and held out valiantly, but their position was impossible, and after enduring considerable punishment they were forced to hoist the white flag - 11 had been killed, 46 wounded, and 56 surrendered - Lotter was among the prisoners, 260 horses were taken, as well as a good supply of ammunition, with some dynamite. The British lost seven men and 21 were wounded, 13 rebels were killed and 30 wounded, Lotter among them. He was executed for treason in October 1901.



Modderfontein

The early part of September was spent in chasing Smuts. The commandos then rushed in the night across the line towards Tarkastad chasing Colonels Gorringe, Doran and the 17th Lancers. The west was guarded by Colonel Scobell at Cradock.

The 17th Lancers, under Captain Sandeman, was posted at Modderfontein, about 18 miles (29km) north-west of Tarkastad, guarding the southern exit from Elands River Poort, and a pass towards the north-east, known as Evans Hoek. The idea was to prevent the Boers from coming south-west into the Cradock district. There is an Afrikaans account of a priest trying to warn the Lancers of the presence of the Boers. Written by J P Bosman, it states that there had been talk of a spy in the area and that when Reverend John Catling went to the Lancers camp to warn them of the approaching commando but had him arrested as a spy.

The morning, of 17 September, was foggy. Sandeman's men surprised by a party of Ben Bouwers men at a stream, but because they were dressed in khaki, they mistook them for Colonel Gorringe's men, who were expected to arrive from Soude Nek. So, they accepted them as comrades. The low mist which hung over the low ground till late that morning also favoured the approach of these men. When the men levelled their rifles at about 200 yards [180m] distant they shouted to them: "Don't fire. We are the 17th Lancers." (These irregular corps often fire at one another by mistake.) The Boers opened fire at once. The British despatched some men to warn the camp, but they were foiled by at a gate and there were even more losses. Bouwer, Reitz Veldt Cornet Borrius and some others made their way up the eastern side of the valley. Borrius and his men found a muzzle-loading mountain gun that was popular in India, which could be quickly dismantled and carried by four or six mules. Reitz and some others dismounted and moved closer to the British Lines. Their horses were trained to stand still.





Lieutenant Hay was shot by Reitz and two gunners were killed. The "Death or Glory Boys," said the newspapers, even in these circumstances, fought valiantly until the approach of Major Nicholls and another squadron of the Lancers. The Boers then ceased fire and departed.

On 22 September 22, 1901, General Douglas Haig wrote to his sister, Henrietta, telling her of the terrible losses suffered by C Squadron 17th Lancers under the command of Captain Sandeman, who, in his opinion was "a most capable officer".

"I was out with the squadron on the previous day when it marched from Tarkastad. The weather, for several days, had been terribly wet. However, it cleared for an hour about 3 o'clock and Sandeman lunched with me (off some of those nice tin things you sent me from Cabbett) on the fatal koppie on which the next day so many poor fellows were killed. I got back to Tarkastad at 9 pm. Next morning was very foggy." He mentioned that patrols, one under Second Lieutenant Russell, reconnoitred the two passes at the exits of one which Sandeman had his camp. All was reported clear, but about noon a message was sent to Sandeman that the Boers were advancing to attack his camp. A troop moved out at once.

"Our men held their position to the last, and not a man surrendered. Out of 130 men, 29 were killed and 41 wounded, Major Sandeman among them. The other men were still fighting when the next squadron came to their support and the enemy. made off. All the officers were either killed or wounded. They were such nice fellows too."

The Midland News correspondent also graphically described the battle. "On receipt of a report that a small picket was in advance of the camp a troop quickly mounted and rode towards the poort. The officer in command saw some khaki-clad men about 2 miles (3,2km) away and thinking they were some of Colonel Gorrings's column, rode forward to meet them. When about two hundred yards distant, seeing them levelling their rifles, he shouted out, 'Don't fire! we are the 17th Lancers.' The only answer was rapid rifle fire.

"During this time another body of the enemy had worked up the donga running past the camp and approached it from the rear. These men also dressed in khaki and were taken for friends. Major Nichols, was encamped at Hoogstude, about 3 miles (5km) distant, hearing of attack on Sandeman's camp, immediately rode out to their aid.

"The lay on the southern slope of a gentle rise, encircled on the west by a spruit running generally north-west, and joining the main river about 2 miles (3,2km) away About three hundred yards from the spruit the ground on which the camp stood rises into a rocky kopje about a hundred yards long at the crest. This was defended with great determination, and most of the casualties occurred here.



“The Boers, also, suffered very severely. Finally, Captain Sandeman tried to reach the kraals in the vicinity of the camp, but most of the men with him were shot down, and he himself was wounded. On entering the ‘camp, the Boers, went straight for the supplies, but were able to take away only a few biscuits and hardly any ammunition, the Lancers had emptied their bandoliers, as the hundreds of empty cartridges found on the kopje testified.

“Not a single British soldier surrendered. Boer casualties were also heavy. The dead and wounded were carried off by the commando when Major Nichols’s squadron arrived, and the Boers departed.”

Kritzingder derailed a supply train on the Middelburg-Cradock on 8 April and looted the village of Conway on 9 April.

Towards the end of June 1901 Malan had left the Camdeboo Mountains and rode eastwards south of Graaff-Reinet over Petersburg and to the north of Cradock up to Maraisburg. On 1 June the 2nd Tasmanian bushmen were involved in a skirmish at Aliman’s Fontein wrote trooper emery in his diary. June 3 saw them riding out with Gorringer’s Flying Column. And on 8 June they engaged Wynand Malan’s Commando at Rietfontein.



After the peace treaty was signed at Vereeniging Fouché, was formed of the war's end, and he surrendered in the Cradock district on 3 June. (Of those who surrendered 134 were colonial rebels of which the biggest number (29) came from the Aberdeen district.)

The Cape rebels were not signatories to the treaty. According to an agreement between the Boer leaders and the Colonial Office, if a rebel surrendered and pleaded guilty to High Treason under Proclamation 100 of 1902, he would receive a partial amnesty and be disfranchised. However, rebel officers were charged in court and fines and prison sentences would be handed down.

The surrendered 100,442 rebels were accepted under this Proclamation 100 of 1902. Rebel officers or those facing serious charges were tried under the Indemnity and Special Tribunals Act in Special High Treason Courts. The general amnesty announced in 1905 brought to an end the prosecutions for High Treason of Cape rebels. In 1906 the names of disfranchised colonists were replaced on the Voters' Roll. The final official return of Cape rebels for 1903 was 12,205 or 0.5% of the total population, while the return, according to the database was 16,198 rebels or 0.7%.

Kritzinger's Trial

Kritzinger was injured near Hanover Road Siding in December 1901 (about 205 km away from Cradock) while trying to cross the railway line. He returned three times to rescue wounded men, but on the last trip was shot through the left arm and lungs. He managed to cross on his horse but was so severely wounded that he needed medical attention. Help was requested from a British ambulance and Kritzinger surrendered.





After some weeks in hospital at Noupoot he was sent to the military prison at Graaff-Reinet to be tried by the Military Tribunal in March 1902 on the charge of rebellion.

Many influential newspapers in the UK and USA took up the cudgels on his behalf after the huge furore that Scheepers's death caused in the international news. One of the main petitioners for Kritzinger's release was W T Stead (the famous British newspaper editor who served as mentor to William Randolph Hearst and who died on the RMS Titanic). His case was also debated in the House of Commons and various individuals and organisations sent petitions to the Privy Council.

In his biography, *In the Shadow of Death*, Kritzinger says he was taken to gaol, confined in a small room, not permitted to communicate with anyone and not even allowed out into the exercise yard. In February he was escorted to court by six soldiers and charged with 14 cases of murder; wrecking trains; and ill-treatment of prisoners-of-war. He entered a plea of "Not guilty," but declined to proceed as he had not been afforded a defence attorney nor allowed to contact witnesses. He appeared again on 1 March, seven days before the trial, and again the charges were read, however, he still he refused to represent himself.

In time he was able to retain Advocate Gardiner and Attorney Auret, from Graaff Reinet, and to arrange for his witnesses to be present. His Court Martial began on 7 March. His counsel objected to the charges of train-wrecking, ill-treatment of troops, and some of the murder charges. The prosecution withdrew them, and four charges of murder remained. After they were overturned Advocate Gardiner pointed out the shallowness of the accusations.

In an address to the court, he said: "We are now reaching the end of a great trial of a great man. Of all the trials that have come before the Military Courts may I say, it is most important.

"No officer of higher or even equal rank to him, who was once Chief Commandant in this Colony, has yet been tried, and on this trial much will depend. It is a case the result of which may have great and far-reaching influence. It may influence greatly the Boer commandoes in the field. On the verdict now given in his case the attitude of other leaders will greatly depend." He then urged the court to acquit the prisoner.

Kritzinger left the courtroom for half an hour. On his return a verdict of "not guilty" was delivered. He said: "I was at last acquitted, and could return to my lonely chamber not as a criminal, but as a prisoner-of-war!

He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labour for high treason, but was released by Lord Paul Methuen the British General Officer Commanding the 1st Division,. Methuen himself was captured by the Boers at Tweebosch on 7 March 1902. He had been wounded in the battle when he broke his leg after his horse fell on him. Boer General Koos de la Rey released him due to the severity of his injuries and provided his personal cart to take Methuen to hospital.



After the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed on 31 May 1902, Kritzinger went to Mexico in self-exile and later to the United States in an attempt to prevent the taking of the oath of allegiance to the British Crown. In the USA he became engaged to the Spanish heiress of a large tin mine in Chihuahua, in Mexico, but called the engagement off and came back to South Africa. He was sued for breach of promise. After some time, He settled on the farm Fleurville in the Cradock District and in 1907 he married Anna Dorothea Michau. They had a son and a daughter.

David Edward Botha, from the farm Rietvlei, near Cradock, was one of Kritzinger men who evaded capture when the railway line was crossed that day.

The Treason Trials

From April 1901 the trial of rebels and captured Boers accused of atrocities began

One of those executed was the 16-year-old Johannes Petrus Coetzee, captured in a fight in the Stormberg area. He thought they would treat him as a POW. They charged him as a rebel, convicted him of treason and made all the Afrikaners in Cradock come down to the centre of town and watch the hanging.

The people of Tarkastad were shocked on November 12, 1901, when a rather innocuous local farmer was executed for high treason. He was Pieter van Heerden, of the farm Vaalvlei, an overweight, non-violent, partly-sighted middle-aged man who had never even ridden out on commando. His arrest and trial took place under questionable circumstances. On August 6, 1901, a commando visited Vaalvlei and the following day a British patrol arrived to find out why. Van Heerden told them they had only wanted a sheep to slaughter. He was warned not to leave his house and told that lookouts had been stationed the veld. Next day the British patrol returned and searched his house for Boers.

They had hardly left when a skirmish broke out nearby, but on the next door farm. There were no casualties, but the Boers took some prisoners. The British alleged that shots had come from the house and arrested Van Heerden as well as his neighbour, Venter. They were taken to Steynsburg, where Venter was later. Van Heerden remained in custody for two months. Many felt it was because he had a son in the commandos who was instrumental in the capture of five British soldiers. He was tried on October 16 at Graaff-Reinet, found guilty and executed in Tarkastad. Later an official report stated that the case was weak as there was nothing to show that he had been with the Boers for any length of time.



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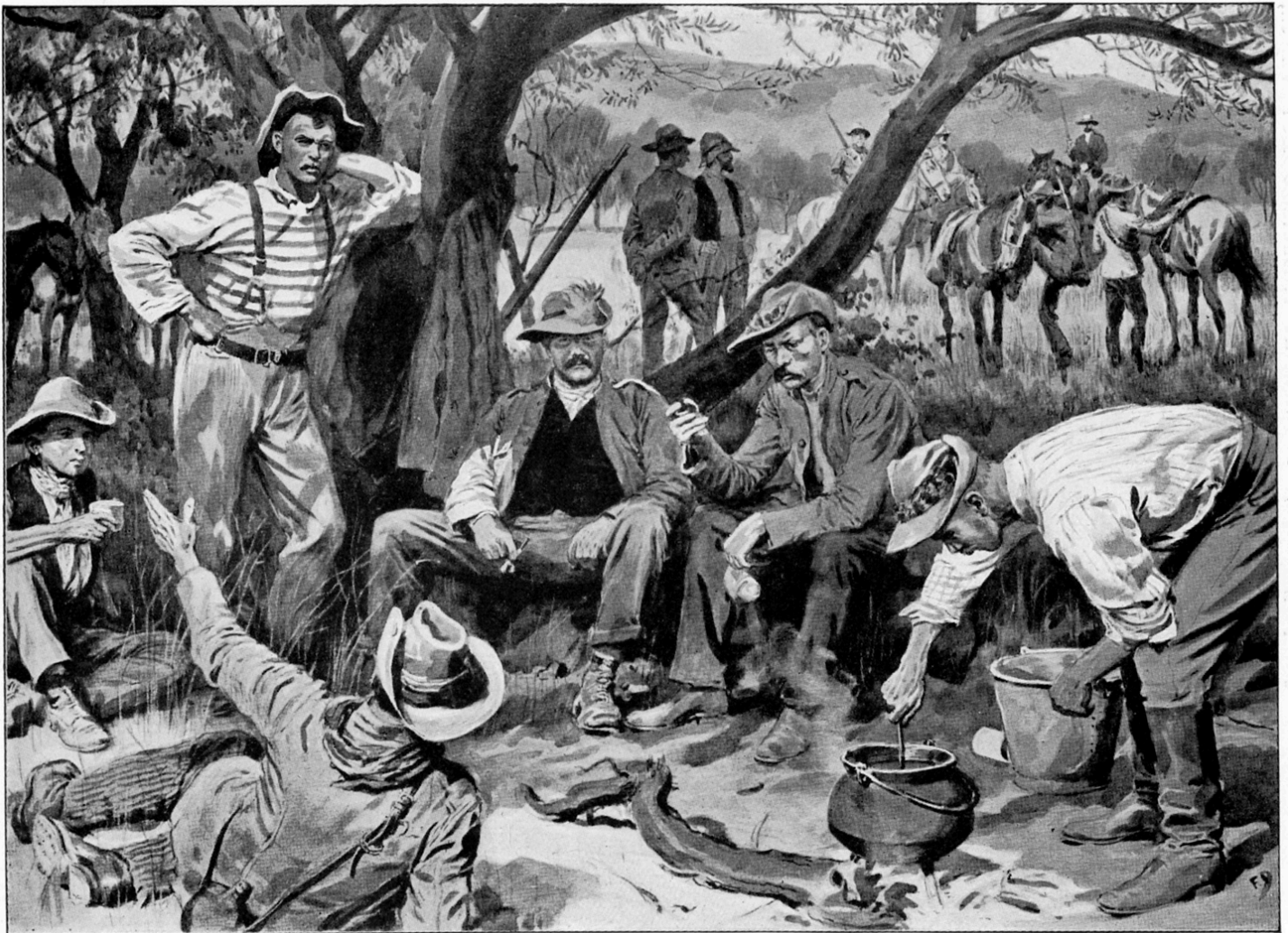
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Les exploits de Dewet

The Cost

Towards the end of the war there were more than 40 camps housing 116 000 white women and children, with another 60 camps housing 115 000 black people. These camps were overcrowded, the captives underfed and the conditions poor. There were limited medical supplies and staff and diseases like measles, whooping cough, typhoid fever, diphtheria and dysentery resulted in 1 in every 5 children dying. 26 370 white women and children died in the concentration camps, 81% of the casualties were children. It is estimated that more than 15 000 black people also died in the separate black concentration camps.

The Second Anglo-Boer War resulted in heavy loss of life for both the Boers and the British. According to statistics 22 000 British soldiers died in this war and of these only 8000 were battlefield casualties. Disease killed more than bullets. Typhoid, the age-old bane of military campaigns, almost won the day. 74000 British soldiers were treated for dysentery and typhoid – more than 8 000 died of typhoid. Then, too, 65 000 British soldiers were invalided out of the army because of wounds and disease.



Hero Of Another War

The first WWI VC went to a Cradock man. The London Gazette of September 9, 1916, carried the story of a brave Karoo man from Cradock who had been awarded the Victoria Cross. He was William Frederick Faulds, 21, fondly known as “Mannie” to friends and family and he was the first South African soldier to receive this medal, the highest award for bravery. He was a private in the 1st South African Infantry Brigade. The newspaper reported that his gallant actions, while fighting among “the bravest of the brave” at Delville Wood, in France on 18 July 1916, gained him the VC. Mannie also displayed supreme courage on several other occasions and, in total, was awarded 11 medals.

Mannie who was born in Cradock on 19 February, 1895, was the second youngest of seven children born to Scottish carpenter, Alexander Faulds and his wife, Wilhelmina Ernestina (nee Neseman). She was a Cradock girl and they were married in the Wesleyan Chapel on February 2, 1881. Mannie enlisted with the Cradock Commando on October 19, 1914.



SOURCES:

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The charming Karoo town, Cradock, is flanked by the majestic Bankberg Mountains and the fast-flowing Fish River. It is a great base from which to explore the nearby Mountain Zebra National Park, where popular activities include birding, cheetah tracking and game drives to view 3 of the Big 5, amongst other African wildlife. Established in 1814, Cradock is a place of literary legends, war heroes and anti-Apartheid icons. However, it is best known for street level, day-to-day warmth and kindness – so typical of much of the Eastern Cape. History enthusiasts can spend time discovering the historically rich surroundings.

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S32 10.229 E25 37.125
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- ☒ Johannesburg: 836km
- ☒ Cape Town: 811km
- ☒ Durban: 806km
- ☒ Bloemfontein: 422km

EXPERIENTIAL CRADOCK

Cradock as is a perfect long-stay destination, ideally located for the nature lover to plan a day trip and explore nearby national parks, enjoying any of many adventure activities, historical guided walking tours and much more.

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- Karoo & Xhosa Cooking Courses
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CULTURE / ART

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- Paint Murals
- Community Gardens
- Restore Historical Buildings

NATURE & PARKS HERITAGE

- Museums
- Cradock Four Garden of Remembrance
- Historical Buildings
- Mountain Zebra National Park
- Cradock Nature Reserve
- Cheetah Tracking
- Egg Rock

ADVENTURE

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- Cradock Writers Exhibition Room at FishRiver Museum
- Township Tours
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- Hiking
- Abseiling
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- Tubing
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TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN CRADOCK

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5700 https://www.sanparks.org/parks/mountain_zebra/
Museums Schreiner House Museum and Book Shop & Fish River
Museum 048 881 5251 <https://amazwi.museum/satelliteMuseums>
Walking Tour of lower historic Cradock 048 881 1650
<https://tuishuise.co.za/things-to-do/>
Township Tour 048 881 1650 <https://tuishuise.co.za/things-to-do/>
Nature Walks - Metcalf Road, Eerstekrans and OuKop 048 881 1650
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Graveyard Tour 048 881 1650 <https://tuishuise.co.za/things-to-do/>
Shopping for local products - True Living, Delicious, etc 048 881 1650
<https://tuishuise.co.za/things-to-do/>
Meeting the locals - churches, coffee shops and restaurants 048 881
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Cradock general information queries: 048 881 1650





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