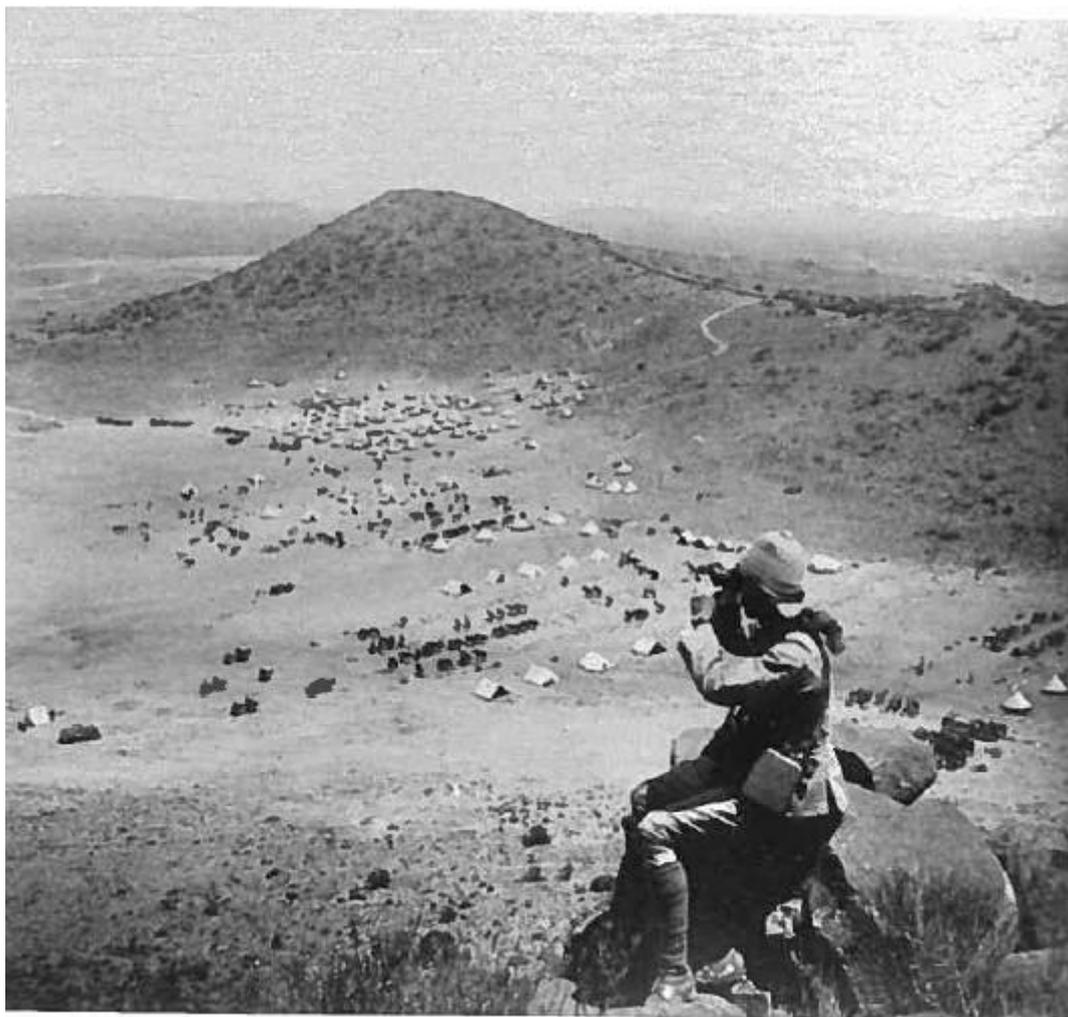


Boer War Memorial Society of WA Inc.

Shoot Straight!

Newsletter - December 2020



The camp at Slingsfontein defended by the 1st West Australian Mounted Infantry

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- Upcoming events

From the President

Greetings members and friends,

Welcome to our newly-named Newsletter, the first from the Society since February 2019. I am very pleased to be able to present this and look forward to working on future editions with our editorial team.

By way of background, I was elected as President of the Society at the AGM held on the 15th of October 2020, taking over from David Thomas who had served as our President for four years previously. I would like to thank David for all of his work for the Society, in particular, our successful re-dedication ceremony in 2017 and obtaining for the Society the use of rooms at the Claremont Bowling Club as part of our affiliation with the Claremont Sub-branch of the RSL. I cannot stress enough how important it is for the growth of our organization that we have a physical 'home' to hold our events.

Prior to being President I served as Treasurer of the Society and continue in that role jointly with my duties as President (if anyone would like to volunteer to be Treasurer, please let me know!). Our new Committee for 2020-2021 is as follows:

- President – Brendan Cook
- Vice-President (and Historian) – John Sweetman
- Secretary – Robert Smith
- Treasurer – Brendan Cook
- Committee – David Thomas, Kevin Bovill (Roving Ambassador), Moira Wilson (Music) and Trish Woodman

My interest in the Boer War extends over many years, primarily as a result of my Great Grandfather, Arthur James Strickland's service with the 2nd West Australian Mounted Infantry in 1900. As a child I had always known about the 'big wars' but had not heard of the Boer War and was intrigued when my Mother told me that her Grandfather had served.

I encourage you to view our website at www.boerwarwa.org.au which contains interesting facts, articles and some wonderful photos of the men of the 1st Contingent. Within the 'links' page on the website is a link to a wonderful website put together by Trish Woodman containing photographs of key battlefields and memorials put together by Trish and the late Matthew 'Midge' Carter in their travels throughout South Africa.

I would like to thank Mike Galvin for his excellent article on Richard Henry Chase and Robert Smith for the link to an excellent paper by Garth Benneyworth of the University of New England on Lieutenant Colonel C.E.E. Umphelby, Australia's highest-ranking Boer War fatality. These make for very interesting reading and I hope you enjoy them as much as I did. Should you wish to contribute material to the website we would be greatly appreciative as would we for any contributions to future newsletters. Should you wish to contribute, you can contact me at President@boerwarwa.org.au or Robert Smith at Secretary@boerwarwa.org.au

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and I look forward to meeting you at our upcoming events.

Brendan Cook FIPA, FTI

President, Boer War Memorial Society of WA Inc.

Book Review – *Breaker Morant* by Peter Fitzsimons, 2020, Hachette Australia

By Brendan Cook, President

Peter Fitzsimons' body of work polarizes Historians both professional and amateur. Some argue that his books are not history at all but instead stories centered on historical events that take license with what actually was said or happened. Others state that works are historically accurate and the everyman writing style employed attracts new readers of history, introducing them to the subject matter and perhaps encouraging them to read further afield.

Regardless of one's view, Fitzsimons' prodigious output and sales figures would be the envy of any writer so he must be doing something right or, at least, be on to something. Fitzsimons himself has never laid claim to being an Historian, instead he self-styles himself as a 'Storian', that is, someone who writes historical stories based on fact. In each of his history-based books he credits the team of Researchers without whom he would not be able to produce works with such frequency.

It was perhaps inevitable that Fitzsimons would eventually write on the subject of Breaker Morant given the 'Breaker's' now embedded place in Australian military folklore and the still simmering arguments as to his and his co-accused's guilt, the fairness of the Courts Martial and the right of the British to execute 'Australian' soldiers.

As one who has an admittedly jaundiced view of Fitzsimons work (I deplore his use of ocker-blokey language and slang) I was surprised at how much I enjoyed reading this book. The slang and ockerisms were as annoying as ever, however, he does a creditable job setting the context to the build-up of the war and how Australia came to be involved. Where this book is the strongest is in the descriptions of the Battles of West Australia Hill (yes, it gets quite a mention!) and Elands River. These accounts are enthralling and make for very enjoyable reading. I take issue with his view of General Sir Redvers Buller - he has perpetuated the myth that he was a bumbler when much more astute and credentialled Boer War Historians such as Thomas Pakenham have demonstrated otherwise.

Fitzsimons' build up to the Court Martial makes for good reading although I noted some inconsistencies about what Fitzsimons claimed happened and then what he states was actually said at the trial. Unfortunately the records of the Court Martial appear to have been destroyed (possibly by enemy bombing in the Second World War) so accounts of who had said what come from disparate sources.

Moreover, I was surprised at Fitzsimons' ultimate conclusions surrounding the Breaker Morant case (with which I largely agree) given that he is an avowed Republican and no great fan of the British establishment.

In conclusion, I recommend that you give this book a go. If you do not feel inclined to buy it, certainly borrow a copy from the library or from a friend. The Society will be offering a copy of the book as a raffle prize at our next general meeting.

Soldier of the Empire

Richard Henry Chase

By GM (Mike) Galvin

On 14 Oct 1914 Fifty-Five-year-old Richard Henry Chase commenced the process of enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force at Blackboy Hill Camp. The examining medical officer passed him as "Fit" subject to him providing himself with a spare set of false teeth. He returned on 19 Oct 1914 with the required false dentition and completed his application to enlist in front of Second Lieutenant Arthur Henry Mountain. Richard Chase falsified his age and declared that he was 47 years old having been born on 10 Oct 1867 at St Lucia in the West Indies. He nominated his mother Mrs Susan Ilfill Chase of 185 St Georges Tce Perth as his next-of-kin as his father had died in 1874 and he was unmarried. His occupation was stated to be orchardist/public servant. He was attested into the AIF on 19 Oct 1914. Even if his age had been truly stated he was well over the maximum age for enlistment. This fact should have been known to Second Lieutenant Mountain so he was either ignorant of the enlistment criteria or chose to ignore the facts before him but there is no way now to determine which of those is true. His schooling had been at Saltash Grammar School, Saltash Cornwall United Kingdom. Following his school education, he was trained by Megoan and Galloway of Liverpool in the Mercantile and Marine Agency profession for 5 years. He then travelled to Africa and tried his hand as a prospector with apparently variable results.

Richard Chase had significant previous military experience which he documented as:

Bechuanaland Field Force 1884/1885 operating mostly in what is now Botswana. He arrived in Western Australia late in 1885 following the Bechuanaland experience.

Second Contingent, WA Mounted Infantry, Anglo-Boer War with regimental number 83. He received the Queens South Africa Medal with the following clasps.

Johannesburg

Diamond Hill

Belfast

Cape Colony

Orange Free State

South Africa 1901

South Africa 1902

He was discharged from the WA Mounted Infantry in Perth on 19 Apr 1901 but later returned to South Africa as a private citizen.

In South Africa he enlisted in the Second Scottish Horse, an irregular unit of British Army (regimental number 42015) as a Lance Corporal and following the Treaty which ended the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1903 he enlisted in the Natal Mounted Police for a service period of 3 years. Following his Mounted Police service, he returned to Western Australia and operated as an orchardist, but later was employed as a public servant. The attesting officer recorded that Richard Chase produced

discharge documents as evidence of all his previous experience. He was assigned to the 16th Battalion with the regimental number 691 and the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Pope, allotted him to D Company of the Battalion. [Second Lieutenant Mountain was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and was also posted to D Company.]

The Battalion concentrated in Melbourne with the other elements of the Fourth Brigade and following a ceremonial march through Melbourne departed Australia through the Port of Melbourne aboard A40 HMAT *Ceramic* on 22 Dec 1914. After disembarking in Egypt through Alexandria on 03 Feb 1915 the Battalion undertook training in Egypt then Lemnos before the Landing at Anzac on 25 Apr 1915. Pte Chase was Killed-in-Action with some confusion of whether it was on 27 or 28 Apr 1915 but the official date was settled to be 28 Apr 1915. His remains were never recovered and therefore he has no known grave.

Pte Chase is remembered on the following official memorials:

Lone Pine Memorial Gallipoli

Australian War Memorial Canberra, ACT

WA State War Memorial, Kings Park

For his service he was entitled to receive the following campaign medals:

1914-1915 Star

British War Medal

Victory Medal

These campaign medals were issued to his family together with the Memorial plaque and scroll. His eldest brother Ernest Edward Chase, assistant private secretary to the Governor WA wrote to Army Records asking that his age shown on the scroll be amended from 47 years to 55 years. The reply was simply to state that he enlisted with the age of 47 years and despite what the family requested, that was his 'Army Age' and there would be no amendment. Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission also show his age to be 47 years.

Unofficial Memorials:

After his death his family arranged for a memorial tablet to be fixed to an internal wall of St Georges Anglican Cathedral, Perth. The tablet remains to this day.

Pte Chase has a memorial plaque in Kings Park (M 57) which was dedicated by his mother on 03 Aug 1919 and it shows his age as 54 years. [Mrs Chase died at the age of 83 years on 20 Nov 1920 and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery.]

The Memorial to the South African War in Kings Park has an additional band consisting of the names of those who served in WAMI or Commonwealth Horse and died on Active Service during the Great War. Surprisingly, Pte Chase is not amongst those listed.

There was a further connection to the Army as a younger brother, William St Lucien Chase was awarded the Victoria Cross for extreme bravery while serving as a Lieutenant in the 28th Bombay Native Infantry during the Second Afghan War. The action took place near Kandahar, North West

Frontier on 16 Aug 1880. William Chase VC continued to serve in the British Indian Army and was later awarded the decoration of Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB). He rose to the rank of Colonel and for some time served as a Temporary Brigadier. Colonel Chase VC CB died in Jun 1908 and was buried at Quetta in what is now Pakistan. The Chase family donated the medal group of Colonel Chase VC CB to the Army Museum Western Australia in 2003 and although the group was not strictly within the collection criteria of the Museum, they were accepted through the link to Pte Richard Henry Chase 16 Bn AIF, late 2nd Contingent WAMI.

When completing the AWM circular his brother made special note of the fact that Richard Chase had a lifelong interest in the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Much of the recruiting material produced from 1914 to 1918 emphasised that soldiers were fighting for *The Empire*. Private Richard Henry Chase was the embodiment of an Empire soldier having been born in the West Indies, educated in England, serving in an Imperial Unit before migrating to Australia and then serving in South Africa in both a Western Australian Infantry Unit and later in an irregular Unit of the British Army followed by employment in the Natal Mounted Police. It is hard to know why a 55-year-old man would then volunteer for service in the AIF and become a false age enlistment. To be Killed-in-Action at Gallipoli completes the definition of this paper. Richard Henry Chase was truly a soldier of the Empire and having a brother with the VC adds gloss to his story.

G M (Mike) Galvin

20 Nov 2020

Footnote:

This is a very fine photographic portrait of Richard Henry Chase in uniform including head dress (forage cap) wearing his QSA with clasps at AWM H05925



Link to Article (submitted by Robert Smith)

[Microsoft Word - 12 - Notes.doc \(une.edu.au\)](#)

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Garth C. Benneyworth, 'Lt Colonel C. E. E. Umphelby, Australia's Highest Ranking Boer War Fatality: Establishing his Memorial', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 14, 2011, pp. 249-258.

Upcoming events

1. Our first General Meeting for a number of years will be held as follows:

Date: Tuesday, 23rd February 2021

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Location: Claremont Bowling Club, 64 Bayview Terrace, Claremont WA 6010.

Presentation Topic:

Presenter – Brendan Cook

Topic - Wage theft or maladministration? Pay Debacle of the Boer War (by Brendan Cook)

2. Our annual Commemoration event is scheduled for Sunday, 30 May 2021 at the South African War Memorial Kings Park. Exact timing to be provided at a later date.