

AN UNUSUAL DOCUMENT OF THE ANGLO-BOER WAR – THE VISITORS’ BOOK OF THE TRANSVAAL HOTEL IN PRETORIA

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‘n Buitengewone dokument uit die Anglo-Boereoorlog – die besoekersboek van die Transvaal Hotel in Pretoria

Dié bydrae ondersoek die waarde van “ongewone” dokumente vir historiese navorsing. Die Annalesskool van Frankryk het historici die belangrikheid geleer om ‘n breër uitkyk op ander moontlike bronne as die voor die hand liggende dokumente soos amptelike regeringsdokumente en private dagboeke en briewe te hê.

Die besoekersboek van die Transvaal Hotel in Pretoria gedurende en ná die Anglo-Boereoorlog van 1899-1902 bewys die waarde van sodanige “ongewone” dokumente.

Die historiese waarde van die boek is onskatbaar. Dit bevat die handtekeninge van nie slegs vooraanstaande persone soos Winston Churchill, sir Arthur Conan Doyle en Leo Amery nie, maar ook oorlogskorrespondente en Britse generaals, soos John Brocklehurst, Edward Brabant, Horace Smith-Dorrien en Herbert Plumer, en Boeregeneraals soos Christiaan de Wet, Louis Botha en Barry Hertzog, asook Waarnemende President Schalk Burger van Transvaal. Talle ander mans en vroue (maar hoofsaaklik mans) wat beroemd was of in die twintigste eeu roem sou verwerf, het in die hotel tuisgegaan. Die boek is bykans ‘n “Who’s Who” van die Anglo-Boereoorlog.

As sodanig besit die boek beslis antikwariese waarde. Wat dit egter histories belangriker maak, is dat die verblyf van party van hierdie besoekers in sommige gevalle met belangrike momente in die oorlog verbind word. In party gevalle stel dit die historikus in staat om die plek vas te stel waar ‘n historiese figuur hom op ‘n gegewe oomblik bevind het.

Dit is die skrywer se oortuiging dat historici bewus daarvan moet wees dat “ongewone” dokumente hulle in hulle navorsing behulpsaam kan wees.

Sleutelwoorde: Anglo-Boereoorlog, besoekersboeke, Boere-offisiere, Britse offisiere, handtekeninge, historiese bronne, joiners, oorlogskorrespondente, Pretoria, Transvaal Hotel, Winston Churchill

This contribution emphasises at the value historians should place on “unusual” sources in their research. The Annales School of France has taught us the importance of adopting a broader outlook on other possible sources than merely the obvious such as official government documents and private diaries and letters.

The visitors’ book of the Transvaal Hotel in Pretoria during and after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 proves the value of such “unusual” documents.

The historical value of the book is priceless. It contains the signatures of not only distinguished figures such as Winston Churchill, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Leo Amery, but also war correspondents and British generals, such as John Brocklehurst, Edward Brabant, Horace Smith-Dorrien and Herbert Plumer, and Boer generals such as Christiaan de Wet, Louis Botha and Barry Hertzog, and Acting President Schalk Burger of the Transvaal. Many more men and women (but mostly men) who were famous or were to become famous in the twentieth century stayed at the hotel. It is almost a “Who’s Who” of the Anglo-Boer War.

As such there is a definite antiquarian value to the book. But what makes it historically more important is that the stay of some of these visitors is sometimes linked to important events during the war. In some instances it assists the historian in ascertaining the whereabouts of historical figures at a given moment.

It is the author’s contention that historians should be aware of the fact that “unusual” documents can assist them in their research.

Key words: Anglo-Boer War, autographs, Boer officers, British officers, collaborators, Pretoria, historical sources, Transvaal Hotel, visitors’ books, war correspondents, Winston Churchill

Introduction

The emergence of the Annales School in France in the twentieth century as a new field in historiography, with its inter-connection between history and the social sciences, has brought about an extension of boundaries in historiography. Not only has this ensured a movement away from the narrow Rankian view on history to describe political events, but it has also drawn the historian’s attention to less traditional sources for an investigation into the past. State documents could be complemented by literally all kinds of historical rests to reconstruct and understand the past.

Historian F.A. van Jaarsveld mentions, as new types of sources, lists of market prices for the study of fluctuations in agricultural production, notarial rolls for the changed fortunes of family farms, and church registers for the study of demographic movements.¹

¹ F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Moderne geskiedskrywing* (Durban, 1982), p. 30.

Another interesting source in this regard is public comment, which can be a useful reflection of a certain mentality of a given period. For example, in 1999 the author asked the Afrikaans speaking students in his first year history course their opinion in writing on the Anglo-Boer War of a century before. Their comments were illuminating.²

In another document, the visitors' book at the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein, Albert Grundlingh has picked up a valuable comment by a visitor, who wrote in the late 1990s: "Dit is baie interessant, maar tel vandag vir niks." (It is very interesting but counts for nothing today). Grundlingh's deduction was that some Afrikaners found it difficult to connect their understanding of the past, and the Anglo-Boer War in particular, with developments in South Africa since 1994.³ There are therefore, clearly, out of the ordinary documents available for the researcher of the Anglo-Boer War.

In this article the emphasis falls on one of the most interesting and most unusual documents of the Anglo-Boer War – the visitors' book signed by guests booking in at the Transvaal Hotel in Pretoria, capital of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (the Transvaal), during and after the war of 1899-1902 (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1: The leather-bound visitors' book of Transvaal Hotel, which contains more than 14,000 signatures of the visitors to the hotel for the period 2 May 1900 to 26 October 1902. This covers the last five weeks of Boer rule in Pretoria during the Anglo-Boer War, and the period of the British occupation from 5 June 1900, until five months after the Peace of Vereeniging of 31 May 1902. (Photograph: F. Pretorius, 2012)

² F. Pretorius, Historiese perspektiewe op die Anglo-Boereoorlog in Grietjie Verhoef (red.), *Die Anglo-Boereoorlog: Herdenkingslesings aan die Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit, 1999* (Johannesburg, 1999), p. 21.

³ A. Grundlingh, The Anglo-Boer War in 20th-century Afrikaner consciousness, in F. Pretorius, *Scorched earth* (Cape Town, 2001), p. 253.

The historical value of the book is priceless. It contains the signatures of Winston Churchill, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of the Sherlock Holmes detective series), Leo Amery (editor of *The Times history of the war in South Africa*), Generals John Brocklehurst, Edward Brabant, Horace Smith-Dorrien and Herbert Plumer, and Acting President Schalk Burger of the Transvaal and the Boer Generals Christiaan de Wet, Louis Botha and Ben Viljoen, all in one book. And those of many more men and women (but mostly men) who were famous or were to become famous in the twentieth century. In a sense it is almost a “Who’s Who” of the Anglo-Boer War. As such there is a definite antiquarian value to the book. But what makes it historically more important is that the stay of some of these visitors is sometimes linked to important events during the war.

This leather-bound book with 982 pages of entries, weighing 33 lbs (15 kg) and measuring 18 x 17 x 4 inches (46 x 43 x 10 cm) was locked away in a vault of the accountancy firm Ernst & Young in Pretoria and has recently been presented to the author as a gift. The book contains more than 14,000 signatures of the visitors to the hotel for the period 2 May 1900 to 26 October 1902. This covers the last five weeks of Boer rule in Pretoria during the Anglo-Boer War, and the period of the British occupation from 5 June 1900, until five months after the peace of Vereeniging of 31 May 1902.

Staying at an hotel at the time of the Anglo-Boer War was obviously regarded as a logical act for the well-to-do and socially aware guests in Pretoria. There was in actual fact no other accommodation available to the visitor. The sojourn by thousands of British officers at the Transvaal Hotel during the British occupation of the capital is a continuation of this phenomenon, where the officers clearly chose to stay in the comfort of an hotel instead of bivouacking with their regiments in the outskirts of the city.

The two finest hotels in Pretoria at the time were the Grand Hotel and the Transvaal Hotel. The Grand Hotel stood at the south eastern corner of Church Square and Market Street (present day Paul Kruger Street). It was built in 1890 and originally called the President Hotel. In 1895 it became the Grand Hotel with S. Schlomer as proprietor.⁴

The Transvaal Hotel, refurbished, upgraded and given a third storey by proprietor S.B. Levy in 1899 just before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War,⁵ (**Figure 2**) was situated on the southern side of Pretorius Street between St. Andries and Market Street (present day Thabo Sehume and Paul Kruger Street). According to an Austrian volunteer on the side of the Boers, Franco Seiner, who stayed over at the hotel in January 1900, the rate was £1 per night,⁶ although there are some inscriptions in the book indicating that guests paid only 15 shillings per person when sharing a room.

⁴ L. Dunston, *Young Pretoria 1889-1913* (Pretoria, 1975), p. 69.

⁵ L. Dunston, *Young Pretoria 1889-1913* (1975), p. 238.

⁶ F. Seiner, *Ervaringen en herinneringen van een Boerenstrijder op het slagveld van Zuid-Afrika* (Doesburg, 1902), p. 22.



Figure 2: The Transvaal Hotel, refurbished, upgraded and given a third storey by proprietor S.B. Levy in 1899 just before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War
(Photograph: L. Dunston, *Young Pretoria 1889-1913*, Pretoria, 1975, p. 239).

The hotel was subsequently renamed the Polley's Hotel. It has since been demolished, and all that is left is the name of an arcade called Polley's Arcade on the spot. Ernst & Young's predecessors, Ralph Craggs Accountants, were the auditors of the Polley's Hotel, and Louis van Breda, Director, Audit, of Ernst & Young in Pretoria, explains that the book basically came with the furniture.⁷ It is suspected that the reason for preserving the book was purely because of the signature of Winston Churchill.

Under Boer rule

In the five weeks between 2 May and 4 June 1900 that Pretoria was still under Boer rule, most of the guests at the Transvaal Hotel were civilians. These included the medical doctors W.J. van der Merwe of Krugersdorp⁸ and Neptune F. Blood of Standerton,⁹ and businessman X. du Homme de St. Croix, who continued his visits during the period of British occupation.¹⁰ St. Croix was a French baker from Johannesburg.

⁷ Interview: Mr Louis van Breda, Director, Audit, Ernst & Young, Pretoria, 2007-05-27; E-mail, Louis van Biljon – Fransjohan Pretorius, 2007-06-28.

⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-13, p. 24; *Staats-Almanak voor de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1899* (Pretoria, 1898), p. 89.

⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-13, p. 25; *Staats-Almanak voor de Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek 1899*, p. 86.

¹⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-03, p. 4, 1900-05-07, p. 10, 1900-05-17, p. 30, 1900-08-15, p. 131 and 1900-08-23, p. 138.

On 31 October 1899 he received a contract from the republican government to erect field bakeries on the Natal front and supply the Boer commissariats at Glencoe and Elandslaagte with bread and rusks.¹¹

A number of Boer officers enjoyed the hospitality of the Transvaal Hotel in this period. Although it was probably the clerk who signed him in, the already famous Boer scout, Captain Danie Theron, and two of his friends, of whom one would have been Lieutenant Bernie Enslin, stayed over on 3 May 1900,¹² having journeyed from the regions of Bloemfontein in the Free State to arrange equipment for their corps. On learning of the commencement of the advance of Lord Roberts, the British Commander-in-Chief, from Bloemfontein on the same day, they had to rush back to their corps. On 6 May Theron was already at Kroonstad in the Free State, where he and Judge J.B.M. Hertzog were planning the defence of the town.¹³ Theron was to be killed in a skirmish with Major-General A.F. Hart's column in the western Transvaal on 5 September 1900.

The entry in the visitors' book on 16 May by Commandant C.W.H. van der Post of Fauresmith,¹⁴ father of the later Sir Laurens, assists us in determining the date when this former chairman of the Free State Volksraad arrived in Pretoria after his wanderings to elude the British following Major-General R.A.P. Clements's occupation of Fauresmith on 27 March 1900. Both Generals Tobias Smuts and Sarel du Toit enjoyed the hospitality of the hotel with their wives on respectively 5 and 22 May.¹⁵ Two future Boer generals of the western Transvaal, burghers Jan C.G. Kemp and Lodewyk A.S. Lemmer, stayed over on 31 May.¹⁶

Four foreign military attachés with the Boer forces were also guests at the Transvaal Hotel in May 1900. The first was Lieutenant-Colonel V.J. Romejko-Gurko on 6 and again on 30 May.¹⁷ He arrived in Pretoria via Lourenço Marques in Mozambique on 26 January 1900, and subsequently reported on the Boer siege of Ladysmith and events in the central-northern Free State. Between his two visits he observed Roberts's advance towards Pretoria.¹⁸ The Norwegian military attaché with the Boers, Captain J. Allum, stayed over on 9 May, and the French military attaché,

¹¹ Transvaal Archives, Archives of the Head Committee of the Commissariat of the ZAR, 40, Book 2, HCC – X. du Homme de St. Croix, 1899-1-31, pp. 64 and 73.

¹² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-03, p. 4.

¹³ J.H. Breytenbach, *Komdt. Danie Theron: Baasverkenner van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog* (Cape Town, 1950), p. 166.

¹⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-16, p. 29.

¹⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-05, p. 7 & 1900-05-22, p. 41.

¹⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-31, p. 58.

¹⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-06, p. 8 & 1900-05-30, p. 55.

¹⁸ M.C.E. van Schoor (ed), The despatches of Lt.-Col. Gurko of the Russian General Staff attached to the Boer forces in South Africa, *Christiaan de Wet-Annale* 3, October 1975, pp. 174-194.

Captain M.G. Demange, on 12 May and again on 31 May.¹⁹ Captain Carl Reichmann, the American military attaché with the Boer forces, booked in on 12, 25 and 31 May.²⁰ With a keen eye for the organization of the Boer forces, he was to file a comprehensive report on the Boer military operations from Paardeberg in February to Komati Poort in September 1900.²¹ This report was published by Scripta Africana in the 1980s.²²

Approximately 2 000 foreign volunteers joined the Boer war effort until the British occupation of Pretoria. Four important volunteers staying at the Transvaal Hotel in May 1900 were the Russian soldier and journalist, Yevgeny Maximov (7 and 13 May), the German artillerist Oskar Hintrager (3, 13 and 23 May), and the Frenchmen, Naval Lieutenant de Chteau-Vieux (9 and 20 May) and Count O. d'Etchegoyen (9 May).²³ Hintrager accompanied the Free State Artillery Corps between June and September 1900 under General Christiaan de Wet. His diary was published in German in 1902, entitled *Steijn, de Wet und die Oranje-Freistaater*, and subsequently in Dutch and in Afrikaans.²⁴ The two Frenchmen fought in the western Free State in March-April 1900 as members of the European Legion of the French volunteer, Colonel Georges de Villebois-Mareuil. D'Etchegoyen's diary was published in 1901 in English under the pseudonym "An Ex-Lieutenant of General de Villebois-Mareuil" with the title *Ten months in the field with the Boers by an Ex-Lieutenant of General de Villebois-Mareuil*.²⁵

Maximov's stay was of special historical interest. He was de Villebois Mareuil's deputy in the European Legion until the latter's death on 5 April 1900. On 30 April he fought with distinction at Tobakop in the eastern Free State until he was seriously wounded. Early in May he was elected as combat-general by several Boer commandos, but his injuries prevented him from taking the field. Requested to attend the last session of the Transvaal Volksraad on 7 May (the day he booked in at the Transvaal Hotel), he was personally thanked by State Secretary F.W. Reitz for his services to the Transvaal. Believing that the war was over with the British occupation of Pretoria and still experiencing injury problems, he returned to Russia, where he campaigned for financial assistance for the Boers.²⁶

¹⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-09, p. 15, 1900-05-12, p. 22 & 1900-05-31, p. 57.

²⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-12, p. 22, 1900-05-25, p. 46 & 1900-05-31, p. 57.

²¹ C. Reichmann, *Report on the operations of the Boer army* (Washington, 1902).

²² *Extracts from the reports of Captain S.L.H. Slocum and Captain Carl Reichmann*, (Johannesburg, 1987).

²³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-03, p. 4, 1900-05-07, p. 10, 1900-05-09, p. 16, 1900-05-13, p. 24, 1900-05-20, p. 35 & 1900-05-23, p. 42.

²⁴ Anon, *Steijn, de Wet und die Oranje-Freistaater* (Tübingen, 1902); Anon, *Met Steijn en de Wet op kommando* (Rotterdam, 1902); J.J. Oberholster (red), *Dagboek van Oskar Hintrager – Saam met Christiaan de Wet, Mei tot September 1900*, *Christiaan de Wet-Annale 2*, October 1973.

²⁵ O. d'Etchegoyen, *Ten months in the field with the Boers by an Ex-Lieutenant of General de Villebois-Mareuil* (London, 1901).

²⁶ F. Pretorius, *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (Lanham, 2009), pp. 271-272.

A few medical doctors, nursing sisters and nurses from foreign ambulances among the Boers stayed at the hotel in May 1900. Among them were Drs. R. Bertelsmann, and F.F. Weber of the Russo-Dutch Ambulance.²⁷ Sisters J. van Schermbeek, J. Meyer, J. Ezhevskaya and S. Izedinova of the same ambulance stayed here as well.²⁸ Izedinova's diary was to be published in English in 1977 entitled *A few months with the Boers: The war reminiscences of a Russian nursing sister*.²⁹

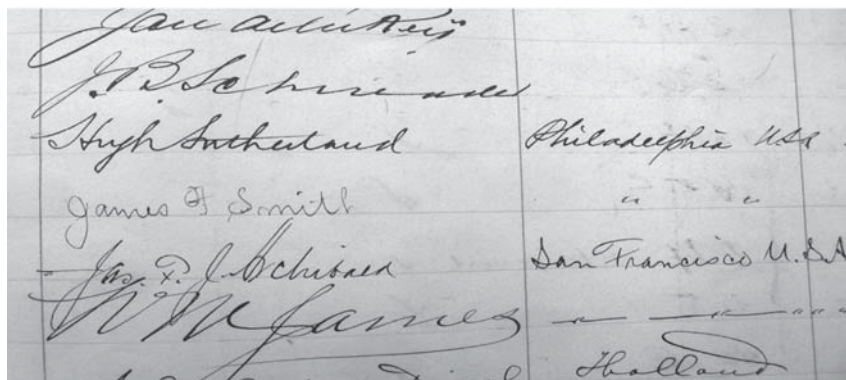


Figure 3: The juvenile signature of the sixteen year-old James F. Smith from Philadelphia in the USA, together with the adult signatures of his chaperones, Hugh Sutherland, Jas. F.J. Archibald and M.W. James, visitors to the Transvaal Hotel on 28 May 1900. The next day Smith presented a book containing thousands of signatures of pro-Boer school boy supporters from Philadelphia, to President Paul Kruger just before his final departure from Pretoria
(Photograph: F. Pretorius, 2012)

For 28 May the visitors' book displays the juvenile signature of the sixteen year-old James F. Smith from Philadelphia in the USA, together with the adult signatures of his chaperones, Hugh Sutherland, Jas. F.J. Archibald and M.W. James³⁰ (**Figure3**). President Paul Kruger, who left Pretoria on 29 May 1900 before Lord Roberts's advance and who was to leave the Transvaal for Europe in September, explains in his memoirs:

²⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-12, p. 22 & 1900-05-15, p. 28.

²⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-07, p. 11, 1900-05-08, p. 13, 1900-05-12, p. 22 & 1900-05-15, p. 28.

²⁹ S. Izedinova, *A few months with the Boers: The war reminiscences of a Russian nursing sister* (Johannesburg, 1977).

³⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-05-28, p. 51.

On the afternoon of my last day at Pretoria, 29 May 1900, while my things were being packed, I received the American lad, Jimmy Smith, who brought me an address in which thousands of school-boys in Philadelphia, the children of a city which was the first to declare its independence of Great Britain, sent "a message of sympathy to the leader of the people which was now engaged in defending its independence against the same nation." He also handed me a Transvaal flag which had been embroidered in America. I thanked the boy and the American gentlemen who had accompanied him, and, one hour later, when it was already dark, I drove with a few faithful friends to Eerste Fabrieken, the first station on the eastern line³¹ (Figure 4).



Figure 4: James Smith and company with State Secretary F.W. Reitz at the occasion of the presentation of the pro-Boer signatures to President Kruger
(Photograph: Transvaal Archives Depot)

Under British occupation

Proof that the Anglo-Boer War was a genuine media war – still a relatively new concept for the time – is the fact that the first to arrive at the Transvaal Hotel with the British occupation on 5 June 1900 was a large number of British war correspondents who had followed Roberts's advance to Pretoria. More were to follow soon.

Melton Prior, artist of the *Illustrated London News*, was the first to sign the visitors' book on 5 June.³² He made three famous sketches, probably in his room

³¹ S.J.P. Kruger, *The memoirs of Paul Kruger II* (London, 1902), p. 352.

³² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-05, p. 61.

number 8A in the Transvaal Hotel, of events on this historic day. They were entitled “Occupation of Pretoria: hoisting the British flag, Lord Roberts leading three cheers for the queen”; “Occupation of Pretoria: release of 136 imprisoned officers from the ‘Birdcage’”; and “Triumphal entry into Pretoria: Lord Roberts reviewing the troops.” The first of these was published in a supplement to the *Illustrated London News* of 21 June 1900, and the other two in the supplement of 21 July 1900.³³

Other war correspondents who booked in at the Transvaal Hotel on 5 June were Guy H. Seull, of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, E.D. Scott (*Manchester Guardian*), W.B. Wollen (*The Sphere*), H.A. (“Taffy”) Gwynne (Reuters), James Barnes (*The Outlook*), Bennet Burleigh (*The Daily Telegraph*), J.H. Macken (Scribners), W. Bleloch and M. Maxwell (*The Standard*), Lionel James, H.S. Somerset and P. James Macdonell (*The Times*), Henry H.S. Pearse (*Daily News*), William R. Smith (*The Star*, Montreal, Canada), H.W. Nevinson (*Daily Chronicle*), A.B. (“Banjo”) Paterson (*Sydney Morning Herald*) and R.C.E. Nissen (*Cape Times*).³⁴

Some of these men were to publish books on their South African experience. Scott’s book was entitled *Some letters from South Africa 1894-1902* (1903), Bleloch wrote *The new South Africa* (1901), James published his book entitled *On the heels of de Wet* (1902) under the pseudonym “Intelligence Officer”, Pearse wrote *Four months besieged: The story of Ladysmith* (1900) and he was editor of *History of Lumsden’s Horse* (1903), and Nevinson’s book was *Ladysmith: The diary of a siege* (1900). Paterson was better known as the author of the Australian song “Waltzing Matilda”. Burleigh, one of the leading war correspondents of the day, first accompanied the Boer commandos to the Natal front. He then joined General Buller’s forces in Natal and subsequently those of Roberts in the advance to Bloemfontein and Pretoria.³⁵ He was to enjoy more than a dozen stays at the Transvaal Hotel in the course of the war. His book, *The Natal campaign*, appeared in 1900.³⁶

Undoubtedly one of the most illustrious guests at the Transvaal Hotel was the 25 year-old Winston Churchill, war correspondent for the *Morning Post*, and son of the late Lord Randolph Churchill. He stayed over on two occasions. On his first visit on 5 June 1900 – accompanied by his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough – his name was entered by the hotel clerk,³⁷ but he personally signed his name on his second visit on 14 June, after his return from the battle of Diamond Hill (11-12 June)³⁸ (**Figure 5**).

³³ J. Carruthers, *Melton Prior: War artist in Southern Africa 1895 to 1900* (Johannesburg, 1987), pp. 248-257.

³⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1900-06-05, pp. 62-63 and 1900-06-06, p. 65.

³⁵ F. Pretorius, *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (2009), p. 66.

³⁶ B. Burleigh, *The Natal campaign* (London, 1900).

³⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1900-06-05, p. 62.

³⁸ C. Sandys, *Churchill wanted dead or alive* (London, 1999), pp. 205-206; Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1900-06-14, p. 73.

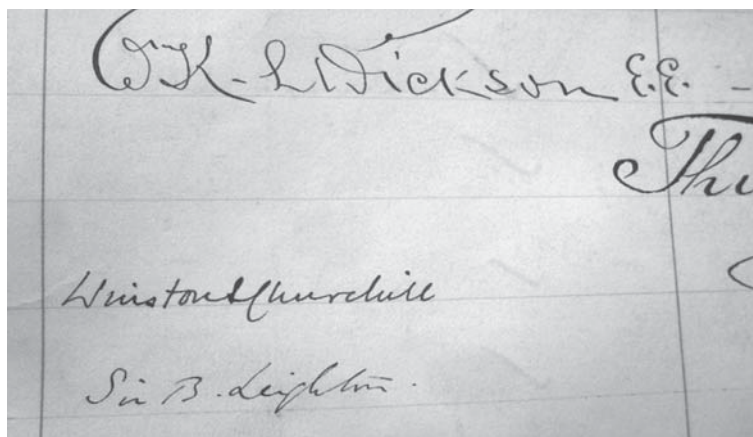


Figure 5: The signature in the Transvaal Hotel’s visitors’ book of the 25 year-old Winston Churchill, war correspondent for the *Morning Post*, one of the most illustrious guests at the Transvaal Hotel. Above and below his signature are those of respectively W.K.L. Dickson and Sir B.B.M. Leighton, both mentioned in this article.

(Photograph: F. Pretorius, 2012)

Churchill had been captured on 15 November 1899 near Chieveley in Natal, while playing a major military role in a skirmish with the Boers. He managed to escape from Pretoria on 12 December and made his way to Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) hiding in a train. He reappeared on the Natal front as a lieutenant in the South African Light Horse, and also continued to report on the war. He and the Duke of Marlborough were among the first of the British to enter Pretoria in the early hours of 5 June 1900, and the first to reach the British prisoners of war.³⁹ He was to recount his experiences in his books *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* and *Ian Hamilton’s March* (both published in 1900), and *My early life: A roving commission* (1930).⁴⁰

Other entries of note on 5 June include the names of cameramen Edgar M. Hyman, Joseph Rosenthal and William K.L. Dickson, operators of a new special camera patented as the “Biograph,” which showed live scenes from the war lasting between 30 and 60 seconds as newsreels for the public back home. Dickson had accompanied Buller in Natal, and was to publish his experiences in a book entitled *The Biograph in battle: Its story in the South African War* (1901).⁴¹

³⁹ C. Sandys, *Churchill wanted dead or alive* (1999), p. 203.

⁴⁰ W. Churchill, *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* (London, 1900); *Ian Hamilton’s March* (London, 1900); *My early life: A roving commission* (London, 1930).

⁴¹ W.K.L. Dickson, *The Biograph in battle: Its story in the South African War* (London, 1901).

In the course of the war more correspondents stayed at the Transvaal Hotel, some of whom had already made their mark in life. Signing in together on 27 June 1900 were Dr Arthur Conan Doyle (and servant) and Leo Amery⁴² (**Figure 6**).

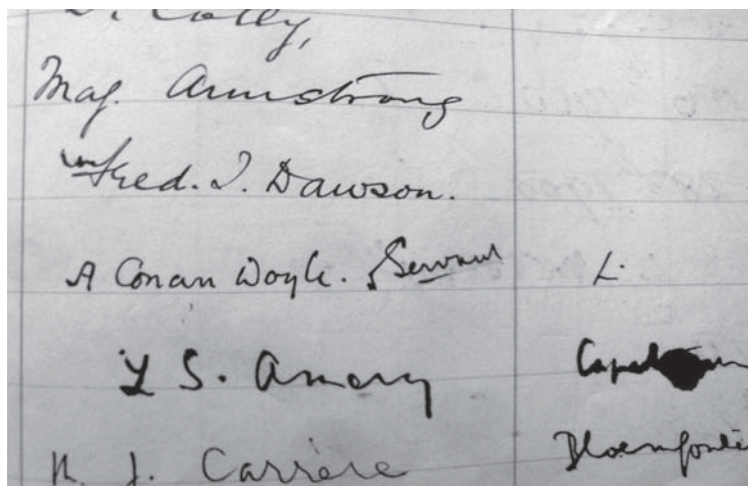


Figure 6: Signing in together on 27 June 1900 were Dr Arthur Conan Doyle (and servant) and Leo Amery. Doyle was already well-known for his Sherlock Holmes detective stories, and war correspondent Amery was to achieve fame for his contribution to the seven-volume *The Times history of the war in South Africa*.

(Photograph: F. Pretorius, 2012)

Doyle, already well-known for his Sherlock Holmes detective stories, had worked in Bloemfontein as a physician with a private volunteer field hospital after the British occupation in March 1900, where he also contributed articles to the *Friend*, a pro-British newspaper. Later in 1900 he was to publish his account of the first phase of the war, entitled *The Great Boer War*, which he subsequently updated. Alarmed by the Liberal vilification of the British scorched earth policy later in the war he refuted these allegations in *The war in South Africa: Its causes and conduct* (1902). Amery, who again was to visit the Transvaal Hotel in the last two weeks of the war,⁴³ had been sent out as *The Times*' assistant foreign editor in September 1899, and had become chief war correspondent in South Africa just before the outbreak of hostilities in October. He was to achieve fame for his contribution to the seven-volume *The Times history*

⁴² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-27, p. 89.

⁴³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-05-19, p. 669 & 1902-05-23, p. 673.

of the war in South Africa (1900-1909). He was to write the first three volumes and the section in Volume VI on post-war reconstruction in South Africa and to act as general editor for volumes IV and V. He was also destined to serve as a distinguished Conservative MP, holding many high offices.⁴⁴

Visits by other war correspondents included C.S. Goldman (*The Standard and Outlook*) on 21 August 1900 and again on 1 and 12 October 1900,⁴⁵ who was to write *With General French and the cavalry in South Africa* (1902), A.B. McGowan (*The Daily Mail*) on 7 October 1900,⁴⁶ D. Innes Calder (Reuters) on 11 April 1901,⁴⁷ and Edgar Wallace (*The Daily Mail* and Reuters) on 29 May 1901 and again on 1 June 1901 and 16 January 1902.⁴⁸ Wallace was to write *Unofficial despatches on the Boer War* (1901), and he was to achieve the last scoop of the war for the *Daily Mail* by obtaining first notice of the peace settlement.⁴⁹

For the rest of the war most visitors to the Transvaal Hotel were officers of the British army, ranging in rank from corporal (to be discussed below) and second-lieutenant to brigadier-general. An important source to identify these personalities is the *Boer War services of military officers of the British and colonial armies, Imperial Yeomanry, Mounted Infantry, local units &c. 1899-1902*, published by Savannah, London, in 1998.

Of special interest are some members of the aristocracy who preferred to add their titles when booking in at the hotel. They usually were accompanied by one or more servant or valet. These included the Duke of Marlborough with three servants (Light Oxford Imperial Yeomanry, 5 and 15 June 1900),⁵⁰ Sir B.B.M. Leighton (Westmoreland & Cumberland Imperial Yeomanry, 5, 6, 9, 14 and 18 June 1900),⁵¹ Major Lord J.H.G.M. Athlumney (Colt Gun Detachment, 15 June 1900),⁵² Lord Rosmead (Sir Hercules Robinson, former British High Commissioner in South Africa, 3 July 1900),⁵³ Captain Lord G.W.J.C. Cardigan (Royal Wiltshire Imperial Yeomanry, 29 June 1900),⁵⁴ Lord Major T. Denman (Middlesex Imperial Yeomanry, 2 July 1900),⁵⁵ Lord Albemarle (Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army, 7 July, 6 August

⁴⁴ F. Pretorius, *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (2009), p. 10.

⁴⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-21, p. 135, 1900-10-01, p. 172 & 1900-10-12, p. 187.

⁴⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-07, p. 178.

⁴⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-04-11, p. 300.

⁴⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-05-29, p. 339, 1901-06-01, p. 341 & 1902-01-16, p. 538.

⁴⁹ F. Pretorius, *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (2009), p. 486.

⁵⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-05, p. 62 and 1900-06-15, p. 73.

⁵¹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-05, p. 64, 1900-06-6, p. 67, 1900-06-09, p. 71, 1900-06-14, p. 73 & 1900-06-18, p. 78.

⁵² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-15, p. 73.

⁵³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-03, p. 97.

⁵⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-29, p. 93.

⁵⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-02, p. 96.

and 12 September 1900),⁵⁶ Major Lord E. Cecil (son of British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, 13 October 1900),⁵⁷ the Marquis of Tullibardine (Scottish Horse, 28 March 1901),⁵⁸ Honourable H.E.S. Lambart (City of London Imperial Volunteers, 21 August 1900),⁵⁹ Lord S.J. Lovat, officer commanding of Lovat's Scouts, Imperial Yeomanry (8 and 12 October 1900),⁶⁰ and the Honourable Sidney Peel, the author of *Trooper 8008 I.Y.* (1901) on 21 August 1900.⁶¹

Other officers of note included Brigadiers-General B.T. Mahon who led the combined forces for the relief of Mafeking on 17 May 1900 (11 July 1900);⁶² H.C.O. Plumer who joined hands with Mahon's column for the relief of Mafeking and also led the column that occupied Pietersburg in April 1901 (30 September 1900 and 13 July 1901);⁶³ E.O.F. Hamilton, commander of the 2nd Brigade (26 September 1900);⁶⁴ Sir E.Y. Brabant, who raised Brabant's Horse (23 October 1900 and 31 October 1901);⁶⁵ G.G. Cunningham, who was in command of a mobile column in the western Transvaal (3 August 1901, 24 October 1901 and 18 February 1902);⁶⁶ Majors-General J.F. Brocklehurst, commanding the 2nd Cavalry Brigade (21 October 1901);⁶⁷ H.L. Smith-Dorrien, commanding the 19th Brigade and who was to write *Memories of forty-eight years' service* (1925) on 25 October 1900;⁶⁸ J.M. Babington, who was in command of a mobile column in the western Transvaal (16 May 1901, 10 and 30 July 1901 and 5 and 9 September 1901);⁶⁹ R.S.R. Fetherstonhaugh, commanding the 9th Brigade (1 and 29 April 1901 and 18 and 22 October 1901);⁷⁰ Lieutenants-Colonel Sir E.P.C. Girouard, Royal Engineers, who was to write an official report for the War Office in 1903 entitled *History of the railways during the war in South Africa 1899-1902* (6 June 1900);⁷¹ D.Mc T. Lumsden, who raised Lumsden's Horse (15 and 19 June 1900 and 30 August 1900);⁷² T.D. Pilcher, who was on the staff of Lord Roberts

⁵⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-07, p. 100, 1900-08-06, p. 152 & 1900-09-12, p. 156.

⁵⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-13, p. 189.

⁵⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-03-28, p. 295.

⁵⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-21, p. 136.

⁶⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-08, p. 180 & 1900-10-12, p. 187.

⁶¹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-21, p. 135.

⁶² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-11, p. 103 & 1900-08-28, p. 143.

⁶³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-30, p. 171 & 1901-07-13, p. 375.

⁶⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-26, p. 168.

⁶⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-23, p. 203 and 1901-10-31, p. 476.

⁶⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-08-03, p. 394, 1901-10-24, p. 469 & 1902-02-18, p. 568.

⁶⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-10-31, p. 201.

⁶⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-25, p. 206.

⁶⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-05-16, p. 329, 1901-07-10, p. 371, 1901-07-30, p. 390, 1901-09-05, p. 420 & 1901-09-09, p. 425.

⁷⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-04-01, p. 296, 1901-04-29, p. 312, 1901-10-18, p. 463 & 1901-10-22, p. 467.

⁷¹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-06, p. 66.

⁷² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-15, p. 74, 1900-06-19, p. 80 & 1900-08-30, p. 143.

and who was to write *Some lessons from the Boer War* in 1903 (21 June and 11 July 1900);⁷³ G.L. Holdsworth, 7th Hussars, who had led his column against the Boers in the Kgatla massacre of a Boer commando at Derdepoort on 25 November 1899 (30 August 1900);⁷⁴ N. Legge, commanding the 6th Company Mounted Infantry, who was to be killed at the Battle of Nooitgedacht on 13 December 1900, less than a month after his booking in at the Transvaal Hotel (15 November 1900);⁷⁵ and M.F. Rimington, leader of Rimington's Guides, together with Captain L. March Phillipps (29 April 1901),⁷⁶ the latter of whom was to write *With Rimington* (1901); F.F. Colvin, who was to publish *Diary of the Ninth Lancers during the South African campaign* with Captain E.R. Gordon in 1904 (7 May 1901);⁷⁷ and Captain C.F. Romer, who was to publish *The Second Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the South African War* with A.E. Mainwaring in 1908 (9 September 1900).⁷⁸

Quite a number of colonial officers chose to stay at the Transvaal Hotel. Most of them were from Australia whilst the rest came from Canada, New Zealand and Rhodesia. Lieutenant-Colonel H.L. Pilkington, a British regular army officer, was with the South African Constabulary when he booked in on 2 January 1901, but until October 1900 he had commanded the 2nd Western Australian Mounted Infantry.⁷⁹ Colonel T.C.R. Price, father of mounted riflemen in Australia, stayed at the hotel on 7 October 1900 while he was with the 2nd Victorian Mounted Rifles and the 1st Victorian Contingent.⁸⁰ Major H.G. Chauvel of the combined 1st and 2nd Queensland Contingents, was accommodated on 18 June 1900, a few days after his participation in the Battle of Diamond Hill of 11-12 June.⁸¹ With him from Diamond Hill was Major V.C.M. Sellheim, New South Wales Lancers.⁸² Western Australian Major W.D. Karri Davies, who had helped raise the Imperial Light Horse in September 1899 before the war, visited the hotel on 12 and 25 July 1900.⁸³ A friend of Cape Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes, Davies had raised and commanded an Australian Corps for the Jameson Raid of 1895-1896 and was sent to gaol for his participation in the raid. Historian Craig Wilcox calls him "probably the most influential Australian in the war", his Jewishness,

⁷³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-21, p. 83 & 1900-07-11, p. 104.

⁷⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-30, p. 147.

⁷⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-11-15, p. 230.

⁷⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-04-29, p. 311.

⁷⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-05-07, p. 319.

⁷⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-9, p. 154.

⁷⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-01-02, p. 255.

⁸⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-07, p. 179.

⁸¹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-18, p. 79; F. Pretorius, *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (2009), pp. 84-85.

⁸² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-18, p. 79.

⁸³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-12, p. 104 & 1900-07-25, p. 109.

economic interests, and political principles making him a firm enemy of the Kruger government.⁸⁴

More Australians were to follow their colleagues to the Transvaal Hotel. Major J.M. Antill, commanding A Squadron New South Wales Mounted Rifles, and his servant, Corporal Smith, stayed over on 11 September 1900.⁸⁵ In 1901-1902 he was to command the 2nd New South Wales Mounted Rifles. During World War I he was to be among those responsible for the disastrous charge at the Nek on Gallipoli in August 1915.⁸⁶ Lieutenant Sam Harris of the 2nd West Australian Mounted Infantry visited the hotel on 8 August 1900 and again on 2 and 5 October 1900.⁸⁷ This was about the time he took over command of the regiment with the rank of captain from Pilkington. After the Australian disaster at Wilmansrust on 12 June 1901 he was to be accused of cowardice and was also to be ordered to account for missing funds of the regiment.⁸⁸ Major F.H. Howland commanding the 1st South Australian Mounted Rifles was a guest in the hotel on 23 June 1900,⁸⁹ three weeks before he became involved in the first hunt for General Christiaan de Wet, an event he was to cover in his book *The chase of De Wet* (1901). Three other important Australians stayed over as well – Captain D.E. Reid, 1st Queensland Mounted Infantry, on 1 and 7 September 1900, Lieutenant H.B. Christie, New South Wales Citizen Bushmen, on 20 September and 1 October 1900, and Lieutenant R.R.C. Vernon West Australian Citizen Bushmen, on 20 September 1900.⁹⁰ All three were to be decorated with the Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O).⁹¹

Perhaps the most notable (perhaps even notorious) of the Australian visitors to the Transvaal Hotel was Harry (“Breaker”) Morant (**Figure 7**), who was to be executed with Lieutenant P.J. Handcock in Pretoria on 27 February 1902 after having been found guilty of killing a number of Boer prisoners in the northern Transvaal. They claimed that they had secret orders from Lord Kitchener not to keep any prisoners of war.⁹² Morant stayed at the hotel on 7, 9 and 15 July 1900 as corporal of the 2nd South Australian Mounted Rifles (he was clearly not deterred to mix socially with commissioned officers of the army), and on 6 October 1901 he stayed over as captain

⁸⁴ C. Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The war in South Africa 1899-1902* (Melbourne, 2002), p. 377.

⁸⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-11, pp. 155 and 156.

⁸⁶ C. Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War* (2002), p. 375.

⁸⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-08, p. 124, 1900-10-02, p. 172 & 1900-10-05, p. 176.

⁸⁸ C. Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War* (2002), pp. 379-380.

⁸⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-23, p. 86.

⁹⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-01, p. 149, 1900-09-07, p. 153, 1900-09-20, p. 163 & 1900-10-01, p. 172.

⁹¹ *Boer War services of military officers of the British and colonial armies, Imperial Yeomanry, Mounted Infantry, local units &c. 1899-1902* (London, 1998), n.p.

⁹² C. Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War* (2002), pp. 379 and 383.

of the Bushveldt Carbineers.⁹³ This last visit was while he had a fortnight's leave to complete some duties in connection with his friend, Captain P.F. Hunt, whom Morant claimed had been murdered by the Boers. Upon his return to Pietersburg Morant was arrested to stand trial.⁹⁴

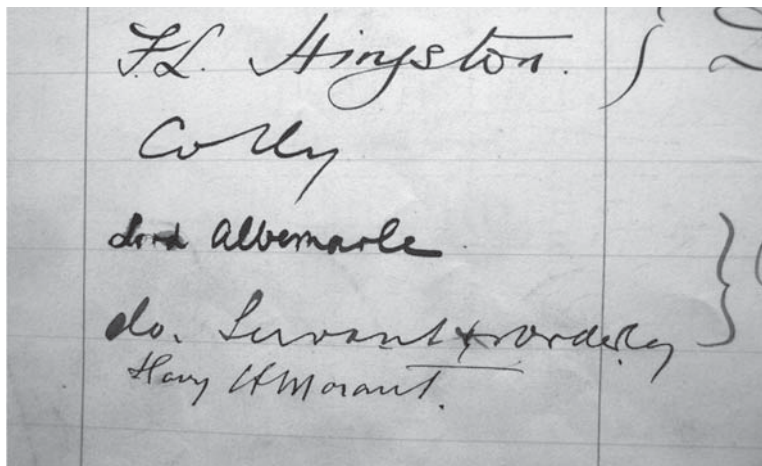


Figure 7: Signature of Harry H. Morant, just below that of Lord Albemarle and the latter's servant and orderly, in the visitors' book of the Transvaal Hotel, 7 July 1900.

(Photograph: F. Pretorius, 2012)

Officers of the First Contingent Royal Canadian Regiment who stayed at the Transvaal Hotel from time to time all participated actively in the Battle of Paardeberg along the Modder River in the western Free State on 18 February 1900 and saw the surrender of General Piet Cronjé with 4 000 Boers on 27 February. The position of the Canadian companies was the closest to Cronjé's laager of all British sections. They were also part of Roberts's advance from Bloemfontein to Pretoria in May-June 1900, doing valuable scouting along the way.⁹⁵ These officers included Captains S. Maynard Rogers who stayed over on 6 and 8 June 1900,⁹⁶ A.H. Macdonell (27 August and 15

⁹³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-07, p. 100, 1900-07-09, p. 102, 1900-07-15, p. 107 & 1901-10-06, p. 451.

⁹⁴ N. Bleszynski, *Shoot straight, you bastards! The truth behind the killing of 'Breaker' Morant* (Sydney, 2002), p. 187.

⁹⁵ C. Miller, *Painting the map red: Canada and the South African War 1899-1902* (Pietermaritzburg, 1998), *passim*.

⁹⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-06, p. 66 & 1900-06-08, p. 68.

and 28 September 1900),⁹⁷ R.K. Barker (27 August 1900),⁹⁸ J. Cooper Mason (15 July 1900)⁹⁹ and H.E. Burstall (11 and 19 September 1900).¹⁰⁰ When the Royal Canadians returned home at the end of September 1900 (which is why some of them stayed at the hotel at this time), Rogers and Macdonell volunteered to remain behind and continue fighting in South Africa. Historian Carman Miller writes that Macdonell's "wise council gave his men a sense of direction and confidence" at Paardeberg.¹⁰¹ During his stay at the Transvaal Hotel, Mason had seemingly recovered from a serious wound sustained at Paardeberg. Both he and Burstall were to become Canadian generals in France during World War I.¹⁰²

Two New Zealanders of note who stayed at the Transvaal Hotel were Major Thomas Burns on 21 August 1900 and J.A. Shand on 12 June 1900.¹⁰³ Burns appeared on a photograph, serving as surgeon with the New Zealand Mounted Rifles, in H.W. Wilson's *With the flag to Pretoria: A history of the Boer War of 1899-1900*, attending a wounded New Zealand soldier.¹⁰⁴ Shand, who was a war correspondent during the war, was commissioned by the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs in 1929 to write a history of the New Zealand contribution to the war. Completed in 1931, this manuscript was found unsatisfactory and was described by Major-General Howard Kippenberger as not having "a single merit that should be present in a military history", apart from many facts "hidden under the verbiage." The manuscript, entitled "O'er Veldt and Kopje" was deposited in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington.¹⁰⁵

Of the Rhodesians staying at the Transvaal Hotel Major A. Weston Jarvis (Rhodesia Regiment, 16 August 1900) and Lieutenants R.M. Daniel (British South Africa Police, 16 August 1900) and A.E. Haserick (Rhodesia Regiment, 24 September and 6 October 1900) were prominent.¹⁰⁶ Jarvis had been wounded at Ramathlabama on 31 March 1900, but recovered to participate in the relief of Mafeking in May 1900.¹⁰⁷ Daniel was stationed in Mafeking after the relief and was to become Resident Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate after the war.¹⁰⁸ Haserick had been

⁹⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-27, p. 142, 1900-09-15, p. 159 & 1900-09-28, p. 170.

⁹⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-27, p. 142.

⁹⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-15, p. 107.

¹⁰⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-11, p. 155 & 1900-09-24, p. 166.

¹⁰¹ C. Miller, *Painting the map red* (1998), p. 108.

¹⁰² C. Miller, *Painting the map red* (1998), pp. 99 & 425.

¹⁰³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-21, p. 136 & 1900-06-12, p. 72.

¹⁰⁴ H.W. Wilson, *With the flag to Pretoria: A history of the Boer War of 1899-1900, Vol. 1* (London, 1900), p. 339.

¹⁰⁵ J. Crawford & E. Ellis, *To fight for the Empire: An illustrated history of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Auckland, 1999), p. 98.

¹⁰⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-16, p. 132, 1900-09-24, p. 166 & 1900-10-06, p. 178.

¹⁰⁷ A.S. Hickman, *Rhodesia served the Queen, Vol. 1* (Salisbury, 1970), pp. 253 & 359.

¹⁰⁸ P. Gibbs, *The history of the British South Africa Police, Vol. 1* (Salisbury, 1972), p. 219; A.S. Hickman, *Rhodesia served the Queen, 2 Vols.* (Salisbury, 1970 and 1975), *passim*.

captured on 2 November 1899 at a skirmish near Tuli in Rhodesia,¹⁰⁹ but he had obviously been one of the prisoners of war released at Nooitgedacht with the British advance in the eastern Transvaal at the beginning of September 1900 and had now made his way to Pretoria.

British medical doctors, some from the Royal Army Medical Corps (R.A.M.C.) and a few doctors who had been assisting the Boers, also seemed to favour the Transvaal Hotel as their accomodation. Doctor J. de Montmollin, who had gone to South Africa with the Swiss Red Cross Ambulance in January 1900, worked in the Johannesburg Hospital where he and a colleague dealt with about 500 burghers and 1 400 British soldiers. After the British occupation of Pretoria on 5 June 1900, he was convinced that working with small parties of Boers hardly served any purpose and he decided to return to Switzerland.¹¹⁰ His stay at the Transvaal Hotel on 17 June 1900¹¹¹ was the beginning of his return journey. Members of the R.A.M.C. included Colonel A.W. Duke (1 July 1900) who was in charge of No. 2 General Hospital, Wynberg,¹¹² Majors T. Archer (1 July 1900)¹¹³ and R.I. Power (3 July 1900),¹¹⁴ and Captain J.J.W. Prescott (21 August 1900), who was to be awarded the D.S.O.¹¹⁵

On 11 July 1900 Honorary Major Doctor Samuel Evans of the Medical Staff signed in at the hotel, together with W.F. Monypenny, former editor of the Johannesburg *Star* but now director of civil supplies in Johannesburg. The purpose of their stay was a visit to Political Secretary George Fiddes to campaign for the shifting of the capital to Johannesburg and dividing the Transvaal into four areas. They were not successful in their endeavour.¹¹⁶

The well-known Doctor Kendal Franks C.B. stayed at the hotel on 29 June 1901.¹¹⁷ Originally from Ireland he had settled in Johannesburg in 1897 on account of the illness of his wife. During Lord Roberts's stay in South Africa (January to November 1900) he had been consultant surgeon attached to Roberts's staff. In November 1901 he was given the task of inspecting the concentration camps and his

¹⁰⁹ A.S. Hickman, *Rhodesia served the Queen, 2 Vols.* (1970 & 1975), *passim*.

¹¹⁰ J.C. de Villiers, *Healers, helpers and hospitals: A history of military medicine in the Anglo-Boer War, Vol. I* (Pretoria, 2008), pp. 354, 503-506 & 512.

¹¹¹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-17, p. 77.

¹¹² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, p. 94; J.C. de Villiers, *Healers, helpers and hospitals, Vol. I* (2008), p. 213 & *Vol. II* (2008), p. 91; *Boer War services of military officers*, n.p.

¹¹³ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-01, p. 94; *Boer War services of military officers*, n.p.

¹¹⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-03, p. 97; *Boer War services of military officers*, n.p.

¹¹⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-08-21, p. 135; *Boer War services of military officers*, n.p.

¹¹⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-11, p. 103; D. Cammack, *The Rand at war 1899-1902: The Witwatersrand and the Anglo-Boer War* (Pietermaritzburg, 1990), pp. 136-137 & 142-144.

¹¹⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-06-29, p. 364.

report published in the British Government's Blue Books was endorsed by the Ladies' Committee under Millicent Fawcett.¹¹⁸

Probably the most notable female visitor to the Transvaal Hotel during the war was the vivacious Lady Sarah Wilson, sister of Lord Randolph Churchill and aunt of Winston Churchill. The wife of Lieutenant G.C. Wilson of the Royal Horse Guards who was Aide de Camp (A.D.C.) to Colonel Robert Baden-Powell, was captured by the Boers while smuggling military reports through to Baden-Powell inside the besieged Mafeking. Just before Christmas 1899 she was allowed to return to Mafeking, where she acted as a morale booster to the soldiers and civilians. She distinguished herself as a nurse and as a journalist, smuggling out reports to the London *Daily Mail*. On 19 June 1900 she and her friend, Mrs Godley, wife of Major Allick Godley, stayed at the Transvaal Hotel. She was to recount her Mafeking experience in a book entitled *South African memories* (1909).¹¹⁹

On 12 October 1900 the distinguished Lady Chesham was a guest at the hotel.¹²⁰ She and Lady Georgina Curzon had been the driving force behind the establishment of a Yeomanry hospital at Deelfontein, near De Aar, in March 1900. This opened the way for other Yeomanry hospitals and a Yeomanry field hospital and bearer company, which accompanied various columns between August 1900 and March 1901. When Pretoria was occupied, a branch Yeomanry hospital was opened there as well, and her visit was obviously connected to this event.¹²¹

Despite the war situation civilians – businessmen, couples, families, and mothers with their children – still travelled, which meant that the Transvaal Hotel remained a hub of activity. Notable was the German businessman, Carl Rolfes (16 July and 25 September 1900),¹²² the co-owner of Rolfes Nebel and Company in Johannesburg, importers and distributors in the liquor trade. They ran a number of bottle stores and hotels. Rolfes was the owner of the beautiful Villa Arcadia in Parktown, Johannesburg.¹²³ Other guests included South Africans such as Mr and Mrs Gustave Durr of Waterval Boven (4 September 1900);¹²⁴ Dutch families (temporarily) returning to the Netherlands such as the family Sytze Wierda on 22 August 1900 (a famous

¹¹⁸ J.C. de Villiers, *Healers, helpers and hospitals, Vol. II* (2008), pp. 234-235.

¹¹⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-19, p. 81; F. Pretorius, *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War* (2009), pp. 494-495; H. Birkhead & J. Groenewald, *The riddle of Rustenburg* (Johannesburg, 2007), p. 16.

¹²⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-10-12, p. 186.

¹²¹ L.S. Amery (ed), *The Times history of the war in South Africa, 1899-1902, Vol. VI* (London, 1909), p. 354.

¹²² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-07-16, p. 108 & 1900-09-25, p. 167.

¹²³ D. Adams et al., *Follow the flags through Parktown for a glimpse of Johannesburg's war* (Johannesburg, 2002), p. 56.

¹²⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-09-04, p. 150.

architect, responsible for the design of the Volksraad building on Church Square);¹²⁵ colonials such as Mr and Mrs Theophilus Shepstone (2 December 1901);¹²⁶ and British visitors such as Major Viscount & Viscountess Garnock (on 28 June 1902, four weeks after the end of the war).¹²⁷ Shepstone was the son of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, former Bantu administrator for Natal, who had annexed the Transvaal in 1877 on behalf of the British government.

Interesting visitors to the Transvaal Hotel during the British occupation were a number of Boer collaborators with the British – whom the Boers called “joiners”. The background to these visits was Lord Kitchener’s approval in December 1900 of the establishment of a central Burgher Peace Committee in Pretoria, from which local committees in the Transvaal and the Free State were formed. Their message to the burghers on commando was that further resistance was fruitless and that the republics could not rely on intervention by foreign powers.¹²⁸

Historian Albert Grundlingh accepts that the origin of the Burgher Peace Committee was the discussion between Kitchener and Meyer de Kock, a surrendered burgher, on 15 December 1900.¹²⁹ However, the visitors’ book of the Transvaal Hotel reveals that the brother of General Piet Cronjé, ex-General Andries P.J. Cronjé of Klerksdorp, stayed over at the hotel on 11 December 1900.¹³⁰ This is significant, since Andries Cronjé had laid down his arms on 14 June 1900 in Klerksdorp and at the end of December 1900 was to become a member of Kitchener’s central Burgher Peace Committee and in early 1902 one of the leaders of the National Scouts giving military assistance to the British army.¹³¹ Cronjé must therefore either have had a meeting with Kitchener a few days before Kitchener’s discussion with de Kock, or was present at the Kitchener-de Kock talks.

The contact that the Burgher Peace Committee had with the British authorities in January 1901 is reflected by the signatures of some burghers of the central committee in the visitors’ book of the Transvaal Hotel. These men included the Volksraad member for Heidelberg, H.P.F.J. van Rensburg (13 January 1901), who now became chairman of the central committee, B.C. Bezuidenhout (a prosperous farmer from Heidelberg, 21 January 1901), and A.J. Dercksen (former commandant of the Boksburg Commando, 22 January 1901). Dercksen had in fact dabbled ineffectively with peace attempts in October 1900, as his stay at the hotel on 11 October 1900 bears

¹²⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1900-08-22, p. 138.

¹²⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1901-12-02, p. 503.

¹²⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1902-06-28, p. 737.

¹²⁸ A. Grundlingh, *The dynamics of treason: Boer collaboration in the South African War of 1899-1902* (Pretoria, 2006), pp. 117-182.

¹²⁹ A. Grundlingh, *The dynamics of treason* (2006), pp. 120-122.

¹³⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors’ book, 1900-12-11, p. 245.

¹³¹ A. Grundlingh, *The dynamics of treason* (2006), pp. 345-348.

testimony. A.J. Boshoff, chairman of the newly-formed Standerton peace committee, also signed in on 21 January 1901. Other Heidelbergers who supported the efforts of the Burgher Peace Committee and stayed at the hotel were the Reverend C. Juno Brink (6 September 1901) and H.G. Junius (15 November 1901).¹³²

There are two extremely noteworthy visits to the hotel by Boer officers during the war. The first was by Commandant Lodi Krause on 2 January 1901. Krause had been the officer commanding of the northern Transvaal scouting corps before his capture on 22 December 1900. He was summoned to an interview with Kitchener in Pretoria on 1 January 1901. It was at the time of Kitchener's discussions with prominent surrendered Boers of the Burgher Peace Committee. However, it was clear to the British commander that Krause was not interested in becoming involved in this venture. In May 1901 Krause was shipped off to India as a prisoner of war.¹³³ When he returned to the hotel on 22 August 1902, almost three months after the peace, he inscribed "India" in the column of the visitors' book requesting the visitor to state where he or she had come from.¹³⁴

The other visit of note was that of Captain Jack Hindon. He had gained full citizenship of the Transvaal for his volunteer service against the Jameson Raiders in 1896. That was after he had deserted from the British army at the early age of 14 while serving in Zululand in 1888. At the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War he joined the Boer forces. A year later he was appointed commander of a Boer scouting corps in the eastern Transvaal, where he distinguished himself in attacks on the railway line. Worried about amnesty due to his desertion from the British army so many years before, he accepted an offer in mid-May 1902 from Captain J. Paton, Provost of Balmoral, to surrender.¹³⁵ This brought him to Pretoria, where both he and Paton signed in at the Transvaal Hotel on 16 May 1902.¹³⁶ After an interview with Kitchener who must have granted him amnesty, Hindon returned to Balmoral. He was not prosecuted after the war.¹³⁷

After the war

The Peace of Vereeniging signed at Melrose House in Pretoria on 31 May 1902 marked the end of the Anglo-Boer War. Increasingly, more civilians, including businessmen,

¹³² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1901-01-13, p. 258, 1901-01-21, pp. 262 & 263, 1901-01-22, p. 263, 1900-10-11, p. 186, 1901-09-06, p. 421 & 1901-11-15, p. 491; A. Grundlingh, *The dynamics of treason* (2006), pp. 92-95, 98, 122-123 & 425.

¹³³ J. Taitz (ed), *The war memoirs of Commandant Ludwig Krause 1899-1900* (Cape Town, 1996), pp. x-xii & 136-137.

¹³⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-08-22, p. 850.

¹³⁵ G. Preller, *Kaptein Hindon: Oorlogsavonture van 'n baasverkenner* (Cape Town, 1942), *passim*.

¹³⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-05-16, p. 665.

¹³⁷ G. Preller, *Kaptein Hindon* (1942), pp. 277-281.

booked in at the Transvaal Hotel as life slowly returned to normal. Nevertheless, literally hundreds of British officers, waiting for their regiments to return home, and those who remained with the British army in the new colonies, continued to stay over at the hotel when in Pretoria.

Noteworthy among these was Lieutenant-Colonel G.M. Bullock, commander of the 2nd Devonshire Regiment, who was wounded and captured at the Battle of Colenso on 15 December 1899, but who was released with the British occupation of Pretoria on 5 June 1900, and who became one of the first British officers to sign in at the Transvaal Hotel on that day. He again stayed at the hotel on 1 August 1902.¹³⁸ Another was Major-General R.S.R. Fetherstonhaugh, commander of the 9th Brigade, who had been at the hotel in April and October 1901,¹³⁹ and again booked in on 9 June 1902.¹⁴⁰ He was wounded at Belmont in November 1899 and had given chase to the commandos of General Koos de la Rey in the western Transvaal in the guerrilla phase, before he commanded the lines of communication in the eastern Transvaal.¹⁴¹

Attracting the attention, however, was the phenomenon that Boer officers who had become famous during the war, booked in at the hotel as they tried to arrange matters for a new beginning after the defeat in the field. The first Boer officer to book in on 1 June 1902,¹⁴² the day after peace had been signed, was General P.H. Kritzinger, who had been assistant chief-commandant of the Free State and Cape rebel forces in the Cape Colony. He was wounded and captured on 16 December 1901 and tried by a British military tribunal for train wrecking, but was acquitted. A free man on 1 June 1902 he stayed over at the Transvaal Hotel and started preparing for a lecture tour of Europe and the United States and to get medical treatment for his injured arm.¹⁴³

But surely the prize signatures in the visitors' book, along with that of Winston Churchill, are those of six of the ten Boer leaders who had signed the Peace of Vereeniging at Melrose House in Pretoria on 31 May 1902 (**Figure 8**). During the discussions at Melrose House the Boer delegates stayed at Parkzicht, the house of Karel Roode, adjacent to Melrose House, but six of them booked in with their A.D.S.'s at the Transvaal Hotel three nights later, on 3 June. General J.B.M. Hertzog, signing first, had the historical awareness to write "Vereeniging" in the column "Where From" of the visitors' book. Next General Christiaan de Wet, who had become famous for his

¹³⁸ L.S. Amery (ed), *The Times history of the war in South Africa, Vol. II* (London, 1902), p. 456 & *Vol. IV* (London, 1906), p. 268; Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1900-06-05, p. 63 & 1902-08-01, p. 807.

¹³⁹ See note 64.

¹⁴⁰ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-06-09, p. 690.

¹⁴¹ L.S. Amery (ed), *The Times history of the war in South Africa, Vol. II* (1902), p. 333n and *Vol. V* (London, 1907), pp. 280, 326 & 383.

¹⁴² Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-06-01, p. 683.

¹⁴³ D.W. Krüger, P.H. Kritzinger, in D.W. Krüger & C.J. Beyers (eds), *Dictionary of South African biography, Vol. V* (Cape Town, 1977), pp. 483-484.

ability to escape every cordon that the British columns had prepared for him, signed, followed by Generals Lukas Meyer and Louis Botha (the Commandant-General of the Transvaal), W.J.C. Brebner, and Acting President Schalk W. Burger of the Transvaal.¹⁴⁴ Later in the day General C.H. Muller also booked in.¹⁴⁵

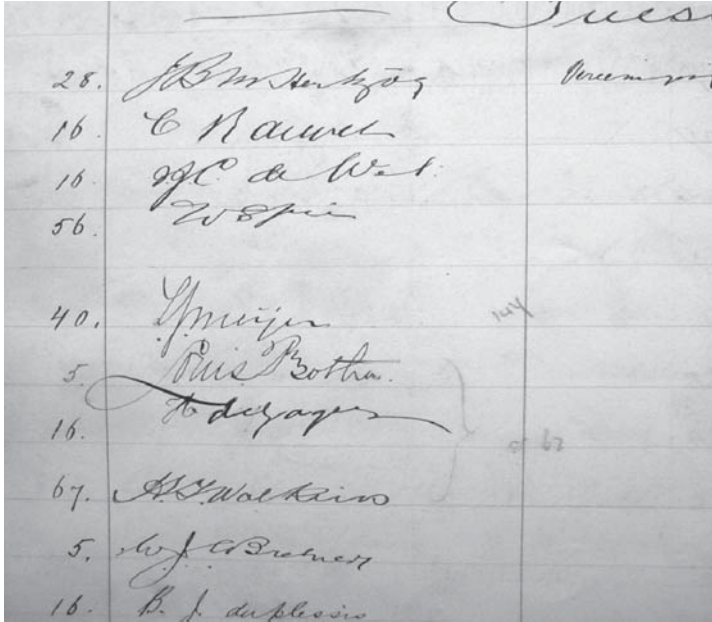


Figure 8: The signatures in the visitors' book of the Transvaal Hotel on 3 June 1902 of six of the ten Boer delegates who had signed the Peace of Vereeniging three nights before – Generals J.B.M. Hertzog, C.R. de Wet, Lukas Meyer and Louis Botha, and W.J.C. Brebner (State Secretary of the Orange Free State) and Acting President Schalk Burger, and their adjutants.
(Photograph: F. Pretorius, 2012)

Other Boer generals soon followed their leaders to the Transvaal Hotel – Jan C.G. Kemp on 2 July 1902,¹⁴⁶ Coen Brits two days later,¹⁴⁷ Hennie Alberts and Ben Viljoen on 18 August 1902,¹⁴⁸ and Piet Viljoen on 1 October 1902.¹⁴⁹ Ben Viljoen had just

¹⁴⁴ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-06-03, p. 686.

¹⁴⁵ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-06-03, p. 687.

¹⁴⁶ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-07-02, p. 744.

¹⁴⁷ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-07-04, p. 747.

¹⁴⁸ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-08-18, pp. 843 & 846.

¹⁴⁹ Transvaal Hotel, Visitors' book, 1902-10-01, p. 933.

returned from St. Helena where he had been a prisoner of war, and he was arranging matters in Pretoria for his journey to England and the United States, where ultimately he was to settle. His book, *My reminiscences of the Anglo-Boer War*, was to appear during his stay in England in 1902.¹⁵⁰

On Sunday 26 October 1902 the penultimate page – page 982 – of the visitors' book of the Transvaal Hotel was filled with the signatures of fifteen civilian guests. The next book, starting with Monday 27 October 1902, must have been opened the following day. And the visitors' book for the period 2 May 1900 to 26 October 1902 was put away, later to find its way to the vault of the hotel's accountancy firm. The Anglo-Boer War and the story of the thousands of visitors to the hotel in this period became a closed book. Until now.

Conclusion

There is a definite antiquarian value to the visitors' book of the Transvaal Hotel. But what makes it historically more important is that the stay of some of these visitors is sometimes linked to very important events during the war, making it a colourful addition to our reconstruction of the past. In some instances it assists the historian in ascertaining the whereabouts of historical figures at a given moment. The effort is now to computerize the more than fourteen thousand names in order to make the document available for research. It is clear that historians should be aware of "unusual" documents that can assist them in their research. The visitors' book of the Transvaal Hotel is but one such document.

¹⁵⁰ W.J. Meijer, *Generaal Ben Viljoen 1868-1917* (Pretoria, 2000), pp. 241 et seq.