

# **Boere Krygsgevangenes in Ceylon**

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## THE BOERS AT DIYATALAWA

BY E. H. VAN DER WALL

The Victorian age ended in the crash and conflict of the Great Boer War. The youngest combatants in that war have reached the dignity of middle age. Most of the older men sleep with their fathers. It is a war that has now receded into history.

Diyatalawa was a creation of the Great Boer War. Before that period it was geographically known but not discovered. Smiling in the sunshine of the rolling patanas, it was the Happy Valley that lay beneath the Industrial Home, conducted by the Rev. Mr. Langdon of the Wesleyan Mission. It was just a glorious bit of landscape, only that and nothing more.

And then the opportunity came. Where were the thousands of Boer prisoners to be interned? The fertile brain of Sir West Ridgeway, Governor of Ceylon, supplied the answer. At Diyatalawa of course.

Here was indeed a suggestion of home for the prisoners of war. The distant mountains, the rolling veldt, the cold dry air – it was South Africa all over again. And besides, it was a land once colonized by men of their own blood and breed.

The suggestion was enthusiastically received by the authorities, but in Ceylon there were rumblings of discontent. The wise and the prudent scanned their kitchen accounts and shook their heads disapprovingly. Would not the cost of living rise? Sir West Ridgeway was a diplomat. He was also an orator. He made one of the most brilliant speeches in his brilliant career. The occasion was the Royal College prize distribution and the hall was packed. “Yes something might happen” he added after he had calmed all fears. “The price of pumpkins might possibly rise!” Nothing after all is so effective a weapon as ridicule. The newspapers lost their latest sensation.

I was one of the first to see the Boers arrive and to visit them at Diyatalawa. The war had let loose a flood of literature and we heard *ad nauseam* that the Boers were rough and uncultured, dirty in their habits, crafty and treacherous. The impressions I formed were of a totally different kind.

Taken as a whole it must be admitted that the Boers were not tailor-made men. But their appearance and habits were not different from those of civilized farmers in any part of the world. Certainly there were some Boers at Diyatalawa whose culture and refinement would not have failed to make an impression on any assembly of men whatsoever. It must be remembered that the Boers constituted an entire race with necessarily varying types.

Let us try another source – the villagers who live round Diyatalawa, amongst whom the Boers moved for over two years and who were able to estimate their character. “Good men” is the unanimous verdict.

And so they were – simple, unsophisticated farmers most of them, deeply religious. It was pathetic to see them at camp poring over the Bible, drawing inspiration and comfort from its pages.

Among the prisoners of war at Diyatalawa were the two well known Generals, Roux and Olivier.

Paul Roux, the fighting person, was a natural leader of men. Spare of figure, straight, tall, alert and well-groomed, he was destined to be great both as a spiritual leader and on the field of battle. He spoke English with the ease and grace of a cultured Englishman, and his light touch of humour made his conversation most attractive.

I asked him what he thought of Lyddite, a new form of explosive which was first used in the Boer War. “We don’t like it at all” was his ready reply. “It spoils the colour of our trousers.”

His occasional use of some Dutch word that was well known to us gave his conversation a special interest. “We were once trying to get the range of a gun that was worrying us” he observed “when we hit it over it went like a *wafel*.” And suiting the action to the word he turned the palm of one hand over on the other.

The good old town of Matara which has always borne a great reputation for its hospitality was more than once visited by General Roux. The hostess anxious to please reasoned in this wise. In the old recipes which have come down to us there are some highly seasoned curries. Let therefore a special effort be made to provide curries which are reminiscent of Dutch days. General Roux heroically stood his ground to the end of the meal and then observed:- “I have gone through many months of war without shedding a tear, but I very much feared I should do so today.”

General Jan Hendrik Olivier was a magnificent physical specimen, tall, wide shouldered, clean limbed, with a great black beard slightly touched with grey. He had a fine head and forehead and searching dark eyes. He was responsible for the British reverse at Stormberg. “I had only one gun” he explained “which I quickly moved from point to point.”

His knowledge of English was not extensive. One of the most respected members of our community requested him to be godfather to his infant son. He readily agreed, and when the infant Jan Hendrik Olivier, so named after him, was presented to him, he greeted him as follows, shaking him heartily by the hand:- “Hullo man (pronounced *mahn*) Goodbye! Goodbye!”

The greeting was sincere and came from the heart of the kindly man, though the phrasing was misconceived. What did that matter though? How many of us then could speak as much Dutch as he did English?

I was spending a Sunday afternoon at Haputale with some good friends of mine, a family from Colombo, who had come up for the two fold purpose of an up-country holiday and a visit to the Boer Camp. Seeing a party of Boers pass by along the road we invited them in.

The hostess asked them to sing and in response the Boers lifted up their voices and sang. It was a slow and monotonous tune, heartily and lengthily rendered. At the end of the performance our hostess felt she should say something and remarked it was very solemn. Ja! Remarked one of the Boers with surprise. It was a P-s-a-l-m (pronounced very much like solemn).

Later on, it was clear that something was troubling the mind of our worthy hostess. Her remark that the singing was solemn had been flung back at her by one of the Boers and now she had a new grievance. She had handed round cups of tea to the Boers and every man on receiving his cup had said "Donkey". Alas! All they had said was "*Dankje!*" That was a quarter of a century ago, since which the Dutch language has made much progress in Ceylon.

About a hundred yards to the North East of the Survey Camp is the Boer Cemetery. It is sad to think that 140 Boers who had survived the dreadful tragedy of war and had arrived as prisoners of war in Ceylon did not live to return home when peace was declared.

There are 133 Boer graves marked by plain wooden crosses. Seven are unmarked as the great stone monument erected by the Government of South Africa in 1913 bears 140 names.

Some of these names, reminiscent of the great figures in the war or of some special interest to Ceylon, are given below:-

Kruger, Cronje, Olivier, Roux, Steyn, Pretorius, Prinsloo, du Plessis, Van Rooyen, de Villiers, de Jonge, Laurens, Smith, Palm, de Klerk, Nel, de Bruin. The youngest in the roll of the dead is Douw van der Walt of Bloemfontein aged 16 years, and the oldest W. J. R. Bretz, also of Bloemfontein, aged 144 years. The latter's death is the last recorded with date 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1902. He had twice outlived the Psalmist's span of life. He had no doubt been in the Great Trek and had known the vicissitudes of good and evil fortune which his people had experienced during nearly a century and a half. And now that peace was declared, he had nothing left to live for. Like Simeon of old well might he have said "Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in Peace; for my eyes have seen Thy Salvation."

Oh, the tragedy of those simple inscriptions on the plain wooden crosses. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1900 there were six deaths and on the 24<sup>th</sup> December five deaths. An

epidemic of enteric had broken out and the angel of death was busy. Public opinion was stirred and Sir West Ridgeway promptly took action. Dr. T. F. Garvin, the ablest physician in the Government service, was immediately dispatched in medical charge to Diyatalawa, and the prompt action he took saved the situation. But oh, the tragedy of it all and the thought of those brave men who never saw their homes again. One could weave such tragic situations. There are the two Prinsloos of Ficksberg, one aged 18 who died on the 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1901, and the other aged 51 who died on the 18<sup>th</sup> March. Were they father and son? And did the father not will to live when he had lost his son?

But let us leave the heroic dead where they lie. Better there than in the congested area of a city, for they were accustomed to the silence of vast spaces in their homeland –

Under the wide and starry sky  
Dig the grave and let me lie!

# **Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon**

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## **THE BOER PRISONER-OF-WAR IN CEYLON (1900 – 1902)**

BY R. L. BROHIER F.R.G.S.  
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### **Introduction**

The story of the Boer prisoner-of-war in Ceylon will in four years be half a century old. The majority of that generation which witnessed the arrival of these Burghers from overseas, and were able to contemplate this notable event in its maturity and decline, sleep with their fathers. Those who were in their teens at the time have reached the dignity of old age.

The recent war years, which have happily ended, brought this unique bygone event into prominence from the point of view of comparative history. It emphasised the sad reflection that one cannot enjoy a closer intimacy with the lot of the Boer captives, and with the origin of that swiftly created town in Ceylon where they were interned, without burdensome research.

In four pages of a number of *The Journal* published seventeen years ago (Volume xviii, No.3), the late Mr. E. H. Vander Wall, with aptness of phrase which makes his picture as mellow as it is delightful, briefly recounted his reminiscences of "The Boers in Diyatalawa". It is indeed a pity he has not told us more.

For the rest we must turn to all but forgotten and scattered writings which repose in newspaper cuttings, periodicals, and pamphlets. So far as the author is aware, no book which deals comprehensively with the subject has ever been published. As we live in a period of short memories, some endeavour is being made in this series of contributions to bring into more permanent form a store of bygone facts, which should be of special historical interest to readers in South Africa, and the Dutch Burgher Community in Ceylon.

The work, it will in due course be seen, is divided into two parts. The chapters which deal with the arrival of the Boer prisoners in Ceylon, descriptions of their camps, and other items of interest connected with their transient sojourn, lay no pretension to be other than a superficial attempt to bring to memory the more important features of this event.

The collection of mortuary inscriptions, on the other hand, which forms the second part, is a complete collection of reduced facsimiles of the originals found in the Boer Cemetery

at Diyatalawa in the year 1929. Every effort was made, not only to copy them faithfully, but also to follow as nearly as possible the quaint orthography of the originals.

The words and lettering on many of the inscriptions may excite criticism. Periodical renovation and re-painting at the hands of people unacquainted with the language, have led to numerous alterations in the original lettering, omissions and inaccuracies. These depreciations unwittingly caused by the indifferent, cradled the germ which gave rise to the idea of compiling a record of the mural tablets *in situ*.

Where a store of facts have been accumulated by a process of winnowing the pamphlet and newspaper article, it is a human fault to forget the source of some of this information. The author desires however, specially to acknowledge here, the thanks due to Mr. L. E. Blazé, for numerous newspaper cuttings, on which chiefly the first part was developed and expanded.

## I

### **Which describes their Arrival and the Discovery of Diyatalawa.**

Much was said and written at the time of the rights and wrongs of a conflict which history named the Great Boer War. Although as a war it interested other nations, its issue was not such as to cause grave anxiety to any other but the belligerents. Ceylon contributed to this war in two widely different ways. For one, it raised a Mounted Infantry for service in South Africa, and undertook the expense of equipping, arming and transporting the Contingent, providing horses for members not able to supply themselves. For the other, it solved an Imperial problem regarding the internment of thousands of Boer prisoners.

The reason why Ceylon was selected to supplement St. Helena as a place of internment for the prisoners of the Boer War, has never been revealed. Popular opinion at the time credited the Governor, Sir West Ridgeway, too with ready acquiescence to the Imperial experiment. Many declared that the Governor's friendship with Lord Roberts, under whom he served as Political Officer in Afghanistan, had something to do with the selection of Ceylon. But as nothing perhaps is to be gained by venturing too deeply in search of the policy which introduced the captive Boer into this Island, there seems no justification for dwelling on this point.

It seemed abundantly clear that Ceylon undoubtedly possessed advantages for securely and comfortably lodging European prisoners-of-war. Local conditions promoted the assurance that, compared with Cape Town, where the prisoners brought their plans of wholesale escape to the verge of maturity without the authorities having the slightest suspicion of their intentions, the chances of escape from Ceylon were very remote. It was equally evident that the possibility of local connivance with the efforts to escape would be reduced to a minimum.

This, of course, presents the Government point of view. We pass on to gather how the prospect of having so large a contingent of Boer prisoners in their midst was received by



the people of Ceylon. When the local press initially splashed in headlines the secret which had been carefully preserved, there was much public doubt as to the wisdom of the arrangement. A "family man and tea-planter", wrote to the local papers:- "Imagine what it would mean to Ceylon if it were saddled with more Boer prisoners than there are European British subjects. As prisoners-of-war are not confined to prison walls and treated like criminals, how are they to be guarded, and what should be given them to do? It would be madness on the part of England to send a large number of prisoners to Ceylon. The very thought of thousands of Boer prisoners-of-war in the Island, is enough to depreciate our great industry and create a longing desire to go out of the country."

Yet others fancifully stressed the fact that the entire European population of Ceylon at that time did not exceed six thousand, while the arrangement foreboded the advent of five thousand "rough, uncultured, crafty and treacherous" Boer prisoners, with no more than a thousand troops to guard them. In domestic circles fears were entertained concerning the enhanced prices of provisions and foodstuffs which would directly result from this enforced invasion. Even the wise and prudent shook their heads disapprovingly.

But in its Governor, Ceylon at that time possessed a great diplomat. What is more, Sir West Ridgeway was a great orator. Using every opportunity to give public utterance to his views he gradually allayed all fears. He assured the house-wife that at the most "the price of pumpkins might possibly rise!" The happy results he anticipated from taking the public into his confidence soon in great measure realized. Controversy gradually subsided, and Ceylon settled down to view with a measure of complacency the arrival of the Boer captives. The model Imperial sanatorium which today enjoys the perfection of climate in ideal surroundings, and is so well known throughout the Indian and Eastern world, was the discovery of this Imperial experiment.

Ever since those early days when the British occupied the central portion of Ceylon, Upper Ava was regarded as a favoured region and the healthiest part of the Island. Diyatalawa was just a speck in a glorious stretch of landscape – nothing more.

About thirteen years before the arrival of the Boer prisoner-of-war in Ceylon, a tract of land in Diyatalawa (literally "the watered plain") was leased from Government by the Rev. Samuel and Mrs. Langdon as the site for an Orphanage and Industrial School. It is recalled that when the foundation of the orphanage buildings were being laid, only the few huts of the labourers employed on the work splashed the outlook of the rolling patana. The only other building on which the eye rested was the club house on Wilson's Plains, several miles distant. With the gradual growth and development of the Wesleyan Missionary Settlement, the place came to be known as "Happy Valley". The Mission House was built after the Orphanage, in turn there sprang up the Reformatory and Hospital.

Finally, a prettily situated Chapel was erected on a site off what is today called the Polo Ground. The valley was consequently gradually crowded with numbers of busy workers, some tending plots which were planted in Tea, others learning a trade in carpentry or other industrial pursuits. Diyatalawa and the Happy Valley thus became a frequented

resort of travellers off the beaten track, and its vast possibilities for expansion were apparently not lost sight of in Government circles.

The pioneer effort of Missionary enterprise was consequently the inspiration which invested Diyatalawa with a fame and prominence few could have anticipated for it. In the month of April in the year 1900, the Wesleyan Mission had summarily to move. Barely three weeks later an officer (Mr. R. W. Smith) of the Public Works Department, who was at the time serving as District Engineer, Kurunegala, received instructions to take over the supervision and erection of a camp at Diyatalawa, for quartering the Boer prisoners-of-war.

There followed the most remarkable exhibition of what organized local labour can accomplish when kept going at it. The five acres of undulating land selected as a site for the camp presented a scene of activity which was unprecedented, and barely eclipsed by any town-planning or building scheme, put through in our own times under the strain of emergency occasioned by a world-war. On the ground all sorts of building implements were strewn in profusion, iron bars, sheets of galvanized iron, planks, barrels of cement, bricks and buckets. All day, and even into the night, the valley throbbed to the toil of builders and engineers. Labourers in gangs of hundreds, a large proportion of them being women, moved to and fro carrying earth to hand carts that passed up and down a network of roadways. Loaded trucks clattered as they ran along two-foot ground tramways to dump the earth from excavations into the yellow stagnant swamps hummocked by the patanas.

Before a period of ten weeks had elapsed, the camp as originally planned to accommodate 2,500 prisoners and a guard of 1,000 men, besides the staff and labour establishments, was completed, and was handed over to the Prisoners' Quarters' Commandant. Water, obtained from streams on the hillside, flowing through Roehampton and Kahagalla estates, above the railway, was laid from suitable intakes to a break of pressure tank, and thence to four service tanks constructed in close proximity to the camp. A masterpiece of baffling double barb-wire fencing, and trenches, girdled the prisoners' camp. Arc and flare lamps had been provided to light up this barrier at night. Electric lights had been installed in all the staff and military buildings. A fire-wood wire-shoot had been provided and ran parallel with an aerial tramway raised on Eiffel Tower like structures, for conveying stores over a distance of three-quarters of a mile from rail-head to Quartermasters' store. A metalled road constructed from railway station to camp completed means of communication by affording vehicular access.

Truly, as if by miracle, what but a while ago was a bleak patana punctured by a few straggling buildings, materialized into a veritable town of silver sheen – for such the mass of corrugated iron buildings looked like in the glare of a tropical sun. From the heights of the girdling ranges of maintains elevated two thousand feet and more, which overlooked the valley, and from distances even as much as twenty miles as the crow flies, this swiftly created town in Ceylon was visible to visitor and resident. It became a landmark which never failed to arrest the attention and showed up all day as a bold white patch – at one

moment bathed in sunshine, at another mottled by the play of subdued light and shadow caused by the clouds which floated over the valley at great heights.

The first batch of prisoners-of-war sent from South Africa to Ceylon arrived at Colombo on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1900, by the transport “Mohawk”. Further batches arrived from time to time, the last, at the beginning of June in the following year. The total number of Boer captives eventually interned in the Island was 5,089 (See Schedule of Boer arrival in Ceylon). Since the camp was not originally planned to afford accommodation for quite this large number of prisoners, additions had to be made. The circling barrier of entanglements increased in due course of time to a circumference of nearly two miles.

Records show that with little delay and no hitch these contingents of captives were immediately transferred from steamer to camp. But something that has not been recounted and perhaps never will be, is the first impression which assailed the minds of these rough, but simple and unsophisticated warriors, when they took their first view from the exit of the summit-level tunnel near Pattipola, over the Uva amphitheatre, and glimpsed as they looked down between breaks in white seas of cloud and vapour, the rolling patanas and the tin-roofed town which was their destination, sitting far away in the distance.

### Schedule of Boer arrival in Ceylon

Date of Arrival in Ceylon	Name of Vessel	No. of Prisoners of war in each Batch			
		Free Staters	Trans-vaalers	Uitlanders	Total
<b>1900</b>					
Aug. 9	Mohawk	-	113	129	242
Do. 11	Orient	-	26	26	52
Sept 3 & 4	Ranee	525	46	27	598
Do. 8, 9 & 10	Bavarian	1230	42	19	1291
Do. 11 & 12	Dilwara	800	146	42	988
Do. 13 & 15	Mongolian	719	-	4	723
Do. 26	City of Vienna	57	184	20	261
Nov. 10	Ranee	128	96	17	241
<b>1901</b>					
Jan. 10	Catalonia	-	-	-	500
Jun. 1	City of Cambridge	-	-	-	103

Sad and dour though they were, who can venture to doubt that it must have been with a shock of delight that they beheld in that vast panoramic landscape many of the characteristics of their own country. Here indeed were *veldt* and *kopjes*, surrounded by mountains and as full of cover as their own – South Africa all over again.

And what of the other features in that ever changing kaleidoscope which all travellers may even today visualize as the train slides, in and out of successive tunnels, and crosses viaducts bridging deep gorges, on its slow and circuitous approach to Diyatalawa? The glens of rich vegetation spangled with cinnamon-tipped myrtle and the blood-red

rhododendron, the strips of forest trailing along the sinuous courses of ravines which terminate so abruptly on the whilom grassy expanses; here and there, the charred crescents of burnt patana, fired during the months of July and August so that a crop of tender succulent shoots may spring up for the cattle grazed on them, and the villages, scattered far and wide in the sheltered valleys, ten, twenty, some nearly thirty miles distant, their picturesque huts peeping from a pretty setting of foliage and studding the margins of the moist green paddy-fields. As the eye wanders further afield, a mountain horizon, on the one side the gigantic pile of Namunukula looped up in a silhouette of undulations to the craggy heights of Hakgala or the "Jaw Rock"; on the other, the prominent heights of Nayabadde, St. Cathrines and Craig, merging into the forest-topped peak Totapola.

Surely, it has been amply proved that nothing was wanting in this choice of a locality to alleviate the lot of the Boer who had to be kept under restraint in Ceylon.

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## THE BOER PRISONER-OF-WAR IN CEYLON (1900 – 1902)

BY R. L. BROHIER F.R.G.S.

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*(Continued from our last issue).*

### II

#### **Boer Town ... Some Facts and Fallacies.**

The portion of the Diyatalawa Camp which was ringed by the deep trench and barbed wire entanglements, very soon came to be called Boer Town. It was divided into two *laagers* or settlements. The one nearer to the railway station was dubbed by the prisoners themselves Kruger's Dorp, and was occupied mainly by Transvaalers. The Burghers from the Orange River Colony occupied the other part, which they christened Steyn's Ville.

Several articles describing visits to Boer Town, many of them by eminent newspaper correspondents, found a place in the Press accounts of the period. Avoiding minor details which at this date have lost their sharpness of outline and interest, suppose we glean those particulars which materially help to construct impressions of the life of the South African prisoners-of-War in these settlements, and to recall the poignant observations made at the time regarding the treatment accorded to them. Describing the surroundings, one visitor wrote: "Having passed through the well-guarded gate of the wire entangled enclosure, we found ourselves in a scattered settlement of huts and tin-roofed sheds, not at all unlike one of those newly established townships one comes across in Rhodesia, or some other young colony. And indeed, it is a township, for this Boer community as I soon discovered, controlled by their own officers, manage everything for themselves, and have among them their own tradesmen and artificers of every sort, their shops and their schools and their churches, all within the limit of the wire enclosure."

Another correspondent pictures the small shops of the Boer tradesmen, flanking the approach road to the settlements, within the enclosure, as being precisely like the "winkel" or village store in the Transvaal. "Here", he says "the Boer barber and the universal provider had settled to do business, the one was to be seen trimming the black beard of a fellow Burgher, while the other was sitting on his tins and his boxes, with an air of placid content that the winkel-keeper on the veldt might rightly have envied."

"A motley crowd indeed," was the expression in general use to sum up the inhabitants collected in Kruger's Dorp and Steyn's Ville. Some, we are told, were refined and highly

educated, others were of very mean intelligence. They were mostly Free Staters who had gone on commando with Olivier, the majority young men, with the beard just showing in ragged points on their chins; round, soft looking faces, bearing on them nothing of the stress of haggardness of war. Many were boys scarcely out of their teens, but all sturdy boys at that. Some of the captives were very old men.

There were Transvaal Burghers and Boers proper; Americans, Austrians, Belgians, Norwegians, Russians, Spanish, French, Germans, Greeks, with seven Englishmen and five Scotch, listed among them, a good many honest excellent fellows, some chivalrous enemies, a few with evil histories behind them. They were collected in groups everywhere, walking, or standing and talking; the majority had put aside the smasher hat of the veldt and wore solar topees. Now and again one saw some sour old Dopper irreconcilable, or ill-conditioned youngster who glared sullenly, but in general there were not only in good health but also contented and happy.

The thrift of the average Boer captive was reflected by the fact that while he wore his old clothes in camp, and masqueraded as a scarecrow in patches, most of them had good clothes packed away in boxes waiting for the day when they were to have their liberty again. It followed therefore that these thick-built men looked solid and loutish in their rough slipshod attire. But when they were seen, thirty at a time, in the swimming bath they had built for themselves, fed with cold water from the hills, one noticed their fine physique, and realized that clothes do not make the man in war. It was only under these circumstances that their activity and endurance, which was apt to be hidden by the occasional round shoulder and careless gait, were revealed.

Some hysterical people sought to raise an outcry against the presence of children in the camp of the captive Boers. There were two hundred and fifty children in the camp at Diyatalawa, who were represented in some versions as victims of British oppression, in others, as heroes who outshone David in prowess.

The fact, however, discloses that these children had been captured with their fathers and their brothers and uncles, and were allowed to accompany them to Ceylon, as they had no other relative to look after them. A strong arm indeed would have been needed to tear them away from their relatives. Captivity must indeed have sat lightly on these youngsters. "We are afforded a glimpse of them" said one visitor, "trooping to school, looking as happy as children can." Dutch teachers had been provided at the expense of the Dutch South Africa Fund to educate these children. Comparing conditions, it was doubtless only too truly said that "they were better fed, better clothed, better taught and better housed than the majority of the children in the Transvaal at that moment."

The prisoners-of-war, with the exception of the officers, were housed in the long well-ventilated huts which are a feature of Diyatalawa to this day. Each of these zinc, barrack-room-like structures held 56 camp beds which are ranged on either side allowing for a corridor down the middle. The central space was furnished with mess-tables and benches. At each table sat 8 men, thus providing 7 messes to each hut.

There was hardly any other furniture, except these bare necessities and a locker with which each captive was provided. All trace of bareness was, however, effectively removed by an odd collection of bags, clothing and miscellaneous personal purchases of the inmates which were strung on the lower structures of the steel framework supporting the roof. In this orderly disorderliness one might have picked out sticks of sugar-cane, bunches of plantains and pineapples, even grasses and strange curios which had appealed to individual tastes.

Mid-day usually found the huts quite full, the prisoners lying about in a minimum of every-day clothing waiting for their meal. When they sat down to their food, it was to be expected that there would be large disappearances of the servings which were made to them, in a manner natural to hungry and heavily built men. They drew rations ordinarily allowed to the British soldier, with a few extras on medical advice. Beef was issued six days in the week, mutton once a week and the usual supplementary ration of potatoes, bread, sugar, tea and coffee. Official reports rather labour the point that the beef and mutton supplies were imported. The kitchens were separately housed in the vicinity of each living shed, and those occupying a hut took turns to do the cooking for their companions in a particular shed.

This recurring menu of boiled meat and coffee suggests a rather monotonous diet, but these campaigners of the veldt proved that they were not accustomed to variety in cooking. They expounded the axiom that if food be good in one way, it should always be good in that way. But there was apparently one point on which they made no compromise, by being great lovers of fat, succulent meat. In the early stage, while arrangements for adequate supplies of frozen meat and mutton from Australia were in the making, they complained bitterly of the coarseness of the beef and declared that the mutton was just goat! They could not reconcile themselves to the singular fact that it has always been so in Ceylon.

The sanitary arrangements in the settlement consisted of wash-houses and baths liberally scattered over the fringe of the dwelling huts, well-planned latrines worked on the dry-earth system, which were located in convenient situations, and the systematic transportation along a line of light railway of all refuse, garbage and solid excreta, with provision for their disposal by fire or burial. All the huts and kitchens were as a matter of routine cleansed and disinfected once a week by the prisoners-of-war themselves, the process consisting of the spraying of the walls with Jeyes solution and the dressing of floors with a 1 in 500 solution of perchloride of mercury.

These details, which throw light on bygone living conditions in a prisoner-of-war camp, where life in general was considered to be tougher, are interesting if not entirely amusing. Bugs were close companions, and apparently multiplied as rapidly as they are reputed to have done in modern concentration camps. However, those were the days before the virtues of D.D.T. were discovered, and remedies were confined to a thorough sterilization of all bedding and clothing in what is stated to have been "a Thresh's disinfecter".

The Boer in his tropic camp lost nothing of his strong religious bent and the worshipful spirit nurtured in his homeland. As a matter of fact their naturally austere religious character was considerably strengthened by the irksomeness of a captive life, by the weary monotony of awaiting release, and the constant thinking of home and friends.

Every night prayer-meetings were held in the open and a genuine chorus of praise rose in the evening air. Often during the day groups congregated in the shade singing Psalms, and sat listening to long sermons of which they never seemed to grow weary. Invariably too, the grim-looking, old, grey-beard, sitting apart silent and solitary, whom one passed with a poignant interest, held in his hand a time-worn, leather-bound book with heavy black text, which one easily recognized. Stolid and uncompromising in religion, as in war, these silent, dramatic personnel seemed to be alive to nothing else but the inspiration and comfort which they were able to draw from the torn and well thumbed pages of their Bibles. Like most zealots, they did not scruple to look upon all amusements as sinful, or to resort to artifice for religions sake.

The story is told that the younger men built themselves a very fine recreation hall for that indoor pastime in the confinement of a camp they so much needed. The older element asked the authorities for permission to hold a service there one night in the week. When this request was granted, they appealed for two nights to be set apart for services, and then three. Eventually they pressed for the consecration of the building. The authorities, perhaps, considered it better policy to humour the older generation, and the hall was consecrated. The climax came shortly after this was done. The zealots insisted that indoor sport should not be permitted as the hall had been consecrated. Pressing their point, they gained entire possession, and a new recreation hall had to be built.

Yet another incident arose over a difference of opinion regarding the band of the British regiment doing duty as guards at Diyatalawa. Nearly every night it used to play in a quadrangle adjoining the Boer settlement, and proved to be a source of relaxation to a large number of the prisoners-of-war. The old Boer die-hards lodged a protest declaring that the performance was ill-timed, because it drew young people away from the evening prayer-meetings and turned their thoughts to the frivolities of life!

Stranger still, about the same time there was an outcry that the military band had been sent up to Diyatalawa for the gratification of the "spoilt" Boer. So, weighted by the clamour of protest in the local papers, and the misdirected evangelical piety of some of the Boers themselves, the Regimental band ceased to play in the vicinity of the prisoners-of-war camp. Much to the disappointment of the "loyal communities" it was not however moved to the cities, but performed instead for the benefit of Tommy Atkins in the precincts of the Guard's Camp.

This phase of religious zeal was developing into a mania and it seemed obvious that something had to be done. Eventually, a medical board decided that all those captive Boers who did not conform to a self-appointed curriculum of athletic pastime should be sent out of the camp daily, on parole under the charge of one of their officers, for



exercise. By this means and in other suitable ways they were gradually distracted from intense preoccupation with religion.

Their normal spiritual wants were attended to partly by a special chaplain sent from South Africa, and partly by volunteer ministers from among themselves and from different religious bodies in the Island. Very naturally, the larger number of the prisoners-of-war belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. Proportionately they were about 90% of the total interned. In lesser degree, every other denomination was represented, including the Congregationalists, the Greek Church and the French Reformed Church. A fairly large number called themselves "Protestants" and a few claimed to be "Lutherans". Only 29 classified themselves as followers of other religions. The majority of these professed the Jewish faith, the remainder included Spiritualists, Atheists, Free-thinkers, and two who claimed to be followers of Mohammedanism. There were five men who confessed they had "no religion".

The picture of the Boer Camp Postmaster is interesting. He was a pure-blooded Burgher of the Free State, named Van Olst, a Justice of the Peace in his district, who was called up to fight like the rest of his countrymen when the time came. It was his daily duty to collect the letters for the prisoners which had been passed and censored in the Camp Commandant's Office, and personally to deliver them to the addressees. Considering the large population he served, he seems to have faithfully performed his duties to the satisfaction of one and all.

Subject to the censorship referred to, the prisoners-of-war were permitted to communicate freely with their friends in or out of Ceylon. Apparently comparatively few letters or publications had to be detained or suppressed by the authorities. Among those which did not pass the Censor was a fiery little pamphlet, dated 1900, entitled "Our beloved South Africa in Fetters".

It is beyond the power of the pen to describe the thousand and one odd incidents of camp-life brought to the notice of visitors in the course of a day spent in these temporary "laagers". When we recall that nearly all the veldt-born Burghers must have led very busy lives in their home-land, it is not unusual to expect they found time hanging very heavily.

Soon after the early contingents from South Africa moved up to Diyatalawa, a large number of them asked for work. In the light of circumstances which would naturally have made these captives petulant and impatient, the authorities decided to afford these volunteers the employment they craved for.

This happened about the time it was found necessary considerably to extend the camp. The available skilled labour was accordingly diverted onto these undertakings, and on the construction of additional reservoirs and water-works. The unskilled labour was detailed to carry out earth-works. The parade-ground, which adjoins the main road leading at the present time to the Survey Camp, and the esplanade called the Polo Ground, both of them originally swamps – the former in particular an eye sore and the sole disfigurement of a

well laid out settlement, were filled up and levelled by the captive Boer. The road which traverses the valley between Diyatalawa and Bandarawela, was also both traced and constructed by them. Perpetuated by its name, the Boer Road, it is one of the few tangible links left to remind the average visitor to Diyatalawa of the sojourn of the Boer prisoner-of-war.

The labour supplied by the Boers was apportioned on a 7 hour a day basis. The prisoners were paid for the work they carried out, the maximum rate for the more skilled captive-artisans being Rs. 1/25 a day.

The varied talent concentrated in the prisoner-of-war camp is most illuminatingly revealed in the report of the Census of the Island, which happily came to be taken very soon after their arrival. No fewer than 152 different previous occupations were recorded. The list begins with accountant and end with Wine Merchant. Farmers were of course in preponderance, (3679), and there were by no means a few carpenters, black-smiths, masons and fitters. There was a professor of Mathematics, 32 Engineers, 1 Attorney, 2 Advocates or barristers, several doctors and more interesting to reflect on, a conjurer, 2 pugilists and an undertaker.

As has ever been the custom of war-prisoners all the world over, a large number spent their time manufacturing curios to while away the dragging hours. Not having tools they devised planes out of table-knives, saws out of barrel-hoops, and with the aid of these and other improvised implements turned out souvenirs an multitudinous articles of utility, most of them from waste material.

Visitors recall that one of the most interesting features viewed in the camp was these groups at work. While in one corner of a temporary workshop three or four were assisting at a make-shift turning lathe of a very primitive fashion, in another there were busy sawyers of nadun or tamarind, or carvers at work on ebony and other hard Ceylon woods bought from Don Carolis. Although as stock-keepers and shepherds most of these craftsman had never handled the tools they were putting to use, the skill shown in cabinet making and carving was surprising.

Ambling around, one came anon to the marts where the results of their labour were on show and for sale. There were paper knives made of bone and horn, inlaid chests and boxes, and walking sticks of all varieties. There were carved name-brooches which at the time were much in fashion, there were picture-frames, pipes and tobacco jars.

More ingenious handicraftsman turned out models of ox-wagons and cannon – Long Toms especially, and Kruppers. One captive, who owned to Scotch parentage, made a complete model of a Johannesburg gold-crushing machine, which he displayed with great pride. Two rupees per item seemed to be the prevailing price; but as mementoes of a visit to the camp, apart from the carved inscription, “Made by Boer Prisoners-of-war”, these articles were considered worth a good deal more than their intrinsic value. The immense interest displayed in the articles which the prisoners-of-war industriously manufactured eventually led to an Exhibition of Boer Curios in Colombo.

Three of the Diyatalawa prisoners-of-war, P.H. de Villiers, a native of Krugersdorp and nephew of a Chief Justice of Cape Colony, Robertson, and Botha, were released on parole to superintend the preparations, and they provided an unique spectacle. One of the leading features of the Exhibition was the work in oils of a distinguished prisoner-of-war artist, including a canvas of the attack on Spionkop. The proceeds of the enterprise, which was largely supported by the public and was informally visited by the Governor, swelled the monthly remittances which the Boers were in the habit of transmitting for relieving the distress among women and children in the concentration camps in South Africa. Incidentally, the bulk of the exhibits were sent to England for further exhibition and sale, the late Mr. Christie Drieberg taking no small part in making the necessary arrangements for this and the Show in Colombo.

It was freely remarked at the time that many of the newly arrived Boers were very flush with money. The rumour was not unfounded, for a good deal of this money, mostly in Transvaal sovereigns, was deposited with the Camp Commandant. These sovereigns were exchanged at Rs. 15/25 for coin of the Island. They looked slightly larger than the British gold pound, but the gold was probably a trifle less pure. The "Kruger" money, and Transvaal postage stamps which were also brought in large numbers, were greatly sought after as mementoes. Eventually, very high prices were being asked for the few specimens which remained. A currency of rupee and cent notes, of value only inside the camp, had been introduced for purposes of trade. When as often happened, word was received that a sum of money had been placed to the credit of a prisoner-of-war in one of the South African banks, he was allowed to draw against it in the miniature bank-notes issued by the Camp Commandant.

### **III** **The Boers in Sport and Pastime.**

There are thousands of people whom a recent war committed to exile, who will testify that homesickness and ennui are two of the most unconquerable forces of our natural emotions. It has played strange tricks in history before now, and who can doubt that ways and means of diverting its ache by occupation and pastime were greatly sought after by the Boer captive.

Besides the many prisoners-of-war who spent the hours of a hot eastern day in remunerative occupations, not a few of them beguiled their time with non-exertive pastimes. Skittles and Quoits were much in vogue. In the cool afternoon, tennis, cricket, and football soon became regular items in their programme of athletic pastime, and while a "Tommy" sat with loaded rifle at each corner of the ground ready for any emergency, the captives exercised their minds and bodies with the utmost unconcern.

Football in particular claimed a remarkable measure of enthusiasm, and it was specially noticeable how very keenly the Boer fell to this pure British game. In the beginning they were content to watch the soccer men of the garrison dribble, or to applaud the dexterous handling of the oval. Then they joined in during practice play and indulged in a primitive

game of their own. It did not take them long to learn the intricacies of combinations, and ceasing to borrow the Gloucester Regiment's ball, they had nearly a dozen of their own. Matches which pitted the Transvaalers against the Free Staters, or the Doppers of the Back Veldt against the Johannesburgers, became the order of the evening's play. Several matches were in due course arranged against local clubs, and one which proved of special interest was played on the Racquet Court against the Bloomfield Cricket and Athletic Club.

Cricket was often indulged in all day long on an excellent ground within the Boer Camp, and matches were frequently played between Ceylon cricket clubs and the Boer teams. A good deal of publicity was given to an agitation over the leniency which allowed Boer prisoners out of detention to play cricket matches in public. The vast crowds which gathered to witness the matches however, amply testified to the appreciation of this small act of conciliation towards an involuntary "guest". One match in particular between the Boers and the pioneer local club, the Colombo Colts, justly claims a place in cricket history. When the Boer eleven which travelled down from Diyatalawa arrived on the cricket grounds in the Cinnamon Gardens, their reception was described as "most cordial", for few crowds had been previously witnessed at any cricket match played in Colombo.

It is interesting to recall that the Boer team included two players, de Villiers and Koetsze, who had previously figured in contests against Lord Hawke's eleven; and who doubtless would have represented South Africa in international matches had they not taken up the sterner game of war.

The names of those who played for the Colts team call to life a procession of bygone cricket-worthies: A. Raffel, the captain, J.C. Mc Hoyzer, Pollocks, J. Ludovici, C.E. Perera, J. Kelaart, L. Thomasz, W.D. Fransz, E.A. Joseph, J. Forsyths and Tommy Kelaart. The proverbial uncertainties of cricket turned a comparatively poor display of the Boer batsmen on the first day into a game of spectacular cricket on the second. The Colombo Colts won the match by 141 runs, but of more import and greater interest than the scores were the extraordinary assurances of mutual good-will which the event kindled, and which the local and several leading London newspapers used to diplomatic advantage.

One of the sporting papers abroad referred to the match, which had the patronage and presence of the vice-regal party, and the leading Boer captive, General Olivier, as an example of the influence of the great English game, which made Briton and Boer forget the dark battle fields of South Africa and "join together in Cricket's manly toil."

The "Daily Chronicle" found room to pen-picture H.E. the Governor complimenting the Boer team upon their playing, and of the dense, closely-packed crowd which keenly enjoyed the sportsmen's gesture, when, as their Excellencies were about to leave, Commandant van Zyl, the leader of the visiting team, called for three cheers for the Governor, which Sir West Ridgeway acknowledged by turning and lifting his Panama.

Perchance that veteran “wizard with the leather”, Tommy Kelaart of the Colts, still cherishes the token of goodwill which was presented to him by the interned Boer cricket team. It was a bone paper-knife. On the one side it bore an inscription tastefully engraved in gold: “To Tommy K., from G.P. Koetsze”; on the other the legend: “A Souvenir of the Boer-Colts Cricket Match.”

Athletic sports, concerts and boxing were other distractions which helped to dispel the dullness and monotony to be expected in a prisoner-of-war camp. There were at least four men amongst the Boers reported to have been able to hold their own in any company at the 100 yards hurdles, half mile, and the mile; and these races were consequently classed as events which were well-worth seeing. But what was described as “the cracker” of the meets was a mile race for boys under 21, for which there were generally about 30 entrants who were able to go a mile as if it were a 220 yard race. Most of them ran bare-footed, their occupation before the war having been the driving of ostriches out to their pasturage, 20 miles off in the morning, and bringing them back at a hand gallop in the evening.

The fun of the day was provided by the Veteran’s race, for which a noble array of plethoric old champions usually turned out. None had perhaps run on a racing track, but there were not a few amongst these old’uns who had done record time over the veldt from a wounded lion or rhinoceros. Household names theirs are in Boer homes, and many a stirring tale they told of “moving accidents by flood and field” in the day when Paul Kruger was still a mighty lion hunter.

The Boer colony possessed two exceedingly skilled pianists, one of whom was said to be the finest in Ceylon in those times, and that easily. Among other unique souvenirs of the Boer concerts, is a programme of one which was organized by the Hollanders to celebrate Queen Wilhelmina’s birthday, described as “the first during her loyal Colonials’ captivity in Ceylon.”

There were few entertainments more greatly enjoyed by the captive Boers than the musical “At Homes” given by Lady Ridgeway at Queen’s House and frequently repeated, to which the leading local musical talent readily contributed.

One of the largest structures in the camp, known as the “Recreation Hut”, was used for boxing practice at all hours of the day. Among the prisoners was an Irishman, Jim Holloway, who was the champion boxer of Pretoria previous to his capture, and had also won for himself a name in the boxing circles of the world. He found lucrative employment in giving lessons in the manly art to the Boer Officers and men at 10 shillings a lesson.

En endeavour was made to send an Africander Boxing Team, consisting of Holloway and two youngsters who had been trained by him in the Camp at Diyatalawa, to tour England and the States. One of them, Spencer Dryer, who was to come of age on his next birthday, as a middle-weight; and the other Jan Vanstaden, 28 years old, was a heavy-weight. Both were considered by their trainer and comrades to be well able to make an

impression. Although the presence of the ex-South African, who was prepared to throw out a challenge of £1000 sterling to any boxer of 9 stone 13 lbs. for the light-weight championship of the world, was sufficient to assure the success of the proposed venture from a financial point of view, they could not gain their release in time, and the project fell through.

Boer photography, much of which was displayed to visitors, was yet another side line which filled the leisure hour. Most of this work, which was considered to be of no mean quality, was set up in artistic albums, and doubtless raised the envy of many a curiosity hunter. They invariably contained unique assortments of autographed portraits, and scenes of camp life in every description; comic, tragic and conventional.

There were many journalistic productions edited by the Boers themselves which were circulated and sold in large numbers at 20 cents a copy in the Camp. One of them bore the amusing title: "The Diyatalawa Dum-Dum." Another, a much more sparkling production with the censor's blots upon many of its pages, was suitably called the "Prikkelraad" (the Barbed Wire). The others were entitled the "Diyatalawa Camp Lyre", "De Krygsgevangene" (the Captive) and "De Strever". They consisted largely of a summary of the war-news, culled from the local press, and were, except for the one named last, published in English with translations into German and Africander Dutch. The pathos of their position often tempted contributions in a poetic vein. Besides their sonnets written by the captive poets, the paper usually contained a leading article by the Editor, letters, and a few humorous sketches and silhouettes.

Not the least amusing part was the advertisement column. For instance, one advertiser announced he has "always in hand Transvaal and Free State stamps, Kruger Money, curios etc. and is always ready to undertake raffles". An undertaker of another type announced: "You can be buried at a reasonable price. J.E. is still carrying on business as usual at same address". Pipe carving, palmistry, beer halls, and shooting galleries, were only a few of the other items advertised.

Rare humour underlay the writings in the column headed "Camp Sweepings". Picking up a copy of "The Dum-Dum" we read: "Another Wail! Our intelligent contemporary the "Ceylon Observer" complains about the fearful rise in poultry and eggs. This is our fault, and we promise it will never, never happen again. The festival of Queen Wilhelmina's Birthday is over, and we assure the observant one, that the six skinny chickens sacrificed on the altar of patriotism will not furnish a precedent. Do forgive us!"

#### IV

#### **Boer Personalities – Great and Little.**

In a little cottage outside the barricaded Boer town, with its name "Roux Ville" displayed in white stones between flower beds, there lived the fighting patron of the Free State, General Roux. Spare of figure, well-groomed even to his short beard trimmed to a point in the fashion of a naval officer, he was an alert-looking man with quick piercing eyes.

His light touch of humour and ease of expression in English, are recalled in the reminiscences of a visitor who asked him what he thought of Lyddite – a form of explosive which the British first used in the Boer War. “We don’t like it at all” he readily replied, “it spoils the colour of our trousers!”

Despite the tendency promoted by the heated political and controversial issues of those times, the fact that the Boers were honourable prisoners-of-war, who had merely fought for their freedom – a sentiment so widely stressed in the grimmer perils of the present generation, rehabilitated them in the esteem of all right-minded Ceylon people. Neither is it entirely surprising that the initiative for extending hospitality to them when so many of the officers and some of the men were in due course permitted the privileges of a leisured resident or visitor, should have largely fallen on the local community of Dutch Burghers. In that freemasonry of recognition of a common stock dating from the older days of power and conquest which have established Dutch names, Dutch houses and Dutch traditions in this tropical Island, where still the name “Burgher” can be correctly applied in an ethnological sense, it was mutual courtesy, although sometimes ironically misrepresented as pro-Boer; and no reflection whatever on the other communities, that the weight of entertaining the Boer prisoners-of-war was borne by them.

The story is told how on one of many days spent by General Roux in private homes, a hostess anxious to please her guest, had planned a menu of seasoned curries reminiscent of Dutch days. Having heroically stood his ground to the end of the meal, the General observed: “I have gone through many months of war without shedding a tear, but I very much feared I would do so to-day.”

His wife, who came out to Ceylon and joined him, used to recount how she herself had been on commando with her husband, and had used her rifle to much advantage.

Another Boer leader interned originally at Diyatalawa, was General Jan Hendrik Olivier. He was responsible for the British reverses at Stormberg. Without any trace of personal pride he recalled how this had been accomplished with only one gun quickly moved from point to point. He was a tall, sturdy, frank-looking man with long flowing black beard faintly streaked with grey. Labouring to set his thoughts to English, he used to tell of the retreat he led along the Free State frontier where he was eventually taken with most of his commando by Ian Hamilton. Smiling significantly, and chatting in a pleasant and unrestrained fashion, he showed by simple diagrams how he was hemmed in for days, on the one side by the British forces, while on the other hordes of war-like unconquered Basotho’s watched him from the hill-tops, waiting eagerly for the violation of their border which would have justified attack. This, he added, was when the Boer General de Wet made the first of a series of sensational escapes which baffled his opponents.

One of the chief causes for reflection, which to this day must evoke many a regret, is that so little was done to utilize the vastly varied talent and scientific knowledge which the Boer prisoners-of-war could have pooled for the benefit of Ceylon and its people. Foremost in this direction was their knowledge of farming and agriculture. General Olivier himself was before the war a stock-rearer and a large breeder of thorough-bred

horses. An invitation extended to him by the Government to visit and advise on the horse-breeding venture at Delft, which had recently been systematically organized, was one of the few instances where the colony profited by taking advantage of the specialized knowledge available. Apart from confirming the stud, which he said resembled an improved Basotho pony, and the conditions for breeding on this island off the Jaffna Peninsula afforded great possibilities for profitable development, he called attention to a poisonous herb of a variety found in Africa which grew on the grazing plains of Delft. This led to further investigation on behalf of the Government, by another Boer captive who had established a claim to be recognized as an authority by research in South Africa.

There were few parts of Ceylon which General Olivier did not visit, and he was invariably accompanied by S. Gillingham, a Dublin man, who had long resided in the Transvaal where he occupied a responsible position, and held with his family at that time important mining interests. The “Colonel”, the “millionaire”, and “Old Sol”, were degrees of familiarity applied to him in which the choicest spirits could hope to graduate.

Yet another scientific asset to Ceylon from the Boer captives was Commandant Krantz, a well known naturalist, through whose initiative chiefly the State Museum at Pretoria had been opened about six years before the Boer war. He was acclaimed one of the best shots in South Africa. Krantz, offered to mount specimens in the natural history section of the Colombo Museum while on parole. This offer was accepted under the authority of Government on the surprisingly modest remuneration of Rs. 300 per month. The scientific experience which this expert brought to bear on his work, with the assistance of another Boer, A. van der Zyl, a taxidermist, gave to the Museum its first group of mounted mammals, representing a buck of the spotted deer attacked by a leopard, with a faun looking on. All the material fell to the gun of Commandant Krantz on a Museum expedition to the Hambantota District.

“Vrouw Krantz”, the wife of the Commandant, who followed her husband to Ceylon, was another Boer woman proud of having carried a rifle on commando. Guests at table in the hotel where she stayed often heard the good lady recount, without any suspicion of animus against the British, her bag of rooineks. Before they came to Colombo the Commandant and his wife were in residence at “The Refuge” in Lady Torrington Road, Kandy.

Another expert in his line employed by the Government was the Boer, F.E.O. Mors, an Instructor in the State Bindery at Pretoria before he was made a prisoner-of-war. He helped considerably to improve the standard of work in this line carried out at the Government Printing Department.

There were several among the captive Boers bearing well-known names, members of the former Volksraad, lawyers and others. Of these, there was C.L. Neethling, ex-member of the Transvaal Parliament, who though 67 years of age ran a farm at Eikenhof near Johannesburg; Commandant Joubert, who was a son of the greatly respected Commander-in-Chief of the Boer army, one of the sons of Paul Kruger, and a nephew of the elusive de Wet, Commandants Boshoff, and Wilcocks who were taken with Cronje at



Paardeberg, and Adjutant Boshoff, a son of the Commandant, were others listed among senior Boer officers.

J.T. Bain, the ex-editor of the *Johannesburg Witness*, who wielded a practical and clever pen in verse as well as prose, was another notable prisoner-of-war. A Scotchman by birth, he became a Boer by naturalization and long years of residence in South Africa. Holding very strong views on the action of the Home Government, he took up arms against the English and was made captive at the fall of Johannesburg.

He was an intensively interesting conversationalist, and when asked the opinion he had formed of Ceylon, rather piquantly described it as “a land of good intentions”, and added that the conviction had been slowly dinned into him that it was “too slow for a funeral!” He cited the jogtrot way its commercial world set about securing markets worth having.

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## THE BOER PRISONER-OF-WAR IN CEYLON (1900 – 1902)

BY R. L. BROHIER F.R.G.S.  
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(Continued from our last issue).

### IV (Continued)

#### Boer Personalities – Great and Little.

A half-hearted attempt seems to have been made to popularize Ceylon tea among the Boer prisoners-of-war. “Of course” remarked Bain, harping on the topic of Ceylon’s lackadaisical commercial policy, “we Burghers drink a lot of tea already. As a general rule, the Boer drinks coffee in the early morning, tea at breakfast, coffee about 3 o’clock in the afternoon, and tea at his last meal about 7 o’clock in the evening.” The variety of tea generally used in South Africa was, he declared “a blend of Indian and Ceylon, with a little China, marketed under a trade name Mazawattee Tea.” This proved, he said, that a market for “the beautiful tea one *should* be able to get in Ceylon, was available in South Africa for the asking.” He went on, however, to declare, on a wide travel experience, that “the tea he had drunk in the Island was the rottenest he ever drank.”

Four medical men named Drs. Coster, Pino, Rykens and Van Houten formed another very interesting group. They belonged to a non-combatant corps, the Netherlands Ambulance, and were made prisoners-of-war on a charge of carrying war letters to General Botha from Pretoria after that city had been occupied by Lord Roberts. All four were qualified in sanitary and medical matters. Soon after they arrived, they offered their services to the Ceylon Government during an epidemic of cholera which broke out near Kandy, and subsequently volunteered their services during the bad epidemic of enteric at Diyatalawa. Apparently it was not considered good policy to employ them on either occasion, but when they were permitted to live out of camp on parole, they were afforded wide facilities for studying local conditions and for research.

Dr. Van Houten, mentioned as having been an assistant to Professor Spronek of Utrecht University, whose work on the culture of the lepra bacillus and its sero-diagnostic behaviour had gained international reputation, was anxious to work at leprosy. He coordinated his research with the clinical observations of Dr. Meier, who had 25 years experience of this malady as Superintendent of the Leper Asylum at Hendela. Dr. Perry, who was at that time Principal Civil Medical Officer, commenting on the report submitted by Dr. Van Houten and his investigations, observed that they were most interesting and instructive, although competent critics said he had not made out the case

he set out to prove. He also remarked on the excellent way Dr. Van Houten had expressed himself in a (to him) foreign language.

Many a Boer prisoner-of-war in Ceylon bulked rather large in his home papers, and one of the most striking extracts to indicate how the Boers themselves viewed their treatment was told by the *Natal Mercury* in a reference to Ted Slater, a well-known journalist of the Rand and a humorous writer. "It is pleasant", said this paper, "to hear that he was enjoying life as a prisoner-of-war in the lonely isle, and that he had joined the ranks of the irreconcilables in order to delay his departure from fair Ceylon."

A more entrancing story concerns a prisoner-of-war named VanderSluis. In the last desperate bayonet charge made by the Dublin Hunt Company of the Yeomanry, at Lindley, the son of a Lord Justice was shot through the leg and lay for hours on the battlefield. He was discovered and tended to by the Boer, VanderSluis, who, when night fell, walked for miles in search of a wagon, and brought the young wounded British officer to a station behind the Boer lines. On the following day the British forces captured the town. British doctors and nurses took over the care of the wounded. While the British officer lay for many weeks in hospital with his leg amputated, VanderSluis continued his commando with the Boer General Prinsloo, surrendered with him, and was deported to Ceylon.

Not knowing that the officer he had succoured was still in South Africa, VanderSluis addressed a letter to his home in Dublin. The letter fell into the hands of the Lord Justice and was forwarded to him by Lord Roberts. In appreciation of the Boer's kindness, to a fallen foe, immediate directions were given that VanderSluis should be brought back from Ceylon to South Africa and reinstated on his farm.

"Souvenirs de Captivite", in a serial form, by a French mercenary, M. Montazel, who was sent after capture to Ceylon, provides many interesting glimpses of Boer personalities – great and little. The author was an eye-witness of a visit which the Governor of Ceylon paid to a son of Mr. Kruger in the prisoner's enclosure at Diyatalawa. "His Excellency, Sir West Ridgeway", he says "galloped round, shook hands with Generals Roux and Olivier, and then, dismounting, approached President Kruger's son. The latter went on smoking his pipe without replying to His Excellency's observations. As the Governor persisted in speaking, Kruger junior turned to a fellow Boer and said in Dutch with much feeling: "Tell him that since his country is at war with mine I speak no English". How truly was the sincerity of life's purpose of the father reflected in the son. Veldt-Cornet Piet Kruger was the fourth son of "Oom Paul."

Apparently the most amusing personality in the camp was an Irish soldier of fortune, a Captain O'Reilly, who had fought all over the world wherever there was fighting to be got, and was Captain of a gun which from the summit of Umbulwana fired something like 3000 rounds of shell into Ladysmith when the British lay besieged. He is said to have had an inexhaustible fund of stories, and of cheroots with which he often stuffed the pockets of friends whenever they called on him. O'Reilly, with a Major Menton who once was chief detective in Johannesburg, had founded a band of mercenaries which later

came to be called the Irish-American Brigade. Their advertisements for recruits are said to have provided most entertaining reading in the *Standard and Diggers News* of those days, and one of the later claims made by this band of adventurers who threw in their lot with the Boers, was that they had saved the Rand mines from destruction! Whatever might have been their records, they were acclaimed a cheery lot. Instead of, as might have been expected, being the most difficult prisoners to control, they proved to be the most amenable.

Revd. and Mrs. Potsma, Dr. Rykens, J. Gillingham, Keuneman, Baron Michael, de Lot and A.P. Roos, besides Commandant Krantz, resided in Kandy after they had been granted parole. Joe Gillingham was the son of the "Boer millionaire" who has been already mentioned. Keuneman was stated to have been one of Commandant Krantz's scouts in South Africa. He left on his release *en route* to Germany. Baron Michael and de Lot appear to have been French nationalized Boers. Roos, who joined later by his wife and family, found a home in Kandy for more than one year, and counted a host of friends in the hill capital of Ceylon.

The Revd. Mr Potsma was one of the predicants who attended to the spiritual want of the prisoners-of-war. The Revd. Mr. Minnaar and Rev. Thom, were two of the others. They took a considerable interest in the Dutch Reformed Church at Wolvendaal, so redolent of by-gone times with tombstones and coats-of-arms of the Dutch Governors and Statesmen which cover its floors.

There were a few other Boer officers mentioned in the news who have not been referred to in these jottings. They are Commandants J. Boshoff, Du Plessis and Wilcock, Adjutants Boshoff and J. Botha. Commandant Boshoff took great pride in claiming that he was in the field with six of his sons, four of whom were captured while the other two remained to the end. Two of his daughters were in the Ambulance Service, and practically the entire family had participated in the war with the exception of Mrs. Boshoff and a little infant. The Commandant was taken prisoner at Paardeberg with Cronje. Du Plessis was a member of the Volksraad.

The homely and domestic characteristics of the Boer contributed in no small measure to make the prisoner-of-war on parole a welcome guest in many a private home. Apparently too the more the people in Colombo and outstation towns got to know them, the more they liked them. This intimacy very naturally led to engagements of marriage with the ladies of locally established families.

The earliest rumour of Boer prisoners-of-war being matrimonially inclined came from far away Jaffna. There were nine of them billeted in a house which the Government had rented near the Main Street, Pettah. The story current was that two of them had attempted to escape from the Island of Delft to India. Arrangements were made to bring them back to Colombo. This order raised a storm of protest, including a petition to His Excellency the Governor. The Boers urged the unfairness of moving all of them for the mischief of two of their fellow-men, more so as they had made many friends in Jaffna, and on the score that a change was unwelcome, particularly to two who had arranged

marriage with some ladies in the station! While the public was stirred by the sentimental side of this news, six infuriated Boers who had been taken on board the B.I.S.S. "Aska" at Kankasanturai were on their way to Colombo. Three of the band were permitted to remain at Jaffna until their case was reconsidered by Government. It is known for certain that one at least of the Boers, Lieutenant de Rooy, who had good cause to want to remain, was not included among the three.

The first Boer marriage which took place was that of Lieut (and Adjutant) Andries Belardies Van Rooyen, to Miss Adeline Van Rooyen of Colombo. The bride was the daughter of Mr. Charles Van Rooyen, a well known surveyor in his day, whose sons made names for themselves as doctors and lawyers. Permission for the registration of the marriage had to be obtained from the War Office. It was solemnized at the Dutch Reformed Church, Bambalapitiya, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1902.

The second Boer marriage was solemnized in Jaffna, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1902, the contracting parties being Lieut. Hendrikus George de Rooy and Miss Ella Strantenberg, daughter of Mr. C. Strantenberg, Proctor and Notary.

Two other Boer prisoners-of-war married ladies they met in Ceylon. One of these was Sauer, who married Miss Felsing, a sister of the late Mr. E. O. Felsing, at Colombo. The other was Solomon Gillingham, "the South African millionaire", and the friend of General Olivier. He married Miss Olive N. Stainton of Kandy, at Cape Town, by special license, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1904.

Van Rooyen, de Rooy and Sauer remained in Ceylon when the Boers were eventually repatriated. The first named took to planting in Ratnapura and was a popular personality in the district. De Rooy, who took out papers under the Naturalization Ordinance, secured employment with the Ceylon Government and retired after many years of service in the Ceylon Government Railways. Sauer, after a period of residence in the Island, left for his homeland. His wife and young family remained in Ceylon. The story, however, does not end here, but goes on to prove how fact can be as strange as fiction. Several years later, one of his sons on a visit to South Africa, had the good fortune to contact the father, who was little more than a shadowy, youthful memory to him. He brought the news to Ceylon, and the final result was a happy family re-union in South Africa. It is interesting to recall yet another link which was forged when another son of the Sauer family married the younger daughter of the Boer, Van Rooyen.

## V

### **Other Prisoners-of-war Camps**

#### **(a) RAGAMA**

A section of the captives at Diyatalawa, known as the foreign mercenaries, proved the most disquieting element in the camp. The frequent attempts they made to escape, and their persistent insubordinate squabbings, were a fruitful set-back to discipline. No kindness seemed to modify the bitterness of their feelings, and their leaders made it their business to see that the tension they promoted did not flag.

This large band of adventurers ranged over the whole social gamut, from counts to convicts. They represented 24 different nationalities, and were dubbed “the incorrigibles”. Unlike the dogged Boer who stoutly justified his fighting and was reconciled to his lot, these foreign mercenaries sought to shelter behind the weak excuse that they had “no wish to fight, and were forced into this war”! Their one whine was that they were really not combatants at all.

Mutual recriminations between them and the Burghers from the Transvaal and Free States very naturally led to friction and frays. These were sometimes of the fiercest description, when blows were exchanged, and bottles, stones and other missiles were freely used. Invariably the British Regiment on guard had to be called out to quell these disturbances.

There was obviously one remedy – to separate the foreign element from the Boer captive proper. The authorities accordingly transferred these “incorrigibles” from the cool camp in the highlands to a more subsidiary camp in the low country where, they were caged more effectively and quartered much less comfortably.

In this new camp at Ragama, there was a wire-netting barrier besides the tangle of barbed wire, and, as an additional protection, an electric alarm in case of an attempted escape. The conditions under which this troublesome band of captive found themselves, therefore, rather emphasized the fact that if they continued to wrangle they would be merely emulating the historical fight of the Kilkenny cats!

The site selected for the camp and staff quarters at Ragama was that commonly referred to at that time as the Plague camps Nos. 2, 3 and 4; and is identically that on which the Ragama Chest Hospital has been subsequently established. The original Plague Camp was intended for the segregation, sanitary regulation, and medical supervision of the Indian labour which filtered through Colombo for employment on tea and rubber plantations. It was a little distance away from the main Immigration Camp located on the rising ground behind the Ragama railway station. Apparently very few alterations were needed to adapt the buildings to the purpose required. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1901, within a month of the date when it was decided to establish this subsidiary camp, 262 men and officers were moved into it from Diyatalawa. Subsequently, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, 25 more were received from the *S.S. Catalonia*. The number gradually increased until at one time there were 338 captives. The water on this camp was pumped from two wells close to the railway line into seven reservoirs, and distributed by stand-pipe. Two of the old reservoirs in the Plague Camp were converted into swimming baths for the use of the prisoners-of-war. These, with a few horizontal and parallel bars, provided means for recreation. Oil lamps were used for the lighting in the camp, and a ring of these lamps was also set up on posts at intervals of 20 yards round the outer limits of the wired barricade to illuminate the beats of the pickets on guard.

One building, which happened to stand apart divided from others by a road, was wired of independently. It was used exclusively for the ‘Irish-American Brigade’, while the rest of the camp housed “all the nations.”

It was the popular opinion at the time, that the visitor to the Ragama Camp who had not seen the Boer Camp at Diyatalawa was apt to form wrong conclusions of the atmosphere of a prison-of-war camp. If perchance one did secure a permit and ventured to visit the Ragama Camp in the evening hours, the first impression formed would be that of sullen groups of captives pacing up and down the enclosure, smoking evil looking pipes of all shapes and sized; while a few others on the mellow side would be watering or tending beds of growing vegetables or flowering plants laid out by the side of the huts they occupied.

The larger number of the captives are indoors and are lolling or reclining on their beds reading well-thumbed books or old and crumpling newspapers. A few sit round the tables placed down the central corridor of these living huts and are occupied in sundry ways. Some are writing, others are drawing; some are interestedly poring over albums of postage stamps, photographs or scraps, others keep looking on, occasionally engaging a neighbour in conversation.

Wandering around one comes to the mess rooms, for unlike Diyatalawa, dining halls have been provided where the captives have their meals served to them and sit to eat in relays. One building in a cool and shady corner of the camp is the hospital. It was able to accommodate 20 patients. The Medical Officer in charge was Capt. W.P. Gwynne R.A.M.C. Maybe one saw here a Corsican, a Greek, a Dutchman and a Jew lying on beds set side by side.

What a headache inward and outward mail days must have given the Censor! There are in this concentration of many nations several British subject too, including a London medical student and other Englishmen. Some of them had no doubt fought, or pretended to fight, against their own countrymen under extenuating circumstances. These were men who with their wives and families had settled in the Transvaal, and when the field cornet gave them all the alternative between joining a commando and the forfeiture of all their property, went over to the Boer side with loyalty to their country at heart.

Others perhaps did so bearing in mind how the British Government had let down the Transvaal Loyalists. But there were no doubt a few British subjects who were treated as prisoners-of-war, in whose favour not a shadow of an excuse for having fought on the Boer side could have been put forward. At Ragama, in the hands of their British captors, they were privileged to enjoy what was described as “the sentimental tolerance of treason.”

Apparently even Ragama failed to quell the turbulent spirits of the foreign element, and within the year some of them had to be moved to the Welikada Jail. To give effect to this, the Gazette duly announced that “Martial Law shall prevail and be administered to all persons within a part of the said Jail”, the limits whereof were declared to be: The Wards known as ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’, with the adjacent to them known as Dhoby Yard, and the six cells at the west end of the ward in the same known as ‘S’ ward.

One night, as a protest against being refused tobacco, the 30 prisoners-of-war incarcerated at Welikada staged a riot. They hammered the floor with their cots making as much noise as they could, and when these were removed they used their boots and finally shouted until they were hoarse. They did not get their way, however, and apparently did not go to all that trouble again.

**(b) Mount Lavinia**

The sea-blown headland which in peaceful times provides fresh air and recreation for the residents of Mount Lavinia, and in times of war is put to use as camping ground or battery, lays bare the story of another subsidiary camp which was established for the Boer prisoner-of-war. It was originally opened on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, 1900, as a Sanatorium to accommodate 25 convalescents at a time, who were encouraged to regain their health and strength by bathing in the inviting warm, clear sea and by picnicking on the broad, sandy beach. A mile of the sea-shore was at their disposal and within their bounds they were permitted to roam about at will between 6 and 9 in the morning, and 4 and 6-30 in the evening.

It was not long, however, before the value of the station as a rest and holiday camp pressed for notice, and led to additional building being erected to hold about 150 inmates. The Mount Lavinia Camp thus came to be gradually filled by a very quiet and harmless set of Boers, including, besides the convalescents, the old, the feeble and the debilitated. The average length of stay of a prisoner-of-war in this camp was four months.

A small hospital of four beds was located in the permanent military barracks by the side of the railway line nearer the sea. Dr. V. VanLangenberg officiated as Medical Officer in charge. Cases which needed prolonged hospital treatment were sent to the General Hospital, Colombo.

**(c) Hambantota.**

A camp in distant Hambantota, one of the driest parts of Ceylon, was opened on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, 1901, and a batch of prisoners-of-war numbering 57, of whom 32 were officers, moved down from Diyatalawa to live in the unoccupied jail which had been converted for the purpose. They were all on parole. Subject to a few restrictions, these Boers were permitted to move about freely. They contributed largely during their sojourn to the social amenities of Hambantota, and made many friends at Tangalle. There are references to cricket matches against teams arranged by the Assistant Government Agent, Mr. Horsburgh, and concerts to the success of which one Boer in particular, a capital violinist, largely contributed.

One of these "prisoners", by name D. Frost, eventually secured an appointment as an Assistant Engineer in the Irrigation Department, and on release when peace was declared proceeded to Anuradhapura.



Out-of-the-way happenings are recalled in the incidental misfortune which befell one of these prisoners-of-war, a Greek, who was bitten by a rabid dog. He was forthwith dispatched under escort for treatment at the Kasauli Pasteur Institute in India.

**(d) Urugas.**

One other spot prominently associated with the story of the Boers in Ceylon was 'Urugas'. For a decade and two years these grass covered downs, four miles from the Kosgoda Railway Station on the road to Elpitiya, had served as the venue of the annual camp of instruction of the Ceylon Volunteer Corps. This explains how Urugasmanhandiya figures so largely in the old soldiers tales of hard work and merriment, and how 'Urugas' – to use the abbreviation which nobody will blame the Boers for introducing – suggested itself when circumstances warranted the establishment of yet another subsidiary prisoner-of-war camp, to accommodate a section of the captives who had incurred unpopularity at Diyatalawa by having offered to take the oath of allegiance.

This camp, which was pitched on high ground well above the paddy fields hammocked in the declivities, was opened on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 1901. The first contingent to move in numbered about 200, but it was not long before this number was doubled. They were guarded by no sentries, subject to no restraints, free to go where they liked, bound by nothing but their word of honour.

The building in which the Volunteer Officers assembled for messing and instructions was used as the Commandants Office and Orderly Room. Two Boers named Stow and Preller, who were well versed in English, officiated as clerks. The living quarters were huts built of mud and wattle, each 150 feet long, with thatched roofs and floors of rammed earth. The side walls were three feet high, the upper portions consisting of cadjan lats which were raised or lowered as required. They were in addition lofty, and consequently well ventilated. The 'succulent pumpkin' which was not inconspicuously referred to in the opening chapter of these jottings, was very soon growing against the walls of these huts, and the farming proclivities of the Boers were to be seen in a number of vegetable gardens scattered about. There were two workshops in the camp, and separate mess rooms with canteens attached. The sale of liquor within certain hours was a special privilege accorded to these loyal Boers, and 16 Boer policemen, who were paid "fifty cents a day", made it their chief business to see that no illicit sale was carried on within the camp limits which extended three miles in each direction.

There were four Boer officers who assisted the Commandant and directed activities within the camp. They were Lieut. Cairn Cross who belonged to the State Artillery in Transvaal, Adjutant Gobbler, and Field-Cornets Smith and Van Wyk.

In anticipation of events and post-war conditions in South Africa, the senior officer, Lieut. Cairn Cross, had opened an English school which was supported by a Government grant. The roll showed 170 students, and its object, according to Cairn Cross, was to teach the Boers to read, write and translate from Dutch into English and *vice versa*, so that they would be at an advantage in re-establishing themselves on their return, although

the Taal would be still in vogue and would no doubt be used in Law Courts. A great many of the Boers in Urugas were said to have held posts as clerks, and billets in the Police and elsewhere, while the larger number of both Free Staters and Transvaalers had farms and families in South Africa.

The authorities were faced with some trouble a few months after this camp was opened, in providing for the spiritual wants of these prisoners-of-war on parole. Most of them belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. Although they had their own predicants sent out from South Africa and the services of Revd. Mr. Boshoff, they made a demand for the services of a local chaplain. The services of the Rev. David Tweed having been secured for the purpose, bickering on this subject ceased, but it did not take long for the artfulness which prompted them to be revealed.

In conformity with the rules of this denomination of the Church of South Africa, every candidate for confirmation had to undergo a course of preparation and catechising for six months by a clergyman, and not infrequently had to stay for that period with paying him boarding fees all the time. There were 39 Boers in Urugas who were unconfirmed and sought to join the Church. They appreciated the possibility of doing so here under less rigorous conditions. Revd. Boshoff confirmed them, but refused to give them certificates.

The minutes of a meeting of the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church of Ceylon held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July reveal that “on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1902, the Rev. David Tweed and Brothers Limburger and Speldewinde proceeded to the camp at Urugasmanhandiya, and having satisfied themselves that the 39 prisoners-of-war, who expressed a wish to join our church, were fit to be admitted as Church members, they were duly confirmed and formally admitted.” Each of these new members was given a certificate.

Forty-four years have gone by since this camp filled by men from afar was abandoned, and “...the place that once knew them, knows them no more...” Scrub and lantana have long blotted out the croquet lawns near the Volunteer Officers’ mess where many votaries of this game used to assemble; the stretch of green south of the road from Kosgoda, which once saw exciting cricket and football matches played against local teams, and was also the venue of many Boer Athletic Sports Meets, is in the occupation of local colonists, who strive with much less energy and raise a meagre crop of vegetables from a soil which was once shown to respond freely. White ants, and the fret of time and weather, have removed all traces of the buildings.

Not so long ago there were still some aged and venerable villagers left in the locality who could point out the site where once upon a time there stood a hospital of two wards to accommodate 10 Boer patients, and a Bungalow near the Rifle Corps lines where the medical officer in charge, Dr. H.U. Leembruggen, used to live. They could tell from cross-questioning, which of the mounds was called the Ceylon Mounted Infantry Hill, where buildings were set apart as a segregation camp should any infectious disease break out among the Boers. With their aid it was possible to trace the 36 acres, two hundred yards off the site of the old Volunteer Camp, where work on yet another emergency camp

had been started by the P.W.D. and abandoned, immediately peace was declared, with the barbed wire fence round it half done and the buildings partly erected. And they would also tell how the advent of the Boer prisoner-of-war had brought them the facilities of a post office, prosperity with trade and barter, and good times. The only building, which stood then, and passing years have not entirely destroyed, is the rest house at Urugas, where many a Boer doubtless sat to a tasty and liberal 'spread' of curry and rice, which until recently, with the serenity of its country setting, was its chief attraction.

(To be continued)

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## **THE BOER PRISONER-OF-WAR IN CEYLON (1900 – 1902)**

BY R. L. BROHIER F.R.G.S.  
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*(Continued from our last issue)*

### **VI.**

#### **The Guards of the Boer Camps, and Escapees.**

The military guard for the Diyatalawa Camp was originally furnished by the 2<sup>nd</sup> King's Royal Rifles and some of the Gloucesters. The latter had left half their battalion behind in South Africa at the minor disaster of Nicholson's Nek.

In the last days of 1900, the King's Royal Rifles went over to India and were replaced by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry or the D.C.L.I. as they were called for short. Coming as they did direct from one of the hottest stations in Bengal, and with many of their men saturated with Dum-dum fever, the change to a hill sanatorium did not prove to be unaccompanied by trouble as their bill of ill-health showed. Although the battalion of "Cornwalls" was over 800 strong, their effective parade strength was consequently much less. The guard at Ragama was composed of 50 N.C.O.'s and men of the Gloucesters. The barracks and guard centres of the British troops at Diyatalawa were picturesquely situated on five selected eminences surrounding and overlooking the barbed-wire barrier of the Boer encampment. It may well be said from impressions of British military routine which is fresh in most memories that the duty of officers and men by night as well as by day was no sinecure. The toil was not arduous, but their numbers were small compared with the 5000 stalwart adults who had to be kept in captivity, and among whom not a few were restless and adventurous.

Normally, the routine of mounting guard, or even the lighter one of sitting down with loaded rifle at corners of the sports ground, watching the Boers play football or cricket, but ready for any emergency must have proved dull. Occasionally, there was excitement, as happened one day when over an altercation between a Boer captive and a private of the Gloucesters, the machine-gun posts on the hills surrounding the encampment were hurriedly manned to check a possible breakout; or when a Boer tried to escape over the double fence of barbed-wire between the sentries and the guard-huts.

There were in all 22 cases of escapes made by the "prisoners"; of these 20 were recaptured in the immediate vicinity of the camps. The remaining two were arrested at Rangoon. Besides the five guard-huts immediately outside Diyatalawa, there were further out on the hills several thatch huts, each on an eminence, and with a flagstaff from which a white flag floated. In the event of an escape, a red flag was run up instead as

soon as news of it reached these outer guard posts. The flags were replaced by lamps at night. The signals were familiar to every labourer in the camp, and villager in the neighbourhood. It meant a reward of fifty rupees for every recapture, or news which led to one.

There was an attempt at tunnelling out, which proved to others who contemplated this method of escape the hopelessness of the process. A "prisoner" was shot dead by a sentry while attempting one night to get through the wires in a dark corner. The general impressions which this attempt gave rise to was that the "prisoner" was endeavouring to creep on the sentry and secure his rifle and ammunition.

In the early months these attempts at escape by those who were weary of duration were fairly common. The successful way they evaded the vigilance of the sentries was by bravely coming out in open day, behaving very ordinarily, and assuming a parole if they did not have it. The unsuccessful way was to 'make tracks' cross-country, hiding in the grass thickets and ribbons of forest peculiar to the country round Diyatalawa, evading the hue and cry which their absence had raised, and the numerous self-constituted and armed bands of local village scouts which the promise of reward had let loose. As the fugitive generally carried a scanty supply of provisions and was afraid to venture into the more extensive stretches of forests, he was often recaptured within a few days.

Two prisoners-of-war, German mercenaries named Reishardt and Perchland, did it in the right way. They donned their best clothes, made believe they were on parole, and boldly walked out past the sentries who were accustomed to considerable freedom of action on the part of their charges. They went to the railway station and took First Class tickets to Colombo. At tiffin time, they calmly entered the refreshment-car and enjoyed a meal in the company of two Government officials of high standing, who sat unsuspectingly at the same table and found their stories and conversation most entertaining. They reached Colombo unquestioned, and their interesting progress "down" was all that the authorities were able to discuss for a time. Nobody was able to find out how they actually got away from this Island. All they admitted when arrested on suspicion at Rangoon was that they had given false names and declined to give their real ones.

Chief Inspector Ancel Collette and two European Sergeants were despatched to Rangoon by the local police authorities when news in connection with this arrest was made known to them. But apparently the Civil Government had bungled. This was a case for the military authorities. The police officers were recalled on instructions by wire, and a Sergeant and private of the King's Rifles were ordered to proceed to Madras whence they were to go over to Rangoon and assist in the military trial.

Two others were less smart, did it the wrong way. They were W.G. Vanzyl and J.F. Corbett. Hiding by day and wandering seemingly blindly at night, they took three days to reach the fringe of the Ohiya forest. Here they ran out of food and were beaten back by leeches and forced into the open. While on the way to give themselves up to a military patrol, they fell in about 6 miles on the Haputale side of Ohiya with Mr. Sydney Herlt, a plate laying inspector and his gang of labourers, who had been notified of the escape of

two prisoners-of-war and warned to be on the lookout for the escapees. The Boers, who were very hungry and could hardly walk, made no attempt to evade arrest. They had made the attempt to get away five days earlier at 6 p.m. and hid themselves in the grass not far from the camp. An hour after they had gone past the barrier, they were followed by the Camp Police who passed with their lanterns within a few yards, and failed to see them. There was one other unsuccessful attempt at escape from Diyatalawa which merits notice. In this instance the runaway Boers, names Joseph Johannes Thomasse and Carl Pieter Cronje, were mere lads, 20 and 18 years of age respectively.

Ragama camp recorded one attempted escape. It did not, however, cause the authorities any apprehension of a weak spot in the ingenious alarm system which had been installed. The fact was that the get-away was not made through the barbed wire, wire-netting and electric-alarm entanglement. The escapee was a Frenchman. He was under arrest for insubordination and had been confined in the guard room. A glimpse of his record would have shown two previous attempts to elude the vigilance of the guard at Diyatalawa. They had cost the Government Rs. 100/- in rewards. Being seemingly well versed in the art, he once again succeeded in eluding the sentry at Ragama. Having got as far as the railway line, he made for Colombo.

A boutique keeper of Ragama, happening to see an European minus coat and a shirt walking hurriedly along the rail track at 8 p.m., suspected something amiss. When accosted, the fugitive offered him 300 rupees if he guided him across country to Colombo. Sensing he was a prisoner-of-war, and anticipating perhaps a bigger reward, the boutique-keeper loudly announced his suspicions, and with the help which seemed to materialise from nowhere hotly pursued the escapee who had taken to his heels.

The runaway, seeing he was 'cornered', showed fight, but eventually submitted to arrest, and found himself soon after being escorted back to the camp by a sergeant and two rankers. He was tried in the camp and sentenced to ninety days' imprisonment. This escape added to his score, for it cost the Government Rs. 50/- paid to the boutique keeper as reward for effecting the capture, and Rs. 50/- more which was divided between three others who came to his assistance.

Even more thrilling is the story of the escape by five prisoners-of-war on a Sunday night, the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, 1901, in the Colombo Harbour. They had jumped for it and sailed away to a safer and distant port. Three days earlier the steamer S.S. *Catalonia* had berthed in Colombo harbour with 300 Boer captives aboard. The next day 150 of them were landed and sent to Diyatalawa. In two days the train which conveyed the first contingent was to return for the remainder. There were five Boers among those left on board who were thinking of but one thing, escape.

One of them was William Steyn who had been an officer on General Smuts' staff. He was at Roodeval when the burning of mails took place, and claims to have set the first light there. When acting as field cornet of the Orange Free States he was ordered in June, 1900, to hold an outlying position against Methuen's and Kitchener's advance. Finding himself surrounded and outnumbered, he surrendered.

Two of the others were his particular friends, Roos, who was a school fellow in Heilbron, and Botha whose father was a magistrate of Philippolis. Hausaner, a German and two brothers named Steytler, who came from the Free States and who had the same designs, were let into the secret and fell in with the plan. One and all were well aware it was no easy matter to get away from the ship. Besides the strong guard of the Gloucester and the vigilance of the ship's staff on board, it was usual when these Boer prisoners-of-war arrived to find several launches patrolling the harbour at short intervals of time – day and night. They were fitted with searchlights which were turned on and off to light up the ship-side and sea, and this made the chances of escape, even under cover of darkness, extremely difficult.

The odds against a getaway in daylight were however greater, so they set their plans for the night. Zero hour was to be midnight, or just before the guards were changed. The details of their plan and how they eventually worked out, throw curious sidelights which make a remarkable story. The narrative as told by the leader, Steyn, on his return to his homeland, was given publicity in local papers, and allayed rumours and wild speculation as to how the escape had been effected.

The initial move was to secure a rope and lifebelt for each one of the escapees. This was accordingly done, and the articles duly secreted. At the appointed time the younger Steytler threw the rope over the side, and donning a lifebelt was the first to let himself down. The noise of falling water from two cocks on the ship's side drowned that of the initial splash. He was soon safely out of range of the lookouts. The elder Steytler, who insisted on following his younger brother, was the next to go. The German, a loud-voiced clumsy individual and a poor swimmer, nearly wrecked their plans. He followed the elder Steytler. The three who got off had decided in daylight to make for a German ship they had spotted out of the forty odd ships in harbour. Steyn and Botha had agreed on a French vessel. In between, a three-funnelled ship which carried a flag with the Russian double-eagle lay berthed. Eventually, twenty minutes before midnight, the leader of the party went over, clad in nothing but a shirt over which he donned his lifebelt. Recounting high-lights in thrills, he tells of his horror on discovering a patrol boat making for the ship's side when he was half way down the rope. Sliding swiftly down, cutting his hands in the process, he reached the water, and in a few seconds, perceiving the patrol boat almost on him, evaded discovery by diving. Losing sense of direction in the inky darkness he gave up hopes of reaching the French ship, and was beset by a great fear lest he should swim by mistake to some British vessel. Floundering in the sea in the grip of despair for 2 ½ hours, he suddenly picked out three great funnels in silhouette on the sky line. Thanking heaven that here surely was evidence that he was making no mistake; he swam with renewed energy in the direction of the Russian ship.

Very curiously they seemed to be expecting him on board. A sailor shouting and beckoning cast a rope over the side. Being too exhausted to climb up, he hung on the end of the rope until two burly Russian sailors seized him, and carried him on to the deck. When he recovered from his exhausted condition, they led him away to the forecabin. To his surprise he found himself confronted there by Botha, the two Steytlers and Hausaner. They had all got lost in turn and were carried by the current to the big boat

with the three funnels, the Russian Volunteer steamer *Kherson*. The earlier arrivals had given warning that there were other escapees, which accounted for the look-out and the welcome accorded to Steyn. At 3 o'clock in the morning the *Kherson* weighed anchor and was steaming out of Colombo harbour.

Apparently nothing of importance happened until the ship reached Aden, here two British Officers boarded the ship requesting to see the captain: They produced two cablegrams, one from the Ceylon Government, and the other from the Russian Consul, indicating that five Boer prisoners-of-war escaped and that there was reason to believe they were either on board the Russian or the French vessel that had left Colombo before daybreak on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January.

The captain had made it his business not to contact the escapees, and vehemently pronounced he had not seen any Boer runaways aboard. An insistent demand was made for a search, but who would have thought to look into one of the funnels – the furnaces connected to it were not being used – for five men who had sat precariously, in a fearfully cramped position, on an iron ladder for six hours! Port Said, their next stop, was an international port. Nevertheless, on the advice of the officers, they remained on board, falling in with a plan that they should keep to the ship until they got to Russia, and that they should then make their way across Europe to Holland, and from there back to South Africa.

Proceeding in stages with the same connivance which afforded them safety in Aden, they travelled from Theodosia where they disembarked to St. Petersburg and thence to Berlin. They eventually got to Utrecht, and there met President Kruger, 18 days after he had undergone the operation on his eyes which he had come all that way to stand. “Morgen Kinders” he is recorded to have said greeting them: “is julle die vijf swimmers?” (Good morning children, are you the five swimmers?)

At length they trekked homewards, having travelled half round the world to rejoin their own people. They had it is true provided a nice little problem in international ethics, but this apparently was passed over as just one of so many small incidents of those times.

Steyn speaks of the party as the only five who escaped from Ceylon. He was doubtless unaware of the two who got as far as Rangoon, but were brought back.

## VII. Spotlight on their Medical History

The medical history of the South African prisoners-of-war in Ceylon is an interesting part of their story. Before they arrived as captives in Ceylon, the Boers had for 2 ½ years lived on commando, under conditions which were both arduous and far from sanitary. Quite naturally this had undermined their normal resistance to disease. On arrival many of them were found to be wearied by fatigue of their campaigns. They were also



depressed by defeat. Moreover, being used to a free and active life their reaction to confinement and other restraining influences did not improve matters.

All this merely went to prove the enormity of the task which devolved on the preventative and curative branches of the Ceylon Civil Medical Departments which was made responsible for the health of the prisoners-of-war camps.

The first cause of anxiety to the medical staff at Diyatalawa camp was a severe outbreak of measles. Statistics show that there were 251 cases and 7 deaths. The disease was introduced into the camp by a prisoner-of-war named J.P. Coetzee, who had arrived in September 1900 and travelled from ship to camp while suffering from measles. Even before the measles epidemic had subsided, the more tragic part of this 18 months of history obtruded itself. Few epidemics in Ceylon proved so ominous as the outbreak of a virulent form of South African enteric fever in Diyatalawa during the early months of its establishment as a camp.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1900, a few cases of fever was traced to a batch of Boer captives which had arrived a fortnight earlier by the transport S.S. *Bavarian*. The infection was traced to some stretcher cases which had been removed direct to the General Hospital at Colombo when this vessel came into port. Kindled by this spark the fever spread like wild fire and in a most alarming manner.

The hospital accommodation for the camp originally consisted of one ward of 25 beds. As rapidly as the situation demanded it, more accommodation was provided, and by mid-November eight additional huts with provision for 282 beds had been converted into hospital wards. These were all located within the area which is in present times the camp of the Survey Department. In addition, to meet the pressing need for yet more accommodation, the two bungalows near the railway station popularly known as the 'A' and 'B' Government Bungalows, were converted into convalescent Wards, and in December another set of temporary buildings were speedily erected for the convalescents from enteric. Moreover, for several months there was a hospital ship "*Atlantian*" in the Colombo Harbour to which the convalescents were sent, besides transfers to Mount Lavinia.

Turning to statistics to glean some idea of the situation, it appears that from the 24<sup>th</sup> of September to the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 602 cases of enteric had been treated. There were 50 deaths. The peak was reached in November when 370 new cases occurred. In December, the number dropped to 196, and thereafter steadily declined. The total reckoning was 755 cases and the number of deaths, 68.

On the appearance of the outbreak everything that sanitary Science suggested was daily enforced. Dr. Griffin, Colonial Surgeon, was appointed in charge of this Boer Hospital at its inception. He had two medical officers to assist him, namely Dr. L.A. Prins and Dr. H de Saram. Early in November, when there was a note of despair in the efforts made to bring the epidemic under control, the direction of affairs was placed in the hands of Dr. T.F. Garvin, Surgeon Superintendent of the General Hospital, Colombo. His first act on

taking charge was to press for more professional staff. Dr. V Van Langenberg, Dr. E.R. Loos and Dr. K. Eapen were accordingly appointed Assistant Medical Officers in addition to the others who had been detailed earlier.

It is unlikely that there is anybody who can realize how much Ceylon and the Boers were indebted to the eminent skill of the superintending physician and the labours of his assistants. It fell to their credit that an epidemic which had occasioned terrible anxiety was first checked, and then brought surely and effectively under complete control, but far indeed from that being the least, it was also due to the woman who volunteered to nurse the sick Boers. Theirs was a sacrifice purely in the cause of humanity, unsupported by patriotism or the hope of reward.

The devoted nursing in this Boer hospital by “Sister Lucy” and her small staff consisting of nurses Gregson, von Dadeleson, Gray and Baldwin, had to face the criticism of the blunt Britisher of those times who did not believe in this sort of sacrifice and sentiment. But apparently this did not matter a jot to these good woman.

The reader who can remember this generation and contrasts the rigid ideas of late-Victorian times with the robustness of the present decade, will find special pleasure in the following extracts from a letter written by “Sister Lucy” and published in the Ceylon Review of January, 1901:

“We are working,” she wrote, “under Burgher doctors, very decent men. One I like very much. Truly the Boers are very pleasant to nurse. You do not hear bad language or at least very little, and never a bad remark or expression, or even a look so that in all this crowd of men I can safely allow my fair young nurse to go with me.”

“Having nursed my own countrymen, alas! the difference is perceptible. How often my young nurses in English hospitals have had to appeal to me. These Boers seem a moral, simple, quaint sort of people, and with little idea of truth, their religion seems so much one of form.”

What a vivid period-piece, and how naturally this older lady, with years behind her and intelligence to sum conditions up, contemplates the perils which beset the pleasant looking maid who, pre-occupied with good works, engage herself to nurse the sick in the days of the Boer War.

As for the Boer prisoner-of-war both patient and captive – how trying it must have been for them, cooped up in a circumscribed space seeing their friends sickening and dying before their eyes. Even the Governor, Sir West Ridgeway, testified how they bore their severe trial with patience and fortitude. They had the satisfaction however of seeing their sick comrades accommodated in neatly ordained and comparatively comfortable establishments supplied even with soda-water and lemonade (gigantic luxuries to a sick man) from a Government aerated water manufactory, and ice to cool the fevered which was brought twice daily a distance of 160 miles. They realised that it was good to be a

convalescent Boer prisoner-of-war with the prospect of a final spell at Mount Lavinia, looking as they pleased out upon the blue sea or back over a tree-furrowed country and distant hills.

But simple though these Boers proved to be they were not humourless, even on their sick-bed. One of the younger medical officers amused by the guileless good nature of his patients, propounded some problem with him on his daily round. One day, he said "I say, old boy, do you know the moon is inhabited?" "Impossible", the old fox replied with his habitual calm. "But have you not heard that your friends, the French, have watched the inhabitants of the moon through the giant telescope at the Paris Exhibition?"

"Impossible, my lad" remarked the old Boer, "if the moon were inhabited the English would long ago have tried to annex her!"

It was not the singular misfortune of the Boer alone to face the tragic effects of this epidemic. The health of the camp where the British guard was located continued satisfactory for about a month after the outbreak of enteric was first noticed. In mid-October, a soldier reported sick with fever which was diagnosed as enteric. From that time onwards, other cases of a similar nature were admitted at frequent intervals to the Military Hospital. The establishment was maintained as a separate institution. It was staffed by the R.A.M.C. Surgeon Major Manders and Colonel Quill officiating in turn as Senior Medical Officer.

The Revd. R.P. Butterfield, who was serving at the time as Chaplain to the Forces, and was an assiduous visitor to both the Military and Boer Hospitals helps imagination to picture the calamitous situation in a pithy statement: "I got to know the Burial Service by heart."

It is indeed equally pitiful to think of those time-expired British soldiery who paid the supreme penalty. Denied the excitement of active field service they had all the tedium of guard work, and no doubt looked forward as eagerly as the war prisoners they guarded for the day when peace should come. Their military funerals alternated with the constant procession and much greater numbers of Boer burials. While the military Chaplain officiated at the former the funeral services of the latter were conducted for the most part by their own Predicants.

The causation of this outbreak had been traced beyond doubt. The transmission of infection raised a good deal of speculation. Opinion waxed and differed. Some said it was airborne and others that it was fly borne. The precautions taken almost ruled out all possibility of water being the source of infections. The pathological aspect of the subject was freely discussed in medical circles, and at a meeting of the local branch of the British Medical Association.

On the subsidence of the epidemic, Dr. F. Keyt and Dr. H.U. Leembruggen replaced their brother officers, de Saram and Eapen. Dr. Van Langenberg left with a draft of convalescents for the camp opened at Mount Lavinia, and Dr. Leembruggen took charge of the hospitals at Urugas when that camp was in due course established.

As no more doctors could be spared by the Civil Medical Department, when the Ragama Camp was opened, medical assistance was secured from India. The staff lent in these circumstances included Major Thomson and Capt. Gwynn of the R.A.M.C. and a civil surgeon, Dr. Burch.

The information available discloses very few deaths in the Diyatalawa camp from other diseases. There were only four which occurred in the camp before an admission to hospital. One was the result of an assault by a fellow prisoner – a duel with bare fists over some unknown disagreement until one man fell dead; one from gun shot received when attempting to escape; one from cerebral meningitis; and the last from heart disease. A truly remarkable observation made by the medical authorities was the absence of a single instance, or trace of social disease among the prisoners-of-war despite the very free parole which was given them.

Dr. Garvin continued to officiate as Superintendent of the Boer Hospital until the end of 1902, almost up to the time when the camp was practically closed. The earlier epidemic of enteric was followed by a smaller wave about the middle of the succeeding year. It was brought under control without much difficulty. Many an invitation was extended to Dr. Garvin by grateful Boer patients, to visit South Africa. The most pleasing token of appreciation of his labours in the interests of the Government and humanity, was a complimentary dinner given in his honour by his colleagues of the Medical profession, on his return to ordinary routine from Diyatalawa.

### VIII. Good-bye to “Our Guests”

“What! are our hearts so narrow, that we have  
No tribute for the vanquish’d and the brave?  
Praise for the victor – none for the brave few  
Who fought and bled with Oliver and Roux?  
None for the unquench’d fire that kindles yet  
In the proud souls of Botha and de Wet?  
Perish the ungenerous though! Be this our boast,  
To honour those who all save honour lost.  
Call back the chivalry of long ago,  
And pledge to-night – Our Guest, the fallen foe!”

*(Ext : from the Prologue recited at the Prize-giving of Kingswood College 8-12-1900).*

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, 1902, terms of peace were finally signed at Pretoria. The Boers at Urugas received the news with acclamation punctuated by such expressions as: “By Jingo, I am glad” or “Hurrah! we’re going.” The captives in the “foreigners’ camp” at Ragama, both from sentiment and conviction, pretended to be unmoved by them either way. A large leaven of “Irreconcilables” in the Diyatalawa camp, who looked on their own capture as a minor incident in the contest which they expected would soon be set right, hugged the delusion that the fortunes of war were still in their favour and protested

that the “end of the war story” was another British trick! Some of the older ones, in the manner becoming us poor mortals when the silvery hair goes thin on top, resigned themselves to say with hearts that were dead and lips that trembled: “The Lord’s will be done.”

It was generally believed by the Boer prisoners-of-war that once the war ended they would be transported immediately back to their homes or that they would be free to go whither they pleased. It was impossible to let five thousand men, even if the majority were not absolutely destitute, loose on the Island. South Africa was barred to all who were not prepared to accept the conditions created by the success of British arms, and only those who were prepared to recognise British sovereignty were allowed back there. This naturally raised some difficulty.

One month after the peace terms were signed, the following general decisions regarding the disposal of the prisoners-of-war were duly announced: Burghers of the late South African Republic and the late Orange Free State were permitted to proceed to South Africa immediately at their own expense, or to await repatriation as soon as arrangements could be made for their transportation. Foreign prisoners-of-war, except those able to produce evidence that they were nationalized Burghers, were not allowed to return to South Africa. They were permitted instead to leave at once at their own expense if they wished to do so, or await repatriation by the Consuls of their respective Governments. All releases were subject to a declaration of allegiance to the British Crown, and in the case of those leaving at their own expense, proof of possessing means of subsistence.

It was also made known that “all rebels will be forwarded to South Africa under the charge of the Captains of the transports by which they are sent, and will be handed over on arrival to the Cape or Natal authorities respectively appointed to receive them.”

The “Urugas” Boers, who had earlier signified willingness to take the oath of allegiance, were the first to leave. A suspected outbreak of chicken-pox in the camp gave rise to many fears among the inmates that it might delay their departure. eight of them had been segregated by Dr. Leembruggen, and this had prompted a hefty son of the veldt to give it as his opinion that “the doctors know no more about chicken-pox than the man in the moon!” “This sickness which they speak of as chicken-pox,” he added, “is a sort of prickly heat, and I don’t think that any fuss need be made about it.” Happily the outbreak was brought under control and did not interfere with the arrangements for the embarkation.

The first batch to leave these shores, numbering about 400, was brought to Colombo from Kosgoda station by a special train. Lieut. Cairncross was the chief of the five officers included in the draft, and the Boers were under no escort beyond the supervisory control of a few non-commissioned officers of the Gloucesters. On arrival at the Fort railway station, they were met by representatives of the Headquarters Military Staff, the General Manager Railways, and the Rev. David Tweed of the Dutch Reformed Church. Their heavy baggage had been sent on ahead and the men merely carried small bundles of their clothes.

A fact most noticeable was the large majority of young men in the party. There were very few who conformed to the common characteristics of the orthodox bearded Boer, namely slouching gait and easy indifferent temper. They were on and all without exception in high glee at their departure, and placed great premium on the fortunate prospect of getting home in the ploughing season, and just at the proper time to “set them on their legs.”

There were no demonstrations at the jetty, and their embarkation into five large lighters which conveyed them to the transport *Templemore* was a very quiet ceremony. As they passed up the gangway, one by one, they were carefully counted and checked off. Dr. H.U. Leembruggen accompanied these prisoners to South Africa in the capacity of Medical Officer.

Nearly a month later, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August to be exact, a second batch of 400 Boers left Ceylon by the transport “*Englishman*”. In keeping with what happened on the previous occasion, the embarkation was carried out as quietly as possible. This draft too was primarily composed of prisoners-of-war from Urugas, only 33 of them having been drawn from Diyatalawa. There were as many as 26 officers, who wore the distinguishing mark of red *puggerie* on their headgear, and included, among others, Commandant Joubert (a son of the late Commander-in-chief of the Boer Army), Von Mall, Crowther, H.P. Steyn, J.M. de Beer, J. Raux, Van Mallitz (India), John Stuyt (India), F. Broll, J.H. Meiring (India), Field Cornet Heyns, C.A. van Zyl, P. de Plooy, Horak and Muller. The majority were Free Staters who had farms of their own. Their affluence was reflected by the character of the kit that each man carried – cameras and kodaks being greatly in evidence.

The 800 departures in two batches might have seemed a large number, and people found it hard to realise that there were yet 4000 prisoners-of-war to leave these shores. The difficulty lay with the ‘irreconcilables’ at Diyatalawa. A few leaders were holding out against signing the declaration in order to secure an advertisement for themselves, and they knew they could depend on the feelings of the more unintelligent Boers for their trade. They and their sympathisers sturdily declined to purchase their freedom by an oath or declaration which recognised King Edward as their sovereign.

There was no slackening in the efforts made by their own leaders to induce their irritable and captious countrymen to show sound sense by submitting to the regime of the victor, however painful it may appear. General Roux intimated to them he had acquiesced in the terms of peace and suggested that they too should submit to the inevitable. General Olivier had done likewise. Besides these appeals made locally, many copies of an outspoken letter in Dutch which had recently been addressed to the irreconcilables in India by their leaders, Botha, De Wit, De-la-Rey and others, had been freely circulated.

However, in reality this delay in bringing the recalcitrant’s to reason was of some advantage. Their own land undergoing a change of Government was not quite prepared to receive them, and even if the conditions on veldt and farm justified the sudden

dumping down on them of thousands, more or less in want, from other lands where they had been held captive, the means of transport were not readily available.

Whenever a ship did turn up to take them away there was a rush to sign the declaration, but that did not relieve the authorities of the problem of the Boer who in the interim period between the arrival of ships had agreed to do so. Their life in camp among their erstwhile comrades was a perfect misery, subjected to intimidation, derision and insults leading to the most unpleasant situations. It was in this sequence of affairs that Urugas was converted into a "clearance camp" for those whose spirits had been softened towards their captors and guards and thus merited priority in the scheme of repatriation.

The third ship to carry away a contingent of prisoners-of-war was the British chartered transport S.S. *Lake Manitoba*. It actually received 1000 Boers aboard before it sailed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 1902. This number was made up of 500 from Diyatalawa Camp, a few short of 400 from Urugas, 80 from Mt. Lavinia, and the remainder from Ragama. The Cornwalls supplied a guard of 40 men who volunteered to accompany the draft to South Africa.

Several well-known Boers were included in the party and this added to the general interest which the embarkation of such a large number evoked. The special train which brought the prisoners-of-war from Diyatalawa picked up the Ragama contingent on the way; and the special from Kosgoda bringing the Urugas party did likewise with the Boers from Mt. Lavinia. They were met on arrival at the Fort Station by their Generals, Olivier and Roux, who were also returning to South Africa by the same ship. On detraining, the several drafts were formed into parties, and "Marched" to the Passenger Jetty, led by General Olivier and his son.

The streets of Colombo Fort, which have packed history with a strange varied panorama of marching contingents of fighting men from other lands, might well be expected to have contributed to a most poignant picture on this occasion. It should not be difficult to affect a sense of vividity to the pathetic scene unfolded to onlookers. Here indeed were men who had stretched their patriotism to desperate ends, and given blood and treasure, but were certainly not the stuff of which desperadoes were made.

Youth and age were strangely blended, in this film-reel of the past. Years of hardship and the last eighteen crowded months of exile which had intervened since they had obeyed their "commandeer brief" and the field cornet's summons to war were reflected in individual cases of disablement, halting step, or bent shoulder; while many a face with a deeper tint above the beard line than ever sun and wind on the high veldt could bestow, bore deep lines of anxiety or sadness or a far-away reminiscent and cast-down look in the eyes. In addition to the bundles of personal apparel and belongings which the captives carried in preference to packing them with heavy baggage which was sent on ahead, many of them were burdened with mementos of Ceylon. There is as much amusement as there is pathos in contemplating this widely varied collection of curiosities which included monkeys, parrots, teal, bird nests, bunches of green plantains, pineapples and a multitude of other equally strange possessions.

A number of persons, more particularly the Burghers of Ceylon, a community which perhaps is most fitted by peculiar circumstances to cement the feeling of confidence between conqueror and the conquered Boers, had foregathered at the Passenger Jetty with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret to bid good-bye to individual friend and acquaintance among those who were embarking that day.

Time which had aged the forgotten event has so mellowed it that a peculiar interest extends even to the individual present on the occasion. "Among others," so the newspaper accounts run, "these were" Dr. and Miss. W.G. VanDort and the Misses VanDort, Mr. H. VanDort, Mr. W. Van Langenberg, Mr. and Mrs. P.D. Mack, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Mack, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Theuring, Mr. and Mrs. Colvin de Kretser, Mr. Lloyd de Kretser, Miss. P. Keuneman, Messrs. T. Garvin (Jr), F. Toussaint, W. Ludekens, Mrs. and Miss. Prins, and Mr. and the Misses Paulusz" – names which, brought into the perspective of years, call to memory a bygone worthy and a few who have outlived the intervening period.

General Roux, labouring under a muzzling order imposed on him by the Superintendent of Police to the effect that he was not to speak to newspaper men, expressed resentment by speaking to no one. He refused to meet friends who had come to see him off and went on board the transport by himself in a private boat. His Orders were to go on board between 8-15 and 10-30 a.m. Most Ceylon residents who came in contact with him agreed he was the most cultivated man among the Boers held captive in the Island.

General Olivier, when interviewed, more tactfully remarked that he was "against communicating anything to the press, and that it would serve them better if the papers said less about the Boers!" He was pleased to add, however, that he had made many friends in Ceylon, whom he was sorry to leave, that the Boers had been well treated, and that their Camps were all that prisoners-of-war could desire – excluding Ragama about which he could not say anything. Declaring there was nothing more to say, he shook hands with those present, and left in a private boat with his two sons, for the steamer.

Other popular Boer personnel who left by the same transport were Captain P.H. de Villiers, the leader of the cricket eleven which played the premier Ceylon Club, the Colts, and lost; a nephew of General Botha; M. Douwes, who was on the Printing Staff of the Colombo Apothecaries Co.; Commandants Du Plessis and Hertzoy; Wallace – the Boer who had created a sensation by stating that he and his young friend Parkes, an Irish naturalised Boer, had found a gold reef in the neighbourhood of Urugas; young Grant whose father was a major in the British Army; Commandant Krantz, the Boer naturalist who assisted Dr. Wiley at the Museum; Revd. Thom, a Boer predicant; and Mr. and Mrs. A.P. Roos with their two sons, a three-week old Ceylon born baby, and a Sinhalese ayah. During their eighteen month stay in Kandy the two boys had been students of Kingswood College. The prisoner-of-war in whom every one seemed most interested, was Jim Holloway. "Where's Jim Holloway?" was the question asked on every side, and there were a great many people who were disappointed on being shown a lightly built man with a quiet face, wearing a suit of white clothes with a big bundle on one shoulder and carrying a fiddle case and other paraphernalia in his left hand. "You don't mean to say



that chap is an international boxer” was the oft repeated remark, so ordinary looking was ‘Jim’ with not the slightest appearance of any swagger about him. “You can make sure I am coming back to Ceylon” was Holloway’s final remark. “I only want to make a little money first ... I like Ceylon.” Those who knew him well accepted the sincerity of his declaration. One wonders whether he kept his word.

As each lighter moved off handkerchiefs were briskly waved and shouts and cheers were given by the Boers. Seven sick Boers from the General Hospital were also embarked on board this vessel.

Contrasted with this imposing send-off, the two departures which followed were of a quiet nature. The S.S. *Dunera*, which sailed for Durban and Cape Town in the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup> December, took 900 Boers away. Dr. V Van Langenberg proceeded, with this draft as Medical Officer. The last batch which left five days later by the S.S. *Ionian* also consisted of nearly 900 Boers.

In between the massed departures the prisoners-of-war of foreign origin, and the naturalised Burghers of the late South African Republic who were able to find their way home at their own expense, had been leaving these shores in small numbers. In July 1902, a German steamer the *Oldenburg*, took away 8 officers and 48 German mercenaries who were to be disembarked at Bremen. A week later, the *Marquès Bacquehem* bound for Trieste eliminated the Austrian mercenaries; Frans Muller, Giovanni Bussanich, Arthur Clemens Cernice, Alois Ortner and two others. About the same time an American-Boer was repatriated to Boston.

A party of 76 Hollanders, late belligerents in South Africa who were held a prisoners-of-war in Ceylon, were also repatriated in July. As no steamer proceeding direct to Holland was due for some time, they were put on board the Rotterdamschi Lloyd S.S. *Selak* which was proceeding to the Straits and the Dutch Indies. They were able to be transhipped at Padang on to a Dutch liner which goes direct to Holland without touching any port east of Suez. The party included 65 men from the Ragama Camp. The officers were Capt. Van Hoogstaaten, who took command of the draft on board, Lieut. Keulemans, formerly of the Staats Artillery and a Mr. Funke, who was one of the leading men among the prisoners at Diyatalawa. Despite the great deal of trouble the Ragama element gave the authorities, they embarked very quietly but insisted on flying the Dutch tricolour on the steam launches which took them on board. There were about 30 other Dutch prisoners-of-war who were sent home by the same circuitous route about 2 months later, in a Dutch mail boat “*Princess Sophie*”, which arrived from Amsterdam and left for Batavia.

The imprisoned Dutch Ambulance Staff which was detained and sent to Ceylon for carrying “war letters”, left direct for Holland in July. Dr. Coster, interviewed on arrival at the Hague, referred to the rare consideration with which he and his medical colleagues were treated in Ceylon, and described their ‘parole’ as ‘elastic’. He made special mention of the full facilities afforded them to use the laboratories and prosecute their studies.

The Frenchmen captured with the Boers were handed over to the French Consul and eventually repatriated by a homeward bound French mail boat. They were all from the Ragama Camp where they were incarcerated despite vehement protest that they were non-combatants, and that the *Comite Francaise Pour la Conservation de l'Independence Boer* which sent them out, dumped them at Delagoa Bay without giving them any further assistance and left them there to shift for themselves.

A few prisoners-of-war were dealt with as “rebels” and were sent back under arrest. On arrival from Ceylon they were handed over to the Cape or Natal authorities to stand their trial. Joseph and William Brooks, charged with high treason, were sentenced to pay a fine of £10 each, or to undergo one month’s imprisonment. Jacob Stephanus Swart, on a similar charge, was sentenced to £20 fine or to two month’s imprisonment. E.C. Stowe, another Ceylon prisoner-of-war, said to have been of British parentage born in Cape Colony, was charged on arrival at Durban of being a British subject who fought on the Boer side.

The case of William Cheney, a Pietermaritzburg youth of 19, appears to have excited special interest. His mother had distinguished herself by reason of having had six sons fighting for the British in various columns. William Cheney did not follow his brothers’ example. He went to the Free States a few months before the war began and was induced by the Boers to fight for the Republic. He was in one of the Boer units sent to reinforce General Cronje at Paardeberg, but here took the opportunity to desert to the British lines. He was made a prisoner, sent to Ceylon, and eventually sent back to Natal as a “rebel” to face a charge of “high treason.” According to the London Standard’s Durban correspondent, forty-one Cape Colonists were arrested on their return from the prisoner-of-war camps in Ceylon, on charges of high treason.

The younger Gillingham was the first Boer to pay his way home. He declared he was going direct to Pretoria to look after his father’s business until his father joined him. C.L. Neethling, the ex-M.P. of the Transvaal, was a passenger for South Africa on the *City of Benares*. Revd. Postma and his wife, temporarily residing at “Guyscliff” in the Cinnamon Gardens, were passengers on the S.S. *Gera*. The *Somali* took away Commandants Boshoff and Wilcock who were captured with Cronje at Paardeberg; Adjutant Boshoff, a son of the Commandant, also three others names Botha, Hollard and Cardinal. They proceeded to Zanzibar and transhipped to Durban. The *Umlazi* removed Kruger, the son of the ex-President, who said he was proceeding direct to his farm at Grassenburg where he intended settling, and Mors who had been connected with the Ceylon Government Printing Office. The elder Gillingham was nearly the last to pay his way home. He sailed in December by the S.S. *Pangola*, loathe to leave Ceylon, but glad to take over his large interests in South Africa.

## IX. The Irreconcilables

In the manner described, batch after batch of Ceylon’s “guests” from South Africa left the scene of their involuntary sojourn. Martial Law ceased at Ragama Camp. The camps

at Urugasmanhandiya and Mount Lavinia were empty. Diyatalawa – the first camp to be formed, the largest, most tenanted and in every way the most important of the four – was occupied by only 14 prisoners-of-war. There were 16 others in Welikada Jail, who had made themselves notorious. None of the Boers in these two lots were prepared to meet the conditions laid down for repatriation.

The story of these ‘irreconcilables’ supplied ample material for a Boer nursery rhyme, descriptive of how they grew fewer by degrees and gracefully less. The Welikada lot, who came to be known as Major Firminger’s party, were the first to give way. They asked to be sent to Java. By arrangement with the Dutch Government they were released and permitted to take their departure without any declaration or oath on the undertaking that they were to settle there permanently as colonists. They were first shipped from Colombo to Singapore. From there they were sent on to Batavia, and were immediately moved off by railway to the Preanger Province where the Government had assigned an abandoned estate on which these new colonists were to settle as small cultivators. “Of course, you much prefer South Africa to Java” they were asked before they left Ceylon. “Yes,” they replied, adding “it can’t be helped.”

Mr. Tom Kelly of Barbeton, who was specially sent to Ceylon and India as an emissary by General Botha, to induce irreconcilables to take the oath of allegiance, succeeded in persuading nine of the diehards in Diyatalawa to do so. When these duly left, there were seven, but two subsequently and at the last moment when they found their comrades going, decided to join them in becoming co-citizens with the British in Africa. The names of the five who still remained were: Engelbrecht, Rogers, van Rooyen, Bacgot and Geldenhuis – a combination which produced a picture as pathetic as their frame of mind and obstinate, Geldenhuis, who was well over 70 years of age, gave expression to his feelings by displaying a tombstone he was carving for his grave, in anticipation of dying in Ceylon. The others, excepting Engelbrecht, were also veterans well over 50, who had families, including grand-children in South Africa awaiting their return. Each and all refused to have anything to do with the Ceylon Government, acclaiming that they had been brought here as prisoners-of-war and would only go back to their homes as prisoners-of-war.

For nearly a whole year this refractory fragment rigidly adhered to their determination not to take the opportunity afforded to them to rejoin their kith and kindred. Like ghostly figures of a past they continued to wander aimlessly within the barbed wire barriers of the deserted Diyatalawa camp, under the eye of a squad of the Royal West Kent Regiment. Some of their time was spent in making curios for which they had received orders from Colombo and were well paid. When in July, 1903, Diyatalawa was for the first time used as the practising ground and venue of the annual camp of the Volunteer Forces of Ceylon; they were still there and were interested spectators of the “summer manoeuvres.”

Many and varied comments were made on the expediency of treating these ‘irreconcilables’ seriously. While the authorities seemed to wait until patience and good sense would have their regard, the public were beginning to look upon the very idea of keeping these helpless men prisoners in the Island as possessing a good deal of humour

about it. "What could they do against the might of the British Power?" asked one person. "Do they count at all", asked another. And then the clamour went up: Why should they not be permitted to go where they like and do what they like, rather than be subjected to these childish punitive precautions! In this, as in not a few other public opinions concerning the Boer prisoners-of-war, the authorities decided to abide by the voice of the people.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1903, the Secretariat issued the *communiqué* notifying the release of the remaining five Boers incarcerated at Diyatalawa, stating that "they are now free to go anywhere they liked in or out of the Island except to South Africa. When they took the oath, they can go to South Africa." They were permitted to accept employment in the Island, and information concerning their qualifications was to be supplied on release to the Colonial Secretary's Office.

Simultaneously with this order two of them, van Rooyen and Bacgot, were brought under escort to Colombo, put on board the S.S. *Lady Havelock* and landed at Jaffna; Engelbrecht and Rogers were escorted and left at Hambantota; While Geldenhuis was taken to Batticaloa and given his freedom. Thus separated and in pastures new, but perhaps less pleasant, on the north, south and east of Ceylon, they were left to meditate on their lot. They continued to receive a bounty from Imperial Funds, of two rupees a day as a "living allowance." Stranger still it was made known that the allowance would be paid to them only at the revenue stations to which they had been posted at the time of their release.

Very naturally, these strangers in strange surroundings who could hardly speak any language but their native "taal", were a source of great interest to the local people. The grey headed old man banished to Batticaloa was destined to the loneliest existence of them all. he refused to exchange it, turning down even a personal appeal from General De-la-Rey who telegraphed from India asking him to take the oath of allegiance. He took a delight in bathing in the lake and fishing. He also apparently enjoyed a fish tiffin, to judge from the catch he was known to make in the morning, which he proceeded to cook and eat under the shelter of a tree. One curious mannerism of this veteran, which amused the people of Batticaloa a good deal, was his habit of keeping his topee on, even when inside a house. Opinion seemed divided as to whether he took his boots off when he went to bed! But the anguish and tribulation of this aged exile was destined to be of short duration. He died about the middle of 1904.

The Jaffna climate, and separation from his comrades, seemed to have worked a change in van Rooyen and Bacgot. Although still very bitter against the British, they decided to take the oath. Two passages were found for them on the Natal Line S.S. *Umkuzi*, and they sailed for their home, to rejoin their families, sufficiently primed to impart a strange story to their children, and their children's children.

Robert Rogers, who with H.E. Engelbrecht was compelled to take up his residence at Hambantota, has left a very vivid picture of his experiences. "My life", he declared, "was a perfect misery in Ceylon." On arriving at Hambantota, they were housed in a

tumble-down tenement which the Assistant Government Agent had rented out at six rupees per month. Within twenty days of their arrival, according to Rogers, their allowance of two rupees per day was cut down to Rs. 1/25. On this miserable pittance, their condition was rendered really pitiable, for they were brought to the verge of hunger and nakedness. Eventually driven by want and the irksomeness of the hermit life they were leading, Rogers declared that he managed to find his way to Colombo. The rest of the story is perhaps best told in his own words: "I came up to see the Governor who refused to see me. So I stopped nearly 7 months in Colombo. They ordered me to go back, so that I may receive my allowance. I however continued to stay in Colombo, losing my allowance from Government for disobedience of their order."

Asked how he found it possible to live in Colombo, he said: "Mr. L. Sauer (the Boer prisoner-of-war who married Miss Felsing) was kind enough to give me my food and clothing. I am also grateful to many other friends for their kindness in helping me – especially the Burghers who were exceedingly good to me." Continuing he said: "On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, I petitioned the Governor to send me anywhere he liked except to the British Colonies. I received a reply that he could not send me to a foreign country, unless one of the Consuls allowed it. I accordingly communicated with the Dutch Consul who saw no objection to my going to Holland."

These were the circumstances under which Robert Rogers, who had taken part in actions at Penhoek, Naesby, Heidelberg, Bethlehem and Taba-nen; who surrendered with General Prinsloo and arrived in Ceylon with General Roux, terminated a four and a half year sojourn in the Island. He left on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1905, by the S.S. *Berlin*, severely cautioned that he was never to set foot on Africa's shores.

Engelbrecht, a Free Stater, continued to eke out a miserable existence in Hambantota. For a short time the pittance paid by the Imperial Government was augmented by a small allowance from a fund which was started for him in Holland. But this came to an end, and it would appear that even the small concession of a roof over his head was denied him. Early in 1905 an action for recovery of rent and for ejection was filed in the Tangalle Courts in which he was mentioned as the defendant. The case evoked considerable interest both from a point of law, and from the disclosures in the evidence led. The issue raised was whether this action against an alien enemy was maintainable. The Commissioner of Requests (Mr. Schrader) observing in his judgement that he saw no law which prevented the defendant suing or being sued, proceeded to declare that it was the Assistant Government Agent and not the Boer who engaged the "tenement". He held that it was only the notice to quit which was justified. Remarking that an allowance of Rs. 1/25 a day was hardly sufficient to enable Engelbrecht to pay for food, clothing, shelter and washing, he suggested the obvious remedy – representation to Government.

Public opinion once again stirred itself in the interests of this unrelenting Boer prisoner-of-war; and he came to be installed in the very congenial post of Warden of the Yala Game Sanctuary. He had many traducers and there was a good deal of opposition to his appointment. The Engelbrecht episode was consequently not permitted to rest closed.

A decade later, during the World War No. 1, when the enemy cruiser “Emden” in a mysteriously elusive manner was sending ship after ship flying the British flag to the bottom of the Indian Ocean, the wildest rumours were circulated that Engelbrecht, the Boer who had not taken the oath of allegiance, was apparently in communication with the enemy cruiser. The authorities did not pause to sift the truth of these reports. Whether or not his failure to take the oath was made the occasion for confirming the rumours about him, there are none who will tell. What we do know is that Engelbrecht was arrested, removed from his post at the Yala Game Sanctuary, and detained in the Kandy Barracks. His reinstatement in office a few weeks later was in itself a declaration that he had been found innocent. Somebody had bungled, badly in the hope of earning the smiles of official favour.

The visit of the new *Emden* to Colombo in 1936, gave Mr. L.G. Poulier, a friend of this Boer sportsman, the opportunity to vindicate the baseless reports on which a harmless man was humiliated. On the testimony of the German officers who served on the *Emden* at the time of the raids, Engelbrecht’s innocence was placed beyond all shadow of doubt. Engelbrecht died in Ceylon on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1922.

Beyond the wild, relentless waters of the Styx, the turbulent spirit of the last man in 5000 who would not compromise, he found eternal release. A simple inscribed stone in the Hambantota cemetery marks the spot where his mortal remains were buried. In this setting the rhythmic beat of the sea on shore, and the southing winds of the open spaces sound a continuous dirge. Their mournful murmur echoes the yearnings of these exiles whose misty eyes were strained on every hill and glade of green:

“..... Till anguish keen  
Did once again a fresh hold take,  
The dear dead voices of the veldt awake  
The might have been.”  
(“*In Exile*”, from the *Diyatalawa “Dum-Dum”*)

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## THE BOER PRISONER-OF-WAR IN CEYLON (1900 – 1902)

BY R. L. BROHIER F.R.G.S.

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*(Continued from our last issue)*

### X.

#### **Odds and Ends.**

Diyatalawa became historic ground on account of what happened in four years. Whatever public opinion had to say, and this was by no means little when a prisoner-of-war camp in Ceylon was originally mooted, there were few projects which proved a more striking success, and eventually received more whole-hearted support, than the discovery and development of Diyatalawa. A great service had been rendered to the Empire at a critical moment, and in the happy way of blundering along without design or plan, a great service was rendered to generations yet unborn.

When Diyatalawa ceased to do service as a concentration camp and the Boer prisoner-of-war departed, it became a ghost-town of unoccupied huts – a striking picture of desolation and abandonment. There was considerable speculation as to what would be the next move. Rumour had it that the heads and staff, and the advisers of the War and Colonial Offices, were contemplating an order which would obliterate this admirably fitted-out encampment. A proposal was in fact made to dismantle the buildings and sell the material on the spot. The press, vehemently protesting, declared such action a thousand pities, and even worse.

Facts were marshalled to show that a providential solution lay at hand for solving the objection to Nuwara Eliya, which was being used at that time as a Sanatorium for 'Tommy Atkins'. In marked contrast, Diyatalawa offered a climate which was not blanketed for months on end with mist and rain during the monsoon, or which was uncomfortably damp and cold. It was urged that nothing could exceed the convenience which Diyatalawa offered, with a first-class broad-gauge railway touching its limits and communicating direct with the port of Colombo, for the movement of troops at short notice. Here lay the opportunity, so public opinion declared, for establishing a Ceylon Military Sanatorium, a model of its kind, an example to the whole Empire, and the best possibly in the Indian and Eastern world.

Other sober-minded folk who took stock in the light of opportunities for developing the country, prophesied to what extent Diyatalawa would expand if it was selected as a permanent Military Camp and Sanatorium. They foresaw a market which would promote the establishment of stock and poultry farms, of orchards and fruit gardens; and how

residential bungalows and cottages were bound to spring up in the environs. These and more were the predictions made 45 years ago.

Even the most obstinate opinion could not gainsay the wisdom and the tact with which the Governor, Sir West Ridgeway, followed up on one step of foresighted statesmanship by another which has conferred such immense benefit to the Island. In response to the clamour, a threefold scheme was authorised by His Excellency detailing the probable uses to which the camp would be put in the future. It was to serve as a “rest camp” for the Military and the Imperial Navy in Eastern Waters; an encampment for the Ceylon Volunteers (Later known as the Ceylon Defence Force); and lastly as a place of recess for the Survey Department.

The last proposal was the only one which excited doubt and comment. The disadvantages which the junior officers, who form the bulk of the staff, would have to face were predominantly pictured. It was shown that they were by no means overpaid, that the necessaries of life in the camp and its neighbourhood were not in general easily procurable at rates at which they were sold elsewhere. Disapproval was voiced in a series of questions: Are all these men to be compelled to live for three months of each year at a cost exceeding their ordinary expenditure? Is the public exchequer to meet this by a payment of batta to which they are not, under the existing regulations, entitled? What about their families? What of those to whom these three months of “recess” are the only time during which they have an opportunity of seeing anything of the ordinary town life?

The essentially modern Diyatalawa which has materialised from the empty shell which was left by the Boer prisoner-of-war, owes its modernity to the presence of the Military, Naval and Survey Camps within its borders. Foreign goods, garden produce, beer, Scotch whisky and tobacco, replaces markets for quaint curios, bone and wooden trinkets merchandised by the Boer craftsmen. Tapering firs and pines, and giant gums hide the original bare “town of the silver sheen.” Electricity illuminates it at night. And there can be no question that in the years which have clothed it in its present modern garb, Diyatalawa has been voluntary witness to many other great services to the Empire at critical periods of stress and anxiety.

The visionary who predicted the development of the neighbourhood, if he be still alive to remark: “I told you so!”, has but to take you on the rolling downs and let your eye scan the private houses and cottages which have sprung up, sheltering in the valleys or behind wind-belts. He will illustrate the great demand and short supply of building sites by quoting the soaring price of land – since the beginning when sixty rupees an acre was considered a good price. The dreams of garden and orchard has taken tangible form on the gently undulating greatly increased hill slopes, and the pioneer efforts of the Uva Orange Farm specialising in lime juice products have proved the commercial possibilities, with modern methods of manufacture, of fruits collected from the orchards.

And as the eye moves round scanning the lower valley, it will pick up the clear cut line of motorable road, built on the gravel track laid by the Boers. This road places within a



distance of four miles, a comfortable and well ordered hotel for the visitor who would see Diyatalawa – an Imperial experiment of the Boer War, and the result of Governmental afterthought.

## XI. Travelled Gentlemen.

For some time after the Boer prisoners-of-war left Ceylon, books, periodicals and letters sent or written to friend and acquaintance conveyed news of their home-coming, and threw light on their experiences and settling down to the altered conditions in South Africa. Repatriation Boards had been established to replace the farmers on their farms, and relief works had been organised on a large scale in the Orange River Colony to provide work for the Boer who might otherwise find himself unemployed. The Britisher who had already established himself in South Africa jocularly referred to the repatriated Boers as “travelled gentlemen.”

The case of Jan Coetzee, a Boer farmer who was a prisoner-of-war in Ceylon, is typical of the experiences of many others who had set out to re-establish themselves, their families and household, on their farms which had been left abandoned for several years. Coetzee had been discharged at a port in Africa after an uncomfortable sea-voyage – in fact many of the Boers made very bad sailors, and did not want to see the ‘big dam’ as they called the sea, any more.

Like his comrades in misfortune, Jan had been fairly generously treated by the Repatriation Board. He had signed a bond for £50 and had received in exchange two mules, two long-horned oxen, a plough, six bags of seed wheat, six of mealies, three of seed-potatoes, one of flour, some sugar, coffee, candles and soap. He knew his bond would never be called for.

Jan, his vrouw in rusty black gown and wide brimmed bonnet, with their *kinders* and a Zulu wagon driver who is also general factotum, were bivouacked at a forsaken wayside station on the Central South African Railway. At dawn the following day, the mules and the oxen were yoked to a wagon. The family stowed themselves away on bags and blankets, and the Zulu tugging at the reins looped around the horns of the ‘leaders’ of this mixed team, set the procession going.

The road was easy. It was just a track from which the undergrowth has been worn by traffic. In the wake of the procession a cloud of impalpable powder was stirred up by the wheels and hoofs. After three hours driving they all caught sight of their goal. The wagon rattled down a slope to what was Jan’s home. He looked at the change wrought during the interval of absence, and contemplated war’s toll. He saw an empty rude cattle kraal with a stone mortarless fence. The framework of a brick house partly stripped of its thatch roof. An acre of land which had once been cultivated, but was now choked with weeds. A patch of slender stemmed trees in a hollow, and a dam breached by the rains, holding up a shallow sheet of water.

The vrouw entered her home followed by the bairns. There was a general taking of stock. In the living room nothing but a settee. The room beyond was stark bare. Shell explosion or fire had carried off part of the roof, but it certainly hadn't removed the furniture. These, most likely, had been annexed by the Black predatory bands who had made the most of the advantage which was offered to them.

The Government having placed Jan and his family on the farm whence they came, with stores enough to meet their wants for a month, made it clear that their share of work had been done. It was at this stage left to Jan, and his comrades all over the country, to do something. Their position was desperate. The rains were due very shortly. Delay to prepare the ground for seed spelt no harvest. Both the mules were worn out and glanders was rife in the district. The oxen were poor, many of them in the clutch of rinderpest. Happily, the beasts which Jan had selected were healthy. Within a few hours of their arrival he had settled down to a job. The oxen stolidly paced up and down the little field. With luck, the corn was going to show itself in tender green clumps before the month had run out.

Many a keen observer of the trend of affairs was known to remark: "These ruined Boers are certainly undismayed and dignified under disaster. Few other peoples would display such fortitude and bear such heavy losses with so even a mind."

Yet another reference to a Boer repatriated from Ceylon is made by Mr. E.F. Knight, the popular special correspondent to the *Morning Post* in those days. Writing to that paper from South Africa, he described how on a visit to a Boer's farm, he was greeted by the farmer and his sturdy boys. The Rouxville Repatriation Commission had allowed them eight oxen with which to begin ploughing. "He has brought a good deal of land under cultivation since his return from Ceylon," said Mr. Knight, "and he made us a very welcome present of some of the fine potatoes and unions which he had produced. Like the other farmers I met, he was hopeful of the future.

The scheme behind the relief work in the Orange River Colony was based on efforts to improve the Government Farms, while giving employment and a means of livelihood to the Boers released from concentration camps. The main idea was to build dams on the farms and irrigate as much of it as possible on a co-operative basis, and then to cut it up into lots for settlers. Each of these relief schemes was placed under a British Officer who was both organiser and administrator. Besides, he was also paymaster, as a large number of things had to be bought and paid for – spades, horses, forage, etc. His staff included an engineer, a store-keeper, and a time-keeper, as well as clerks.

Most of the relief schemes attracted a large number of Boers, who came with their wives and children. The men got good pay, 4s. 6d. a day, and the "bosses" 7s. 6d. a day. Drawing conclusions from a letter describing one of these schemes, it would appear that the main job was to get the dam built for the irrigation works. The writer says: "The first sod has been cut, and we calculate that it will take 18 months to 2 years to get the work finished. In the early stages, until the engineer was ready with the levels, the labour was turned on to planting up a garden, the idea being to ensure a supply of vegetables to the

inmates of the camp. It was reckoned that each man would have to pay only nine pence per week for his vegetables, and that he would get a selection of potatoes, onions, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower or beetroot. Pretty cheap! But of course Government supplied seed and manure *gratis*. We have also got a grocer and a butcher's shop – so, as you see, we are getting on.”

The following extracts are culled from a letter written by J.N. van Zyl of Fourisburg, a Boer repatriate who had spent 2 ½ years as a prisoner-of-war in Ceylon: “I am glad to say that the Boers who returned to South Africa from Ceylon are quite reconciled to British rule. A good percentage of the claims have been paid out and the promises made to us in Ceylon have been amply fulfilled, so that we have no cause for complaint with the Government.” Another prisoner-of-war writes: “Funny how friendly we are now, when only a short time ago we, British and Boer, were doing our best to shoot one another!” The irreconcilables had dwindled down to a great minority and apparently were “mostly young men with more bravado than sense.”

Many a letter which was written by the Boer on his return, to friends in Ceylon, made very feeling references to the hospitality they had received when they were banished from their home and friends – “being daily reminded of this fact by the barbed wire enclosure.” One of the more pleasing gestures on record was a simple souvenir: a photograph of the Paarl Gymnasium Boy's High School, Cape Colony, which was sent to Mr. C.F. Vanderwert, the residing at Hill Street, Colombo, with the following lines penned on the back of it: “as a small remembrance of your highly appreciated kindness shown to my brother while a prisoner-of-war on your Island – H.K.J. Van der Spuy.”

The ‘brother’ referred to was a Boer prisoner-of-war at Diyatalawa. On parole he made the acquaintance of Mr. Vanderwert who did what little he could to make this Boer's stay in Colombo as pleasant as possible. Few incidents had surprised the recipient of the souvenir more than this evidence of how much these homely folk appreciated a little kindness.

## **XII. The Last Call.**

Soldiers, sailors and civilians in very large numbers, have carried away memories of Diyatalawa with its billowy waste of patanas, and its amphitheatre of girdling mountain ranges. It is doubtful if there be any of this vast crowd, who have not made pilgrimage to the picturesque cemetery a little beyond the Survey Department Offices and quarters. It is readily picked out by the isolated clump of fir trees surrounded by patana which carpet the ground below them with this mosaic of sunlight and shadow.

When the Boer camp was originally planned, this secluded site on a quiet knoll was requisitioned as a sleeping place for those who would never leave the scene of their

transient abode. Here, as month gave way to month, one might have seen row upon row of tombstones rise.

On the southern side of this hallowed acre there are 133 graves in six lines, separated by pathways paved with white stones, where the Boers are buried. On the northern side there are two lines of British dead mostly from the regiments on guard. Nearly all who were buried here when Diyatalawa was a prisoner-of-war camp had succumbed to the epidemics of enteric fever. Victor and vanquished thus lie side by side having responded to the "last call."

The peacefulness of the surroundings of this cemetery kindles an indefinable sadness as the eye scans the lines of crosses. Each one of the Boer graves has the same Celtic cross above it and a board which bears particulars of the man lying underneath, together with a reference to a text from Holy Writ. The cross and the carved inscription were originally of wood, the handiwork of the Boers themselves. It was possible to pick out the inscriptions which had been carved by one and the same unknown craftsman. More recently, a concrete cross and slab have replaced the wooden memorial.

A closer study of the inscriptions of the Boers who sleep their last so far away from their homeland shows that they are nearly all familiar Dutch names coming down from families who were the pioneers of South Africa and had been in the Great Trek.

There are many names reminiscent of the great figures of the war, and some of which are of special interest to Ceylon. In the Boer section there is but one name which is typically English: George Dickson, but he was a Free Stater from Bethlehem. Robinson is another, but his Christian names, Daniel Johannes, show that he too was born a Dutchman. There are two inscriptions bearing the name Kruger, and Pretorius, is repeated over and over again upon the tablets. Among the Christian names there were several which were scriptural. It is not difficult to image the mood of the Boer father who names his son Belshazzar.

The youngest in this roll of dead is Douw van der Walt of Bloemfontein, aged 16 years. Abraham J. Wiessener of Thaba Nchu, O.V.S. was another who was but a lad of 16. Pathetic to recall, it was mostly the youth that appear to have fallen victims to the stream of death which enteric fever let loose, and several who died between September, 1900, and February the following year were still in their teens. The oldest man to be buried here was 90 years of age – David J. Henop of Kroon Stad, O.V.S. Another veteran who had answered his country's call and would appear to have died irreconcilable on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1902, or seven months after he was free to leave, was Pieter Jordaan Dordreche of K.K., aged 87 years.

One of the most remarkable tablets is erected over the grave of W.J.R. Bretz of Bloemfontein. It shows him as having been 144 years old. His death is the last recorded, with the date: 17<sup>th</sup> December 1902. To have twice outlived the Psalmists span of life is indeed a very unique reckoning, but the probabilities are that this is one of the many

errors which have been introduced during periodical renovation by the irresponsible and indifferent.

The tragedy of these simple inscriptions can be traced in many other diverse ways. For instance, imagine the blank despair of a Christmas ushered in with five funerals, preceded by six on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December. Contemplate the coincidence of Jacobus F. Greyling and Jacobus L. Greyling being buried on one and the same day. They were both Free Staters, the first 25 years of age, from Wepener; the second 23 years old, from Ficksburg. Were they brothers? And there is one case of the two Prinsloo's of Ficksburg, one aged 18 who died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1901, the other aged 51 who died 3 days later. Were they father and son? And did the father not will to live when his son was taken away?

There are many names on the list which are familiar locally: Laurens, van den Berg, Steyn, van Wyk, van Rooyen, de Bruin, Wille, de Klerk. Three bore the surname Nel: Andries J. Nel, Jan I. Nel and Johannes H. Nel. There are two de Jongs, one from Rouxville, the other from Bethulie who died within a fortnight of each other, the one 44 and the other 38 years of age.

Five graves are marked by marble or stone monuments which have replaced the simple cross. One of these commemorated the burial place of General Olivier's son. In 1918, the Government of South Africa caused a stone obelisk to be erected in a central position overlooking these graves. On three sides of it, marble slabs with leaded lettering display a full list of all these Boer prisoners-of-war who lost their lives in captivity or on parole.

The locks in the gateway of the wire boundary have somewhat rusted, proving that the cemetery has not been put to frequent use after the Boer camp was closed nearly four decades ago. Yet, though the years have rolled by, they have not staled interest in this – the one and only visible link with the Boer prisoners-of-war in Ceylon. As one passes out of this well ordered sanctuary, far away from the bustle and din of urban activity, who will gainsay that it is better that these Boers should lie here, amidst the lemon-scented grasses which scatter their fragrance when the tussocks wave in the wind, than in the congested environs of a city. They were accustomed to the silence of vast spaces in their homeland.

Records show a few deaths among the Boer prisoners-of-war in the Ragama Camp and Mount Lavinia, and among the cases transferred from these camps to the General Hospital. Their remains are interred in the General Cemetery in Colombo. One of them, by the name Frederic Scott, had been an inmate of the Mental Asylum for some months. Mathius Johannes Uys died of natural causes on board a transport in the Colombo Harbour; and another who died at the General Hospital was P.R. Massy. In all these cases, the funerals took place with full military honours, the Gloucesters invariably supplying the firing parties. The Revd. David Tweed, and the Revd. W.C. Fleming, ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church of Ceylon, officiated at these burials. Henrich Stock, a German mercenary, died while on parole at Veyangoda. He was buried at Ragama with military honours.

A rather unique application was made to the Ceylon Government asking that the remains of Mr. Kock, a Boer prisoner-of-war who had died at the General Hospital in Colombo, be transported to South Africa at the expense of the Imperial Government. This as may well be expected was refused. Two years later an application was made by the widow of a deceased Boer named Lourens Pieter Geldenhuys, a Free Stater, who had died in the Colombo Hospital in January, 1902, for permission to have his remains removed for re-internment in the applicant's farm. The Hon'ble Mr. F.G. Loos, on behalf of Geldenhuys' people in South Africa, moved the Court for an order. The interested party had consented to meet all expenses connected with the removal. This application was allowed, and after exhumation under the direction of the Sanitary Officers and the Cemetery Keeper, Mr. A.W. Raffel, the remains were taken to South Africa by the Natal liner Umsinga on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1904.

### **XIII. The Roll of Honour.**

In a work published in 1913, Mr. J. Penry Lewis, C.M.G., of the Ceylon Civil Service, embodied the labour of a lifetime in a record of "Tombstones and Monuments in Ceylon" which were of historical or local interest.

The inscriptions at the Boer Cemetery at Diyatalawa are of course not of such historical importance in a comparative sense of antiquity as the monuments of the Portuguese and Dutch occupation of Ceylon, or of early British times. This is perhaps why they have not been made available for the use of the historian of a future or the public who find interest in them. But it does seem a pity if on that score alone something is not done to record such details as are available of the mortuary inscriptions of the South African Prisoners-of-war, before some modern changes sweep away these relics of a short but unique period in the history of Ceylon.

The writer has essayed this task, which might otherwise be unattempted, on a twofold urge. First, as an antiquarian pastime while stationed at Diyatalawa. Secondly, to show the mistakes in figures and lettering which were creeping in every time these obituary notices were renovated or repainted.

There are 36 plates in all which will be included when this work is published in book form. The following details complete the roll:-

<b>No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Hometown</b>	<b>Date of Death</b>	<b>Age</b>
1	Hendrik Gert Venter	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	11 Sep	36
2	Martinus Hermanus van Staden	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	15 Sep	48
3	Adravaan Hendrik Badenhorst	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	26 Sep	17
4	Daniel Johannes Robinson	Wepener, O.V.S.	8 Oct	23
5	Barend Petrus van den Berg	Potchefstroom, Z.A.R.	11 Oct	23
6	Jan Andertan Coetsee	Thabancho, O.V.S.	18 Oct	55
7	Danial Rudolf Strubel	Thabancho, O.V.S.	21 Oct	18

	8	Jacobus Johannes Venter	Bethulie, O.V.S.	25 Oct	20
	9	Frans Cornelis de Jonge	Rouxville, O.V.S.	30 Oct	44
	10	Johannes Martinus Pretorius	de Wetsdorp, O.V.S.	31 Oct	39
	11	Wessel Laurens	Wepener, O.V.S.	31 Oct	19
	12	Balsazar Johannes Rautenbach	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	31 Oct	22
	13	Daniel Nicolaas Smith	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	2 Nov	36
	14	Cornelis A.L. van Tonder	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	9 Nov	18
	15	Jacobus Johannes Fick	Wepener, O.V.S.	12 Nov	21
	16	Johannes Jacobus de Jonge	Bethulie, O.V.S.	14 Nov	38
	17	Saul Jacobus M'Jburg (Myburg)	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	14 Nov	25
	18	Andries Olivier	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	14 Nov	17
	19	Johannes Steffhanus Smit	Heidelberg, Z.A.R.	14 Nov	25
	20	Gert S. Lubbe	Thabancho, O.V.S.	16 Nov	-
	21	Cornelis Andrie OosthuJ'zen (Oosthuizen)	Smithfield, O.V.S.	17 Nov	24
Monument		Ferrar Reginald Mostin Cleaver	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	18 Nov	36
	22	Nic. J. Bekker	Smithfield, O.V.S.	18 Nov	36
Monument		Andrias S. Henning	Smithfield, O.V.S.	21 Nov	30
	23	Hendrik P.N. van Wyk	Vrede, O.V.S.	22 Nov	42
	24	R.F. van der Walt	Thabancho, O.V.S.	23 Nov	41
	25	Douw P.J. Steyn	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	23 Nov	47
	26	Daniel de Villiers	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Nov	25
	27	Christian B. Kotze	Wepener, O.V.S.	24 Nov	23
	28	Theunis D. Kruger	Bethulie, O.V.S.	25 Nov	20
	29	Frans G. Laupsoher	Kliprivier, O.V.S.	25 Nov	38
	30	Alexander J. Benadie	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	25 Nov	18
	31	Leopold Badenhamer	Duitschland	26 Nov	21
	32	Jan J. Brooks	Harrismith, O.V.S.	26 Nov	30
	33	Abraham J. Wiessener	Thabancho, O.V.S.	27 Nov	16
	34	Michiel O. Roux	Bethulie, O.V.S.	27 Nov	33
	35	Andries P. Du Plessis	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	28 Nov	19
Monument		J.H. Olivier	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	28 Nov	22
	36	Jacobus P. van Rooyen	Wepener, O.V.S.	29 Nov	19
	37	Johannes H. Grobler	Smithfield, O.V.S.	1 Dec	22
	38	Gerhardus C. Olivier	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	2 Dec	42
	39	Petrus J. Niemand	Winburg, O.V.S.	6 Dec	35
	40	Johannes A. van Niekerk	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	6 Dec	28
	41	Philip de Bruin	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	6 Dec	21
	42	Stephanus J. Du Preez	Wepener, O.V.S.	6 Dec	25
	43	Pieter G.P. Schuttee	Winburg, O.V.S.	8 Dec	12
	44	Dirk C. Breed	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	10 Dec	18
	45	Josia J.C. Lombard	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	12 Dec	22
	46	Andries J. Nel	Reddersburg, O.V.S.	14 Dec	27
	47	Johannes D. van Coller	Winburg, O.V.S.	15 Dec	47
	48	Cheristoffel J.P. Langeveld	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	16 Dec	16
	49	Douw van der Walt	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	16 Dec	16
	50	Johannes H. Fourie	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	19 Dec	17
	51	David J.J. Lamprecht	Smithfield, O.V.S.	19 Dec	21
	52	Johannes A. Bester	Winburg, O.V.S.	20 Dec	20
	53	Andries J.S. Smal	Smithfield, O.V.S.	23 Dec	22
	54	Lodewyk Wille	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Dec	27

	55	Petrus Fourie	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Dec	47
	56	Willem van Aswegen	Smithfield, O.V.S.	23 Dec	17
	57	Cornelis J. Weber	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	23 Dec	35
Monument					
	58	Jacob J.W. Barry	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Dec	17
	59	Jacobus F. Greyling	Wepener, O.V.S.	24 Dec	25
	60	Jacobus Hugo	Rouxville, O.V.S.	24 Dec	44
	61	Jacobus L. Greyling	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	24 Dec	23
	62	Johannes M. Booysen	Zastron, O.V.S.	24 Dec	20
	63	Johannes J. van Biljon	Krugersdorp, Z.A.R.	24 Dec	39
	64	Willem N.J. Oosthuizen	Winburg, O.V.S.	25 Dec	27
	65	Stephanus C.L. de Jager	Bethulie, O.V.S.	26 Dec	23
	66	Dirk C.H. Human	Rouxville, O.V.S.	27 Dec	24
	67	Floris P. Coetzee	Dewetsdorp, O.V.S.	27 Dec	29
	68	Marthinus H. Swanepoel	Smithfield, O.V.S.	30 Dec	34
	69	George F. Rautenbach	Thabancho, O.V.S.	30 Dec	36
	70	Jan G. Venter	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	31 Dec	20
					<b>1901</b>
	71	Jacobus V. Geldenheuis	Brandford, O.V.S.	5 Jan	46
	72	Dirk J. Swat	Harrismith, O.V.S.	22 Jan	22
	73	Andries A. Volschenk	Harrismith, O.V.S.	30 Jan	19
	74	Gert P.J. Grobbelaar	Winburg, O.V.S.	2 Feb	44
	75	Christoffel J. Smith	Heilbron, O.V.S.	10 Feb	40
	76	Hendrik Hendriks	Smithfield, O.V.S.	12 Feb	17
	77	Jacobus C.F.S. van Rensburg	Smithfield, O.V.S.	11 Feb	28
	78	Roelf C. du Plessis	Wepener, O.V.S.	14 Feb	31
	79	Tobias B. Wiese	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	27 Feb	23
	80	George Dickson	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	5 Mar	43
Monument					
	81	P.A.H. Grobler	Thabancho, O.V.S.	5 Mar	51
	82	Pieter W. Prinsloo	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	15 Mar	28
	83	Lourens R. Prinsloo	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	18 Mar	51
	84	Philippus Ablingnaut (Blignaut)	Smithfield, O.V.S.	19 Mar	29
	85	Zacharias A. de Beer	Kroonstad, O.V.S.	19 Mar	19
	86	Petrus N. Palm	Thabancho, O.V.S.	21 Mar	31
	87	Johannes J. Britz	Senekal, O.V.S.	19 Apr	21
	88	Pieter J. Pietersen	Rouxville, O.V.S.	29 Apr	26
	89	Pieter S. van Heerden	Winburg, O.V.S.	6 May	28
	90	David J. Henop	Kroonstad, O.V.S.	12 May	90
	91	Majiel G. Nezar	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	10 Jul	22
	92	Gert H. van Niekerk	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	15 Jul	21
	93	Petrus L. Moolman	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	13 Jul	40
	94	Jan I. Nel	Wepener, O.V.S.	5 Aug	39
	95	Phillippus J. Wessels	Harrismith, O.V.S.	15 Aug	33
	96	Johannis L. Olivier	Rouxville, O.V.S.	28 Sep	53
	97	John M. Haley	Rouxville, O.V.S.	9 Oct	18
	98	Barend J. van der Berg	Bethulie, O.V.S.	21 Oct	33
	99	Johannish vande Venter	Thabancho, O.V.S.	31 Oct	17
	100	Nicolaas M. Rautenbach	Thabancho, O.V.S.	2 Nov	24
	101	Izak A. van Niekerk	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	10 Nov	22
	102	Weynand J. Wessels	Winburg, O.V.S.	15 Dec	23



				<b>1902</b>
103	Hermanus P. Nieuwoudt	Jagersfontein, O.V.S	1 Mar	59
104	Eijbert A. Mijburg	Jagersfontein, O.V.S	3 Mar	57
105	Jan Philep Hartman	Thabancho, O.V.S.	16 Apr	17
106	Abram P. Coetsee	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	2 Jun	35
107	Hendrik N. Schueman	Harrismith, O.V.S.	8 Jun	46
108	Corneles J. Roos	Bethlehem, O.V.S.	8 Jun	55
109	Phillippus R. Dupreez	Smithfield, O.V.S.	27 Jun	27
110	Christiaan G.F. Strydom	Heidelberg, O.V.S.	2 Jul	43
111	Christiaan J. Liebenberg	Senekal, O.V.S.	11 Jul	55
112	Martha F.F. Riekert	Pretoria, Z.A.R.	20 Jul	27
113	Gert F.D. Gering	Bethulie, O.V.S.	26 Jul	37
114	J.G.V. Deventer (van Deventer)	Thabancho, O.V.S.	31 Jul	27
115	Roelof Cornelis Lindque	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	1 Aug	22
116	Petrus J.S.C. Kruger	Smithfield, O.V.S.	10 Aug	21
117	Commandant Gideon G. Cronje	Barkley Oost, K.K.	13 Aug	53
118	Phillippus J. Willbr	Winburo, O.V.S.	29 Aug	31
119	Nicolaas J.G. Laubsodhi	Wepener, O.V.S.	15 Sep	46
120	Henry G.Smith	Klerksdorp, O.V.S.	17 Sep	34
121	Johannes H. Nel	Rouxville, O.V.S.	17 Oct	32
122	Alwyn H.J. Scholtz	Harrismith, O.V.S.	28 Oct	34
123	Marthinus Albehtse	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	15 Nov	47
124	Jan Jonathan Duraid (Du Rand)	Wepener, O.V.S.	16 Nov	19
125	Abraham B.S. Fourie	Wepener, O.V.S.	21 Nov	56
126	John G. Pieterse	Zenekal, O.V.S.	26 Nov	24
127	Ignatius M. de Klerk	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	8 Dec	46
128	Pieter J. Jordaan	Dordrecht, K.K.	10 Dec	87
129	Andries R.J. Venter	Bethulie, O.V.S.	13 Dec	21
130	W.J.R. Bretz	Bloemfontein O.V.S.	17 Dec	144

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- (i) Which describes their arrival, and the discovery of Diyatalawa – Vol: XXXVI No.1, July 1946, pp. 1 – 6.
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- (iii) The Boer in Sport and Pastime. – Vol. XXXVI No. 2, Oct 1946, pp. 35 – 47.
- (iv) Boer personalities – Great and Little.
- (v) Other Prisoner-of-war Camps. – Vol. XXXVI No. 3, Jan 1947, pp. 68 – 77.
- (vi) British Guards and Boer Escapes.
- (vii) Spotlight on their Medical History.
- (viii) Good-bye to “Our Guests.”
- (ix) The Irreconcilables. – Vol. XXXVI No. 4, April 1947, pp. 101 – 120.

CONCLUDED.

## ADDENDUM.

### THE BOER PRISONERS OF WAR IN CEYLON

BY L.G. POULIER.

In the April number of the *Journal* an account of absorbing interest appeared from the gifted pen of Mr. R.L. Brohier. It displays much research and accuracy, but on one point I think Mr. Brouhier's information is not correct. He refers to the solitary case of the shooting of a "Prisoner" who tried to escape.

I had the story first hand from three perpetrators of the "Shooting." They were Beinhauer (Australian), Levin (French), and Potgieter (Boer). They were fed up with the restrictions and staged a stunt to get even with the guard. They stuffed a dummy in a white shirt and slacks, perfect in its camouflage even to the slouch hat, which came down below his ears covering the top half of his face. They bided their time till the Commanding Officer and his staff were at dinner. The guard by the barbed wire usually at this time relaxes and takes a seat at one end of his beat with his back to the wire. When the coast was clear these three "Hooligans" deftly threw the dummy over the barbed wire so as to alight on its feet in between the double lines of wire.

It alighted on its feet and was in a standing position. The "Prisoners" then put out all the camp lights and the white figure could be seen for some distance in the dark. The sudden "black out" aroused the guard by the wire. He rose and started his patrol. About thirty feet away he spied the white figure and challenged three times. There being no response he fired and knocked the figure prone. He forthwith reported the incident. There was a hullabaloo. The Commanding Officer and his staff along with the Medical Officer abandoned their mess and rushed to the scene.

With the aid of a flickering lantern they cut the wire, and as the guard stooped to pick up the "dying man" a loud cheer burst forth from the blacked out "Prisoners" camp. The Commanding Officer who had a sense of humour took it all in good part, though he and his staff were inveigled away from their meals, and so the matter ended.

I rather suspect that the guard who did not like the discomfiture circulated the story that a live "Prisoner" was shot as at that time secrecy was the order of the day. (*Mr. Brohier informs us that the Medical Reports reveal one case where a Boer in attempting to escape was shot at and killed. This is mentioned in chapter VII; page 39, Vol. XXXVII, Part 4. – Ed.*)

Later these three "Dare-devils" staged another avenging stunt at Ragama. They and the whole camp were peeved at the order "Lights out at 9 p.m." That was the hour they wished to have some reading or a few indoor games such as chess, etc. They stood it for some time. Beinhauer then got a brain wave. He managed to procure a heavy piece of iron piping about 18 inches long. Along with his mates he ran a length of thin coir rope between the rafters and the thatch of the roof of the camp, and let down both ends to hang

limp about ten feet apart. One end of the rope was lashed to the iron pipe. The other end hung free near Beinhauer's bunk. Beinhauer then stuck a candle on one end of the iron pipe and made it stand on a low stool. Before the lights went out at 9 p.m. Beinhauer lit the candle and the "Prisoners" put out the other lights and retired to their bunks at 9 p.m.

The guard noticed a light burning and shouted "Lights out" several times. There was no response. Eventually he came in cursing and swearing and stooped to snuff out the candle. As he did so Beinhauer quickly drew in the free end of the rope and suddenly let go.

The pipe rose to the height of about 8 feet and dropped on the head of the guard, inflicting a good-sized injury. His forage cap was no protection as it was worn sideways.

He reported the incident. An enquiry followed. There was no evidence and no trace of the rope, the pipe or the stool. Anyway, the whole camp was penalized with three days indoor detention and no recreation. Later, on representations made, the "Lights out" was extended by half an hour.

ENGELBRECHT – The full story of Engelbrecht probably did not reach Mr. Brohier. I believe that he was the last Boer Prisoner in Ceylon and the only one who refused to take the oath.

He was a personal friend of mine and confided in me. He was grateful to me for the little assistance I could give him. He was given a shanty in Hambantota by the Assistant Government Agent. After the A.G.A. left the District he was sued by the owner of the shanty for rent and arrears. I appeared in Court for him.

The landlord's Proctor asked Engelbrecht in the witness box, "Why did not the A.G.A. make arrangements for you?"

*Answer:* "That is what I also wish to know." The landlord's case was dismissed. Later a question was raised in the House of Commons as to why a Boer Prisoner-of-war was sued for house rent when it was the duty of the Ceylon Government to house him.

Engelbrecht was a marksman. He once shot and killed a leopard in the air when the brute sprang at him from a tree. He was obdurate on the question of taking the oath.

Governor Blake was at the time travelling from Badulla through Hambantota. He stopped his car near Engelbrecht's shanty and sent for him. Said the Governor: "I hear you are the last Boer Prisoner-of-war in Ceylon. Why do you refuse to take the oath?" He answered, "I hear you are the Governor of Ceylon. I wish to keep your friendship and not lose it if I tell you why." The Governor proceeded with a problem in his mind which he could not solve.

When Engelbrecht related this yarn to me I put him the same question. He replied, "I have no objection to tell you. I was a scout under General De Wet. Before setting out

with one of his messages we took an oath together, namely, that neither would surrender under any circumstances. If I am confronted with De Wet and he tells me that he has surrendered, I am prepared to take the oath.” Such was the loyalty and chivalry of Engelbrecht – not a trained soldier in the art of “do or die”, but a plain farmer whose sense of loyalty commanded admiration.

When the Government realised his spirit, and by the way of appeasing Whitehall, he was appointed Game Sanctuary Keeper at Yala.

Here he was visited by many sportsmen who came to the shooting reserve for resident sportsmen. They used to leave empty champagne bottles behind in which Engelbrecht used to store his kerosene. These bottles, like the “ju-ju” of East Africa, had a fateful turning for him in his life.

It happened that a minor Government official in the Tangalla District had an axe to grind with his opposite number in Hambantota. He cunningly devised a deep-set intrigue, a cheap scheme involving no risk. He merely started a rumour in Tangalla that Engelbrecht had surreptitiously supplied cattle to Captain von Muller, the Commander of the German Raider No. 1, some of whose crew had landed at Kirinde at night. In support of this he added another lie, that the party had enjoyed themselves – witness the empty champagne bottles in the heart of the jungle. His object was to get his opposite number in Hambantota hauled over the coals or punished as an accomplice, for he was the man on the spot and it was his first duty to report anything hostile to the Island’s safety. This nefarious scheme however misfired as the Military concentrated on Engelbrecht and did not care a hoot about the origin of the rumour. The Civil Authorities were nonchalant. The result was that a bomb had descended on poor Engelbrecht and he became the victim to a vicarious punishment.

Being a time of emergency with a war on, the rumour spread fast, and down came Colonel Jayawardene (Intelligence Officer) with an armed Military guard of two Non-Coms to investigate. It was on everybody’s lips and there was no secrecy about it. I heard the Colonel interrogate the Rest House Keeper in Hambantota. “What Sir” said he, “this all false” – with a true prophetic ear. “I know Engelbrecht is not a man of that type. You will never get at the truth of this.”

Nevertheless, the Colonel went to his camp and lo! there was the empty champagne bottles.

Engelbrecht’s explanation was discounted, and he was arrested. Passing through Tangalla the party halted at the Rest House.

Engelbrecht sent for me and I rushed to the place to find the party gone. He told me later that the guard declined to allow him to see me and give instructions about his affairs.

All his personal belongings in the heart of the jungle was stolen.

The story of his imprisonment is pathetic in the extreme. He demanded a trial and refused to wear prison clothes. The Warden hit back by declining to give him his own clothes on the plea that the rules did not allow him. So Engelbrecht remained naked in a dark room in imprisonment for three months. He told me he never once heard the note of a bird which he loved to hear in the jungle, and if he had any implement, even a pin, he would have taken his life, for he could not distinguish night from day.

He was released after three months without a trial. Probably the Military found him innocent. He then came to me with a tale of his sufferings, hoping he would be able to get relief in a law suit for damages. I was very sorry to disappoint his hope for the DORA (Defence of the Realm Act) was then in force.

Eventually he died with the stigma on him that he assisted the enemy. Some time later I came into possession from a reliable source of the facts of the nefarious scheme.

He had a large collection of freak deer antlers, one with the tines converging, making a sphere like a football. All these with his personal belongings were stolen after his death.

I have only one pair of freak antlers to remember him.

All I could do for him to retrieve his fair name, of which he was very jealous, was a failure as the Authorities were adamant or perhaps did not want to lose prestige.

Twelve years later came the second *Emden* under the command of Captain Withoef, who was second in command to von Muller in the famous Raider. While giving an address at the Rotary Club in Colombo in 1931, he described the daring exploits of the Raider and the gallant behaviour of von Muller towards his captives, when he casually remarked, "We left your beautiful Island alone. There was no point in attacking a small Island."

At long last I had got my chance and forthwith wrote to Captain Withoef and placed Engelbrecht's case before him. He sent me the following letter which the Times of Ceylon kindly published, along with a photograph of Captain Withoef and my humble vindication posthumously of the character and fair name of a straight, sincere and brave man.

The originator of the false rumour and his intended victim are both now no more.

## The Letter.

DE KOMMANDANT.  
DES KREUZERS EMDEN.

Trinkomali  
5th February, 1931

Dear Sir,

With many thanks for your kind letter I may be allowed to inform you that the old „Emden“ never received a supply of cattle and there never was the least connection with your beautiful Island or anywhere else.

I am Sir, yours very sincerely,  
(Signed) S. WITHOEFT.

Opmerkings:

“Tommy Atkins” is die naam wat deur Britte gebruik was om na alle Britse soldate te verwys en waarskynlik waar die bynaam ‘Tommie’ vandaan kom.

Volgens die artikel het Heinrich Stock gesterf terwyl hy op parool was by Veyangoda en is begrawe te Ragama.

Mathius Johannes Uys is dood aan boord van ‘n skip in Colombo hawe, die artikel sê nie waar hy begrawe is nie – waarskynlik Colombo.

No	Naam	Tuisdorp	Datum van Afsterwe	Ouderdom	Oorsaak van dood	Plek gevang	Wanneer Gevang	Nummer
1	Hendrik Gerhardus Venter	Fordsburg, Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	9 Sep 1900	36	gedood deur die hou van 'n mede-krigsgevangene	Mozelkatsenek	1900/07/30	7849
2	Martinus Hermanus van Staden	Boerfontein, Bethulie	15 Sep 1900	48	rumatiek	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7794
3	Adriaan Hendrik Badenhorst	Klipfontein, Bloemfontein, O.V.S.	28 Sep 1900	17	masels en brongities	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7494
4	Daniel Johannes Robinson	Gelegenfontein, Wepener, O.V.S.	8 Oct 1900	23	Appendisitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10089
5	Barend Johannes van den Berg	Blesbokfontein, Potchefstroom, Z.A.R.	11 Oct 1900	23	meningitis	Potchefstroom	1900/08/24	11167
6	Jan Adriaan Coetsee	Lovedale, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	18 Oct 1900	55	pneumonie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9544
7	Daniel Rudolf Strubel	Roodewal, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	21 Oct 1900	18	masels en pneumonie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10216
8	Jacobus Johannes Venter	Broekpoort, Bethulie, O.V.S.	25 Oct 1900	20	masels en brongities	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10310
9	Frans Cornelis de Jonge	Elandsloof, Rouxville, O.V.S.	30 Oct 1900	44	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8167
10	Johannes Martinus Pretorius	Dewetsdorp, O.V.S.	31 Oct	39	masels	onbekend	geen	geen
11	Wessel Hendrik Lourens	Landmansvlei, Wepener, O.V.S.	31 Oct	19	masels en pneumonie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8266
12	Belsazar Johannes Rautenbach	Rietvlei, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	31 Oct	23	masels en pneumonie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9170
13	Daniel Nicolaas Smith	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	2 Nov	36	tifus of tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10178
14	Cornelis A.L. van Tonder	Pleasant View, Ladybrand, O.V.S.	29 Oktober 1900	18	tifus of tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10282
15	Jacobus Johannes Fick	Jammerbergdrift, Wepener, O.V.S.	12 Nov	21	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8051
16	Johannes Jurgens de Jonge	Ventershoeck, Rouxville	14 Nov	38	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7616
17	Saul Jacobus M'Jburg (Myburg)	Kommissiehoek, Bloemfontein O.V.S.	14 Nov	25	masels en diarree	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9917
18	Andries Olivier	Rodekrantz, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	14 Nov	17	tifus of tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8378
19	Johannes Stephanus Smit	Witkleifontein, Heidelberg, Z.A.R.	14 Nov	26	serebro-vaskulêre ongeluk	Heidelberg	1900/10/04	13497
20	Gert S. Lubbe	Alexandrië, Thabanchu	16 Nov	19	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9869
21	Cornelis Andries Oosthuizen	Holzkrail, Smithfield, O.V.S.	17 Nov	24	tifus of tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8348
Monument	Ferrar Reginald Mostin Cleaver	Rand Club, Yeoville, Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	18 Nov	29	tifus met meningitis	Pretoria	1900/06/12	3129
22	Nicolaas Johannes Bekker	Vaalspruit, Smithfield, O.V.S.	18 Nov	36	Tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7919
Monument	Andries Stephanus Henning	Luckhoff, Rouxville, O.V.S.	21 Nov	29	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9735
23	Hendrik Petrus van Wyk	Wilgespruit, Vrede, O.V.S.	22 Nov	42	tifoïde koors	Vrede	1900/09/15	14914
24	Rudolph Frederick van der Walt	Salisbury, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	23 Nov	41	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10350
25	Douw Petrus Johannes Steyn	Middenin, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	23 Nov	47	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9285
26	Jan Daniel de Villiers	Hoenderkop, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Nov	25	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10323
27	Christian Burger Kotze	Kafferskop, Wepener, O.V.S.	24 Nov	23	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7637
28	Theunis Johannes Kruger	Vlakfontein, Bethulie, O.V.S.	25 Nov	29	tifus	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9828
29	Frans Johannes Laubscher	Eikenhof, Johannesburg	24 Nov	38	disenterie	onbekend	geen	49
30	Alexander John Bernardie	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	25 Nov	18	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7928
31	Leopold Bedenhamer	Duitschland (Fordsburg, Johannesburg)	26 Nov	21	doodgeskiet deur wag	Rietfontein	1900/05/01	2636
32	Jan Johannes Brooks	Harrismith, O.V.S.	26 Nov	30	tifoïde koors	Harrismith	onbekend	11673
33	Abraham Jacobus Wiesner	Zoetlaagte, Bloemfontein	27 Nov	16	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10397
34	Michiel Christoffel Roux	Bethulie, O.V.S.	27 Nov	33	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10105
35	Andries Petrus Du Plessis	Slangfontein, Bloemfontein O.V.S.	28 Nov	19	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10011
Monument	Jan Hendrik Olivier	Donkerhoek, Ladybrand, O.V.S.	28 Nov	22	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9962
36	Jacobus Petrus van Rooyen	Rockleby, Wepener, O.V.S.	29 Nov	19	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8465
37	Johannes Hendrik Grob(be)le(aa)r	Waschbank, Smithfield, O.V.S.	1 Dec	22	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8113
38	Gerhardus Cornelius Olivier	Groenkloof, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	2 Dec	42	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9104
39	Petrus Jacobus Niemand	Bosjeslaagte, Winburg, O.V.S.	6 Dec	35	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9098
40	Johannes Albertus van Niekerk	Zwartfontein, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	6 Dec	28	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9097
41	Philip Rudolf de Bruin	Platbergdrift, Ladybrand, O.V.S.	6 Dec	21	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8788
42	Stephanus Johannes Du Preez	Holywell, Wepener, O.V.S.	6 Dec	25	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8431
43	Pieter George Schutte	Vaalbank, Winburg, O.V.S.	8 Dec	12	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9251
44	Dirk Cornelius Breedt	Boschfontein, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	10 Dec	18	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8769
45	Jozua Jacobus C. Lombard	Klipnek, Ladybrand, O.V.S.	12 Dec	22	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8263
46	Andries Jacobus Nel	Het Waterspoort, Bloemfontein, O.V.S.	14 Dec	27	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7677
47	Johannes Daniel van Coller	Kopjesdam, Winburg, O.V.S.	15 Dec	47	meningitis	Winburg	27/08/1900	11498
48	Christoffel Johannes Petrus Langeveld	Bloemfontein, O.V.S.	15 Dec	16	Koors onbekende oorsprong	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9843
49	Douw (Daniel) Gerbrand van der Walt	Fouriesspruitpoort, Bloemfontein O.V.S.	16 Dec	16	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8631
50	Johannes Hermanus Fourie	Doornboom, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	19 Dec	17	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8059
51	David J.J. Lamprecht	Waatsfontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	19 Dec	21	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7648
52	Johannes Adrian Bester	Welverdruc, Kroonstad	20 Dec	20	pneumonie	Winburg	onbekend	7509
53	Andries Johannes Jacobus Smal	Driefontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	23 Dec	22	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8489
54	Lodewyk Wille	Aletta, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Dec	27	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8672
55	Petrus Joseph Fourie	Strydfontein, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Dec	47	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8870
56	Willem Jacobus van Aswegen	De Bad, Smithfield, O.V.S.	23 Dec	17	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7894
57	Cornelis Johannes Weber	Fordsburg, Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	23 Dec	35	peritonitis	Pretoria	1900/06/10	3205

No	Naam	Tuisdorp	Datum van Afsterwe	Ouderdom	Oorsaak van dood	Plek gevang	Wanneer Gevang	Nommer
Monument 58	Jacob Jan Willem Barry	Aprikooskop, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	23 Dec	17	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8712
59	Jacobus Frederik Greyling	Vaalspruit, Wepener, O.V.S.	24 Dec	25	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7574
60	Jacobus Hugo	Weltevredene, Rouxville, O.V.S.	24 Dec	44	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8157
61	Jacobus Louw Greyling	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	24 Dec	23	peritonitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9666
62	Johannes Marthinus Booysen	Zastron, O.V.S.	24 Dec	20	meningitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9472
63	Johannes Jacobus van Biljon	Dwarsvlei, Krugersdorp, Z.A.R.	24 Dec	39	diarree	Wolhuterskop	onbekend	7521
64	Willem Nicolaas Jacobus Oosthuizen	Weltevrede, Winburg, O.V.S.	25 Dec	27	tifoïde koors	Weltevrede, Winburg, O.V.S.	1900/09/18	12663
65	Stephanus Johannes Louw de Jager	Middelplaat, Bethulie, O.V.S.	26 Dec	23	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8166
66	Dirk Cornelis Hendrik Human	Suez, Rouxville, O.V.S.	27 Dec	24	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9765
67	Floris Petrus Coetzee	Nietverwacht, Bloemfontein, O.V.S.	27 Dec	29	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9778
68	Marthinus Hermanus Swanepoel	Treurkop, Smithfield, O.V.S.	30 Dec	34	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7827
69	George Frederik Rautenbach	Moltenaar, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	30 Dec	36	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9170
70	Jan Gerhardus Venter	Middle Reef, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	31 Dec	19	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10313
				<b>1901</b>				
71	Jacobus Viljoen Geldenhuis	Brandfort, O.V.S.	5 Jan	46	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9650
72	Dirk Josua Swart	Harrismith, O.V.S.	22 Jan	22	tifoïde koors	Harrismith	onbekend	11874
73	Andries Abraham Volschenk	Harrismith, O.V.S.	30 Jan	19	tifoïde koors	Wilgerivierbrug	onbekend	11905
74	Gert Petrus Jacobus Grobbelaar	Mijn Rust, Winburg, O.V.S.	2 Feb	44	meningitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8888
75	Christoffel Johannes Smith	Vaalbank, Heilbron, O.V.S.	10 Feb	40	pneumonie	Vaalbank, Heilbron, O.V.S.	1900/07/07	11603
76	Lucas Hendrik Hendriks	Wildebeestfontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	12 Feb	17	verswakking en uittering	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8138
77	Jacobus G.F. Janse van Rensburg	Bethulie, O.V.S.	11 Feb	28	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10079
78	Roelof Cornelis du Plessis	Kalkoenkrantz, Wepener, O.V.S.	14 Feb	31	eginkokkus-sist	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7723
79	Tobias Benjamin Wiese	Welgevonden, Bloemfontein O.V.S.	27 Feb	23	longtuberkulose	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10394
80	George Dickson	Steynsburg, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	5 Mar	43	maagkarsinoom	Steynsburg, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	1900/07/26	8828
Monument 81	Pieter Andries Hendrik Grobler(Grobbelaar)	Groothoek, ThabanchuThabanchu, O.V.S.	5 Mar	51	hartsiekte	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9677
82	Pieter Willem Prinsloo	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	15 Mar	28	empieem	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8435
83	Lourens Erasmus Prinsloo	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	18 Mar	51	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9153
84	Philippus Jacobus Blynaut	Leeuwfontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	19 Mar	29	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7939
85	Zacharias Andries de Beer	Toverwater, Kroonstad, O.V.S.	19 Mar	19	Appendisitis	Toverwater, Kroonstad, O.V.S.	1900/09/25	12400
86	Petrus Nicolaas Palm	Mooihoek, Bloemfontein	21 Mar	31	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9974
87	Johannes Jacobus Britz	Kwaggafontein, Winburg	19 Apr	21	peritonitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8780
88	Pieter Jacobus Pietersen	Pietersrust, Rouxville, O.V.S.	29 Apr	26	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7720
89	Pieter Schalk van Heerden	Driekopies, Winburg, O.V.S.	6 May	28	serebro-vaskulêre ongeluk	Paardeberg	1900/02/27	5590
90	David Johannes Hennop	Uitzicht, Kroonstad, O.V.S.	12 May	30	tifoïde koors	Paardeberg	1900/02/27	5615
91	Michael Gideon Nezar (Neser)	Nooitgedacht, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	10 Jul	22	malaria	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8351
92	Gert Helgaard van Niekerk	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	15 Jul	21	verswering	Jukskeirivier	1900/06/01	3168
93	Petrus Lafras Moolman	Langesnek, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	13 Jul	40	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9061
94	Jan Izak Nel	Des Schantz, Wepener, O.V.S.	5 Aug	39	breintumour	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8345
95	Floris Petrus Coetzee	Harrismith, O.V.S.	15 Aug	33	piëmie	Pretoria	onbekend	11919
	Daniel Smit	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	18 Aug	21	onbekend	onbekend	onbekend	geen
96	Johannes Lodewicus Olivier	Driefontein, Rouxville, O.V.S.	28 Sep	53	lewerkarsinoom	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7691
	Conrad Brasche	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	16 Aug	42	tifoïde koors	Rietfontein	1900/04/30	2635
97	John Michael Haley	Rouxville, O.V.S.	9 Oct	18	meningitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8121
98	Barend Johannes van der Berg	De Put, Bethlehem	21 Oct	33	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	945
99	Johannes Hendrik C. Vandeventer	Trafalgar, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	31 Oct	17	serebro-vaskulêre ongeluk	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10374
	Johannes Marthinus Pretorius	Dewetsdorpdistrik	31 Oct	39	masels	onbekend	onbekend	geen
100	Nicolaas Marthinus Rautenbach	Moltenaar, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	2 Nov	24	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10066
101	Izak A. van Niekerk	Mooihoek, Ficksburg, O.V.S.	10 Nov	22	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8362
	Andries Cornelius	Kommissiehoek, Bloemfontein O.V.S.	15 Nov	25	tifus	onbekend	onbekend	geen
102	Wynand Johannes Wessels	Brandsweig, Winburg, O.V.S.	15 Dec	23	tifoïde koors	Koedoesrant	1900/02/23	6763
	Ernst August Dietrich Boedeker	Vrede, O.V.S.	27 Dec	42	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9471
				<b>1902</b>				
103	Hermanus Petrus Nieuwoudt	Jagersfontein, O.V.S	7 Mar	59	piëmie	Jagersfontein, O.V.S	1900/10/10	14670
104	Egbert Henry B. Mijburg	Jagersfontein, O.V.S	3 Mar	57	verswakking en uitputting	Jagersfontein, O.V.S	1900/10/10	14673
105	Jan Philip Hartman	Patcuana, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	17 Apr	17	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9707
106	Abraham Petrus Johannes Coetsee	Johannesburg, Z.A.R.	2 Jun	35	pneumonie	Bothaville	1900/11/06	15131
107	Hendrik Nicolaas. Schoeman	Bergvlei, Harrismith, O.V.S.	8 Jun	46	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	16758
108	Cornelis Johannes Roos	Bokpoort, Bethlehem, O.V.S.	8 Jun	55	serebro-vaskulêre ongeluk	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9211
109	Phillippus Rudolf du Preez	Driefontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	27 Jun	27	griep en pneumonie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8432
110	Christiaan George Fred Strydom	Vischgat, Heidelberg, Z.A.R.	2 Jul	43	Brongitis	Vereeniging	1900/07/09	3255



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111	Christiaan Jacobus Liebenberg	Braklaagte, Senekal, O.V.S.	11 Jul	55	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9003
112	Martha (Martin) Fransina F. Riekert	Suurfontein, Pretoria, Z.A.R.	20 Jul	27	tifoïde koors	Swavelpoort	1900/07/11	14787
113	Gert Frederick Dirk Geringer	Weltevreden, Bethulie, O.V.S.	26 Jul	37	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7567
114	Johannes Christoffel van Deventer	Trafalgar, Thabanchu, O.V.S.	31 Jul	27	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10373
115	Roelf Cornelis Lindeque	Lindequesrust, Ladybrand, O.V.S.	1 Aug	22	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9856
116	Petrus Johannes S.C. Kruger	Groenfontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	10 Aug	21	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8223
117	Commandant Gideon George Cronje	Merinonale, Barkley -Wes, K.K.	13 Aug	53	tifoïde koors	Bothaville	1900/11/06	15148
118	Philippus Jacobus Willer	Rondebult, Winburg, O.V.S.	29 Aug	31	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9394
119	Nicolaas Johannes Gerhardus Laubscher	Glencoe, Wepener, O.V.S.	15 Sep	46	dermobstruksie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7649
120	Henry Gilbert Smith	Hartebeesfontein, Klerksdorp, O.V.S.	17 Sep	34	peritonitis	Paardeberg	1900/02/27	2946
121	Johannes Hendrik Nel	Nieuwefontein, Rouxville, O.V.S.	17 Oct	32	tifoïde koors	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9933
	Heinrich Stock	Pretoria	22 Sept	48	malaria	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10208
122	Alwyn H.J. Scholtz	Harrismith, O.V.S.	28 Oct	34	hartsiekte	Harrismith	onbekend	11856
123	Marthinus Albertse	Ladybrand, O.V.S.	15 Nov	47	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8698
124	Jan Jonathan Durand	Bloemfontein, Wepener, O.V.S.	16 Nov	19	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8447
125	Abraham Bernardus S. Fourie	Modderveld, Wepener, O.V.S.	21 Nov	56	disenterie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	7564
126	Johan Christiaan Pieterse	Rietfontein, Senekal, O.V.S.	26 Nov	24	dermobstruksie	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	9122
127	Ignatius M. de Klerk	Ficksburg, O.V.S.	8 Dec	46	serebro-vaskulêre ongeluk	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	8183
128	Pieter Johannes Jordaan	Coapslaagte, Dordrecht, K.K.	10 Dec	36	tifoïde koors	Bothaville	1900/11/06	15952
129	Andries Petrus J. Venter	Daspoort, Bethulie, O.V.S.	13 Dec	21	breinabses of meningitis	Fouriesburg	1900/07/30	10295
130	Willem Johannes.R. Britz	Hagenstad, Bloemfontein O.V.S.	17 Dec	43	disenterie	Brandfort	1900/08/09	10511

Colombo	1. Batticaloa-begraafplaas, Colombo 2. Kanatta-begraafplaas, Colombo							
1	Frans Petrus Eckhardt (2)	Zanddrift, Rustenburg	25 Sept 00	21	meningitis	Wolhuterskop	22/08/00	11221
2	Andries Arnoldus Foley (2)	Overschot, Bloemfontein	29 Mei 01	29	breinstuwing	Fouriesburg	30/07/00	9627
3	Hendrik Petrus Geldenhuys (1)	Hartebeesfontein, Vrede, O.V.S.	21 Mei 04	62	onbekend	Boschfontein	03/09/00	13783
4	Lourens Pieter A. Geldenhuys (2)	Winburg	22 Jan 02	68	maagkarsinoom	Clocolan	15/09/00	13784
5	Daniël Johannes Joubert (2)	Willoughby, Bethulie	7 Mar 01	28	subdiafragmaatiese abses	Fouriesburg	30/07/00	9781
6	Johannes Jacobus Kachelhoffer (2)	Veels geluk, Bloemfontein	29 Sept 01	47	tifus	Fouriesburg	30/07/00	9790
7	Leon Johannes Hendrikus Kock (2)	Boksburg, Heidelberg	12 Des 01	18	tifoïde koors	Springs	18/06/00	3068
8	Theunis Johannes Kruger (2)	Kerkstraat, Pretoria	3 Jun 00	24	anemie	Pretoria	09/08/00	11313
9	Willem Hendrik Kruger (2)	Driefontein, Smithfield, O.V.S.	5 Sept 01	51	maagkarsinoom	Ficksburg	30/07/00	8229
10	Philip Rudolph Massyn (2)	Witfontein, Pretoria	14 Aug 02	16	tifoïde koors	Kameelpoort	27/10/01	24931
11	Jurie Jacobus Nel (2)	Rexford, Bethlehem	18 Aug 01	24	breinstuwing	Fouriesburg	30/07/00	9928
12	Johannes G Page (2)	Palmietfontein, Smithfield	13 Sept 00	23	pneumonie	Fouriesburg	30/07/00	8390
13	Frederick Willem Scott (2)	Winburg	16 Jun 02	-	disenterie	onbekend	onbekend	geen
14	Michael Smuts (2)	Roodepoort, Winburg	18 Okt 01	19	disenterie	Paardeberg	23/02/00	6459
15	Louis Cornelius Uys (2)	Dampoort, Smithfield	10 Sep 02	25	onbekend	Fouriesburg	30/07/00	8577
16	Petrus Johannes van Bijlon	Leeuwfontein, Lichtenburg	8 Apr 02	47	penisieuse anemie	Zeerust	24/10/00	14269

## ***Acknowledgement and Note by Transcriber***

*Transcription of a series of Articles first published in the Journal of the Dutch Burger Union of Ceylon:*

Vol: XVIII No. 3, January 1929, pp. 103 – 106.

Vol: XXXVI No.1, July 1946, pp. 1 – 6.

Vol. XXXVI No. 2, Oct 1946, pp. 35 – 47.

Vol. XXXVI No. 3, Jan 1947, pp. 68 – 77.

Vol. XXXVI No. 4, April 1947, pp. 101 – 120.

Vol. XXXVII No.1, July 1947, pp. 1 - 15

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*I have included a map of Ceylon (Sri Lanka now) as well as a list of Boer War Prisoners who died in Ceylon received from the Anglo Boer War Museum.*

*I have done my best to ensure that the entire book is completely and accurately transcribed, but it is of course possible that errors were made.*

*The purpose of this transcription is to ensure that the content of a historical document is available to researchers and interested persons.*

*Please report any errors or omissions to:*

*argiewe@gmail.com*

*Pieter van der Merwe*