

## BOER WAR 1899-1902

The Boer War between the British Empire and the two Boer republics - the South African Republic (later known as Transvaal) and the Orange Free State - began on 11th October 1899. British subjects had flocked to these countries searching for wealth following the discovery of gold and diamonds.

As part of the British Empire, the six Australian colonies offered troops and horses and with the formation of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901, a further three Australian contingents consisting of eight battalions were sent to the war. Many Australians who were already in South Africa volunteered and enlisted to fight. Other Australians who were unsuccessful in enlisting in Australia, travelled to South Africa at their own expense and enlisted in British or colonial regiments in South Africa.

Overwhelmingly, Australian troops served in mounted units and were well regarded for their riding and shooting skills, bravery, toughness and calmness in a crisis.

It is estimated 23,000 Australians served in the Boer War and nearly 1,000 soldiers died on active service. About half of these deaths were caused by illness and disease.

Approximately 43,000 horses were transported from Australia and none returned because of Australia's quarantine restrictions.

The initial open warfare became a bitter guerrilla campaign which extended the war by 20 months. In 1902 the British had crushed the Boer resistance and on 31st May 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed at Pretoria to end hostilities.

The National Boer War Memorial on ANZAC Parade in Canberra was unveiled by Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor-General of Australia, on 31 May 2017.