

## BOER WAR ADDRESS 2010.

This is the 8<sup>th</sup> year that we have held the BOER WAR COMMEMORATIVE DAY. in Hobart and the 4<sup>th</sup> year in Launceston. It has now become an annual event; an event that has been purely Tasmanian, although similar events were held last week in other centres of Australia, such as Victoria and Queensland. So it is good that our participation in that long – perhaps ‘forgotten’ war is now being remembered.

We gather today to remember primarily those Tasmanians who went off to fight and remember those 38 Tasmanian sons who died as a result of their services. You will see upon inspection of the most beautiful memorial in Launceston, names of only 26. There are many, many memorials scattered around Tasmania, which were erected after the war, now mainly forgotten, as they were often not included with the general war memorial of the various towns. Boer War Memorials exist, for instance, besides Hobart and Launceston, at Bellerive, Sorell, Ross, Beaconsfield, St Helens, Penguin, Ulverstone, New Norfolk, Waratah, Deloraine and Evandale. Only a dozen years later, of course, a terrible war, the Great War, exploded upon the world scene and the carnage and repercussions from this war is well known. I tend to think, because of its enormity, it over-shadowed The Anglo-Boer War and thus as time went on, indeed, it became our forgotten war. Also we sent troops to South Africa as an independent colony, although when the war finished in 1902, we were a federated nation. Nonetheless, I tend to believe that because it was a colonial war that is another reason why little is remembered of it.

Wars of course, need not happen; they can be avoided. It is not the war we remember. It is to honour those who fought, those men who were prepared to leave our shores, to leave their families, to serve their country. This is an honourable thing, for if we do not have that type of ‘fellow’ then we cannot depend of the preparedness to protect our country from any form of attack. While mentioning ‘preparedness’ we should recount that Tasmanians sent the First Contingent only a fortnight after the war was declared in South Africa, Oct 11, 1899. We had the ability to send troops because we had well trained and disciplined militaria already in place. A vital point.

I would like to point out, as I always do, the part our Tasmanian nurses played in the war in South Africa. All our nurses went there on their own accord and on their own expenses. They too felt the duty to serve and serve they did. Singly one out, which may be unfair, was Nurse Elizabeth Orr. Her life story was amazing, serving not only in South Africa for Tasmania, but I believe previously in the Afghanistan war of 1879. After the The Boer War, she served with major distinction during the First World War and her career after that war was amazing. The reason why I am bringing up Nurse Orr is that on a similar occasion in the year 2011 in Hobart, I would like to be able to unveil a plaque to her memory and not only to her memory, but to the memory of all the Tasmanian nurses who served in that far off land. The project to have the plaque has already begun and hopefully, as stated, this time next year we will be doing just that, unveiling a well deserved plaque in her honour. I know very well, after researching her, after having work published on her, that she would be the first one to wave this honour; after all she sought to serve, not to be acclaimed and is that not the stuff heroes and heroines are made off? Nonetheless, the plaque will be in memory of those who served; served their fellow man, their country and community.

It is an exciting plan and if accomplished and I believe it will, it will be placed near the splendid memorial on Hobart's Domain for all Tasmanians to view and ponder.

Talking of memorials someone some years ago at a previous ceremony made mention that they were willing to erect a memorial to the horses that accompanied our troops. Initially I thought that was some type of frivolous affair, but over the years I have pondered on the concept and have warmed to it. After all, as many horses as men went away and none of them were allowed to return, primarily because of quarantine laws. So we lost 900 and more horses in South Africa; for Australia tens of thousands and for the whole war, hundreds of thousands of our trusty close friend, the horse.

Our troops in South Africa were all mounted infantry, except for one battery from New South Wales. Often they have been described as cavalry, but this is a mistake. Let us remember our forefathers who served in that land so far away and honour them. Remember the near 900 Tasmanians who went away, the in excess of 16,000 Australians and those 600 Australians who died. Or if you have British, Canadian or New Zealand connections, let us at this time honour them as well. If you are connected with the then enemy, the hardy Boer (and I know there have been those who have attended this ceremony before) we welcome as you as you have long ceased to be the enemy. Your people fought for their country and for what they believed was right. We embrace you as a comrade. And now we recognised the many natives who fought, incidentally, on both sides, who also served.

Thank you for attending this ceremony, your support ensures its continuity. May God Bless you all.

- Reg. A. Watson