

**PRETORIA CITIZENS SERVICE MEDAL : GREAT WAR,  
1914-1919**

by **Henk Loots**

From time to time medal collectors find groups, spanning the First World War period, which contain a bronze medal with a red and yellow ribbon and the inscription on the reverse "Pretoria Citizens Service Medal: Great War 1914 - 1919" in the upper half and in the lower half "Dienst Medalje van Pretoria's Burgers: Grote Oorlog 1914 - 1919". The obverse of the medal has the Coat of Arms of Pretoria with supporters, crest and motto "Praestantia Praevaleat Pretoria" on ribbon.

Up to now very little has been known about the circumstances surrounding the issue of this unofficial First World War Medal. Although it is listed under item 167 in the preliminary catalogue "Commemorative Medals of South African Interest in the Africana Museum" published by the Museum in 1979, the sub-entry under the heading 'Literature' reads 'not traced'. Enquiries made by the Medal and Coin Section of the National Cultural Historical Museum in Pretoria in the late 70's have also been unsuccessful.

During a recent visit, however, to the State Library in Pretoria, I noticed a copy of the Mayor's Minutes for the then Pretoria Town Council, period 1915 - 1919. Under the heading "WELCOME TO RETURNED SOLDIERS, ETC., AND ERECTION OF WAR MEMORIAL" the following appeared:

'The General Purposes Committee presented the following report at a Meeting of the Council held on June 13th, 1919:

- (a) In the month of January, the Council passed the following resolution: "That, subject to the approval of the Government, this Council adopt the principle of the erection of a Memorial to local fallen soldiers, on Church Square or other approved site<sup>1</sup>; that the details in connection with the scheme, and the formation of a Citizen's Committee be arranged by the General Purposes Committee who shall report to the Council."
- (b) At a Public Meeting convened by His Worship the Mayor and held in the Municipal Hall on the 6th May, 1919, the following resolutions were unanimously passed:
- (1) That this Public Meeting of Pretoria Citizens resolves that a public welcome shall be given to Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen.
  - (2) This Meeting of the Citizens of Pretoria resolves that the Town Council be requested to extend a Civic Welcome to, and entertain the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen.
  - (3) That this Public Meeting of Pretoria Citizens requests the Town Council to give permission for the erection of a suitable memorial in the centre of Church Square to all Pretorians who have fallen in the Great War.

- (4) That a Committee consisting of Sir John Wessels, The Lord Bishop of Pretoria, His Worship the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, and the Presidents of the various Patriotic Societies, be appointed to carry out the necessary arrangements”.
- (c) Under powers of Section 87 (1) of the Local Government Ordinance 1912, the Council may lay out and adorn any square or open space the property of or vested in the Council by any architectural or other scheme of ornamentation including statues, fountains, or other structures, and under powers of Section 87 (7) the Council may incur a reasonable amount of expenditure necessary for public entertainment.
- (d) Crown Grant No. 103 by which Church Square was vested in the Council in trust for the perpetual use and enjoyment of the inhabitants of Pretoria provides that no buildings, statues or memorials of any description shall be erected on or other improvement effected to the ground without the sanction of the Lieutenant-Governor being first obtained thereto.

The Council resolved:

- (a) That a civic welcome to extended to Returned Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Nurses, etc., in or about the month of August, 1919, and that the sum of £1,000 be voted to meet the expenditure in connection therewith.
- (b) That, subject to the approval of the Administrator in terms of the Crown Grant referred to, the Council agree to the erection, in the centre of Church Square, of a memorial to all Pretorians who have fallen in the Great War.
- (c) That the Council donate the sum of £1,000 as a nucleus of a War Memorial Fund.
- (d) That the Council be represented on the War Memorial Fund Committee by a member of the Town Council and the Town Engineer; and that the accepted design of the Memorial must be to the approval of the Council.

At the next meeting of the Council the Committee appointed to organise the welcome to Returned Soldiers reported that they had made the following arrangements:

- (a) To hold the civic reception to Returned Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Nurses in Burgers Park, during the period set apart for the Peace Celebrations.
- (b) To present each Pretoria soldier, Sailor, Airman and Nurse with a medal of bronze or gunmetal of the regulation size, with a bar and colours of the Municipality attached; the medal being embossed on one side with the Pretoria Municipal Coat of Arms and on the reverse with the words in the English and Dutch Languages “Pretoria Citizens Service Medal. Great War 1914 - 1919.”

It would seem that the peace was extensively celebrated in Pretoria in 1919. These celebrations were interwoven with the Welcome to Returned Soldiers and this welcome included the homecoming of Generals Botha and Smuts. As two days elapsed between the conclusion of the peace celebrations and homecoming of the generals, the town remained decorated for the whole of the week.

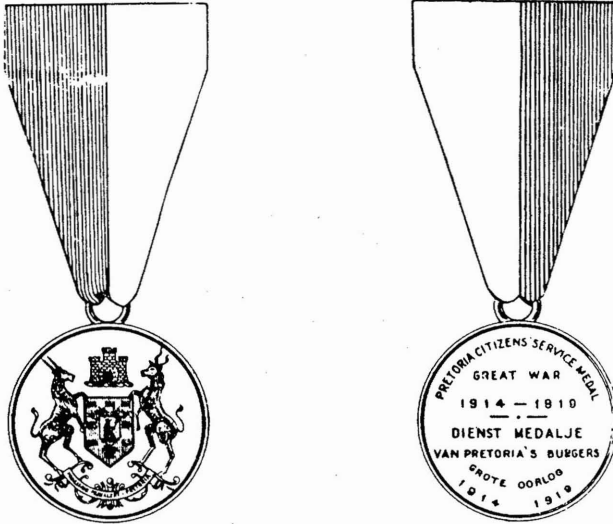
The decorations and illuminations, according to the Mayor, were of a description never before attempted in Pretoria and a number of photographs appeared in the Mayor's Minutes, where it was stated that particularly the Union Buildings were illuminated by what is known as Flood Lighting in addition to the usual coloured electric lamps. To quote again from the Mayor's Minutes: "Pretoria at times looked like a fairyland and I hoped and believed that all our Pretoria boys who were in Pretoria had a thoroughly good time and really believed that we were glad they were back and were grateful to them for all they had done for us and for South Africa and the Empire during the Great War".

The official Programme of Events which according to the Mayor's Minutes "details all we attempted to do, which went off without a hitch of any kind" is still available. From this it is clear that on Monday, the 4th of August 1919, bronze Commemorative Medals for 1914 - 1919 War were presented by his Worship the Mayor to all returned nurses, soldiers, sailors and airmen who attended the particular meeting, and by implication, were Pretorians by residence. It is also interesting to note that the Military ceremony, when War Medals earned by men who served in the Great War, were presented, took place on the previous day, Sunday, the 3rd of August 1919.

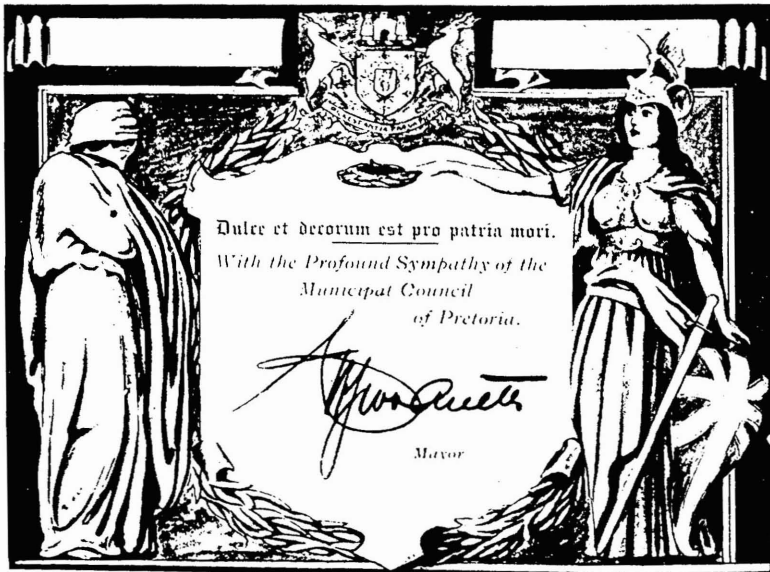
Sketches of the medal as shown in these Minutes are reproduced herewith as well as a facsimile of the Memorial Card sent to the relatives of those Pretorians who fell in the Great War. It would be interesting to hear from any member of the Society who has a specimen of this Memorial Card.

If any members have details of groups containing this particular Memorial War Medal please let the Society know about it. This would be a first step in ascertaining whether only Pretoria residents were eligible for this particular medal.

1. This intended memorial has never been erected by the City Council (note of the editor).



The Medal presented to all Pretoria Citizens who took part in the Great War.



The Memorial Card sent by His Worship the Mayor to the relatives of those Pretorians who fell in the Great War.

## MOONTLIKE VOORBEELDE VIR REISACHER SE SKILDERYE VAN DIE TWEDE ANGLO-BOERE-OORLOG TE PRETORIA (1)

deur C. de Jong

### Die herkoms van die skilder Reisacher en sy werk

In 1969 is in Duitsland vyf groot skilderye met tonele uit die Tweede Anglo-Boere-oorlog 1899-1902 ontdek. Die skilder is Sylvester Reisacher, 1862-1916, vroeër bekend as onder meer veldslagskilder, in Duits "Schlachtenmaler". Sy opdraggewer is tot dusver onbekend. Die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum (NASKO) te Pretoria het in 1972 die vyf skilderye aangekoop en Minister P. Koornhof het op 2 September 1976 die uitstalling daarvan in die Museum aan die Boomstraat geopen. Hulle is die museum se pronkstukke. Mnr. Ton Henning, vakkundige van die Museum, het inligting oor Reisacher as mens en skilder verskaf en die vyf skilderye en die uitgebeelde veldslae uitvoerig beskryf in die brosjure *Vyf skilderye van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog 1899-1902*, wat deur NASKO in 1976 gepubliseer is. Hy kon egter enkele vrae wat deur die navorsing oor die skilder en sy werk opgeroep is, nog nie beantwoord nie. Ek wil probeer om hulle te beantwoord.

Die eerste vraag is of Reisacher 'n egte of 'n onegte, buite-egtelike seun van die kunsskilder Gabriel Reisacher was. Mnr. Henning meen dat sy moeder - Ehefrau Reisacher - 'n byvrou was, maar Ehefrau beteken wetlike eggenote en ons mag gerus aanneem dat Sylvester 'n egte, wetlike seun was.

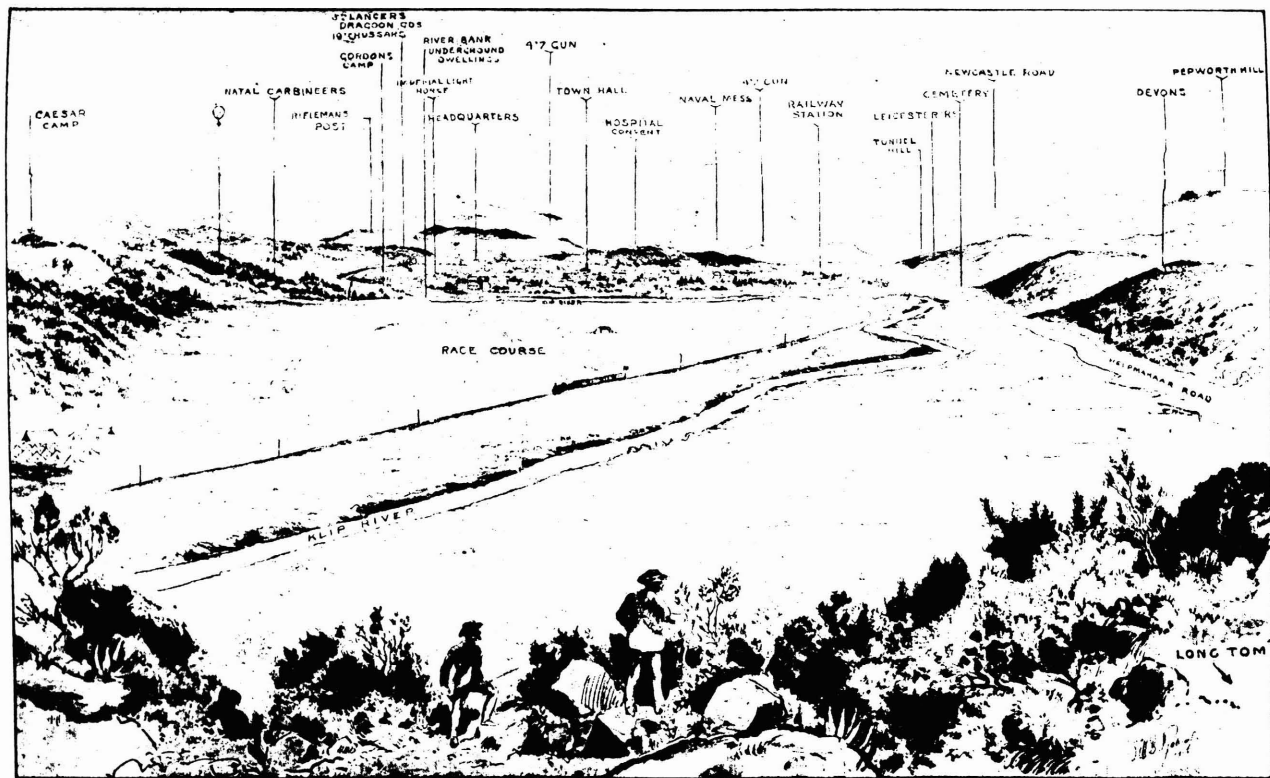
Die tweede vraag is of Sylvester Suid-Afrika tydens of na die Anglo-Boere-oorlog besoek het soos ander oorlogskunstenaars en tekenaars as "Kriegsmaler" gedoen het, van wie Mnr. Henning 'n reeks Britse name noem. Reisacher se noukeurigheid en lewendigheid pleit daarvoor dat hy sy werk in Suid-Afrika gemaak of altans met sketse en tekeninge voorberei het. Maar tot dusver is geen spoor van 'n besoek deur hom aan Suid-Afrika gevind nie. Die goeie eienskappe van sy vyf werke in NASKO kan m.i. verklaar word uit sy nougesette studie van die talryke tekeninge en sketse wat veral in Brittanje gepubliseer is en wat regstreeks uit Suid-Afrika afkomstig was. Ons mag daarom gerus aanneem dat Reisacher Suid-Afrika waarskynlik nie besoek het nie omdat dit vir die vervaardiging van sy skilderye nie noodsaaklik was nie.

Die derde vraag is watter bronne en voorbeelde hy gebruik het as ons aanneem dat hy nie in Suid-Afrika gewerk het nie. Mnr. Henning het nie geprobeer om hierdie vraag te beantwoord nie. Ek meen voorbeelde vir Reisacher se skilderye te herken in gepubliseerde werke, ook kan vir sommige van die skilderye slegs waarskynlikheid en geen absolute sekerheid verskaf word nie.

Reisacher was as skilder 'n vakman en bekwaam in die uitbeelding van wye landskappe met talle menslike figure daarin. Hy was 'n leerling van die "Schlachtenmaler" Ludwig of Louis Braun, wat verbonde was aan die militêre akademie in München, Suid-Duitland. Reisacher toon ook in die vyf werke in NASKO dat hy die weergawe van landskappe, selfs in vreemde wêrelddele, en die veeleisende komposisie van slagveldtaferele met woelende mensemassa's in vinnige aksie onder sonnige of sombere beligting beheers.



Skildery deur Sylvester Reisacher van die beleg van Ladysmith deur die Boere in 1899-1900, aanwesig in die Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum te Pretoria (NASKO). Die toeskouer se blik is na die suide gerig waar ver weg in die vlakte Ladysmith lê. Regs is die Long Tom-kanon op Bulwanaheuwel weergegee tydens 'n beskieting van die stad. Links van dié kanon staan vier Boere-offisiere wat met mekaar beraadslaag.



The Siege of Ladysmith, Jan. 1900. View from Bulwana Hill  
 From a sketch by George Lynch, War Correspondent.  
 The hospital train is here shown on its way to Intombi Camp with its  
 daily load of sick and wounded.

Uit: Louis Creswick – South Africa and the Transvaal War  
 Volume III (deel 3) Edinburgh-Cape Town 1900, p.128

Indien hy die vyf skilderye in die chronologiese volgorde van die uitgebeelde veldslae gemaak het, toon hulle 'n interessante ontwikkeling in sy werk. Hy het begin om sy voorbeelde noukeurig na te volg; dit blyk duidelik uit sy eerste twee skilderye in NASKO. Maar as kunstenaar had hy die talent om bestanddele van sy voorbeelde selfstandig te groepeer en te varieer. Sy latere drie werke is dan ook in toenemende mate vryer van sy voorbeelde en selfstandiger van opset.

### **Eerste skildery: Die beskieting van Ladysmith**

Dit lyk my dat Reisacher die bekende sketstekening van George Lynch, oorlogskorrespondent van die Britse pers in Suid-Afrika, noukeurig gevolg het. Dit stel 'n uitsig vanaf die Bulwanaheuwel met een van drie Long Tomkanonne na Ladysmith voor. Die omtrek van die vlakte, waarin die dorp geleë is, die loop van die Kliprivier en van die spoorlyn skuins deur die vlakte en die koppies rondom kom redelik ooreen met Lynch se werk. Laasgenoemde is afgebeeld in onder meer Louis Creswick, *South Africa and the Transvaal War*, volume III, Edinburgh - Cape Town 1900, p.128, en L. Penning, *De oorlog in Zuid-Afrika*, deel een, Rotterdam 1900, p. 232-233. Reisacher het die kaal voorgrond in Lynch se skets waar slegs enkele name as aanduiding staan, uitvoerig aangevul met gewens, ontleen aan ander tekeninge en aan foto's. Sommige van laasgenoemde het ek ter vergelyking bygevoeg. Links is 'n Krupp-veldkanon van die Boere in aksie, regs 'n Creusot-vestingkanon, bygenaam Long Tom. Die vloer van planke onder die Long Tom is van foto's bekend. Die Boer met die lang, opgestoke stok links langs die Long Tom herinner my aan die artilleris met kanonloopwisper op dieselfde plek op 'n afbeelding in L. Penning, deel een, 166, wat dus moontlik deur Reisacher gebruik is.

Links van die Long Tom staan 'n groep Boere-offisiere wat met mekaar gesels. Ons moet onthou dat een van die beginsels van die veldslagskilderkuns van alle tye - ook van Reisacher - was om aan die veldhere 'n opvallende plek te gee. Ons moet dus in die vier offisiere Boeregeneraals vermoed. Mnr. Charles More te Pretoria het geopper dat die offisier regs die Fransman Georges de Villebois-Mareuil is en die offisier links generaal D. Erasmus. Eersgenoemde is maklik herkenbaar aan sy Franse blou uniform met tresse. Hy is voor die oorlog in dié uniform in Europa gefotografeer en verskyn so in boeke oor die oorlog. Hy het in Suid-Afrika egter altyd 'n grys pak klere met swart knope en 'n Boerehoed gedra. Wie kan die ander offisiere in Boereklleding wees? Ek dink aan die bekende foto waarop die generaals Lucas Meyer, Louis Botha en D. Erasmus aan die Natalse front afgebeeld staan. Dit is moontlik om in die offisier links die swartgebaarde D. Erasmus te herken wat as generaal in 'n oorlog teen Swartes die bynaam generaal maroela ('n boomsoort) gekry het. Die twee ander offisiere is nog moeiliker te herken, maar dit is moontlik dat die skilder met hulle Meyer en Botha as opperbevelhebber en onderbevelhebber aan die Natalse front op die oog gehad het.

(word vervolg)





“Long-Tom” in stelling vóór Ladysmith

Uit: L. Penning — De oorlog in Zuid-Afrika  
H.A. Daamen, Rotterdam, (1900)



Foto van drie Boeregeneraals aan die front in Noord-Natal in 1899.  
Van links na regs: Lukas Meyer, opperbevelhebber in Noord-Natal,  
Louijs Botha en Daniël Erasmus ("generaal maroela")  
Foto: Transvaalse Argiefbewaarplek, Staatsargief Pretoria