



BHA NEWS

Boksburg Historical Association

The past is the key to the future

FEBRUARY 2008
NUMBER 153



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Boksburg's link to the Voortrekker Monument

A Boksburg pioneer played a small but key role in the development of the Voortrekker Monument.

Ds. JAMES MURRAY (JIMMIE) LOUW



18-1-1869
21-11-1939

THE
COMMANDO
PREACHER

James Murray Louw studied for the ministry at Victoria College, Stellenbosch, and in the 1890's he was assistant minister of the Sunnyside, Pretoria congregation of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde church. At this time, the minister of the Boksburg congregation was Ds. P. Stofberg, a graduate of St. Andrews University in Scotland. The first NG church was a wood and iron building on the corner of Market and Trichardts streets, opposite Market Square, where the Old Town Hall now stands.

In 1898 Ds. Stofberg left to become a missionary, and the congregation decided to appoint Ds. Louw as the second minister for Boksburg. He assumed duties in December 1898 and served the Boksburg community faithfully for over 40 years.

When the Anglo-Boer War broke out, Ds. Louw left for the Natal front with the Boksburg Commando on 12th October 1899. For the next 2 and a half years, Louw stayed with the Republican

forces, first with the men from the East Rand, then later often with General Louis Botha's headquarters staff. Right through the war Ds. Louw kept a journal of his daily movements, recording not so much military matters, but the spiritual leadership he offered to the burgers in the field. His diary – published in 1948 – records day-to-day events and is useful in filling in snippets of information for history researchers.

On 31st October, 1899, for instance, Ds. Louw climbed the hills around Lady-smith together with Willem Gravett, brother of the later General Gravett. Together they observed activities in the town below. At the end of January 1900, Louw went with the Boksburg contingent to Colesburg and at the end of July he was with Commandant Dercksen at Dullstroom.



On 5th June 1902 Ds. Louw and the remnants of the Boksburg Commando laid down their weapons finally at Kraal station, just south of Heidelberg. A photographer was on hand to record the moment, and Louw dutifully listed the names of all the people who surrendered

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Boksborg's link to the Voortrekker Monument (Continued)

Seated first left on the ground in front was assistant Field Cornet Salmon van As of the Heidelberg Commando. Little did Van As know that he would be arrested by the British on 8th June for the earlier shooting of Captain R. Miers on 25 September 1901. After a trial at Middeburg, Van As was executed by firing squad behind the Heidelberg prison on 23rd June 1902.



Further reading:

- 1) **So het hulle gesterf**, Jooste, Graham & Oosthuizen, Abrie, J.P. van der Walt, Pretoria, 1998, p 198
- 2) **'n Kommandoprediker**, Kuit, Albert, J.H.B. de Bussy, Pretoria, 1948.

PS. Advocate De Wet recalls that on the 14th October, 1900, when Boer morale was particularly low following the fall of Pretoria and the intensification of the guerrilla campaign, Ds. Louw was particularly comforting. At the time, the Commandos were being forced from the Lowveld into the mountain fastnesses of the Waterberg, and did not know if they would be able to hold out. This was the time when Commandant Dercksen decided to surrender to the British, and when General Gravett was mortally wounded at Roossenekal. Ds. Louw based his sermon on Exodus 23 verse 20, "*See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way, and to bring you to the place I have prepared*"

The historic Klipkerk



On 7th June 1902 Ds. Louw arrived back in Boksborg and got permission from the Provost Marshall at Germiston to conduct a church service the next day, a Sunday. Louw spent the next 37 years serving the

people of the East Rand. Under his leadership, the "Klipkerk" was built in 1912. Ds. Louw was especially concerned about education and welfare of orphans. Immediately after returning from the war, he arranged housing for 20 Boksborg war orphans. Later these orphans were moved to the Abraham Kriel orphanage in Langlaagte – but every year, he arranged for children from this orphanage to visit Boksborg lake for a picnic.

In 1935 Ds. Louw was Chairman of the East Rand Schools Board. At the retirement ceremony for Matt Martin, the long-time Principal of Boksborg North English Medium School, Louw said "Some teachers are half-time, but Mr. Martin was always a 100% teacher and a fulltime man".

The same words apply to Ds. Louw as well; he stayed in the saddle until the very end, and always gave a hundred percent.

By 1938 Louw was frail and in poor health. As one of the last surviving preachers who had stayed with the Boer forces throughout the war, he was asked to deliver the sermon at the foundation stone laying for the Voortrekker Monument on June 16th, 1938. The Commando Preacher spoke of the need to serve God, and the importance of the Sabbath.

Ds. Louw was confined to bed from September 1939 and died on 21st November. Advocate N.J. de Wet, who was secretary to General Botha during the Anglo-Boer war, felt that it was Louw's friendliness, humility and sense of humour that made him a favourite with the Boer forces in the field. Like Matt Martin, Ds. Louw also had a school named after him, but sadly the name of the J.M. Louw school has been lost due to amalgamation of schools.

The relentless pressure from British columns left the Boers almost no time to rest. One day, after an almost sleepless night, General Botha noticed that Ds. Louw had not caught up with the headquarters staff, and sent two scouts back to look for him. Great was the rejoicing when the two scouts found Louw, who was travelling in a Scotch car pulled by a mule, to be quite safe, but fast asleep in the cart, while the mule grazed on a clump of grass. Woken from his sleep, Ds. Louw joined in the laughter of the scouts

ORIGINAL NG CHURCH - 1895



Commandant Dercksen



General Gravett

Visit to the Voortrekker Monument



Our Tour guide, Petrus



The Monument



Mother/child memorial



Ox wagon laager representation



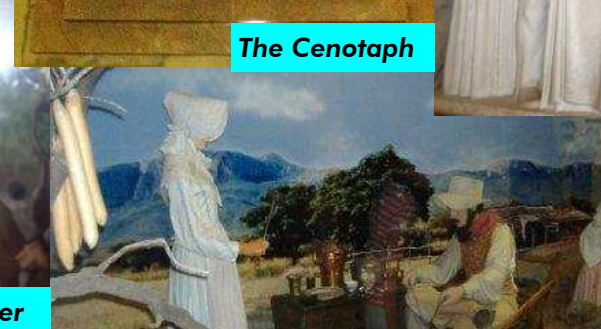
The Cenotaph



Historical frieze



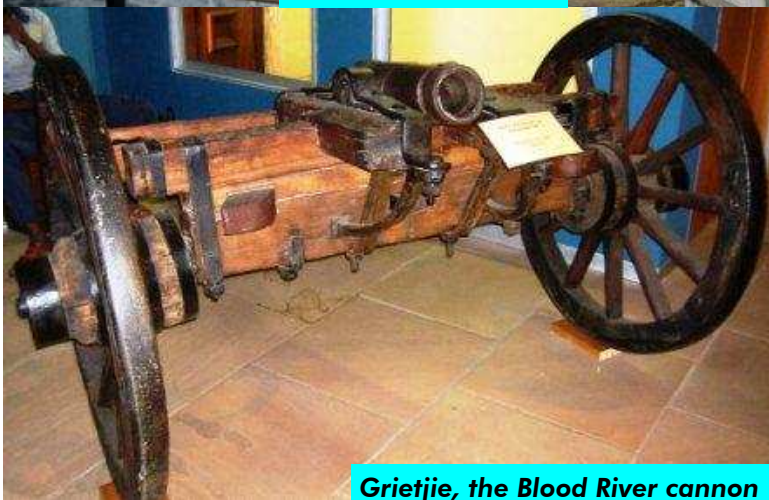
Battle of Blood River



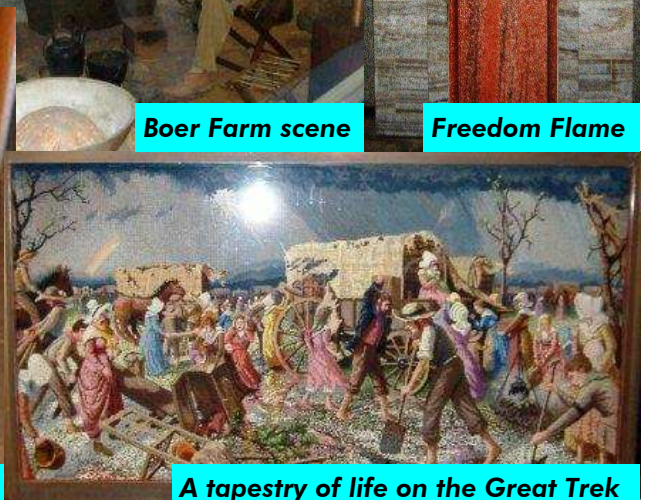
Boer Farm scene



Freedom Flame



Grietjie, the Blood River cannon



A tapestry of life on the Great Trek

Diary of Events

TOUR TO THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT AND THE PRETORIA BOTANICAL GARDENS

Twenty seven members and guests met at the Voortrekker Monument on Saturday morning, 1st February 2008. We were greeted by Petrus, our guide for the morning and what a gem he proved to be

The Monument is an extremely impressive edifice built as a tribute to all the Voortrekkers who began moving from the Cape Colony in 1835. Building of the Monument began in 1937. The foundation stone was laid on 16th December 1938 and inaugurated in 1949. The official opening took place in 1952.

During the climb up the various levels it was interesting to note that the carvings, friezes, and statues related stories from all South Africans.

On level 1 the visitor is surrounded by a symbolic stone laager of 64 full-sized wagons. Climbing the steps up to the level we were confronted by a large statue of a mother and two children symbolizing the trekkers religion and culture. Carved into the retaining wall above are 4 black wildebeest representing Dingaan's Zulu Impis. Further up are 4 carved cornerstone figures of Voortrekker leaders standing as a symbolic guard of honour. Finally above the main entrance into the Monument is a carved buffalo head. Petrus told us the symbolism of this is to protect the building against harm.

Inside the longest carved marble frieze in the world covers the interior walls. This was designed and modelled by South African artists. It depicts all the trials, tribulations, acts of heroism and prayers of thanksgiving endured during the treks.

We climbed higher to view Pretoria through the ramparts and some doughty members even climbed into the dome. Looking down into the hall and cenotaph we realized just how big the Monument is. There is an aperture in the dome specifically designed to guide a beam of sunlight onto the cenotaph at mid-day on 16th December each year when a national commemoration service is held.

In the lower chambers are friezes of beautiful tapestries and embroidered pictures depicting stories from the trek and a very informative museum. There is also an eternal flame symbolising South African unity.

On that note we thanked Petrus for giving us such a super and informative tour .

We regained our strength with a relaxing picnic in the lovely Pretoria Botanical Gardens.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: 8th March 2008
Venue: Boksburg High School
Time: 8.30am for 9.00 am

AGENDA:

1 WELCOME

2 PRESENT AND APOLOGIES

3 BUSINESS:

- 3.1 Approval of previous minutes
- 3.2 Matters Arising from previous minutes
- 3.3 Chairman's Annual Report
- 3.4 Treasurer's Annual Report

3.5 Other Reports

- 3.5.1 Secretary
- 3.5.2 Editor
- 3.5.3 Archivist/Tour Organiser
- 3.5.4 Webmaster

3.6 Election of Executive Committee Members: Chairman and 5-6 other members

- 3.7 Acceptance speech by Chairman
- 3.8 Any other business

4 GENERAL:

- 4.1 Members' Subscription Fees for 2008
- 4.2 Other General

5 SPEAKER

Robert Hewer is a most knowledgeable and interesting speaker on events around the Witkop Blockhouse and some of the skirmishes which took place there during the Anglo-Boer War

Wynand Deyzel will also give a 5 minute brief on the recordings being done by the SE Witwatersrand Genealogical Society at the Boksburg Cemetery.

Please join us for teas, tasty snacks and a chat at the close of the meeting

BIRTHDAY WISHES

Our best wishes to all members born in February on the occasion of their birthdays

GET WELL WISHES

A sincere get-well-soon wish to all members who are feeling below-par