

St Helena National Trust Education Packs

4.3 Island Prisoners - Boers 1900 - 1902

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St Helena National Trust Education Packs

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1. Summary

Boer Prisoners on St Helena

St Helena first became a prison island with the arrival of Napoleon, then Dinuzulu, and next came the very large number of prisoners from the Boer war being fought in South Africa. There were over 6,000 prisoners here, over a two year period.

Although they were prisoners, those who were not rebellious were eventually reasonably free to move around on set days, and some were allowed to live near their employment. One even married here while he was a prisoner - the names **Smith, Piek, Vanguard** and **Nielson** come from Boer prisoners.

There was apparently rivalry between the Orange Free State prisoners and the Transvaal prisoners, so they eventually had separate camps - at Broadbottom and Deadwood respectively. The Generals were allowed to have private houses.

It took 2 hours to offload the first large shipment, and the prisoners were aged between 14 and 60. Some looked really poor, tired and ill. They had to march to the camp straight away - which took them about 3 hours, after having been confined on a ship. This was hard and some collapsed and had to be taken to hospital.

The prisoners worked during their stay - one even started a bakery in town, and others seem to have had small businesses going. They carved a lot of souvenirs which were sent away and sold locally for money to send back to their families who were struggling to survive in South Africa. An exhibition was held while they were here and they also showed their crafts.

There were great concerns about the number of trees being cut down for firewood by this huge influx of prisoners needing fuel.

The St Helena Militia could not ride, but General Cronje demanded a mounted guard, so they had to learn and this caused great amusement to the men in the camps, who were expert horsemen, when they could not re-mount their horses while holding their rifles, and had to be helped by the prisoners!

A number of the men died here, due to sickness that spreads in large camp conditions. The facilities are very limited. A few were buried at St Paul's, then the Baptist Graveyard became their burial place.

Several people tried to escape:

- 3 tried to escape before landing
- 5 tried to get away from Sandy Bay in an old fishing boat
- 2 tried to swim to a Russian Barque in the harbour
- 2 escaped in a small boat with no provisions, but were sighted and recaptured
- Photo 14 shows the 1 who escaped in a box put on board ship but he was returned from Ascension

A few were shot for trying to go outside the fence of the camp.

They joined in with the community whenever they could - there were cricket matches, rugby, a concert, celebrations and sports.

After a time some became British sympathisers. They were not popular with the others so a PEACE CAMP was set up at Deadwood separated from the rest.

When the notice of the end of the war came in June 1902, the Government here set up the Oath of Allegiance, which the prisoners had to swear to before release. Many did not want to do this and were kept here longer, but eventually all but the four mentioned must have returned to South Africa.

Although business boomed during this time, it was very expensive to keep that number of people here, so there were winners and losers as always.

2. Notice of Arrival



NOTICE.

In a few days the troopship *Milwaukee* escorted by H.M.S. *Niobe* will arrive with Prisoners of War.

No unauthorized persons will be allowed on the Wharf at the time of disembarkation. The Police will assist, as far as they can, the Military acting under the orders of the Officer Commanding the Troops in keeping order.

His Excellency the Governor expresses the hope that the Inhabitants will treat the Prisoners with that courtesy and consideration which should be extended to all men who have fought bravely in what they considered the cause of their Country, and will help in repressing any unseemly demonstration which individuals might exhibit.

ROBT. R. BRUCE,
For Colonial Secretary.

The Castle,
St. Helena, 5th April, 1900.

5 April 1900

3. Notice restraining landing



PROCLAMATION.

*By His Excellency ROBERT ARMITAGE
STERNDALE, Esquire, Governor and Com-
mander-in-Chief of the Island of St. Helena
etc., etc., etc.*

WHEREAS it is expedient, during the continuance of the War between Great Britain and the Federated South African Republics and the consequent detention of a large number of Prisoners of War in this Island of St. Helena, to constitute and declare the said Island to be a Prison for the time being and to restrain the landing of unauthorised persons from any Ship or Steamer to visit or reside in this Island of St. Helena.

I DO THEREFORE, by virtue of the powers vested in me, hereby proclaim, declare, and make known that until revocation or alteration of this Proclamation no person shall be allowed to land from any Ship or Steamer or vessel of any kind whatsoever without a pass signed by the Governor; and no boatman, or person possessed of any boat, shall use or permit the same to be used in any manner contrary to this Proclamation aforesaid; and any violation of the above will render the offender liable to a penalty not exceeding £25 under Section 17 Ordinance No. 5 of 1895.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

Given under my hand and the Public Seal of the Island of St. Helena this 9th day of May 1900.

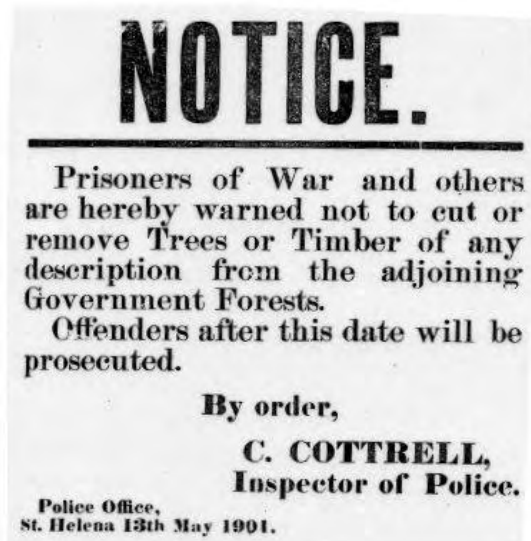
(Signed) R. A. STERNDALE,
Governor.

By command of His Excellency the Governor in Council.

(Signed) ROBT. R. BRUCE,

9 May 1900

4. Notice forbidding tree-felling (English & Afrikaans)



13 May 1901

5. Notice about Oath of Allegiance

NOTICE.

From and after WEDNESDAY 18TH inst., those Burghers of the late ORANGE FREE STATE and SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC who are desirous of taking the Oath of Allegiance to His Majesty KING EDWARD VII are directed to attend at the COURT HOUSE, JAMESTOWN, between the hours of 11 to 1 p.m., and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. daily, Sundays and Coronation Day (26th June) excepted.

Permits for this purpose will be granted by Commandants at each camp.

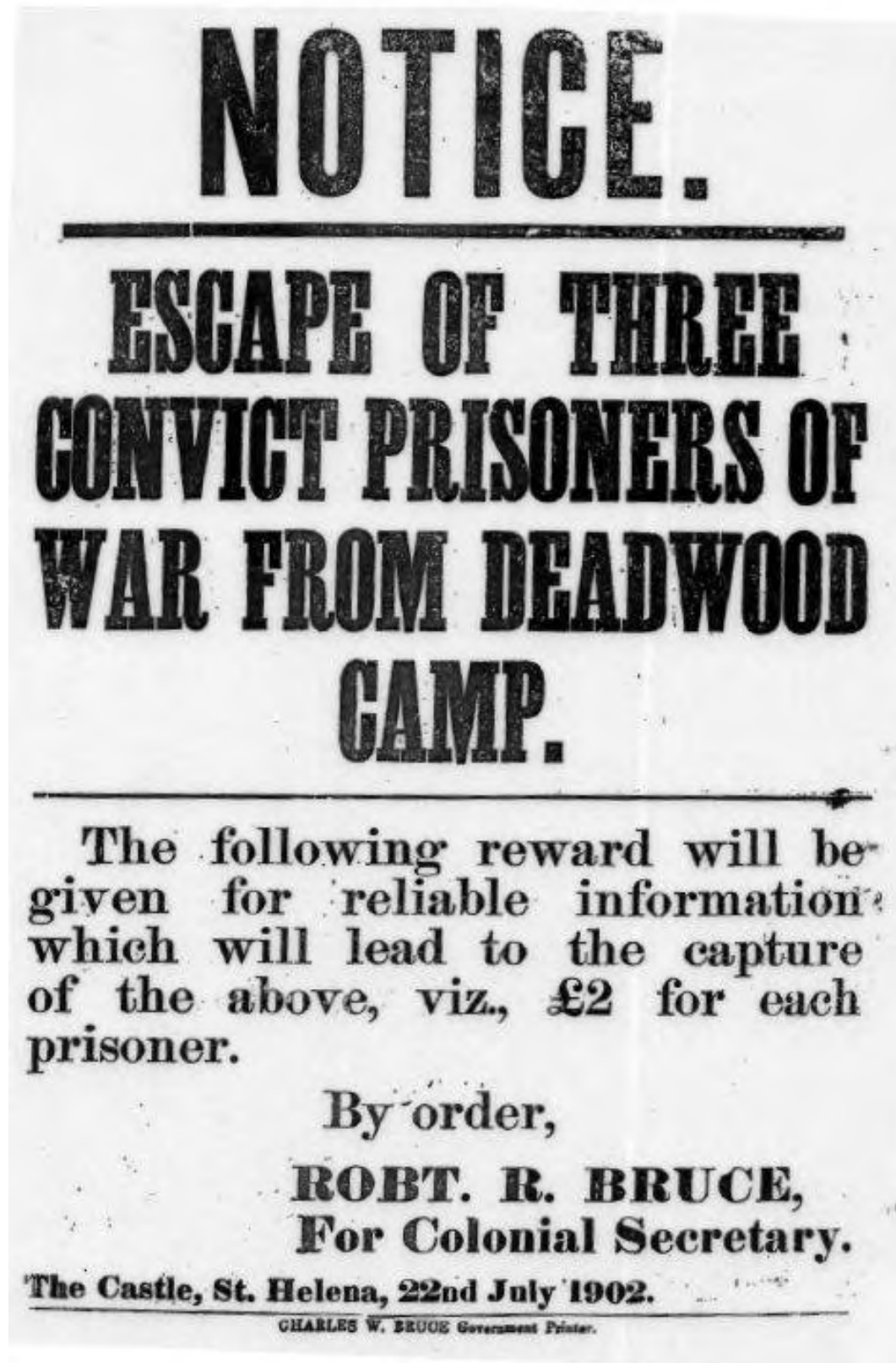
The Oath of Allegiance will be administered by COL. A. J. PRICE, C.M.G. and Captain JOHN PROCTOR, C.G.A., who have been appointed Special Commissioners.

A. J. PRICE,
Colonel, O.C.T.

The Castle,
St. Helena, 14th day of June, 1902.

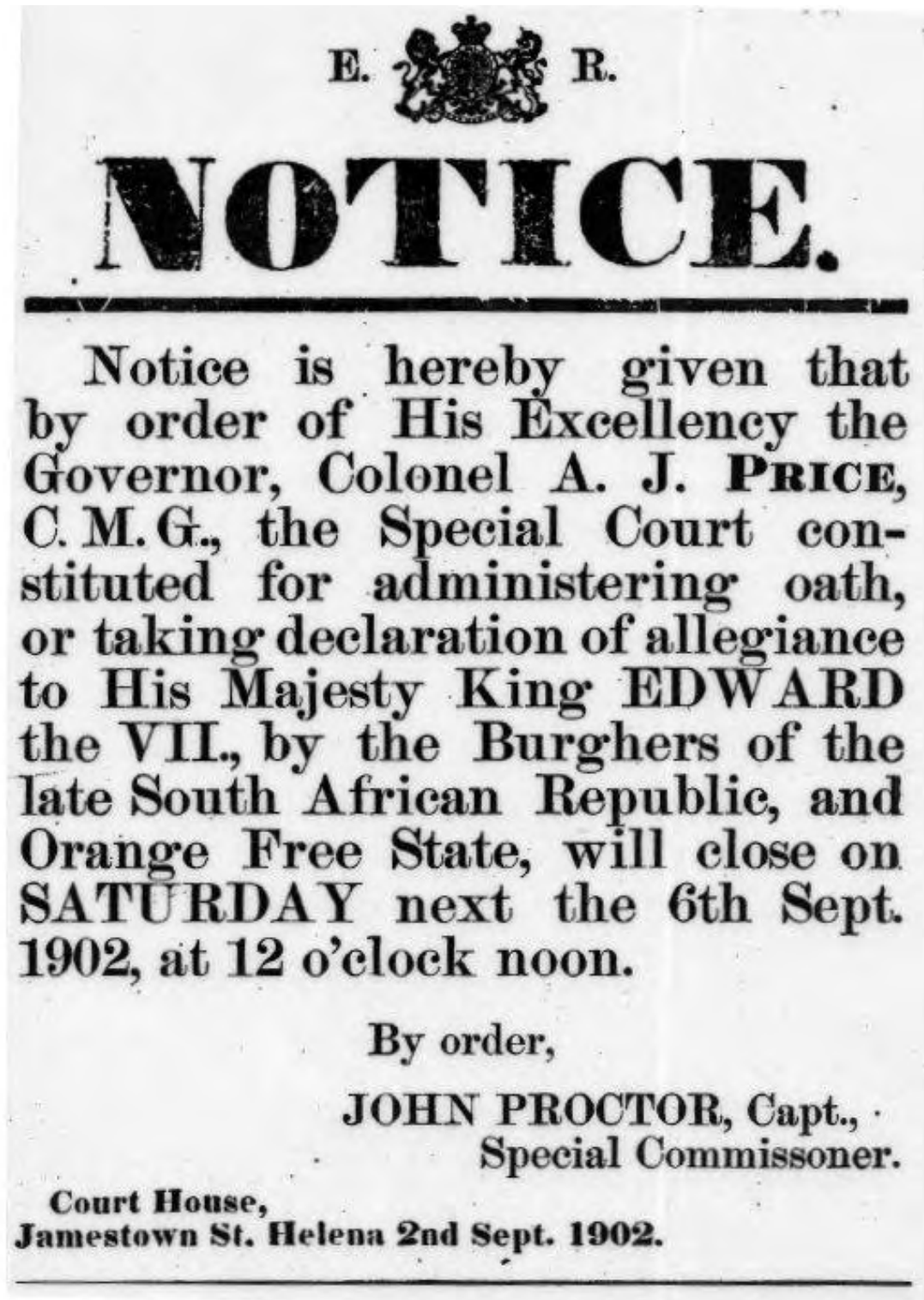
14 June 1902

6. Notice about escaped prisoners



22 July 1902

7. Notice about Oath of Allegiance



2 September 1902

8. Poem “Farewell to St Helena”

July 1902, Constantin Von Braun

*God bless you dear Island! We shall meet again
Meanwhile look to your pastures,
Sun shade grass under trees;
Root out your poetical gorse and similar weeds
Planting trees in their ashes!*

*Should Boers visit you ever again, they and your farmers
Must ponder first how to slaughter the forests!
Collect each drop falling down from Heaven,
Let the tank be ever so small.*

*Guard your earth from crumbling down into depths
Feeding ginger, swamps, clefts or the sea.*

*But now a Farewell to St Helena's youth,
Whom we shall miss more than many believe!*

*Don't trust in false prophets, search for luck
In your Homes and where Christ points to seek:
Search for Heaven in yourselves, and, a life full of toil
Will outstrip the luck you might find - abroad!*

*Keep sacred your soul and indigenous plants!
Goodbye!*

9. List of Finnish POWS

Aberg, Karl, from Helsinki, also spelled Oberg or Akerberg

Backman, Otto, 23 years of age, wounded at Scholtznek

Backman, Simon, stayed on St Helena after the war, carpenter

Backman, Sunnion (?)

Erikson, Isak, stayed on St Helena after the war, carpenter, perhaps the same as Erikson, I. on the Boer Cemetery in Knollcombs

Gustafson, Matts, also went by the name Knuts

Johansson, Johan Jakob, died on St Helena Sept. 11, 1900, also went by the name Gastgivars

Johnson, Erik

Johnson (Johansson), Herman, also went by the name Gunnila, died on St Helena

Korhonen, Gabriel, received a prize for a walking stick he made on St Helena

Laggnas, Mats Nilsson, born 1874, died on St Helena, photo of the grave

Lingberg, Ernst Evert, born 1864, wrote book about the war and the time as a prisoner, also made paintings

Mattson, Matt, from Kalajoki

Mickelsen, Johan, from Vora

Nelson, Matts, same as Laggnas from Munsala, same as Neilsen M., 25 years, at monument in Knollcombs

Nikulen, Teodor, (Nikulainen), married to Rosa Frieman. POW, at St Helena?

Nyman, Jan, from Oravais, can be found on a photo from St Helena

Nyman, Johan, same as above

Ollus,?

Rank, Johan or Johannes, from Munsala

Schoutz, Johan, from Vasa, made a model in Deadwood

Spara, Johan Jakobsson, from Kantlax, died on St Helena

Stenroos, Carl, from Lumparland, Aland islands

Wiklund, Johan Niklas, from Vexala, Munsala, blacksmith in Deadwood

10. Photos - prisoners at the wharf

Scanned from old copy



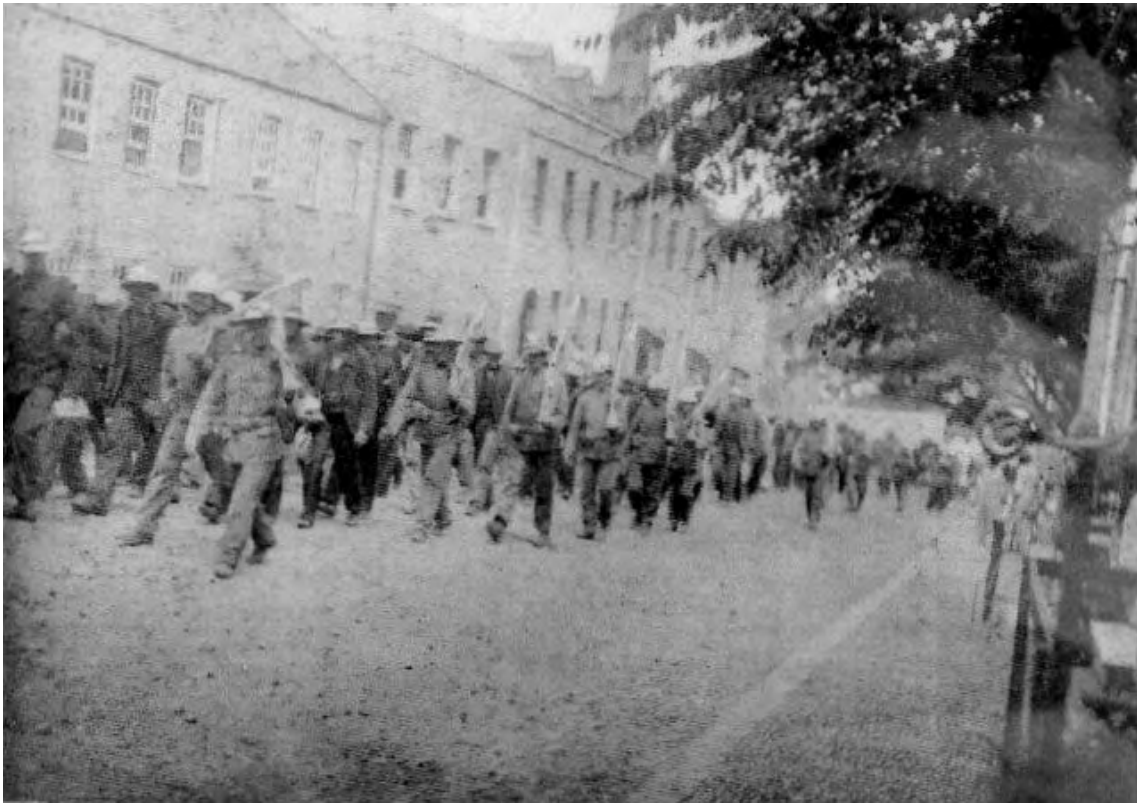
Wharf, with Boer Prisoners on the seafront



Boer prisoners marching from wharf to camp

11. Photos - prisoners in town

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Boer prisoners in Main Street, en route to Deadwood Camp



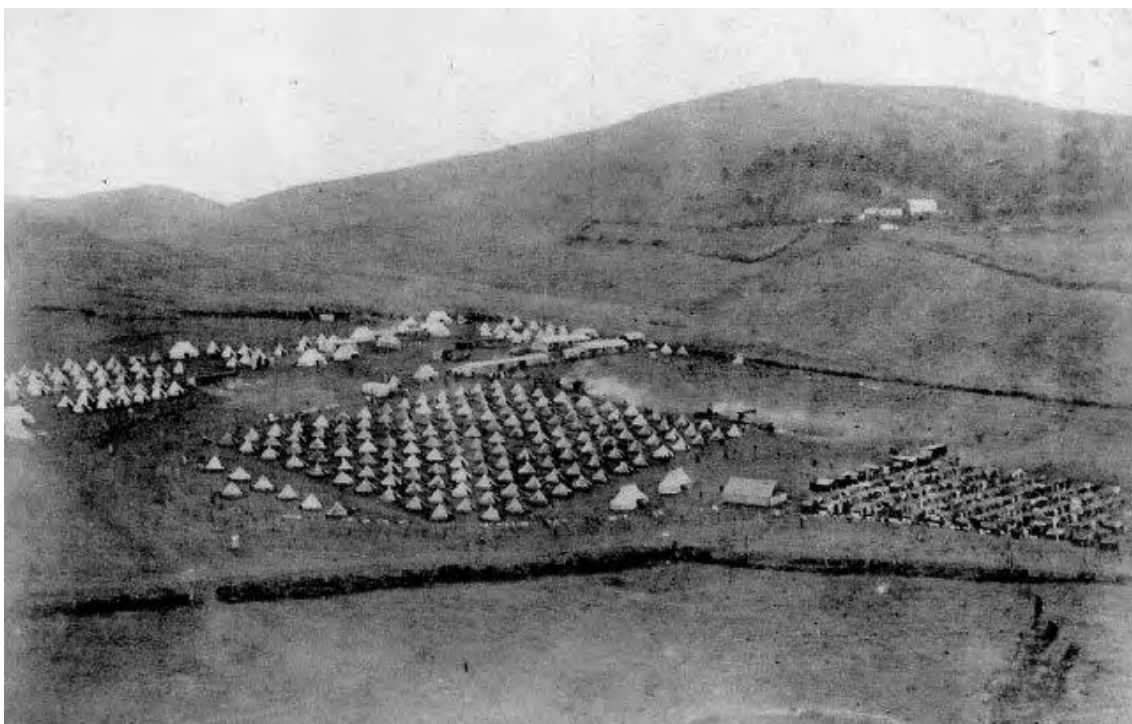
Orange Free Staters crossing Parade Ground, en route to Broadbottom Camp

12. Photos - prison camps

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Camp and Boer Laager at Deadwood Camp and Boer Laager at Broadbottom



13. Photos - prisoners in camp and at High Knoll Fort

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Boer prisoners - camp life



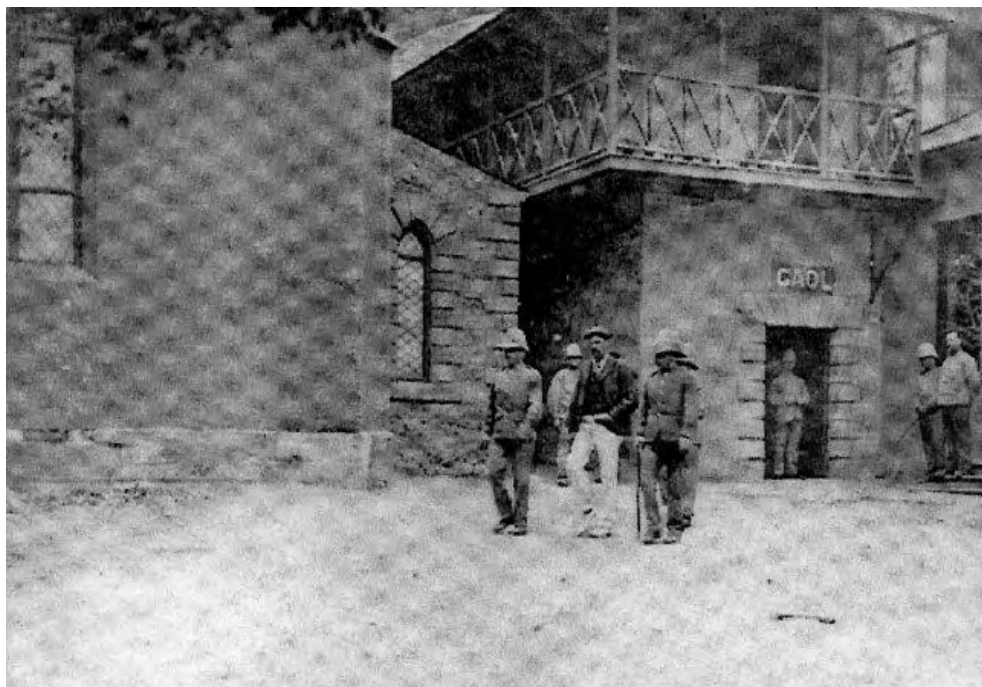
Boer prisoners - confined in High Knoll Fort

14. Photos - prisoner who escaped in a box

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Box in which Boer prisoner escaped from the island. He was discovered on the steamer, landed at Ascension and ultimately returned to St Helena camp.



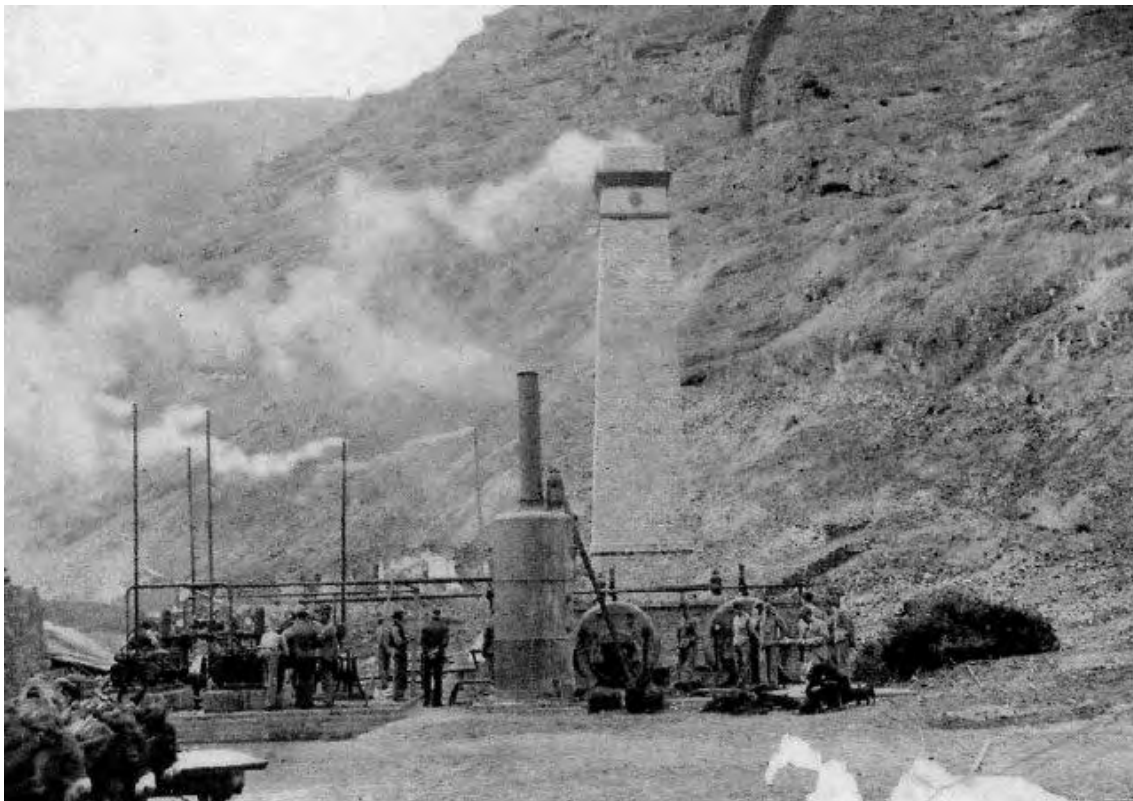
Prisoner of war who succeeded in leaving the island in the box.

15. Photos - exhibition at Castle and condensing works at Rupert's Valley

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Exhibition Room at the Castle



Condensing works at Rupert's Valley

16. Photos - General Cronje

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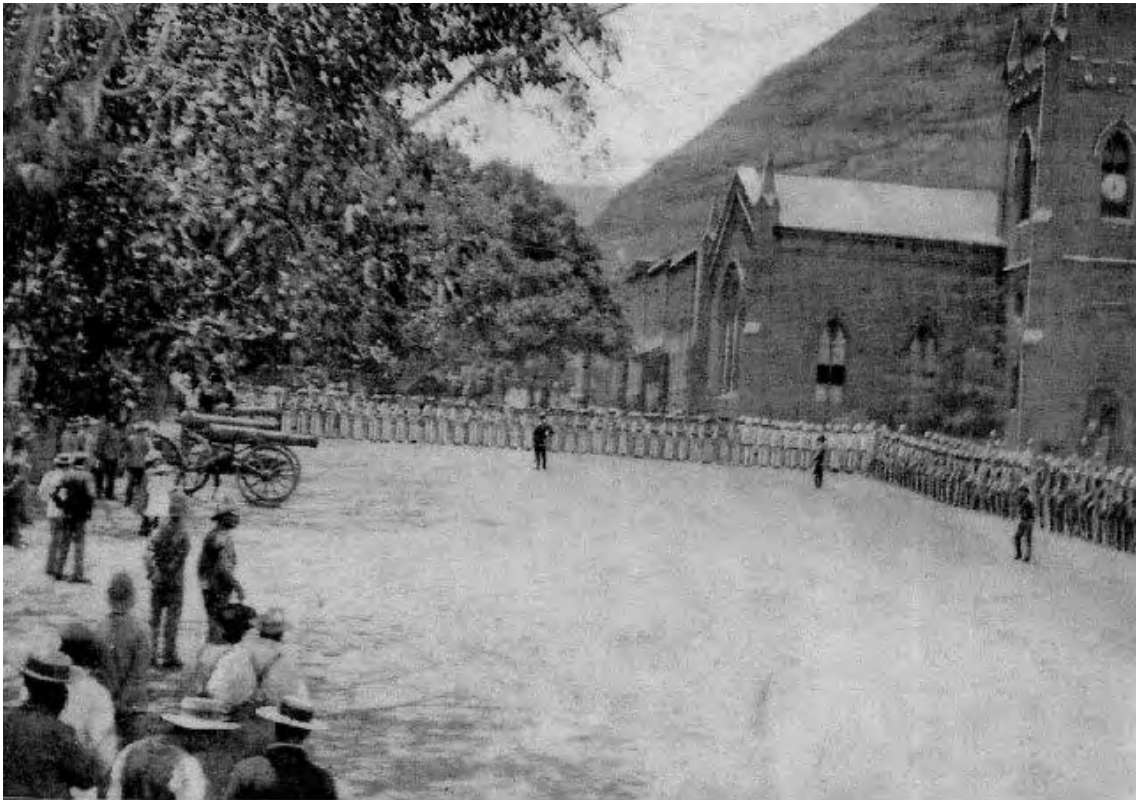
Left - a friend, centre – General and Mrs Cronje, right – Cronje's Secretary



Kent Cottage, the home of General Cronje in St Helena

17. Photos - Grand Parade

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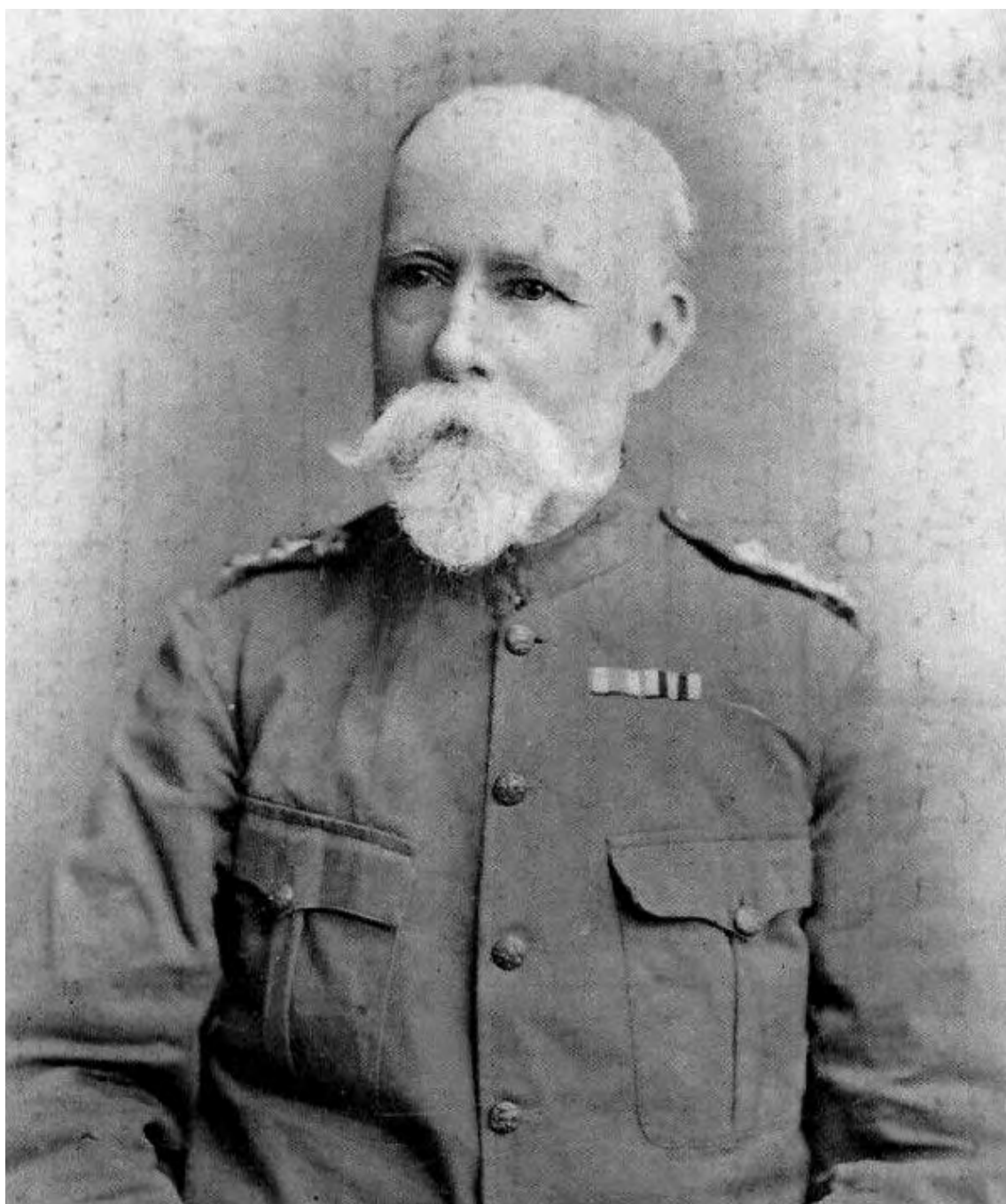


Proclamation of King Edward VII



18. Governor Sterndale

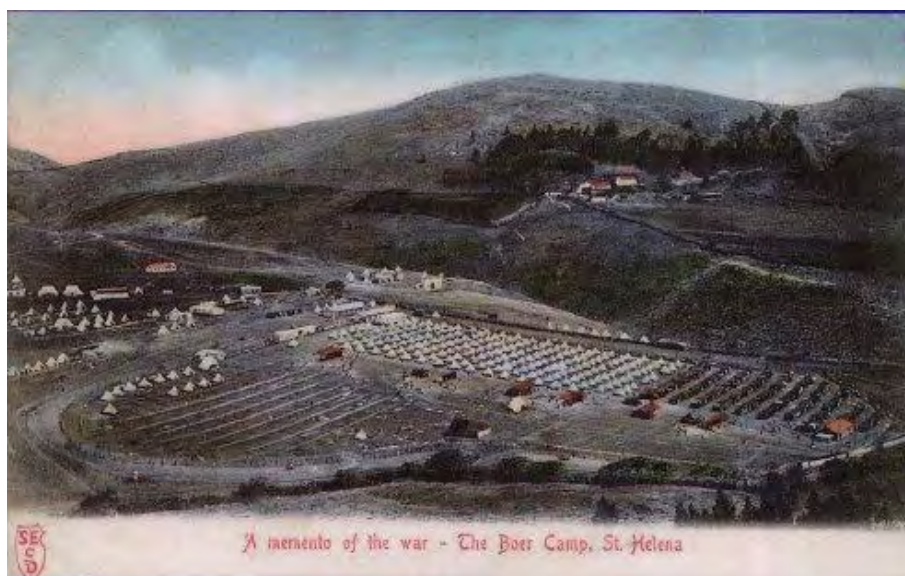
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19. Grand Parade



20. Postcards



21. Boer Prisoners on St Helena

Compiled by Sarah Holland

Much of this information comes from Barbara B. George's Booklet – "*Boer Prisoners on St Helena 1900 – 1902*". Published 1999 and now out of print. Copies should be in each local school. The Booklet is a summary of Emily Jackson's account and the newspaper of the time.

- First prisoners arrived on Milwaukie on 14 April 1900. There were no jeers from crowd who congregated to see the 500 prisoners begin their 3 hour hike to Deadwood Camp.
- Local Government and Islanders saw the prisoners as bringing prosperity to islanders. People were concerned about the island's limited resources, such as forests, when the population quickly doubled. The prisoners required large quantities of stores that were shipped in as not all needs could be met through local production.
- Many prisoners were ill with enteric fever (typhoid), flu, bowel complaints and chest infections. Dr. Arnold one of medical staff. (Memorial in Grand Parade)
- General Cronje and his wife taken to Kent Cottage.
- Number of prisoners allowed to go to work: digging trenches for water pipes and cutting wood to supply to camps.
- By August 1900 Deadwood becoming crowded, Broadbottom chosen as site for another camp. (Due to frictions between the different groups of Boer prisoners, the groups were separated on the island. "Free Staters" were associated with Broadbottom camp, with "Transvaalers" at Deadwood).
- Hollanders, French and American POW as well as a Russian Prince were allowed to return to their countries by August 1900.
- Because of the amount of goods that needed to be delivered to the POW camps, there was a great demand for mule wagon drivers. Many islanders took up this work creating a shortage of farm labourers. This shortage was met by allowing the prisoners to work on farms.
- 1900: Boers started own newspaper called, *Boer Newspaper Kamp Kruimels* which became *Die Krijgsgevangene*.
- When island held an exhibition of industrial art in November 1900, the Boer POWs were invited to participate. So many prisoners did so that a separate room was needed to hold their goods for sale. These items included models of carts, carved boxes, pipes, penholders, etc. The tools the prisoners used were also exhibited. The POWs had to work with what they could get. They converted table knives into saws, umbrella wires into fret, and stones into hammers.
- The Boers were very skilled carvers. Many of the things they made are in the Museum of St Helena. When King Edward VII was crowned, Governor Sterndale decorated a loyal address that was sent to England. The address was sent in a box carved from St Helena ebony by a Boer POW.
- There were a handful of escape attempts, but none were successful. Desperate POWs tried to escape in fishermen's boats or by swimming to foreign ships. Three prisoners were fatally shot when trying to escape camp.
- An outbreak of bubonic plague in South Africa in 1901 prevented passengers and cargo from coming to the island.
- Skilled workers amongst prisoners were allowed to obtain employment. Employers were responsible for them during working hours. Small camps formed in Government Garden (Castle

Gardens) and in the Botanical Garden to shorten the commute of POWs to work. Many of good conduct were allowed to find own lodging as long as they obeyed curfew. Some lived in their employers residences after.

- July 1901 newspaper states that a Restaurant and Reading Room for Boers was opened in town. The Proprietor was a POW. Another POW opened a Bakery/Confectionary.
- Prisoner's Weekly rations:
 - 5 days a week 1 lb. fresh meat
 - 2 days a weeks 1 lb. preserved meat
 - Every day 1.25 lbs bread, vegetables, condiments, sugar and coffee
- 1901 Desalination plant opened in Rupert's Valley. This consisted of two Lancashire boilers, a brick chimney and pumps to produce water for POW camp at Deadwood. Some people wonder whether this plant was ever used as the inside of the chimneystack is free of soot and looks relatively new. A reference in the St Helena Guardian 29 August 1901 states that the plant was used as a trial and gives a full report.
(*The chimney from the desalination plant at Ruperts can still be seen. When the plant was demolished, the distinctive yellow bricks were used in many Island buildings. e.g. the kitchen floor of the Billiard Room Flat in Association Hall is inlaid with these bricks in front of the fire grate.)
- Prisoners entertained themselves and others with cricket matches, rugby, a concert for the Boer hospital and local charities, celebrations for birthday of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland and sports for the birthday of Paul Kruger.
- Some prisoners wanted to return to South Africa and fight for the British. This caused conflict in camps so No. 2 or Peace Camp was set up for those called Traitors by some, but Loyalists by others.
- Jan 30 1902 another 1050 prisoners arrived - 650 to Deadwood, rest to Broadbottom.
- Enteric fever (typhoid) broke out in camps again.
- Peace arrived on June 1 1902. At first the only information was that the war was over. Both the Boers and the British were convinced that the victory was theirs and both sides celebrated. The next day the news that the British had won was received.
- All Boers were asked to take an oath of allegiance to King Edward VII. Almost all took the oath at a special court and were sent off the island.
- Prisoners in letter printed in Guardian say the *"POWs have been squarely and gentlemanly treated."* They thanked His Majesty's Officers *"for the kind and courteous way they have received and met us from time to time - kindness that was a sweet drop in our bitter glass. Their general attitude towards us prisoners of war will always be recounted with pleasure - an attitude at once firm and manly and worthy of admiration - and why? Because "politeness" was evinced in all their actions and doings."*
- Court for administering the oath of allegiance terminated in Sept. 1902, by this time very few remained obdurate - only a few *"Cape rebels"* and unpardoned men were left on the island.
- 4 prisoners chose to remain on island and raise families: Alfred Smith and his brother Charles, Harry James Piek, a Nielson and a Vanguard; their descendants still live on island.
- Monuments to the memory of the Boer prisoners who died during captivity stand in Baptist cemetery at Knollcombes.

| Census taken 7 April 1901 | Males | Females | Children |
|---------------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| Jamestown | 687 | 881 | |
| Country | 847 | 927 | |
| Garrison | 1,428 | 35 | 69 |
| Shipping | 320 | | |
| Prisoners of War | 4,655 | | |
| Population | 9,850 | | |

| Births, Marriages and Deaths | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Births | 129 |
| Marriages | 39 |
| Deaths | 125 |

| Number of vessels calling at Island with Cargo | |
|--|----|
| 1899 | 82 |
| 1900 | 53 |
| 1901 | 44 |

| Livestock | |
|-----------|-------|
| Horses | 120 |
| Mules | 119 |
| Cattle | 1,014 |
| Sheep | 2,094 |
| Goats | 1,011 |
| Swine | 280 |
| Asses | 774 |

Roads

- Imperial Government maintains 60 miles
- Local Government maintains 2.5 miles

Newspaper

- 'St Helena Guardian' circulated about 290 copies weekly

Government

R.A. Sterndale, Esq. was a popular Governor amongst the St Helenians and the Boer prisoners.

(There is a portrait of Sterndale in St Helena, E.L Jackson along with a detailed listing of colonial and military staff on the island at this time; this list includes Dr. Arnold as medical staff)

22. Letters printed in St Helena Guardian about loss of trees

Boer POW - Wood Supply

"Floreat St Helena", 26 April 1900

All sensible minded people of the island are alarmed by the depredations that are being made upon the forests of the Island to supply large quantities of wood for the use of troops encamped at Deadwood. The Government must look into the matter now in its initial stage with a view, in the interests of the Island, to prevent the wholesale destruction of trees. It should be imperative on all those who deplete the trees to plant two or more in the place of every one cut down.

Look at Putty Hill Forest and then picture it some years ago, before the wholesale cutting down of trees to prevent the spread of Australian bug - what a contrast we have! The place is now becoming bare and arid, and the thousands of young trees that come up in the wet season are eaten by flocks of goats that are allowed to roam freely about the place. Surely the time has arrived when the Authorities should make a move not only to stop the depletion of the forests but also to encourage the growth and planting of trees. The first move should be to relegate the goats to a proper goat-range, as was proposed a long time ago but not followed up.

Letter to editor

Dear Editor

I would call to your attention, and that of the public, to the grave consequences that will ensue to the Island's forest and plantations if so large a quantity of wood is asked for the service of the troops and prisoners at Deadwood and elsewhere. The danger is that in certain localities an excess of timber will be cut away, leaving arid tracts that cannot attract moisture, and, almost as bad, no shade and cover for young trees to get a start and grow again.

A Contractor for wood will naturally avail himself of those who will sell wood, and the consequences will be that anything the ordinary wood-seller can convert into a load of wood will find its way to Deadwood, and those who have experience of the Island's ways fear the consequence. These wood-sellers are armed for their work neither with an axe or a saw, but in general with a sword (a machete).

Some persons no doubt will feel indignant at this opposition to cutting down of any timber, without regard of age, quality or situation, and ask if they cannot do as they please with their own land and earn an honest penny when there is the opportunity.

To these we would say that there is such a thing as the public good, and their children's welfare. If the general good is too remote for an individual to care about, and when the individual cannot see the public good, then it is the duty of the Government to use such measures as will make it unprofitable to the possessor of a few trees to denude his lands.

An issue of coal, of which there is plenty in store, might advantageously be made - not all coal, but coal and

a reasonable amount of wood.

With 2,000 men at Deadwood the use of 40 lbs per man of 10 per day would cause the depletion of over 1,600 tons over a period of 6 months.

I maintain that the depletion of 1,600 tons of wood in 6 months would be calamitous for this Island, not that 1,600 tons could not be supplied judiciously, but experience tells us that no judgement whatever will be exercised in the matter.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

An advocate of forestry and the extension of arboriculture on our beautiful island

Dear Editor,

It must be cognisant to you and many others that it has become the rage for most of the farmers and gardeners to cut down trees and supply firewood to the Camp at Deadwood. From the number of prisoners and guards that will in a short time be located there, it seems incredible how the contractors will supply the demand without the destruction of the greater portion of the forest wood available.

It must be borne in mind that when the Island was first discovered it was covered with trees to the water's edge. The introduction of goats destroyed tons of Scrubwood and Gumwood, and when the soil around had nothing around to hold it together the heavy Autumnal rains washed it away, leaving the surface nothing but barren waste-land. History repeats itself; and therefore it is most necessary that Trustees, Management Committees and others loaning out monies on agricultural properties, should take measures to prevent forest trees being destroyed on those estates.

It would be a sad day for those interested in the Benefit Societies after the removal of the prisoners of war and the destruction in (of) lots of forest trees, for the Island would become a barren waste from Diana's Peak to the wave-beat shore.

Yours truly

23. The Prisoner of War

Saturday 8 June 1901, No 1, Translated by G Van Vemde (Dutch) & A Blom (South African)

In Memoriam - A J Ter Meulen

Taken prisoner-of-war at Boshof, Orange Free State, South Africa, 5 April 1900.

Born at Bochum, Holland, 1874. Died "*Boer Hospital*", Jamestown, 6 June 1901

"For Dutch Prisoners of War", A F van der Steen Loven, H. Everitt and J H L Schumann, Editors

Herewith we introduce ourselves for the first time, with the inhabitants of Deadwood and Broadbottom. How they will accept us, time will tell. We are all agreed that there is a need for a newspaper to be distributed, specifically by and for the prisoners of war. Our readers must not expect any politics. The regulations of censorship prohibits us to print anything about war matters or politics attached to it. We will therefore keep to subjects of general interest outside of the war, and subject ourselves to limitations, about as follows:-

1. Matters in respect to happenings in the two camps with strict rejection of all personal grievances or hateful remarks because we do not want to be a paper of disgrace.
2. General information, also cable news and reports from Europe, such as the censor would permit.
3. Special reports on Sports Companies, Clubs, Education and matters related to these.
4. A column will be devoted to Religious matters because most of our readers are not so advanced, (so to say) that they can do without God and worship.

Where needful to all concerned, to criticize those men who availed themselves to be responsible for the administration of the camps, we will do so with all timidity, correctness and truth, without any reflection on being personal. If we would overstep, we are prepared to listen to arguments and endeavour to clarify our viewpoint. Our paper will be open to correspondence, but readers must take into consideration that space is very limited, also that the editors have always the power to reject anything undesirable. Subscriptions must be signed, stating tent or house number. Write only on one side of the paper and direct to the Editor and do write clearly! The official language of the paper is Dutch, but home language may be used.

Those who wish to sell their hand-made articles in South Africa can obtain all information from us.

From these few guidelines we trust it will be clear what the purpose and spirit of this paper will be, and feel it unnecessary to say more.

We will in great measure be dependent on your support, relating to the circulation on the island, and do depend on your support and leave ourselves in your hands for the future.

“Vijfkleur” (“5 colours”) - Sporting and Social Club

On 29th May our fellow prisoners held a meeting in Jamestown to form a club. Mr Waldeck was chosen to be the chairman and said the purpose was to start a Sports Club and Theatre among us, especially a venue where we can spend evenings socially together.

Mr W E Wagner was chosen as secretary and Mr H Fick as treasurer. After discussion, the names, as above were decided upon. The following men were appointed on the committee to make arrangements and lay it before the next meeting: i.e. Venter, Charlie Loetzee, Mackenzie, Taylor, Gardner, Balracchi and Pietersen.

It was decided to send a letter to the different Unions at Deadwood Camp, to notify them about this club and request their assistance with some sporting material. After a few words from the chairman the meeting was closed.

The Widow(s') And Orphans' Fund

As is known to all, and as we learned with thankfulness, that on the continent of Europe, more so Holland, generous amounts of money are collected for the benefit of our prisoners of war, and the women and children in concentration camps and the Widow(s') and Orphans. Of these three we give precedence to the latter, because these unfortunate ones will always remain with us, needing help, even till after the war, while we, woman and children, only temporarily are in need. We are gratified for the success in these endeavours to lighten their plight.

To show our appreciation in a practical way to our European friends, and also to assist as much as possible from our side, a commission was formed with commandant Eloff as chairman, Mr H Everett as secretary and Mrs Neilsen, Van Huijsteen, Coetzee and Van Wijkas members, who took upon themselves the task to collect all kinds of curios and articles made by the prisoners of war, to pack and send it to Holland where it will be sold, and the widow and orphan's fund, advanced with the income. The honourable sir Captain V de Witt-Hamer assisted much in this, and took upon him the shipping and sale of these collected articles, wherewith his brothers also lent a hand.

With the last mail ship the first consignment is already on its way, containing 550 pen holders, 50 brooches, a number of sliding, secret, spectacle, match and other boxes and many other wood and bone articles too many to describe. The second consignment is collected now and call on all prisoners of war to donate to this, no matter how small. Remember every little helps, even if the amount realised is small, we will show to the friends in Europe that we appreciate their sympathy very much and are prepared to assist them with heart and hand in this praise-worthy task of benevolence.

At Broad Bottom camp there is also a section of this commission with Commandant A Van Niekerk as chairman, Mr H Fivaz as secretary and Mrs Lindique and Victor as members.

We sincerely hope that not only one or two consignments would be sent out to Europe, but that so many articles would be collected that with every mail ship, a chest could be shipped and that, when sold, it would be a great amount, whereby the circumstances of many present widows and orphans can be softened. It is a good cause and the blessing of the Lord will rest upon it.

The dream image of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 2, By J.H.L.S, Refers to Jeremiah 29

The Christian “Strivers” Association of the St Helena Prisoners of War

by C.F.M

This association needs no introduction, the reason for writing is not to make it known to the readers. But we surmise that the purpose and work of this organisation is not yet so well known, as we know, *“ignorance is unloved”*. On 11 May this organisation had its first birthday here and may it also be the last one, in these circumstances. For the members and the leaders in particular it was a day of enjoyment and thankfulness. Involuntarily our thoughts went back to the 11 May 1900 when Dr J R Albertyn initiated this on the grass under the open heaven. Then there were 9 working and 5 following members, now it is more than 300, of which most are working members. For those who have this organisation at heart there is much, unending much, to be thankful for, and in all this they recognise God’s good hand over them.

The motto of this organisation is similar to all the CS organisations in other lands, *“For Christ and the Lord”*, though there is another motto specifically for the local union, which is *“Ora et labora”*, pray and work.

The purpose in short is to motivate an earnest Christian life amongst its members and make them more useful to the Lord. Also can be said, that the members aim to reach other young men, and awake them to Christian work, and to help the weak, visit the sick, etc. Once a week there is a gathering to discuss Bible subjects. *“The Power of Satan”*, *“Paul as missionary”*, *“The most important mountains in the Bible”*, *“Perception”*, *“Humility”*, *“Abide in Jesus”*, etc.

It is expected from every member, that he will take part in the meeting (except singing), to read a portion of scripture in relation to the subject, to pray or say a few words. The meetings will be an hour, and by the chairman made as lively as needed plus singing from the hymnal *“Child’s harp”*. Prayers should be short and to the point.

24. The Prisoner of War

Saturday 15 June 1901, No 1

Matt Nelson born at Lagnas, Marsala Finland 1875.

Died at St Helena 7 June 1901

In about October last year, as we all will remember, an exhibition was made of articles by the POWs. All onlookers were surprised at the quality and when the tools were taken into consideration, it is actually wonderful that so many different articles, many that can be called pieces of art, could be completed. The result was that more immediately was the demands for such curios and a market was established, enabling many of us to earn a few shillings. The value of these few shillings we would not discuss each alone knows what it means to add a little something to our diet.

Since then our camp’s business and faculties have increased and with exercise and gradual accumulation of better tools, articles has been made of much better quality and shape as when the above mentioned exhibition was held, If one would take a stroll through the camp in every tent and home one would see one

or more, very busy making penholders, walking sticks, (*rijzweeper*) whips, brooches, different types of containers, chairs, medals and crests of metal, in one word, curios of so many kinds that if all were to be described, this paper would be filled with it.

The bakers and brewers also made much progress and in many cafes and restaurants one can enjoy a cup of coffee, cake or tart as good as any big city and at a menial price. In truth, the buildings cannot compare with such if similar purpose, that are erected in big towns, but even in building much improvement has been made by experience, the first huts and shelters are more and more replaced by houses, and although they do not have a outward appearance of beauty, they are comfortable and so arranged that the inmates are at ease, if not to say well off.

There is also no lack in large buildings. We can but name the building "*Benefit and Entertainment*", (50x25 feet), the "*Deutches Heir*", (German home) the different religious and education buildings of Messrs Church & Pentz and many other, to show that our people are not afraid to work and tackle the great or small.

With all these facts mentioned, we want to bring it to the notice of our readers that a second exhibition could have good results and the demands for "*Boer curios*" increase. Even among ourselves we do not know what our fellow prisoners are making and what can be obtained.

Could the workmen not relegate a commission to consider this matter. If desired they could take on the task to consign the curios to Europe and sell it there, whereby many of us could make much with our handwork and not only relieve our lot as POWs, but save a little money for their return trip. We leave these suggestions in the hands of our readers.

The Hon. Sir de Witt-Harmer has already, although only in a small way, made a request in this matter and we are convinced that this Hon. Sir, would be an assistance to the suggested commission and, if asked for, would take the management on himself and ensure good results because he already achieved a market in Europe.

Dissolvment Of Partnership "Church, Pentz and Briede"

Notice is given hereby that Mr. Briede has relinquished his partnership of above mentioned concern. Business will in future continue by Messrs Church and Pentz, to whom all accounts are to be paid.

F.J. Fick. Photographer

Portrait Vignettes or groups - 6/- per half dozen

Mr Fick remains grateful to the public for their favours and trusts to enjoy the same in future.

Widows & Orphans Fund

In our previous article about this, a mistake crept in! In the Broadbottom camp there is not a section of this commission, but an independent commission with a chairman etc. as was stated by us. We wish them well

in this endeavour of collecting and what they send away will surpass ours. The main cause is to donate to this good cause and whether a joint effort or separately, it is but a menial point.

In the Debate Society: "A" Branch, the monthly Journal was read on Friday evening 1.1 by Mr du Preez, the journal consists of voluntary contributions written by the members and copied by the journalist and had good effect.

The debate followed on the subject: "*who enjoys the most happiness, a civilized person or an uncivilised one?*" Mr Wolmareus spoke for the uncivilised while Mr Keet for the civilised. After a good and well thought discussion the outcome was in favour of the first-mentioned group, with 16 against 10 votes.

A concert was held with the opening of a new building, which will be a restaurant and measuring 20 ft x 30 ft it was beautifully decorated with flowers and branches and was early filled to capacity.

The first of the programme existed of singing and performing, everything was excellent. The 'Hottentot' song of "*Grandpa*" de Grange was well received by the listeners and called for an encore.

The second half was a performance of the "Christy Minstrel Group" under direction of Mr F J Penn, with Gentlemen M de Kock as "*Tambo*" and H de Meillon as "*Bones*", Mr Penn (Johnson) was well supported by them, while Mr Hennir Rouw did the accompaniment on the piano. All the songs and jokes caused great interest and merriment by the audience, the evening was spent successfully. We wish Messrs Young and Slabbert success with their undertaking.

We notice some change - which actually are improvements - at the buffet in the "*Benefit and Entertainment*" building. For a couple of weeks it has not gone too well and was always a question if you would receive some cake with a cup of coffee or not. Nevertheless we now see a good stock of different proviand and trust that it will remain like that.

The erection of buildings in the officers' line is increasing a lot. Recently Commdt. Eloff moved into his house, the commissariat building is completed and many others are following the example.

The Cape mail arrived on Sunday, and as usual brought a large quantity of letters with for us. Many a face shone with pleasure at receiving news that beloved ones at home are well, but alas, on many faces sorrow could be read, receiving news of the death of a father, brother or other relation.

With the purpose to find unknown, yet maybe capable writers among us, and to encourage them, the editors decide to award a prize of 25sh 6d for the best story, or joke, taken from camp life, and not exceeding 500 words. All contributions must be written on one side of the paper and delivered to Mr Henry Everitt, Editor, before Sat 22nd inst. The best chosen article will appear in our paper, and if space permits we will also publish some of the best among the others.

On Monday last, at Branch 'B' of the Debate Society Mr Kuhn also read the journal. The contributions were many and the younger members presented a good example to the older members of branch 'A'. A debate was held on the subject, "*Are books written for the benefit of the author or the public?*". Mr Rossouw commenced and Mr Erasmus was the opponent, and it was decided in favour of the latter (The public).

Public Works

We recently had the opportunity to inspect the jobs of the Public Works of our fellow POWs in Jamestown. Except for different jobs, the new crane on the wharf and the road to West Rocks are great undertakings, and will remain as a reminder that there had been “Boer” prisoners of war interned on St Helena. The crane is completed, also the road, except for the retaining wall, included in this last blasting of the rocks through which the way now go. The building of a sea wall, or dyke and the laying of stones of the road and the chute where all kinds of refuse is dumped into the sea.

At Rupert’s Valley a large chimney is being built in connection with - as we understand - a condensation plant that is to be erected, with the purpose to supply water when there is a shortage. The chimney stack must be fairly high, and will not be completed soon.

Cont. by J.H.L.S

“This portion is a continuation and the description of the dream and the comparison to the different Kingdoms it seemed to represent etc.”

(Nothing about camp or other activities)

Also. The Christian Society paragraph is solely about their services, aims and other practices in relation to this society.

(Nothing of historical interest)

Mixed Reports

In our issue the names of all our fellow prisoners of war who have died since we have been positioned here, with age and place of residence, will be published. Because a limited number will be printed, those who wish to have copies must notify us beforehand.

Gentlemen Le Clus and Botha, two of our fellow prisoners of war - so we have learned - will in the near future open an exhibition. We wish them luck with their undertaking.

During last week four of our fellow POWs passed away. The names are as follows:

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| A.F. Ter Meulen | 27 years |
| G. Gerbere | 29 years |
| M. Nelson | 26 years |
| T.P. Pieterse | 40 years |

Tomorrow a service will be held by Mr C.F. Mijnhardt at the Royal Engineers Camp, Jamestown. All are cordially invited to attend the service.

Sporting Column. Etc. In English

J.P. Smith and J.S. Grobelarr

Sportmen retreat.

At all hours obtainable. Coffee, Tea, Cocoa, Cake and Tarts. etc.

Hot suppers at all times.

Boarders accepted and good meals guaranteed.

25. Frenchman who died for the Boers

Frenchman who died for the Boers

One of the more colourful characters to come to South Africa to fight for the Boers was Georges de Villebois-Mareuil, who was killed in action on this day 100 years ago. This is an edited version of an article by GLENN FLANAGAN.

GEORGES de Villebois-Mareuil was born in Nantes on March 22, 1847, into a Catholic, military family with royalist connections. In 1865, at the age of 18, he entered the military academy of St Cyr and, on passing out, served in French Indo-China. On his return, his bravery during the Franco-Prussian war earned him promotion to captain and the Cross of the Legion of Honour.

De Villebois-Mareuil's passion was the theory of warfare and his observations of the Russo-Turk war in the Balkans led him to write *The Russian army and its leaders*. He was able to apply some of his theories to the French army invasion of Tunisia in 1881 where his bravery in battle saw him promoted yet again — this time to the rank of commandant (major being the English equivalent).

At the age of 45, De Villebois-Mareuil became the youngest full colonel in the French Army. In April 1895, he was posted to Algeria as chief of staff to the first division of the French Foreign Legion in a desert outpost. However, later in the same year, when his regiment was posted to Madagascar, he was not given orders to follow. He resigned in protest after 30 years of service.

Various political scandals, combined with disillusionment about the state of affairs in France, led De Villebois-Mareuil to volunteer his services for the Boer cause as an advisor on logistics, fortifications and staff organisation during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

As a volunteer, he had to pay his own way to South Africa. He travelled incognito via Madagascar to Lourenco Marques. He arrived in Pretoria on November 25, 1899.

Die Franse Kolonel or die Wille Boer,



Georges de Villebois-Mareuil.

as he was named by the Boers, was posted as military advisor to General Joubert fighting in Natal.

At Elandsplaagte, where he arrived on December 7, 1899, he met the French engineer, Captain Leon, who took him to inspect the Boer siege guns at Lombardskop. De Villebois-Mareuil was unhappy that there were no protecting outposts for the guns. As he had feared, the British over-ran the deserted posts on the night of December 7-8, 1899, and the guns were damaged beyond repair.

De Villebois-Mareuil's proposed plan to attack Ladysmith was ignored by Joubert and he encountered a similar response from the younger, less conservative General Louis Botha when he later asked him to check the Boer defensive positions along the Tugela. Even though the two got on well, De Villebois-

tation as a strategist and his example made him a legendary figure. He, in turn, admired the Boer tenacity, spirit, warm hospitality and fundamental morality.

As with Ladysmith, so De Villebois-Mareuil's plan to take Kimberley was ignored by General Cronje when he went to join him on January 23, 1900, on the Magersfontein front. With the Boer delays, the initiative recommended by De Villebois-Mareuil for the attack on Kimberley fell flat.

After Cronje was surrounded at Paardeberg and Bloemfontein had fallen, De Villebois-Mareuil was summoned to a Kriegsraad at Kroonstad, attended by both Boer presidents and approximately 30 senior officers and officials. As he entered the room, the two presidents, Kruger and Steyn, and Commandant General Joubert stood up to greet him, a compliment of the highest order. De Villebois-Mareuil was made a Boer combat general, a *vecht-generaal*, to be paid for his services and put in charge of an international legion. As such, he was the only foreigner to hold the rank of general.

On March 24, 1900, he led his detachment south to blow up railway lines and thus destroy British communication with the Cape. On April 5, 1900, they found themselves some eight kilometres from General Lord Methuen's forces at Boshoff. Their presence was reported to the British and by 1.30 pm they were encircled. As retreat was out of the question, De Villebois-Mareuil and his men put up a fierce four-hour resistance. In the last minutes, leading a charge on the enemy as he had done in the Franco-Prussian War and shouting *Vive la France*, De Villebois-Mareuil was fatally hit by a shell splinter.

De Villebois-Mareuil's courageous stand was acknowledged by Lord Methuen, who buried the French soldier at Boshoff with full military honours and

6 April 2000, The Natal Witness

26. Boer prisoners at Longwood



Longwood House (Napoleon's House) in the background
