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Tackling the Turk

**An examination of tactics employed by the
New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade during
the Sinai-Palestine campaign of World War I**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Philosophy in Defence and Strategic Studies at
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

**Peter Wood
2004**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the tactics employed by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles (NZMR) Brigade during the Sinai Palestine Campaign of World War I. It seeks to determine how the Boer War shaped mounted rifles tactical doctrine prior to World War I, what tactics were employed during the Sinai Palestine campaign itself, and how the tactics evolved over the course of the campaign. It begins by tracing the New Zealand experience in the Boer War, the ensuing development of mounted rifles tactical doctrine and the formation of yeomanry and mounted rifles units immediately prior to World War I. The thesis follows the campaign in Sinai and Palestine, focusing primarily on patrolling operations and attacks, from the re-building of the NZMR Brigade after its return to Egypt from Gallipoli in December 1915, until the conclusion of operations at Amman in September 1918.

The thesis finds that by 1914, New Zealand mounted rifles units trained to employ *fire tactics*, to move mounted, but to conduct attacks dismounted. New Zealanders undertook extensive mounted patrolling from the outset of the campaign. Most attacks were conducted as 'quick' attacks, despite Turkish defensive positions often being well prepared and stubbornly defended. Most attacks employed envelopment of enemy flanks and followed a general pattern of firing lines of dismounted troopers closing on the enemy under the combined weight of their own and neighbouring rifle fire, machine gun fire and artillery support. Attacks usually concluded with a bayonet charge from short range, once firing lines had got close enough to the enemy. Mounted charges were rarely undertaken, despite the spectacular success of the Australian mounted charge at Beersheba. Indeed, the New Zealand commander, General Chaytor, made a deliberate decision to continue employing dismounted tactics. The thesis finds that longevity in command appointments and the influence and experience of Boer War veterans had a positive effect on the tactics used by the NZMR Brigade.

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INTRODUCTION

The Allied campaign in Egypt, the Sinai and Palestine during World War I remains virtually unknown. Even as it was being fought, it was considered a sideshow to the Western Front. In the immediate aftermath of World War I, the exploits of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade was overshadowed by Gallipoli, Passchendaele and the Somme. Even these, with the exception of Gallipoli, have been all but forgotten since World War II, where the battles of Crete, El Alamein, and Cassino, and the names, Freyberg, Kippenberger and Upham are far more likely to be recalled today. Few New Zealanders would associate the names Magdhaba, Ayun Kara or Amman with pitched battles, nor the names Chaytor and Meldrum with successful New Zealand formation commanders.

Despite the lack of awareness within contemporary New Zealand, the Sinai Palestine campaign is worth examination as it was highly mobile, with manoeuvre on a scale seldom seen on the Western Front. The New Zealand Mounted Rifles (NZMR) Brigade, re-formed after fighting as dismounted infantry at Gallipoli, comprised the New Zealand contribution to the campaign, and it played a key role in bringing the campaign to a successful conclusion.

This study will examine the tactics employed by the NZMR Brigade and its regiments during the Sinai Palestine Campaign. It will determine how the Boer War shaped tactical doctrine and mounted rifles organisations in New Zealand and Great Britain up until the commencement of World War I. The study aims to determine the tactics employed on operations by New Zealanders and note any developments as the campaign progressed. This provides the three focus questions of this thesis. They are:

- How did the Boer War shape tactical doctrine and mounted rifles organisations up until the commencement of World War I?
- What tactics were employed by the NZMR Brigade during the Sinai Palestine Campaign?
- How did NZMR tactics evolve during the course of the campaign?

The first chapter will examine Boer War operations from 1899 until 1902 in order to establish the 'legacy' for both Great Britain and New Zealand in terms of the 'cavalry

debate' and the development of mounted rifles organisations and tactics. The second chapter will identify basic tactical concepts, before determining doctrine and tactics that were in use by New Zealand mounted rifles immediately prior to World War I. The third chapter will background the Sinai Palestine campaign, explain the NZMR Brigade organisation and introduce the Turkish Army.

Chapters Four to Six chronologically trace NZMR Brigade operations focusing on patrolling and on offensive operations at brigade level and below; the advance, the attack and the pursuit. The tactics employed within the NZMR will be determined by analysing combat 'actions' between 4 March 1916 and 27 September 1918. Chapters detail the initial attacks at Rafa and Magdhaba, the breaching of the Turkish line at Beersheba and operations beyond the Jordan River concluding with Chaytor's Force capture of the Turkish IV Army. The thesis concludes by examining the influence of command and leadership on tactics, the role of Major General Chaytor, and a summary of NZMR Brigade tactics as they were at the conclusion of the campaign.

The study concludes that in the main, the NZMR Brigade employed fire tactics and the basic mounted rifles doctrine that was in use shortly before World War I. During the campaign, occasional mounted charges were attempted, but not on a scale to be of major significance in tactics. The New Zealanders became adept at mounted patrolling, developed their capacity for close reconnaissance and improved on the employment of machine guns and artillery as the campaign progressed. Longevity in command at brigade, regimental and squadron level along with the combat experience of Boer War veterans served to perfect a sleek fighting formation, whose final independent operation was a dismounted night attack.

NZMR tactics included many similar features to the Boer War operations of the New Zealand contingents. Fighting was mainly dismounted, with lines of soldiers supported by artillery and machineguns making their way forward in daylight, under fire, toward enemy strong points. A bayonet charge would usually prove to be decisive. Patrolling on horseback was extensive, whether as a security element during a combat action or between operations. Occasional mounted charges were attempted, although were most often unsuccessful due to unanticipated or unsuppressed enemy fire.

This study does not intend to determine if a distinctly New Zealand style of fighting emerged, nor to compare New Zealand tactics with those of their Australian or British counterparts. More often than not, New Zealanders were operating alongside Australian and other Allied troops. New Zealand mounted riflemen fought in most of the major actions of the campaign. Despite being but one brigade in a huge Allied army, the NZMR Brigade established a reputation as a first class fighting formation, just as their forebears had managed in the Boer War.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BOER WAR

More than 6,500 New Zealanders served in the Boer War 1999- 1902. The Boer War was New Zealand's first military deployment. The New Zealanders were amongst 29,000 colonial troops that went to South Africa to support Great Britain in her fight against the Boer South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Boers' ally, the Orange Free State. Most New Zealanders who fought in South Africa were mounted riflemen, sent to the war in ten contingents.

The creation of an Imperial General Staff and the publishing of military doctrine reflecting many of the tactical lessons learned in the South Africa were major Boer War outcomes for Great Britain. Like New Zealand, the British saw the need for the magazine loaded rifle, the range and weight of fire they produced, and understood the devastating effect they could have on close order formations. The debate over the continued utility of cavalry versus mounted rifles was not truly resolved, so Britain entered World War I with cavalry and with mounted rifles, which they called yeomanry.

Before examining the Boer War, it is necessary to distinguish between mounted infantry, mounted rifles and cavalry. Iain G. Spence's article 'To shoot and Ride: Mobility and Firepower', defines each:

'Mounted Infantry' denoted infantry (and usually Regular Army infantry at that) which had undergone additional training to allow them to ride into action. Once at the front, they would dismount and fight on foot, using traditional infantry tactics. 'Mounted Rifles' were essentially regarded as irregular cavalry. Equipped with infantry weapons but not trained as line infantry, they fought on foot but were not expected to be expert in traditional infantry tactics. 'Cavalry' were horsemen equipped with the sword or lance who generally fought while mounted, using traditional cavalry tactics.¹

New Zealand's contributions to the Boer War were, by Spence's definition, truly mounted rifles. They did not have the traditional infantry training. They fought more like irregulars so were well suited to flank duties, reconnaissance and skirmishing.

¹ Iain G. Spence, 'To Shoot and Ride: Mobility in Mounted Warfare' in, Dennis, Peter and Grey, Jeffrey (Eds), *The Boer War Army, Nation and Empire*, Army History Unit, Department of Defence, Canberra, 2000, p. 119.

Background

The Boers were horse mounted and well armed.² Just prior to the war, they had purchased thousands of modern rifles from Germany. This enabled the Boers to open fire at greater ranges than the British anticipated, and, as their rifles were magazine fed, the Boers could achieve a heavy weight of fire. Thus, Boer tactics were to open fire at extreme range, with volleys that caused maximum casualties amongst close order British infantry, who had further to advance before closing with the enemy for close combat.³ Artillery was the Boers' only professional military arm, the mass of their Army was based on irregular commandos, able to be called up by their commandants at any time.⁴

Boer commandos numbered from 300 to 3000 burghers, based roughly on electoral districts.⁵ Being predominantly of farming stock, the Boers had excellent knowledge of the land, and were capable shots and horsemen. This provided them with superior mobility and firepower, enabling their use of hit and run tactics. From concealed positions, they were able to engage British close order formations, breaking contact when threatened themselves. British tactics and dismounted infantry were not suited to counter Boer tactics, other than as static security elements. The Boers enjoyed a huge initial advantage in comparative mobility over the British forces.⁶

The Boer War had two distinct phases. The first was a 'conventional' phase where Boer formations fought the British in 'set piece' battles. This phase included the Boer sieges of Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith, the battle of Spion Kop the Allied advance on Kimberley that ended with the capture of the Boer capital, Pretoria. In this phase, New Zealanders saw action at Jansfontein and Slingersfontein, and trekked and fought their way as part of Plumer's cavalry column to Kimberley, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

² Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, Sphere Books Limited, 1979, reprinted 1991, p. 41 and 164.

³ Edwin L. Kennedy, Jnr, Maj, USA, 'The Australian Light Horse: A Study of the Evolution of Tactical and Operational Maneuver', U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, USA, 1991, p. 27

⁴ The Boers also built up their artillery, procuring four 155 mm howitzers (Long Toms), fourteen 75 mm field guns and four 120 mm howitzers.

⁵ D.O.W Hall, *The New Zealanders in South Africa*, War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1949, p. 12.

⁶ William L. Taylor, 'The Debate over changing cavalry tactics and weapons', in *Military Affairs*, Vol XXVIII, 1964-1965, p.173.

The second phase coincided with an increase in Allied mobility. In this phase, the Boers abandoned conventional operations. Instead, they adopted guerrilla tactics, with hit and run raids behind British 'lines'. This forced the Allied forces to re-think their own tactics, leading to the development of 'flying columns' based on mounted troops, and the conduct of 'drives' to sweep Boer commandos onto lines of static blockhouses where they could be killed or captured. Boers tended to defend *kopjes* (hills) or *drifts* (river crossings) for as long as it suited them. They were content to snipe and raid and would break contact unless cut off. Neither side undertook set piece attacks on the scale of the first phase. Boers were usually 'dislodged by wide turning flanking movements with arcs of anything from five to fifteen miles from the position being attacked.'⁷ The New Zealanders participated in flying columns, new model 'drives' and in detaining Boer families and cattle as part of anti-guerrilla operations.

New Zealand troops participated in both phases, although the majority served in the latter. It is not intended to cover the Boer War in detail. However, an explanation of some of the operations that the New Zealanders were involved in will be necessary in order to determine the tactics that developed and whether these were repeated in World War I mounted operations doctrine during combat.

The New Zealand Experience

The First Phase

The actions undertaken by the First Contingent typify New Zealand experience during the first phase of the war. The contingent arrived in Cape Town on 23 November 1899. Within nine days of disembarking in Cape Town, they moved to the northern Cape Colony where they joined General John French's cavalry division at Naauwpoort. The troops were deployed straight on operations due to recent reverses suffered by the British.⁸ The rushed employment into combat was determined, upon reflection after the war, to be a mistake. Future New Zealand deployments to World War 1 and later conflicts would include 'in theatre training' and acclimatisation before commencing combat operations.

⁷ Richard Stowers, *Rough Riders at War History of New Zealand's involvement in the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902 and information on all members of the ten New Zealand contingents*, published by R. Stowers, Hamilton, 2002, p.6.

⁸ Christopher Pugsley, *The ANZAC Experience: New Zealand, Australia and the Empire in the First World War*, Reed Publishing (NZ) Ltd, 2004, p. 42.

The Contingent's first major action was at Jasfontein Farm on December 1899. The New Zealanders advanced '... on the farm, which was done in extended line, dismounted, with bayonets fixed' expecting to fight the Boer occupants, however, the Boers had escaped.⁹ The New Zealanders then occupied the farm buildings themselves. Under the cover of artillery and rifle covering fire, the Boers attempted to outflank the New Zealanders in order to re-capture the farm. Some New Zealanders had to occupy a nearby kopje that overlooked both the farm and the flank route that the Boers were using, in order to prevent the Boers from occupying it themselves and making the farm position untenable. Lessons were learned from this action about enemy and flanking manoeuvre, the need to cut Boers off to prevent them escaping and about maintaining watch over one's own flanks. The cavalry division then moved to Slingsfontein where a base was established from which to patrol the local area.

The significance of high ground was further reinforced on 13 January 1900 at Slingsfontein Farm. Near the division's base there was a large kopje. It was not occupied, nor were outposts established on it. When it was determined that the Boers intended to occupy this feature and thus dominate the base, the New Zealanders were rushed to it, reaching the summit just ahead of the Boers. Thereafter a picket was maintained on the hill, despite periodic sniping. Two days later, the position came under intense fire signalling a major Boer attack. The New Zealanders and troops from the Yorkshire Regiment withstood heavy enemy fire, sustained significant casualties, but prevented the kopje being captured. The New Zealanders defeated the Boer attack with a spirited bayonet charge. The kopje became known as New Zealand Hill. The battle established the New Zealand reputation, just two months after arriving in theatre.¹⁰ Later the division moved to Orange River Station ready to participate in the relief of Kimberley.

With the arrival of more troops in South Africa, General French was tasked to relieve Kimberley. The plan to relieve Kimberley required mounted troops because of the distances involved and the speed required. Lord Kitchener made it clear to General French that the column must out flank and bypass the Boers, not take them head on.

⁹ Richard Stowers, *Kiwi Versus Boer, The First New Zealand Mounted Rifles in the Anglo- Boer War 1899- 1902*, Print House, Cambridge, 1992, p.29. At this point the New Zealanders were not experienced enough to have cut offs in place prior to the attack that would prevent the Boer escaping or to position troops on higher ground to overwatch and cover their dismounted advance to the farm. This would change as they gained combat experience.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 46. General French's address to the New Zealander's following the battle included the words 'it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on a very spirited and gallant manner in which you resisted a very clever and daring attack on the part of the enemy. It is not the first time nor the second time that you have been under heavy rifle fire when you have conducted yourself well.'

In order to achieve this, the regular (dismounted) infantry was left behind.¹¹ The column was issued three days rations to make them self-sufficient and all non-essential equipment was withdrawn in preparation for the twenty five mile “dash” to Kimberley. The trekking was arduous:

During six days continuous march, we had only 20 hours sleep at night in all. On Sunday 11th, we marched and fought for 21 hours and on Tuesday and Wednesday we marched continuously for 23 hours without water, and fought again on Thursday morning, after which we marched 25 miles to Kimberley, all this under a blazing sun...¹²

These long treks established the pattern for mounted operations. Night rides became accepted practice. These required good scouting and guiding skills, which the New Zealanders excelled in, despite their lack of formal cavalry training. Night movement avoided the heat of the day, minimised Boer observation and assisted in achieving the element of surprise

Following the relief of Kimberley the New Zealanders were attached to the South Welsh Borderers to instruct the Borderers in riding and scouting skills.¹³ The South Welsh Borderers were one of the British infantry regiments already in theatre that were hastily mounted as a means of achieving comparable mobility to the Boers, until such time as sufficient mounted troops could be brought out from England. The pattern of attaching contingents to different columns meant the New Zealanders were never under unified command, ‘but although they regretted its necessity they pointed out that it was the New Zealanders’ skill in reconnoitring untraversed country which caused them to be so much in demand.’¹⁴

The first phase ended with the capture of Pretoria, capital of the Transvaal on 5 June 1900. Although many thought the war was almost over, Boer leaders Christian De Wet, Louis Botha and Koos De La Rey conducted a guerrilla campaign that lasted until 1902.

¹¹ Pakenham, p. 313.

¹² Stowers, R., *Kiwi versus Boer*, p. 62. The final 25 mile ‘march’ was the mounted dash into Kimberley. New Zealanders are credited with being the first Allied troops to enter Kimberley. Note that the word march actually means ‘ride’, the effect on the horses was equally felt.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 67

The Second Phase

Further New Zealand Contingents arrived as the preceding contingent's tour was about to expire and the New Zealand commitment was extended. The remainder of this section illustrates typical New Zealand experience in the conduct of anti-guerrilla operations.

In order to conduct anti-guerrilla operations, the Allies formed Flying Columns based on mounted troops. The columns had comparative mobility with the Boers although typically took too much baggage and were overly heavily reliant on slow ox carts for the carriage of horse fodder and supplies. The Kimberley Flying Column was typical. It comprised: Two Fifteen pounder guns and two Pom Pomguns from the Royal Artillery¹⁵, mounted Squadrons from 50th Imperial Yeomanry, Somerset Light Infantry, Scottish Rifles, Dennison Scouts (of the South African Rifles), a squadron of the British South African Police and C Squadron of the Fifth New Zealand Mounted Rifles. Frank Perham describes the Kimberley Flying Column:

The Column was a very mobile one and for the sake of speed always travelled with as little to hamper (it) as possible. It operated mainly in the Orange Free State.... Its main duties were convoy work and dealing with Boer guerrilla tactics, which it did quickly and effectively.¹⁶

Various tactics were developed by the columns to locate the Boers, often by making themselves targets:

April 15th. The Column was on the move at 4 a.m. My section was instructed to occupy a post on the flank until the column passed. At 8 a.m. we camped near two farms for breakfast. Afterwards, the Dennisons with one Pom Pom and the New Zealanders with the other were sent out patrolling in different directions looking for trouble.¹⁷

¹⁴ Hall, p. 26. This was in response to Lt Col Alfred Robin, Commanding the 1st Contingent, on complaining about the 'continued dispersal of the New Zealanders'

¹⁵ The 'Pom Pom' was the nickname given to the Maxim automatic gun which fired belt-fed 37mm high explosive shells. The nickname was derived from the sound the shells made as they hit their target. The Pom Pom gun is the forerunner of today's 40mm automatic grenade launchers. Melvin M. Johnson and Charles T. Haven, *Automatic Arms Their History and Development*, William Morrow and Co., New York, 1941.

¹⁶ Trooper Frank Perham, *The Kimberley Flying Column, Being Reminiscences of Service in the South African war of 1899- 1903* (sic), Print House, Cambridge, New Zealand, 1992, p. 41

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

An account of how they did this appears in Hall:

The main body of New Zealanders trailed a coat before the Boers' position and successfully induced them to open fire and disclose their positions to the British artillery. When at nightfall the Boers fell back, the advancing New Zealanders captured one of the Maxims.¹⁸

The Allies learnt that guard forces needed to be employed in order to protect the main body and to locate, or be located by, the Boers at sufficient range that the main body could still manoeuvre. Joseph Linklater explains the forces required to prevent major interference from the Boers when his squadron of New Zealand's Sixth Contingent were providing advance and flank guards for General Plumer's column:

When going through hostile country scouts always go first, then follows in extended order- that is, fifty to one hundred yards between files- the advance guard.... the supports to the advance, called flankers, follow on, on the extreme right and left of the advance. The big guns come next, protected either side by a strong escort, and then the main body of troops.¹⁹

This did not prevent Boers sniping at the columns and flanks by day and then harassing, even attacking, camps at night. Boers would occupy kopjes along anticipated Allied routes, from where they would snipe and delay the columns then disappear. Allied counter tactics were to fire the Pom Pom gun at the sniper post, however, the Boer would often retire from the kopje under fire, re-locate, then harass another portion of the column.²⁰ Sometimes the Boers would not fire from the kopje at long range, but would wait until the scouts had bunched up below ready to scale it dismounted and only then would the commandos unleash a fusillade. In one case, the Boers waited for the single breathless scout to reach the top before firing at him at point blank range.²¹

¹⁸ Hall, p. 30. The Maxim was a Boer machine gun and thus a significant capture. Presumably the coat was dragged to create dust and therefore suggest a worthwhile target. It would take courage to purposely induce the enemy to fire on one in that fashion.

¹⁹ Joseph Linklater, *On active Service with the Silent Sixth*, McKee and Co., date of publication not specified, p. 18.

²⁰ Perham, p. 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65. In this case, the New Zealanders were advance scouts for the column. On reaching the base of a steep kopje, Trooper Philpott dismounted and climbed to the top. On reaching the top he was fired upon at point blank range. Although he managed to get back down to his horse, he died of his wounds two hours later. Philpott was buried, wrapped in his own blanket, near where he had been shot.

Experience taught the Allies to adapt to Boer tactics. They would send out parties before dawn to occupy kopjes and drifts along the intended route of a column or convoy in order to minimise Boer interference. They learned to draw Boer fire and thus make the Boer a target for the Pom Pom guns, or once they had identified the Boer position, would attempt to outflank it. Both these tactics would cause the Boer to withdraw. On one occasion the Boers withdrew under the cover of smoke they had produced by setting fire to long grass.

Everything had to be picketed, escorted, protected. Mounted troops were detailed to escort guns and supply columns. Outposts were established at night to protect bases, or during night halts of a larger group. Usually an outpost would consist of five troopers and a Non Commissioned Officer. A main picket would be positioned nearer the base camp than the outposts. Being stronger, the main picket's duty was '... to come to the aid of the outpost if we were attacked...'²²

Boers proved to be elusive. Knowing, or at least suspecting, that the Boers stayed on farms where they could hide away and be fed, new tactics were developed to catch them. As Linklater explains:

Reveille 1 a.m; moved 3 a.m; camped at 7 a.m. This early morning marching was meant to surprise the Boers who were supposed to be lurking in farmhouses.²³

In surrounding any farmhouse our plan of action was as follows- a company of men, keeping in touch with each other would surround the house in extended order, thus forming a large circle around it. Each man would march towards the house, keeping as much hidden as possible, until the house was reached, when the surrender of it inmates was demanded.²⁴

Once the occupants came out, the house would be searched thoroughly. Often cattle would be confiscated.

Kitchener had lines of blockhouses constructed and introduced the tactic of 'new model drives'; large sweeps across the veldt, forcing Boer commandos and their cattle against blockhouse lines where they would (in theory) be killed or captured.

²² Linklater, p. 31.

²³ *ibid*, p. 51.

Boer counter-tactics included splitting their forces up and manoeuvring to the flanks of the sweeping forces hoping to locate a gap. Another Boer tactic was to conduct a mass break out. Break outs were occasionally achieved at night by forcing cattle through first, with the commandos following immediately behind the cattle, exploiting the confusion and the cover provided by the animals. Drives were not always effective as this example points out:

On the night of 5 February (1902), these four super-columns, about nine thousand strong, roughly one man for every ten yards, lined out across the fifty four miles of the open end of the rectangle. Meanwhile, other columns were sent to reinforce the blockhouses on the other three sides, and seven armoured trains, equipped with guns and search lights, steamed up and down the railway tracks..... By dawn on 8 February, only 285 out of 2,000 odd Boers had been accounted for.²⁵

In reality it was impossible to maintain a totally intact line. The Boers could always select a point at which to break out if they could not exploit a gap in a flank or infiltrate through a gap quietly by night. For the Allies, the need to have a continuous blockhouse line used up all available troops so there were never sufficient mobile reserves to act as reinforcements and blocking forces once the Boer break out point had been identified. Inevitably the Boers had local superiority at the point they chose to break out. This was the case at Langverwacht where the Boers broke through the cordon that members of the New Zealand Seventh Contingent were covering. Six hundred Boers escaped through the breach leaving 24 New Zealanders killed and a further 41 wounded.²⁶ This was a high casualty rate for the eighty New Zealanders defending that point of the line.²⁷ It highlights the effect of mass, 600:80 or 7.5: 1 that the Boers achieved at their breakout point.

Despite some local successes, Boer resistance finally collapsed. As part of the anti-guerrilla operations, many Boer farms had been burned. Over 120,000 Boer women and children were placed in concentration camps, thousands died in captivity.²⁸ On 31 May 1902 the Boers accepted British sovereignty under the Treaty of Vereeniging.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67

²⁵ Pakenham, p. 545- 546. Clearly, these drives were not always effective given the resources employed, with only 10% of the Boers being captured in the example quoted.

²⁶ Hall, pp. 68-69. Fourteen Boers were killed and 20 wounded by the New Zealanders.

²⁷ Stowers, *Rough Riders at War*, p. 9 and pp. 23- 24. The Boer night break out at Langverwacht caused the eighty Seventh Contingent defenders a total of 65 casualties.

More than 6,500 New Zealanders served during the war. Fifty eight New Zealand soldiers were killed in action, 11 died of wounds received and 27 were accidentally killed. One hundred and thirty six died of disease while 190 approximately were wounded.²⁹

Effects in Great Britain

The war resulted in a number of reforms within the British Army. Two key ones were the establishment of an Imperial General Staff and the publication of army doctrine. Mixed lessons were learned by Great Britain from cavalry and mounted infantry experience in the Boer War. Whilst the mobility provided by the horse was generally accepted, there was widespread debate, especially within military circles, over the continued utility of cavalry and whether mounted infantry or yeomanry could achieve the same tactical tasks as cavalry. Cavalry advocates believed, for instance, that colonial cavalry would not be suited to the battlefields of Europe³⁰, and that 'the Boer War was only a colonial struggle which had little bearing on the type of conflict to be expected among the major powers.'³¹

The Times was scathing over the utility of the cavalry troops, citing cavalry training and mentality as limiting their ability to compete with the Boers. It argued that cavalry manoeuvres in massed formation, based on *shock action* with the sword or lance, were extremely vulnerable to an enemy armed with long range magazine fed rifles operating from cover, seldom visible to the cavalry. Traditional cavalry training (and experience) called for fighting in close formations, usually against mounted or dismounted opponents, in the open. While cavalry units converted to the rifle on Kitchener's insistence, many viewed the Boer War as a 'one off' experience and thus argued that no lessons should be drawn from it that would detract from cavalry's continued utility, completely overlooking recent American Civil War experience.³²

However, the tactics employed by the mounted rifles and yeomanry forces were enshrined in doctrine that was produced for British yeomanry and colonial mounted

²⁸ Hall, p.3. Hall states that 20,000 Boer women and children died in (British) concentration camps.

²⁹ Stowers, *Rough Riders at War*, p. 43.

³⁰ Charles Sydney Goldmann, *With General French and the Cavalry in South Africa*, MacMillan and Co, Limited, 1903, p.416 and Jean Bou, p. 103.

³¹ Taylor, William, L., p. 174.

³² Bou, Jean, '*Modern Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War, and the Doctrinal Debates*', in Dennis and Grey, p.100. Bou notes that the cavalry arm of both the Union and Confederate armies preferred firearms to blade type weapons, usually dismounted in order to use their carbines but if they remained mounted, their weapon of choice was the revolver. See also Taylor, p. 174.

rifles. Patrolling, fire tactics and the care of horses were all included in the doctrine intended for Territorial and colonial mounted infantry. Cavalry tactics, most notably the mounted charge, were excluded from this doctrine although remained within the handbooks written for British cavalry.

Effects in New Zealand

New Zealanders soldiered alongside the best from Australia, Canada and Great Britain, and proved they were more than equal to the task. This success, coupled with minimal casualties sustained, meant there would be a rush of volunteers for future deployments and ensured that New Zealand retained mounted troops within its armed forces, for home defence and for future force contributions. Thus New Zealand was in a position to immediately contribute a mounted rifles brigade in World War I.

The Boer War produced a group of experienced mounted riflemen. 'New Zealanders experienced the advantages of using mobility to outmanoeuvre an enemy whilst maintaining a fighting ethos.'³³ Some veterans maintained their association with the armed forces by joining the Volunteers or serving with the Permanent Force. The experience of Ex- Private Frank Perham (Fifth Contingent) was typical. After returning to civilian life he still yearned to be involved with the military. To achieve this, he joined the Canterbury Yeomanry Cavalry.³⁴

Military events found their way into agricultural shows, where they provided a spectacle, re-lived the Boer War experience and provided some training value for Volunteer units.

The end of the [Boer] war and the return of troops served to keep alive the military spirit in the many volunteer units which had been formed throughout the country and the members trained assiduously in military drill and rifle shooting etc... no agricultural show or pastoral show was complete without its program of military events...³⁵

³³ Mark Wheeler, 'Evaluating the Role of Mounted Infantry During the 1899- 1902 Anglo- Boer War in order to establish observations applicable to the New Zealand Mounted Infantry of the Future', Massey University Thesis, 4 December 2000, p. 47

³⁴ Perham, p. 85.

³⁵ 1997.503 Memoirs of Corporal McMillan ('*Forty Thousand Horsemen*'), Kippenberger Military Archive and Research Library (Army Museum, Waiouru), p. 5.

The Boer War highlighted serious issues in the administration and welfare of the men. By sending small contingents entirely of mounted troops, with no dedicated administrative staffs, the New Zealanders and Australians were significantly worse off than their British or Canadian counterparts. Future New Zealand deployments would ensure dedicated personnel deployed as part of the contingent to take care of pay, mail, medical and spiritual needs, to receive, hold and train reinforcements and to ensure the men had access to hot food and reasonable accommodation.³⁶

Horses

More than eight thousand were sent to South Africa, only one returned to New Zealand.³⁷ All contingents, except the Seventh, took horses with them aboard their troopships. Despite the New Zealanders care for their horses, conditions were harsh, for man and horse, resulting in casualties to both from more than enemy action. The hours were long, fodder was often scarce. If a horse died or became lame, the horseless trooper was consigned to an ox cart, or forced to walk, until a re-mount could be obtained. Lame or sick horses would be shot. The general shortage of horses in South Africa was a limiting factor on Allied mobility. Boer ponies were popular remounts, although not easily obtained. New Zealand horses were preferred, contingents usually passed them on to the other New Zealand contingents as they departed for home.

Many horses died in South Africa³⁸. '... the mortality of horses during the campaign was high: those which were not well looked after by their riders died first.' It is estimated that 400, 346 horses, mules and donkeys were 'expended' in the course of the war. As the horse was a bigger target than the rider, and also sometimes used for cover from enemy fire, it was only natural that horses should have a greater chance of being hit by enemy action than the rider. As well as enemy action and lack of adequate care by their riders, horses were also lost to disease and even due to unsupervised grazing. It is said that at times the route taken by the Allies on a long trek could be determined by following the lines of dead horses:

³⁶ Pugsley, *ANZAC Experience*, pp. 45-46. By contrast, when the British and Canadians came in from a trek they had access to hot food, tent lines that were already established, mail was waiting, and they could draw their pay. This is well covered by Chris Pugsley, and while not directly related to tactics, the issue of administration and command responsibility for the welfare of soldiers *by their officers* is closely linked to morale, and therefore to combat effectiveness.

³⁷ Stowers, *Rough Riders at War*, p. 29. The horse's name was 'Major', the mount of Major Robin, commander of the First Contingent.

³⁸ Stowers, *Rough Riders at War*, p. 29.

Between Bloemfontein and Kimberley it was something awful, the route was a scene of desolation, strewn with dead horses and oxen, with crowds of South African vultures flying overhead them, and starving horses left by the British grazing on the scanty grass.³⁹

Conclusions

The two main effects of the Boer War were the continuation of mounted rifles units within New Zealand's defence force and the production of doctrine by the British, for armed forces generally, but mounted rifles and yeomanry units specifically. The debate over the utility of cavalry was to some extent a sideshow. Certainly, the firepower of the rifle was acknowledged, although its full destructive potential in conjunction with the machine gun was not fully appreciated until World War I.

Additional benefits were an understanding by New Zealanders of the need to conserve horses and for the proper administration and welfare of deployed contingents. Boer War veterans provided an invaluable experience base from which future contingents could be trained and led.

³⁹ Spence, p. 122.