



CESSNOCK



RSL SUB-BRANCH NEWSLETTER

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HANDY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Department of Honours and Awards	1800 11 321
ANZAC HOUSE	(02)9264 8188
RSL Defence Care	(02)80880388
Department of Veteran Affairs	1800 555 254
Home Care (Cessnock)	(02)40304706
Cessnock Council Community Services	49907247
DVA Home Care Services	1300 550 450
Royal District Nursing Service	1300 665 444
HACC Community Care Access Point	1300 731 556
Hearing Services Australia	131 797
National Hearing Care Cessnock	(02)9091 8613
Cessnock Police	(02)49910199
Cessnock City Council	(02)49934100
VVCS- Counselling Service	1800 011 046
Cessnock Hospital	4991 0555
Cessnock Taxi Service	4990 1111
EMERGENCY SERVICES	000
RSL Hall	4991 4141

SUB-BRANCH NEWS

2020 CONGRESS

The following is an extract from the latest (26th Aug) Board Communique relating to 2020 Congress:

Congress 2020

The Board agreed that the current and predicted risk environment rules out the possibility of a 'physical' Congress in December. The Board directed that the Congress/AGM be conducted via technology on 7/8 Dec only i.e. an 'on-line' Congress.

Voting (One member one vote) is now open. Postal voting closes on the 10th November 2020 and online voting closes on the 24th November 2020.

Appendix C item 2 of the RLS NSW Constitution requires all motions for the AGM to be submitted 10 weeks prior to Tuesday, 8 December (i.e. close of business Monday, 28 September 2020). Members wishing to submit motions should familiarise themselves with the content of Appendix C.

Sub-Branch Meetings

Sub-Branch meetings have recommenced from the 4th August at the normal time. With the Social Distancing, COVID Safe plan and 4 Square metre rule in place, the capacity of the hall is restricted to 23 people which does not impact on the number of members who normally attend Sub-Branch meetings.

MILLFIELD GATES UPDATE

The repairs to the left hand column have now been completed. What now is being done is a general cleanup of the columns and re-attachment of the original gates in partnership with the Millfield School.

Also a mistake in one of the names on Vietnam Honour Roll is being fixed in time for Remembrance Day.



RSL NSW NEWS

2020 Congress and the Annual General Meeting will be held on the 7th December as a virtual meeting, Only one delegate from each Sub-Branch will be permitted to take part, Voting for the new RSL NSW Board and President is currently underway by either on line or postal voting and closes on the 24th November,

***THE PRICE OF LIBERTY IS ETERNAL
VIGILANCE.***

RSL National News

No news from RSL
National this issue

HUNTER VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATES

No District Council news in this issue,

OUR SUB-BRANCH SPONSORS

The Businesses/Individuals on these pages are the sponsor supporters of our Sub-Branch. Their continued support is very important to the continued successful operation of our Sub-Branch. Please support them as they support us.



Bryce Gibson

Selling Principal
0422 227 668

Since starting in Real estate at the tender age of 16, Bryce has dedicated his whole real estate career to helping his many clients and customers achieve there real estate dreams.

Bryce is the Selling Principal of LJ Hooker Cessnock and leads an experienced, skilled and dedicated team to ensure your level of service is second to none.

Bryce has many qualifications including being a Licensed Real Estate Agent, a Licensed Stock & Station Agent, a Licensed Business Agent, a Licensed Strata Managing Agent and Licensed Auctioneer, Certified Practising Valuer.



SOMETHING TO LIGHTEN YOUR DAY

Smoking, drinking and unmarried sex

An Angel visited a woman and told her she must give up smoking, drinking and unmarried sex if she wants to get into Heaven. The woman said she would try her best.

The Angel visited the woman a week later to see how she was getting on.

"Not bad" said the woman, "I've given up smoking and drinking but then I bent over to look in the freezer, my boyfriend caught sight of my long slender legs in high heels, he pulled up my skirt and made love to me right then and there."

"They don't like that in Heaven", said the Angel.

The woman replied: "They're not crazy about it in Woolworths either!"



A New York Attorney representing a wealthy art collector called and asked to speak to his client.

"Saul, I have some good news and I have some bad news".

The art collector replied, " You know, I've had an awful day, Jack, so let's hear the good news first.

The Lawyer said, "Well, I met your wife today, and she informed me that she invested only \$5,000 in two very nice pictures that she thinks will bring somewhere between \$15 and 20 million...and I think she could be right.

Saul replied enthusiastically, "Holy cow! Well Done! My wife is a brilliant business woman, isn't she?, You've just made my day. Now I know I can handle the bad news. What is it?".

The lawyer replied, "The pictures are of you and your secretary



**REPRINT OF AN ARTICLE FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA
REGARDING WAR CEMETRIES FROM NOVEMBER 2018**

Today, we mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the signing of the armistice which brought an end to the First World War. It is a time for remembrance, but it seems not all our fallen heroes are being treated with the same amount of respect.

Sister Mary Nicolay trained under Florence Nightingale, and served as a nurse with the Western Australian forces in the Boer War from 1899 to 1901.

Private Charles Duff was born and raised in Welshpool. He served with the 11th Australian Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, and was twenty-one years old when he was killed in action in France, on April 7, 1917.

Private A. M. Griffiths served with the Australian Women's Army Service in the Second World War. She passed away at the age of 44, leaving her husband, Warrant Officer 1st Class I. R Griffiths, to raise their three children, Bessy, Leslie, and June.

Corporal Des Ellis served in Korea, and was home on leave recovering from his wounds when he was killed in a tragic motoring accident.

Other than their service, what each of these people has in common is burial in Perth's Karrakatta Cemetery; that, and fact that their headstones are currently under threat of removal as part of the so-called 'renewal' processes being undertaken by the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board, with the tacit approval of the Western Australian state government. And unfortunately, they are far from alone.

Sergeant Billy Date, served with the 11th Battalion at Gallipoli. A small white plaque now stands beside his headstone, like an insulting white

feather. It reads “This grave is in a proposed Cemetery Renewal area. Please contact Client Services.” The subtext is clear. Billy and his mates will soon be removed, and all but forgotten.

Yes, names will be etched on brass plaques in some secluded corner of the cemetery, but actual burial plots, where family and grateful strangers alike can come to pay their respects, will be lost, and in time other graves will be dug over those of men and women who fought for the soil in which they lie.

Just last week, WA’s Governor and former defence minister, Kim Beazley, spoke of what he described as the intangible social compact that exists between Australian citizens and the service and veterans community. He went on to extend that, implicitly, to include their families, but I think the current situation at Karrakatta requires that we are even more explicit than that. We owe these men and women our continued liberty, and we owe their families not only a debt of gratitude for their service, but the reassurance that we will continue to show them our very deepest respect in years to come.

To say that, just 100 years after the guns fell silent on the Western Front, we can no longer visit the grave of, for example, Warrant Officer 1st Class Alexander Rankin of the Australian Army Medical Corp, and pay our respects where his body lies, is to rubbish any such reassurance.

I have walked through Karrakatta in recent weeks, and the names and the stories are sadly too many to more than simply list. More than 100 souls, whose memorials are being threatened on the very day that we commemorate the silencing of the guns 100 years ago, with 100 bugle calls across our city.

One of them, Gunner J. A. Evans, served with the 8th Field Artillery Brigade. The simple, pristine brass plaque on his headstone reads “His

duty fearlessly and nobly done. Ever remembered.” Sadly, today, one of these statements seems truer than the other by a magnitude too tragic for us to even begin to quantify.

The 100 Memorials at Risk in Karrakatta Cemetery

1. Lance Corporal W. Anderson, 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital
2. Private H. M. Armstrong, 51 Battalion
3. Sergeant S. Atkinson, Royal Australian Engineers
4. Corporal G. Birchall, 11 Battalion
5. Lieutenant Commander P. R. Birchall, Royal Australian Naval Reserve
6. Private R. M. Bryson, 44 Battalion
7. Sapper R. R. G. Butcher MM, 2 Field Company Engineers
8. Corporal J. Cale, Corps of Signals
9. Petty Officer W. B. Clegg, Royal Australian Navy
10. Warrant Officer D. E. Collingwood, 2 Depot Unit of Supply
11. Private J. A. Collingwood, Australian Women’s Army Service
12. Corporal J. J. Copley, Army Ordnance Corps
13. Corporal K. H. Cormack, 2/11 Battalion
14. Private H. M. S. Craig, 11 Battalion
15. Private C. C. Cuthbert, 51 Battalion
16. Private S. P. Dale, Veterinary & Remounts Service
17. Sergeant W. H. Date, 11 Battalion

18. Trooper J. F. Davies, 10 Light Horse
19. Lance Corporal L. A. Denbigh DCM, 13 Field Ambulance
20. Corporal W. Dennerley DCM MM, Labour Service
21. Private H. V. Emery DCM, Labour Service
22. Surgeon Commander H. H. Field-Martell, Royal Australian Naval Reserve
23. Private E. S. Fishleigh, Army Medical Corps
24. Trooper L. L. Freeth. 10 Light Horse
25. Sapper C. C. Gibb, 3 Tunnelling Company
26. Private A. G. Glaskin, 11 Battalion
27. Private C. Golding, 5 Works Company
28. Private D. E. K. Granberg, 2/16 Infantry Battalion
29. Private A. M. Griffiths, Australian Women's Army Service
30. Private W. E. Hackett, 2/28 Infantry Battalion
31. Lance Corporal H. Hall, HQ Guard Battalion
32. Private W. H. Harman, 2/11 Infantry Battalion
33. Private F. F. Hatton, 2 Machine Gun Battalion
34. Corporal L. Henson, Army Ordnance Corp
35. Private F. A. Higgins, 2/5 Commando Squadron
36. Private E. J. Hill, 32 Battalion
37. Sapper W. Hitch, Royal Australian Engineers
38. Sergeant F. A. Hume, Corps of Signals

39. Flight Sergeant D. C. Humphries, Royal Australian Air Force
40. Private F. W. Jackson, 2/1 HQ Guard Battalion
41. Private E. R. C. James, 51 Battalion
42. Private S. C. Jeffrey, 44 Battalion
43. Lance Corporal J. J. Jose, 11 Battalion
44. Private W. J. Kemp, 2 Pioneer Battalion
45. Private H. Kilpatrick, 10 Battalion
46. Gunner R. H. Leach, 10 Field Artillery Battalion
47. Private J. Leonard, 2/14 Infantry Battalion
48. Sergeant T. D. Lester, 10 Battalion
49. Private A. H. Levett, Intelligence Corps
50. Sapper J. G. Little, 2 Tunnelling Company
51. Sergeant G. T. Loane, 16 Battalion
52. Sergeant W. A. MacDonald, Royal Australian Air Force
53. Lance Corporal H. Makin, 2 Field Company Engineers
54. Sergeant C. C. Massingham, Royal Australian Air Force
55. Corporal G. MacDowall, 51 Battalion
56. Trooper H. McMurray, 4 Light Horse Regiment
57. Private G. R. McTaggart, 4 Machine Gun Company
58. Private M. J. McTavish, Labour Service
59. Sergeant W. Mead, 5 Field Ambulance
60. Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant P. Miller, 11 Battalion

61. Private W. T. Moody, 44 Battalion
62. Private C. V. Neave, Labour Service
63. Sergeant P. O'Brien, Army Personnel Depot
64. Private T. Orr, 16 Infantry Battalion
65. Gunner A. E. Page, Royal Australian Artillery
66. Private E. J. A. Palmer, 16 Battalion
67. Private W. Pennington, 13 Mixed Brigade
68. Lance Corporal A. H. Plint, 11 Infantry Battalion
69. Sergeant A. J. Plozza, 2/16 Infantry Battalion
70. Sapper J. Pope, 3 Tunnelling Company
71. Lance Corporal W. J. Prosser, Royal Australian Engineers
72. Leading Aircraftsman J. Prosser, Royal Australian Air Force
73. Warrant Officer 1 A. Rankin, Australian Army Medical Corp
74. Private C. V. Reeve, 24 Battalion
75. Private H. E. Ridley, 2 Special Unit
76. Trooper T. Robinson, 1 Armoured Regiment
77. Major A. E. Sagers, 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion
78. Lieutenant Colonel G. D. Shaw MC, 28 Battalion
79. Lieutenant J. Shorrock, 28 Battalion
80. Lance Corporal F. A. Silbury, 5 Pioneer Battalion
81. Private P. A. Smirk, 26 Works Company
82. Sergeant J. G. Steel, Army Ordnance Corp

83. Private C. W. Stone, 32 Battalion
84. Private J. L. Storey, 51 Battalion
85. Sergeant B. L. Strickland, 26 Infantry Battalion
86. Sergeant K. A. Strudwick, Royal Australian Air Force
87. Private W. W. Sutton, 2/11 IMF Battalion
88. Aircraftswoman L. J. D. Sutton, Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
89. Private E. Taylor, 16 Battalion
90. Private A. W. Taylor, 8 Field Ambulance
91. Corporal L. Thomas, 2/11 Infantry Battalion
92. Leading Aircraftsman S. R. Treadgold, Royal Australian Air Force
93. Corporal P. W. Tucker, 11 Field Artillery Brigade
94. Warrant Officer 2 H. E. Vine, Army Pay Corps
95. Private G. Warren, 16 Battalion
96. Private J. Weir, 51 Battalion
97. Sergeant W. J. Wheatley, 2/5 Field Regiment
98. Sergeant G. A. Wilson, Corps of Elec. & Mech. Engineers
99. Driver F. A. Woodcock, 6 Motor Transport Company
100. Stoker Petty Officer G. A. Woodrow, Royal Australian Navy

There are many more besides.

It is my hope, on behalf of their families, and on behalf of all the Australians who owe them a debt of gratitude, that each of these heroes

continue to rest undisturbed, and that we as a nation and a community continue to commemorate their service and their sacrifice in a meaningful and enduring way.

‘Renewal’ should never be about burying our past along with our dead. If anything, it should be about renewing our commitment to the ANZAC spirit and leaving our dead to sleep in peace.

Aaron Stonehouse

HISTORICAL FEATURE

(Downloaded from Wikipedia and the Australian War Memorial))

The **Battle of Elands River** was an engagement of the [Second Boer War](#) that took place between 4 and 16 August 1900 in western [Transvaal](#). The battle was fought at Brakfontein Drift near the [Elands River](#) between a force of 2,000 to 3,000 [Boers](#) and a [garrison](#) of 500 [Australian](#), [Rhodesian](#), [Canadian](#) and [British](#) soldiers, who were stationed there to protect a British supply dump that had been established along the route between [Mafeking](#) and [Pretoria](#). The Boer force, which consisted of several [commandos](#) under the overall leadership of [Koos de la Rey](#), were in desperate need of provisions after earlier fighting had cut them off from their support base. As a result, they decided to attack the garrison along the Elands River in an effort to capture the supplies located there.

Over the course of 13 days, the Elands River supply dump was heavily shelled from several artillery pieces that were set up around the position, while Boers equipped with [small arms](#) and machine guns surrounded the garrison and kept the defenders under fire. Outnumbered and isolated, the defenders were asked to surrender by the Boer commander, but refused. The siege was subsequently lifted when the garrison was relieved by a 10,000-strong [flying column](#) led by [Lord Kitchener](#). The relief effort, although successful, drew forces away from efforts to capture a Boer commander, [Christiaan de Wet](#), who ultimately managed to evade British capture. This, along with the difficulty the British had in effecting the relief, buoyed Boer morale although the defenders' efforts also drew praise from Boer commanders.



Background[\[edit\]](#)

The first months of the [Second Boer War](#) were characterised by the use of large-scale conventional infantry forces by the British, which suffered heavy casualties in engagements with highly mobile Boer forces. Following this, a series of British counter-offensives, including [mounted infantry](#) units from the [Australian colonies](#) and Canada, among others, managed to capture and secure the main population centres in South Africa by June 1900. Much of the [Boer](#) force surrendered with the loss of their supply bases. In response, the Boers, including many who dishonoured their [parole](#) after having surrendered, and others who had melted away into civilian life, began a [guerrilla warfare](#) campaign. Operating in small groups, [Boer commandos](#) attacked columns of troops and supply lines, sniping, ambushing and launching raids on isolated garrisons and supply depots.^[1]

As a defensive measure to protect the supply route between [Mafeking](#) and [Pretoria](#), the British had established a garrison along the Elands River.^[2] Positioned near Brakfontein Drift, about 35 kilometres (22 mi) west of Pretoria,^[3] the location was developed into a supply dump by the British to supply forces operating in the area and to serve as a [way point](#) on the route between [Rustenburg](#) and [Zeerust](#).^[4] By mid-1900, the supplies that were located at Elands River included between 1,500 and 1,750 horses, mules and cattle, a quantity of ammunition, food and other equipment worth over 100,000 [pounds](#), and over 100 wagons.^{[5][6]} As the supplies were vulnerable to Boer raids, a garrison, spread across several positions, had been established.^[7]

The main position was at a farm located about 1 kilometre (0.6 mi) away from the river, occupying a small ridge, while two smaller positions were established on hills to the south, closer to the river, which were later called Zouch's Kopje and Butters' Kopje.^[7] The area was bracketed by two creeks – the Brakspruit to the north and the Doornspruit to the south – which flowed west into the river. A telegraph line ran through the farm along the Zeerust–Rustenburg road, which crossed the river at a ford about 1 kilometre (0.62 mi) west of the farm.^[8] While the ground to the north, south and west of the supply dump dropped to the river where the Reit Valley opened towards Zeerust, 50 kilometres (31 mi) away, the ground to the east of the farm rose towards a high point which came to be known as Cossack Post Hill. The hill was used by the garrison defending the post to send messages to Rustenburg – 70 kilometres (43 mi) away – using a [heliograph](#).^[9]

Prelude^[edit]

On 3 August, an 80-wagon supply convoy arrived at Elands River from Zeerust, where they were to wait for their escort, a column of 1,000 men from the [New South Wales Imperial Bushmen](#) along with South African [irregulars](#), commanded by General [Frederick Carrington](#), to arrive from Mafeking.^[4] Desperate for provisions, Boer forces decided to attack the garrison with a view to securing the supplies located there.^[7] Prior to the battle, the garrison had received intelligence warning them of the attack. As a result, some actions were taken to fortify the position, with a makeshift defensive perimeter being established utilising stores and wagons to create barricades.^[7] Little attempt had been made to dig-in, as the ground around the position was hard and the garrison lacked entrenching tools.^[10]

15



Boer commander Koos de la Rey

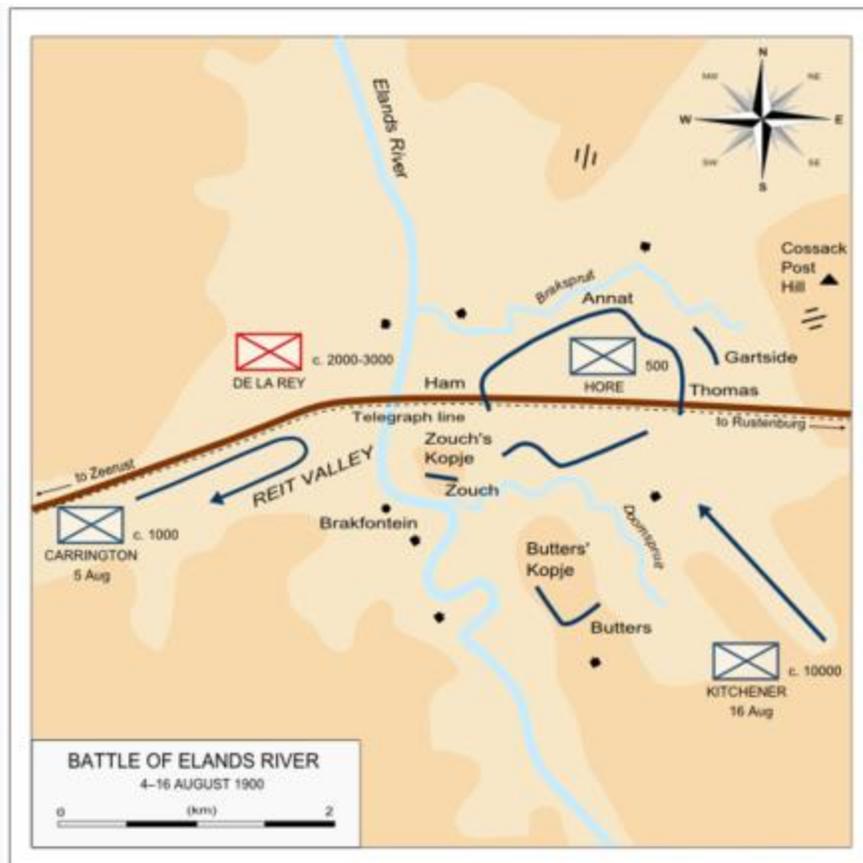
The garrison defending the Elands River post consisted of about 500 men.^[7] The majority were Australians, comprising 105 from A Squadron of the [New South Wales Citizen Bushmen](#), 141 from the [Queensland Citizen Bushmen](#), 42 [Victorians](#) and nine [Western Australians](#) from the 3rd

Bushmen Regiment, and two from [Tasmania](#).^[5] In addition, there were 201 [Rhodesians](#) from the [British South Africa Police](#), the [Rhodesia Regiment](#), the Southern Rhodesian Volunteers, and the [Bechuanaland Protectorate](#) Regiment,^[11] along with three Canadians and three Britons. A British officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hore, was in overall command. Their only fire support was one or two [Maxim machine-guns](#) and an antiquated 7-pounder [screw gun](#), for which there was only about 100 rounds of ammunition.^{[7][12][13]} In addition to the garrison, there were civilians, consisting of Africans working as porters, drivers, or runners and about 30 [loyalist](#) European settlers who had moved to the farm prior to being evacuated.^[5] Against this, the Boer force, consisting of between 2,000 and 3,000 men drawn from the [Rustenburg](#), [Wolmaransstad](#) and [Marico](#) commandos,^[10] under the overall command of Generals [Koos de la Rey](#) and Hermanus Lemmer, possessed five or six 12-pounder field guns for indirect fire, three [quick-firing 1-pound pom-poms](#), which could provide rapid direct fire support,^[7] and two machine guns.^[12]

Battle^[edit]

The Boer surrounded the garrison during the night while the latter were occupied singing around their campfires,^[4] and began their attack early on 4 August after the garrison had been stood down for breakfast. Rifle shots from snipers positioned in the riverbed announced the commencement of the attack. They were followed by an intense artillery barrage from the Boer guns.^[10] One pom-pom and a 12-pounder engaged one of the outposts from the south-west from behind an entrenched position about 2,700 metres (3,000 yd) away on the opposite side of the river, while the main position was engaged by three guns positioned to the east along with a Maxim gun, snipers, a pom-pom and an artillery piece in multiple positions to the north-west about 1,800 metres (2,000 yd) away. A third firing point, about 3,900 metres (4,300 yd) away, consisting of an artillery piece and a pom-pom, engaged the garrison from high ground overlooking the river to the west.^[14] In response, the defenders' screw gun returned fire, destroying a farmhouse from which Boers were firing; however, the gun soon jammed.^[15] Unanswered, the Boer barrage of around 1,700 shells devastated the oxen and killed around 1,500 horses, mules and cattle.^{[4][12]} Those that remained alive were set free to avoid a stampede.^[15] In addition, the telegraph line and considerable stores were destroyed, and a number of casualties inflicted.^[7]

In an effort to silence the guns, a small party of Queenslanders under Lieutenant James Annat, sallied 180 metres (200 yd) to attack one of the Boer pom-pom positions, forcing its crew to pack up their weapon and withdraw.^{[15][16]} Nevertheless, the other guns remained in action and the barrage continued throughout the day, before easing as night fell. The defenders then used the brief respite to begin digging in,^[4] using their bayonets, and to clear away the dead animals.^[15] Casualties during the first day amounted to at least 28, of which eight were killed.^[17]



Battle of Elands River, 4–16 August 1900.

The following morning, 5 August, the Boer gunners continued the shelling, but the effects were limited by the defences dug the night before.^[4] About 800 shells were fired on the second day, bringing the total to 2,500 over two days.^[7] Later that day, the expected 1000 strong column led by Carrington was ambushed by a Boer force under Lemmer's command about 3 kilometres (1.9 mi) west of the position and, although their casualties consisted of only 17 wounded, Carrington chose to withdraw.^[7] The ambush was facilitated by the inadequate reconnaissance provided by Carrington's scouts.^[18] The column later destroyed supplies at [Groot Marico](#), [Zeerust](#) and [Ottoshoop](#), so that they would not fall into Boer hands,^[4] although a large amount of supplies remained usable in many locations, including at Zeerust, and were ultimately captured by the Boers. Carrington's force then withdrew hastily to Mafeking, a decision which damaged his reputation amongst some of his soldiers, particularly the Australians.^[19]

When it became apparent that the relief had been turned back, the Boer commander, De la Rey, seeking to end the siege before another relief force could be sent,^[18] ordered his men to cease fire and sent a messenger calling upon the garrison to surrender. After the garrison rejected the offer, the shelling resumed and continued throughout the night.^[4] Nevertheless, the defenders continued to improve their position, constructing stone [sangars](#) and digging their fighting pits deeper,^[7] reinforcing them with crates, sacks and wagon wheels.^[20] Wood, salvaged from wrecked wagons, was used to provide overhead protection to the positions, several of which were linked with a tunnel.^[18] A kitchen was also established, and a makeshift hospital built in the centre of the position using several ambulances and reinforced with wagons filled with dirt and various stores and containers.^[20] Although the defenders had repaired their screw gun, they were only able to use it for counter-battery fire sparingly due to lack of ammunition.^[16]



Sangars thrown up by the defenders, shown a year after the battle

After the initial heavy barrage, on the third day of the siege the Boer gunners eased their rate of fire when it became apparent that they were destroying some of the supplies they were trying to capture. Nevertheless, the Boers maintained small arms fire, keeping defenders trapped in their defences during the intense heat of the day; the heat also accelerated the decomposition of the dead animals, the smell of which was considerable.^[7] There was no water source within the main camp so patrols under a Rhodesian officer, Captain Sandy Butters,^[4] who commanded the southern-most outpost at Butters' Kopje, were sent out at night to collect it from the Elands River, about 800 metres (870 yd) away.^[3] During several of these sallies, fire was exchanged and the party had to fight their way back.^[4] De la Rey opted not to launch a direct assault on the position to limit his losses. The southern and eastern sides were well protected, but he realised that an approach from the south-west might offer more chance of success.^[21] Attempts were made by the Boers to take the kopje to the south of the Doornspruit on two nights – 6 and 7 August in an effort to cut off the defenders' supply of water; however, Rhodesians, under the command of Butters, helped by supporting fire from the Zouch's Kopje near the creek's confluence with the river, repulsed both attacks.^[18] A force of 2,000 Boers took part in these efforts, and on the second night attempted to cover their approach by advancing behind a herd of sheep and goats.^[22] On 8 August, the post's hospital came under artillery fire, even though it was marked with a Red Cross flag. One of the shells struck it, further wounding some of those receiving treatment.^[12]

After five days, De la Rey again called for surrender,^[7] as he became concerned about being caught by relief forces. The message was received by Hore around 9:00 am on the fifth day of the siege after several hours of artillery fire.^[18] Hore had been suffering from malaria even before the siege and had been largely confined to the post.^[10] As a result, command had effectively passed to an Australian, Major [Walter Tunbridge](#) from the Queensland Citizen Bushmen.^[3] Upon receiving the message, Hore discussed it with the other [officers](#), at which point Tunbridge told him that the Australians refused to surrender.^[18] In order to demonstrate the respect with which he held the defence that the garrison had put up, De la Rey offered them safe passage to British lines and was even prepared to allow the officers to retain their revolvers so that they could leave the battlefield with dignity.^[7] Once again, however, the offer was rejected,^[23] and Hore is reputed to have stated: "I cannot surrender. I am in command of Australians who would cut my throat if I did."^[16] Butters took a similar line, repeatedly shouting towards the Boers that "Rhodesians never surrender!"^{[22][24]}

This stand at Brakfontein on the Eland River appears to have been one of the finest deeds of arms of the war. Australians have been so split up during the campaign that though their valour and efficiency were universally recognised, they had no single large exploit which they could call their own. But now they can point to Elands River as proudly as the Canadians at Paardeberg...they were sworn to die before the white flag would wave above them. And so fortune yielded, as fortune will when brave men set their teeth...when the ballad makers of Australia seek for a subject, let them turn to Elands River, for there was no finer fighting in the war.

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in [The Great Boer War](#)^[16]

As the fighting continued, the British made a second attempt to relieve the garrison, dispatching a force of about 1,000 men under Colonel [Robert Baden-Powell](#) from Rustenburg on 6 August. He halted just 13 kilometres (8 mi) from Rustenburg, around the [Selous River](#), about a third of the way,

and sent out scouts. Failing to allow a proper reconnaissance, around midday Baden-Powell messaged General [Ian Hamilton](#) and turned back, determining the relief effort pointless, citing previous instructions and warnings from [Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in South Africa Lord Roberts](#) about becoming isolated,^[18] and claiming to have heard gun fire moving westward that suggested the garrison may have been evacuated to the west by Carrington.^[25] Based on the reports provided by Carrington upon his return, the British commanders in Pretoria and Mafeking were under the impression that the garrison had surrendered and, as a result, when Baden-Powell's force was about 30 kilometres (19 mi) away from the besieged Elands River garrison at Brakfontein, Lord Roberts ordered him and the rest of Hamilton's force at Rustenburg to return to Pretoria,^[4] to focus on capturing [Christiaan De Wet](#), an important Boer commander.^[18] Late on 6 August, Roberts learned that Carrington had failed to evacuate the Elands River garrison;^[26] in response Roberts ordered Carrington to try again.^[19]

The siege continued; however, the size of the Boer force surrounding the garrison dwindled as their attention was drawn to attacks on nearby farms by members of the Kgatla tribe,^[27] who were in revolt against the Boers following a series of tenant disputes.^[28] The ammunition situation was also concerning de la Rey and, as it became clear that the garrison would continue to hold out, he withdrew his artillery before superior numbers of British troops arrived.^[29] Ultimately, only about 200 men from the Wolmaransstad commando remained. As a result, the Boer weight of fire decreased and finally ceased altogether.^[30] In response, the defenders sent patrols out to scout the Boer positions and small raiding parties were also sent out at night.^[7] These raids failed to confirm that the Boers were retreating and as a result, instead of seizing the initiative the defenders remained largely in their defences, thinking that the Boers were attempting a ruse to draw them out.^[30]

On 13 August, the British commanders learned that the garrison was still holding out when they intercepted a message between Boer commanders via a runner.^{[4][14]} Two days later, 10,000 men under the command of [Lord Kitchener](#), set out towards Elands River. As they approached, de la Rey, faced by a superior force, withdrew what remained of his force.^[14] Small arms fire around the perimeter ceased on 15 August and the garrison observed rising dust from the withdrawal.^[29] That evening, a message was sent to Hore by four Western Australians from a force under [Beauvoir de Lisle](#),^[30] and Kitchener's column arrived the following day, on 16 August.^[14] Carrington's relief force from Mafeking, having been ordered to make a second attempt by Roberts, backtracked very slowly and ultimately arrived after the siege had been lifted.^[19]

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Aftermath^[edit]



Graves of Australians killed at Elands River, taken in September 1901

Casualties for the defenders amounted to 12 soldiers killed and 36 wounded.^[14] In addition, four African porters were killed and 14 wounded, and one loyalist European settler was wounded.^[31] Most of the wounded were evacuated to Johannesburg.^[31] The loss of animals was heavy, with only 210 left alive out of 1,750.^[6] Of the 12 soldiers who were killed, eight were Australians.^[32] During the siege, defenders who had been killed were hastily buried under the cover of darkness in a temporary cemetery. At the conclusion of the fighting, the graves were improved with several slate headstones and white rocks to mark the outlines, and a formal funeral was provided. After the war, the dead

were exhumed and reburied at [Swartruggens Cemetery](#), with individual crosses replacing the group slate headstones. One of the original slate headstones was brought back to Australia in the 1970s and placed on display in the [Australian War Memorial](#).^[12]

Although the behaviour of the defending troops was not beyond reproach, with some becoming drunk during the siege,^[32] the commander of the relieving force, Lord Kitchener, told the garrison upon his arrival that their defence had been "remarkable" and that only " ... Colonials could have held out in such impossible circumstances".^[32] The garrison's performance was also later lauded by [Jan Smuts](#), who was at the time a senior Boer commander, describing the defenders as " ... heroes who in the hour of trial ...[had risen]... nobly to the occasion".^[14] The battle has been described by historian Chris Coulthard-Clark as being " ... perhaps the most notable action involving Australians in South Africa".^[14] The writer, Sir [Arthur Conan Doyle](#), who served in a British field hospital at [Bloemfontein](#) during 1900 and who later published a series of accounts of the conflict, also highlighted the significance of the battle in *The Great Boer War*.^[16] The flag flown by the garrison during the siege was later displayed in the [Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints](#) in [Salisbury, Rhodesia](#).^[6]

For their actions during the siege, the Rhodesian commander, Butters, and Captain Albert Duka, a medical officer from Queensland, were invested with the [Distinguished Service Order](#). Three soldiers – Corporal Robert Davenport and Troopers Thomas Borlaise and William Hunt – received the [Distinguished Conduct Medal](#).^[31] Borlaise, who had been a miner before enlisting, received his medal for the role he had played in improving the position's defences,^[33] while Davenport received the award for rescuing two wounded men under fire.^[15] Conversely, Carrington continued nominal command of the Rhodesian Field Force, which became a paper formation, and was sent back to England by the end of the year.^[34]

The battle had strategic implications. The difficulty the British had in relieving the garrison served to boost Boer morale, which had been flagging due to earlier reverses, while the act of doing so drew forces away from the cordon that was being set up by the British to capture De Wet,^[4] who subsequently managed to escape through the [Magaliesberg](#),^[30] which had been abandoned by Baden-Powell during the relief effort. This ultimately prolonged the war, which would continue for almost another two years.^[29] Over a year after the siege, on 17 September 1901, [another battle](#) was fought along a different Elands River at Modderfontein farm in the then Cape Colony,^[35] where a Boer force under Smuts and [Deneys Reitz](#) overwhelmed a detachment of the [17th Lancers](#) and raided their camp for supplies.^[36]



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