

THE BOER WAR: ARMY, NATION AND EMPIRE

'TO SHOOT AND RIDE': MOBILITY AND FIREPOWER IN MOUNTED WARFARE

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The aim of this paper is to get beneath the 'shoot and ride' concept to examine aspects of the mechanics of mounted warfare and how it operated—or failed to operate—during the Boer War.¹ Although the paper does focus on Australian and New Zealand examples and evidence, this is firmly set in the context of the broader conduct of the war by both the British and Boer leadership. As will be seen, the colonial contingents did play a major role, but their employment, and the conduct of the war as a whole, was firmly in British hands throughout.

The quintessential image of the war for most Australians and New Zealanders is the Light Horseman or Mounted Rifleman. Whatever their specific unit title, the image of the lean bushman holding his rifle and sitting on his horse is one of the most dominant of the contemporary period. The mounted rifleman appears on the cover of the Australian War Memorial's *A Guide to the Battlefields and Memorials of the Boer War*, Craig Wilcox's *The Boer War: Australians and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, and the Summer 1999 edition of the Australian War Memorial's official magazine, *Wartime*. His Boer equivalent appears on the front cover of the Spring 1999 *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*. This is quite rightly so—the Boer War, in all phases, was a war of manoeuvre and counter manoeuvre.

The basis of manoeuvre is mobility and this is the key issue addressed in this paper. This is not in any way to denigrate the role of firepower. The particular effectiveness of the union of horse and rifle discussed in the paper by Jean Bou is one of the main features of the Boer War. In addition, a unit which can only manoeuvre and which cannot inflict casualties on the enemy has only a very limited use in combat—basically one of distraction or deception. However, firepower is in many respects a simpler issue in the context of mounted warfare during the Boer War and which, given space constraints, and coverage elsewhere in the conference proceedings, can be passed over relatively briefly here.

The delivery of effective firepower by mounted troops is largely a function of the quality of the weapons, the marksmanship, and the ammunition, and of the quantity of ammunition available.² The Boer War saw some difficulties in all of these areas, particularly in its early stages. Marksmanship on the British side at least was seen as a problem, although the Banjo Paterson aphorism 'Think how often you're shot at—think of how seldom you're shot!' quoted in Peter Stanley's paper suggests that the Boers were not always accurate either.³

New South Wales volunteers had to pass a shooting test before enlistment or, if already serving, they had to be assessed as a 'first class shot'.⁴ Despite this, the Elgin Report (the report of the British post-war commission into the war), was scathing of the quality of the marksmanship. This included the standard among the colonial troops.⁵ These were not, apparently, the natural marksmen of bush and prairie that they, and the British, had apparently believed. The tone of the Elgin Report in this area is one of disappointment and the post-war emphasis on musketry training in Canada was probably not an overreaction.

The problem of poor marksmanship also gains some support from the amount of ammunition expended during the war. The Elgin Report notes that over 67 million rounds of pistol, carbine, rifle, and machine gun ammunition were fired by British and colonial troops during the two-and-a-half year war. It drily adds: 'this certainly seems a large expenditure in proportion to the highest possible estimate of killed and wounded enemies.'⁶

At the outbreak of the war the British Army was also in the process of changing over from the Lee-Metford to the Lee-Enfield rifle. Although generally regarded as of equivalent value to the Boer Mauser, the original issue of the Lee-Enfield had problems. Parts of the Regular British

forces had had the Lee-Enfield for some time but it was only when the Imperial Yeomanry was issued with the new weapon prior to deployment to South Africa that the problem was identified, namely that the weapon's sights had been incorrectly manufactured and shot 18 inches to the right at 500 yards—just the right distance off target to make a Boer at 500 yards very happy indeed. It was ironic, given the disdain in which volunteer or militia units were held, that they and not the Regular Army discovered the problem—as the Elgin Report noted with some embarrassment.⁷

Interestingly, it was also militia units in Britain that had brought to light problems with the Mark IV .303 inch ammunition which had caused its withdrawal just prior to the start of the Boer War. This was an expanding round and under conditions of excessive heat where dirt was present in the weapon the lead core tended to squirt through the small aperture in the nickel jacket of the round, leaving the jacket in the barrel. When the next round was chambered this led to a blow-back in the breech.⁸

While arguing that the Regular Army had not had this problem because they kept their rifles cleaner than the militia, the War Office rightly concluded that even Regular troops might have problems avoiding excessive heat and dirt in wartime and withdrew the round. The Elgin Report stated categorically that it was not the Hague Convention's ban on expanding rounds which caused the withdrawal of the Mark IV round in the late summer of 1899 (the four million rounds already sent out to South Africa were withdrawn on 17 October 1899). The result was that around 66 million rounds of the 172 million stock of .303 inch ammunition were withdrawn just prior to the commencement of hostilities with the Boer republics, leading to a crisis in stocks. For a while the situation was considered dangerous, but the required ammunition was in fact despatched to South Africa. This was despite grave concerns about the stocks available for home defence and fears that in the event of war with a European power, the British would have had no option but 'to fight them with expanding bullets'.⁹

Despite these early concerns over the ammunition supply and the effectiveness of the Lee-Enfield, their actual effects seem to have been minimal, and probably largely involved some loss of confidence in the equipment among the troops in the field, although this does not feature in the contemporary letters and diaries I have seen. Another potential problem issue was also fairly soon resolved. Cavalry units were equipped with a carbine, which had a shorter range than the rifle, and this placed British-equipped cavalry at a distinct disadvantage against the Boers. However, the carbines did prove effective in the blocking engagement by the remnants of French's cavalry division which preceded Paardeberg, and any disadvantage was removed when the carbines were replaced with the rifle during the course of the war.¹⁰

In terms of firepower, the British and colonial mounted troops faced some initial problems, but apart from the marksmanship issue none of these lasted very long into the war. The mounted troops, including the traditional cavalry units, therefore had the tools available to them to generate generally appropriate small arms fire during the course of the war.¹¹

The issue of mobility is more complex and the rest of the paper will examine its importance and some of the problems with achieving it during the Boer War. The point that mobility was important does not need to be laboured, but it is worth reiterating. The campaigning distances in South Africa are large and the Boers were very mobile. To fight a mobile enemy required the British and colonial forces to adopt a similar level of mobility.¹²

Even in the more traditional warfare leading up to Paardeberg and the subsequent occupation of Pretoria, the Boer tactic of fighting and withdrawing before becoming decisively engaged was very effective against a slow-moving enemy. When the Boers did occupy fixed positions and stood and fought, mobility offered the British forces the opportunity of seizing the initiative. General French's great flanking march to Kimberley illustrates the value of mobility at the operational level to split the enemy and catch him flatfooted. His subsequent blocking of Cronjé's force which led to the destruction of the Boer force at Paardeberg is another good example.¹³

Perhaps the best summary of the importance of mobility is in the Elgin Report. Despite its ambivalence over the respective value of cavalry and mounted rifles, and its caution that South Africa was an atypical war, it stated:

In the late war the Boer force consisted entirely of Mounted Riflemen with, in the earlier stages, a certain number of guns, operating for the most part, in an unenclosed country which offers wide space for the movements of irregular horsemen. Except in Natal, and even there to some extent, infantry were at a great disadvantage in this war as against mounted enemies, and, for this reason, in the latter part of the war all active operations were carried out on the British side by mounted men.¹⁴

However, there were several constraints on achieving mobility which had an adverse effect on the British conduct of the war. Some of these arose from circumstances peculiar to the Boer War. Others arose from factors, or a disregard of factors, which are inherent and timeless in the employment of the horse in combat.

The first potential constraint was the number of mounted troops deployed to South Africa. The field force which embarked after mobilisation in October 1899 had a high proportion of infantry, with mounted troops constituting only approximately 2 per cent of the total (see Table 1).

Table 1
Troop Numbers (combat arms only)
deployed from Britain in October 1899

Troop Type	Number
Cavalry	4586
Mounted Infantry	1163
Infantry	31,326
Artillery	4917
Engineers	1600

Source: Elgin Report, 37

The proportion of mounted troops in the 22,486 strong garrison already in South Africa at the outbreak of war may have been higher (although the figures given in the Elgin Report unfortunately include both Mounted Infantry and Infantry under the same heading). In addition, it was hoped to recruit eight to ten thousand light or irregular cavalry from among local British subjects in South Africa, particularly from those displaced by the Boer republics.¹⁵

However, it soon became apparent that the type of country and the nature of the combat required large numbers of Mounted Infantry and Mounted Rifles. In the context of the discussion it is important to understand the distinction between these two troop types, and between them and cavalry. In the British documents there is a clear distinction, although the nomenclature of units in the colonies and general usage there did not apparently maintain this distinction.

'Mounted Infantry' denoted trained 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.

At the outbreak of the Boer War the British Government accepted 'mounted infantry' from Queensland and New Zealand (although the first contingent of New Zealanders was actually designated as the first New Zealand Mounted Rifles)¹⁶ but then sent a rather unfortunately worded cable to the remaining Australian colonies and to Canada. This read in part: 'firstly units should consist of 125 men; secondly, may be infantry, mounted infantry, or cavalry; in view of numbers already available, infantry most, cavalry least serviceable.'¹⁷

The post-war enquiry produced the explanation that the cable's intent was not to discourage the colonies from providing mounted troops per se, but from providing traditional cavalry. Sir Redvers Buller, who was the individual who had briefed Lord Lansdowne on the requirements and recommended the wording quoted above, stated that he remembered 'saying that cavalry would be quite useless'. However, in answer to the question 'But you did not mean by that to exclude mounted infantry?' he replied:

No it was cavalry I had in my thoughts all the way through, because I know what irregular cavalry, if I may say so, our Yeomanry are. As cavalry they are of no use; they are very good mounted troops, but they are no use as cavalry.¹⁸

Although the report concedes that 'both Lord Lansdowne and Lord Wolseley admitted that the telegram in question may have been unfortunately worded', it concluded that 'it does not appear to have had any practically bad results'.¹⁹ Whether this is an accurate assessment or not, it does reveal a rather infantry-centric approach on the part of senior commanders at the time and may have caused some confusion among the colonies. The real requirement was soon realised however, and Lord Lansdowne notes that when more substantial colonial forces were discussed 'a short time after', the War Office accepted 4700 mounted men compared to 2400 dismounted soldiers.²⁰

However, two factors which did have a serious effect on British and colonial mobility during the Boer War were a general shortage of horses, particularly in the earlier stages of the war, and the widespread poor condition of the troop horses serving in South Africa. The first point might seem initially rather strange as during the 30-odd months of the war over half a million horses served in the Empire forces. The figures in Table 2 illustrate one of the reasons for the problem: the number of horses which died during the war.

Table 2
British Forces Horse Numbers, Boer War

Category	Number
Served	518,794
'Expended'	347,007
'Lost on voyage'	13,144
Survived	158,643

Source: Elgin Report, 97, para 184

The odds of survival for a horse, then, were not good. Only around three per cent survived the war and none of the 40,000 or so Australian and only one of the 8000 New Zealand troop horses were brought home.²¹ The sheer scale of these losses, coupled with the difficulty of replacing them, led to problems which affected mobility, especially in the early years of the war.

There were several reasons for these losses. The first was that some horses never made it to South Africa. The Elgin Report records over 13,000 as 'lost on voyage' (see Table 2). Some died of sickness, others in storms: the *Glen Innes Examiner* of 17 October 1899 records the loss of 100 alone on one ship in a gale off the South African coast.²²

A second reason was enemy action. Because a horse is a much bigger target than a man (and generally not so good at crouching behind cover) it has a greater chance of being hit by fire. In one action in May 1900, for example, a Lieutenant Rundle, who had arrived in the country with the New South Wales Lancers, had three horses shot out from under him.²³ This was apparently a very common experience and perhaps explains why the future General Chauvel seems to have spent the aftermath of most actions in appropriating a Boer pony.²⁴ At Eland's River, of the 1540 horses with the defenders 1378 were killed, around nine per cent of the total. At Wilmansrust some 80 horses peacefully tethered next to the Victorians' tents were cut down in the opening Boer fusillade.²⁵

However there were other hazards, natural ones, which caused horse casualties. The regimental history of the Royal New South Wales Lancers records two instances of groups of horses being killed by lightning strike—apparently a not infrequent occurrence on the veldt.²⁶ Horses could also die from eating the wrong plant life. Vernon, for example, records a case of horses saved with considerable difficulty from a Boer-lit grass fire 'only to die some days later from eating tulip grass'.²⁷

Sickness too was a major problem. If disease was the common enemy of the Victorian soldier, it was arguably worse for his horse. Their frequently poor condition left them vulnerable to disease and many died. There were also the normal hazards associated with hard riding across rough terrain—broken limbs or lameness. All of this might help explain why in the first New Zealand contingent a surgeon's daily pay rate was £1-1-0 while a veterinary surgeon received £1-4-8.²⁸

One of the distinctive features of campaigning in South Africa during the Boer War was the sight of large numbers of dead horses, and descriptions of these are common in the accounts of Australian soldiers.²⁹ Two typical examples, both from letters home to northern New South Wales written by Allan Cameron and published in the *Glen Innes Examiner*, give an idea of what was a fairly common experience.

We came past the place where Cronjé was captured [ie Paardeberg], and could scent it miles before we came to it. The horses are lying so close together that you could walk on top of them; and talk about smashed up wagons, I never saw such a mess before.³⁰

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 hovering over them, and starving horses left by the British grazing on the scanty grass.³¹

The last comment in the second extract illustrates one of the other main reasons for the shortage of horses and a key element in the reduced efficiency of those which lived. This is the harsh conditions under which they operated and the treatment they received. Here again another cherished view of the Australian and colonial participation in the war—our level of horsemastership, or care of horses—does not quite bear close scrutiny.

Like the natural soldier theory of bushmen being good shots, horsemastership among the colonial contingents is the subject of unfavourable comment in the Elgin Report. Despite praise in other areas, care of their horses is one area where colonials were not seen as meeting the same standards as British Regular cavalry.³² These were not necessarily of the highest standard either. Given the strong cavalry tradition, there was probably in 1899 still an element of Cardigan's view that it was disgraceful for any cavalry officer or even trooper to walk. This led to his famous 'sore back reconnaissance' in the Crimean War which resulted in the death of 80 of the 196 horses involved, and the permanent disabling of many others—all without any contact with the enemy.³³

This is a very serious problem for the use of horses in combat. In general they are not as resilient as humans and once they pass a certain point of fatigue, or under-feeding or watering, they never properly recover and are useless for further service.³⁴ The key, unless an

endless supply of horses is close at hand, is not to take the horse past this point. However, this was difficult to do in South Africa given the nature of the country, the nature of the conflict, and problems of resupply.

As Kitchener pointed out, there is little that can be done to improve horsemastership once a war starts; it is largely a product of pre-war training and experience.³⁵ Given the speed with which some colonial contingents were raised and despatched to South Africa, it is not surprising that this was an area of weakness. One contemporary explanation of why Australians were apparently not so careful with their horses as they might have been is that in the Australian peacetime environment horses were not worked as hard and replacements were easy to come by.³⁶

Some attempts were made to improve horsemastership, though. One of the grievances cited by the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles against their commander, General Beatson, after Wilmansrust (and which helped add to unrest and subsequent charges of mutiny against three soldiers) concerned exactly this. Apparently the soldiers concerned were particularly upset with General Beatson's habit of making the entire regiment walk for a day if he found any men whose horses had sore backs.³⁷

Some individuals and some units were of course better than others. The first New Zealand contingent, for example, took 252 horses with them, of which 13 died on the voyage. Despite the fact that on landing in South Africa they were deployed straight to the front, the New Zealanders believed that their mounts held out better than most. They also took great pride in their claim that they lost the smallest percentage of horses of any mounted unit during French's advance on Colensburg.³⁸ However, losses were accepted as natural—the New Zealanders' pride came not from the complete avoidance of loss, but that their loss was the smallest. When the contingent returned home after its 12 months its members were also very proud that they could pass on about 20 of the original 252, all in good condition.³⁹

A survival rate of under eight per cent may not seem anything to boast about, but under the circumstances this was seen as a triumph, and confirmed that good horse-care could bring good results in South Africa. This was demonstrated in 1885, for example, when Baden-Powell completed a 600-mile reconnaissance of the rugged Drakensburg region, averaging 33 miles per day and finishing with his horses in 'tip top condition'. The key to Baden-Powell's success here (apart from not being shot at) was that he used two acclimatised horses which he kept properly fed and watered, and rotated them to allow them to rest.⁴⁰

This was not the case for the British and colonial forces in South Africa, especially at the start of the war. A variety of factors all led to problems with horses. Those from the northern hemisphere brought into the South African summer still had their winter coats. All imported mounts arrived in soft condition following long or very long sea voyages, during which there was no opportunity for exercise. On arrival, horses were often loaded straight onto trains, moved forward, and then deployed straight into combat or combat-related duties. Trooper Vernon records the fate of one such group of horses after a 25 mile (40 km) move in one day, writing in his diary that 'this long march and winter weather conditions proved too much for the "soft remounts" and many had to be destroyed'.⁴¹

This was because once in the field the horses were worked hard. The New Zealand contingent, for example, recorded one three-day period during which their horses remained saddled, and this was by no means uncommon.⁴² Field conditions often involved inadequate watering and feeding,⁴³ and, at least initially there was no proper remount system to replace losses or allow horses to be rested. As a result, horses died in droves (the 6th Dragoons alone lost 200 in one week, on a 170 mile advance in May 1900)⁴⁴ and the performance of those which survived was degraded.

Horse feed and logistics played a very important part. Although the uninitiated may think that feeding a horse is easy—one simply turns it out to graze—the real situation is much more complex. The daily ration for horses on campaign is considerably more than just grass. Table 3 illustrates the British Army scale of rationing in the early part of this century.

Table 3
Daily Horse Ration

Animal	Oats (lb)	Hay (lb)
Horse (over 15 hands)	12	12
Mounted Infantry Ponies (India)	6	20
Mules (small)	6	12

Source: Field Service Pocket Book 1914
(London: HMSO, repr 1917), 169⁴⁵

There is clearly some variation here, depending on the size of the animal and the campaign area, and obviously lower rates often had to be accepted, at least temporarily, under the exigencies of combat. However, something similar to the amounts given for horses in Table 3 was required (less for Boer ponies) to keep a horse functioning properly.

This was not easy. The Elgin Report concedes that there were problems with the supply of horse feed.⁴⁶ Given that the same report claims the supply of food for the men during the war was a success story, while many soldiers' accounts complain that food was often in short supply,⁴⁷ the difficulties with horse feed were almost certainly worse than acknowledged. This problem derived from a variety of factors. The first was that because of the political sensitivity of the situation in the period leading into the war a conscious decision (unpopular though it was with sections of the army) was made to limit stockpiling and local purchase.⁴⁸ In addition, the large quantities of supplies required were more than the transport could cope with. For example, Colonel Sir Edward Ward testified after the war:

Between 7th October and 2nd November the reserves at Ladysmith had increased to 65 days' breadstuff, 50 days' meat, including trek oxen, 46 days' groceries, and 32 days' forage for a force of 12,000 men. But to do this 'we used every train, poured in everything we could, brought up local supplies, and so on.'⁴⁹

The level of the effort required to stockpile even this amount of supplies was very high indeed and, combined with the large quantities of horse-feed required, meant that the supplies for the horses were stocked at a lower level than for the men. The problems of scale here were compounded by general difficulties in the British supply system. At the start of the war the Army Service Corps was operating in peacetime mode, with no plans or capacity for expansion. It was initially unable to keep up with the demand for horseflesh and horse feed. There was also no proper organised remount system, such as that existing in the Indian Army.⁵⁰

Resupply, particularly for the horses, therefore posed particular problems, and to reduce the strain on the supply system. Lord Roberts, for example, cut in half the daily ration of feed during the operations in the eastern Transvaal in February 1901.⁵¹ Grazing as a supplement was also a problem. There was a lack of local grazing, especially in the poorer parts of the country, and to graze the equivalent of 12lb of hay by itself would take a horse five hours. This amount of time was not always available under combat conditions, and would anyway seriously reduce the period available for movement. The limited availability of remounts was also compounded by a prohibition on commandeering local mounts, at least in Cape Colony.⁵²

Not surprisingly the performance of the horses dropped off rapidly under these conditions and the individual soldier and armies alike consequently suffered a loss of mobility. This affected the conduct of the war at both the tactical and operational levels and on several occasions prevented the exploitation of success against the Boers. During the post-war investigation into the war Field Marshal Lord Roberts commented on the general problems of horse condition and singled out the lack of fresh horses as the reason why the Presidents of the two Boer Republics escaped at Poplar Grove. Lord Methuen also claimed that the lack of fresh horses caused him problems at Belmont.⁵³ French was perhaps lucky at the Riet River that the Boers failed to realise that he had only been able to deploy 1200 men to block them because of the

parlous condition of his horses.⁵⁴ On a lower level, letters home from Australian mounted soldiers not infrequently mention problems in pursuing Boers because of the state of their horses or the lack of supplies.⁵⁵

All of this hampered the British war effort by restricting their mobility and allowing the Boers more freedom of movement than might otherwise have been the case. To their credit, though, the British did develop a system to overcome this. This involved large-scale purchase of foreign horses to overcome the lack of numbers in Britain. Horses were bought in Australia, New Zealand, India, Argentina, and in Europe. Interestingly, this also helped bring down prices. Horses purchased in Britain early in hostilities cost an average (to date of shipment) of £47-14-2 while the best price was from Argentina, at £8-3-9.⁵⁶ The requirement for colonial mounted contingents to provide their own mounts also alleviated the situation, as did the setting up of a proper remount system. Later in the war depots were set up well forward where sick or tired horses could be exchanged for fresh ones and in turn rested and recycled.⁵⁷

Gradually the balance of mobility swung away from the Boers and towards the British and their colonial supporters, especially after the fall of Pretoria. The Boers, cooped up in smaller areas, with less support available from the country, began to have their own problems. However, mobility was not enough by itself. In the second phase of the war a combination of experience, the reduced weight carried on horses, and sound intelligence allowed very good results to be achieved by mobile columns. However, Allenby for one complained that Kitchener's poor coordination of these mobile columns considerably reduced their effectiveness.⁵⁸ Some columns covered many miles and expended much ammunition for very small results.⁵⁹ At this point the British and colonial forces possessed a high degree of mobility, and in fact had probably progressed as far as they could in this regard under the circumstances. What was needed was to supplement this by a reduction in Boer mobility.

This was achieved by the blockhouse and barbed-wire system which seriously reduced the Boer capacity to manoeuvre.⁶⁰ Ultimately the combination of highly mobile columns, good intelligence, and these counter-mobility obstacles proved effective. In December 1901 Kitchener predicted (correctly) that the Boers would not be able to hold out much past April because of a lack of horse feed.⁶¹

Clearly lack of horse feed was not *the* reason for the Boer loss of the war; many other factors were involved. However, in their pre-surrender discussions the Boers always included a lack of horses and horse feed as one of the main reasons why they could not continue the war. Botha, for example, claimed 11,000 burghers were still potentially active in the Transvaal, but 4000 were without horses and the horses the others had were in poor condition.⁶² The Boers had simply reached the point where they could no longer employ their greatest strength—mobility.

Mobility was crucial to British success, and logistic considerations and the physical constraints on the use of horses in combat were a major problem for the British effort for a large part of the war. These difficulties did reduce combat effectiveness and arguably extended the duration of the conflict. Only when this situation was improved and the British developed measures to restrict Boer mobility, placing the Boers in a similarly difficult position, were the full conditions for victory met.

Mobility was a crucial factor in the war and one of the keys to victory—as it is today. So too was the associated ability to deliver firepower quickly to the appropriate place. In this respect, and despite some deficiencies, the colonial mounted citizen soldier—whether a New Zealand Mounted Rifleman or the Australian ancestor of the more famous First World War Light Horseman—did play a very real role in helping to win the Boer War.

Endnotes

1. This paper was invited as 'an ancient historian's perspective' on the use of the horse in the Boer War and I would like to thank Dr Chris Pugsley of the School of Classics, History and Religion of the University of New England for providing me with advice on available sources, especially New Zealand ones.
2. The conditions under which the firing takes place, including range, speed of the target, whether the firer is also under fire, also play a major role but are less easy to analyse from a distance of 100 years.
3. From 'Maxims of War', in R Campbell and P Harvie (eds), *Singer of the Bush: AB 'Banjo' Paterson's Complete Works 1885-1900* (Sydney: Landsdowne, 1983), 493. However, witnesses at the post-war commission of enquiry generally (but not universally) argued that the Boers were better shots, especially at close range: *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Concerned with the War in South Africa* (London: HMSO, 1903), 48, para 84 (hereinafter the Elgin Report).
4. *Glen Innes Examiner*, 24 October 1899, cited in AW Cameron (ed), *The Boer War: A Perspective from The Glen Innes Examiner' 1899-1902* (Glen Innes: Glen Innes and District Historical Society Inc, 1999), 21.
5. Elgin Report, 80, para 147.
6. Ibid, 48, para 85.
7. Ibid, 93-94, para 176.
8. Ibid, 86-97, para 160.
9. Ibid.
10. For the Paardeberg incident see LS Amery (ed), *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902*, vol 3 (London: Samson Low, Marston, 1905), 414-16; T Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), 330 (I am indebted to Dr Stephen Badsey for pointing this out). On the replacement of the carbine see the Elgin Report, 94, para 176.
11. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the debate between the utility of true cavalry and mounted rifles. There was considerable division of opinion on this issue at the end of the war (see the Elgin Report, 49-52, paras 88-93) and the topic has been covered in some detail in Jean Bou's paper (see above, 99-114). For what it is worth, my opinion on this complex issue is that mounted rifles were the most useful in South Africa, although mounted troops who could use the *arme blanche* did have their uses. Trooper Vernon of the New South Wales Lancers reported the success of the 9th and 16th Lancers' charge at Klip Drift, stating that 'it cleared all opposition, and from then on I never saw a position held if the intention of a lance charge was shown': PV Vernon (ed), *The Royal New South Wales Lancers 1885-1985* (Sydney: Macarthur Press, 1986), 50-51 (hereinafter Vernon, *RNSWL*). The then Colonel Haig gave similar testimony in the post-war enquiry, Elgin Report, 49, para 88.
12. An interesting early precedent for this is the general increase in the professionalism of ancient Greek cavalry in the early years of the fourth century BC. This in large part arose from Greek experiences in campaigning in Asia Minor against an enemy who made considerable use of cavalry: IG Spence, *The Cavalry of Classical Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 150-51.
13. Amery (ed), *Times History*, III: 379-416.
14. Elgin Report, 49, para 86.
15. Ibid, 78, para 144.
16. R Stowers, *First New Zealanders to the Boer War 1899* (Hamilton: NZ: Priority Press, 1983), 1.
17. Elgin Report, 77, para 143.
18. Ibid, 78, para 144.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. On Australian horses, see LM Field, *The Forgotten War: Australia and the Boer War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 106. The lone New Zealand horse brought home was called 'Major': J Crawford, 'Horse Soldiers: The South African War 1899-1902', *New Zealand Defence Quarterly* 26 (Spring 1999), 26.
22. Cameron, *Boer War*, 21.
23. Vernon, *RNSWL*, 56.
24. AJ Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 19, 25, although the general shortage of horseflesh and the superiority of Boer ponies in the conditions would also have played a part in this.
25. On Eland's River, see P Firkins, *The Australians in Nine Wars* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971), 13; Wilmansrust: Field, *The Forgotten War*, 162.
26. Vernon, *RNSWL*, 59, 60.
27. Ibid, 58, although this was not a strictly South African phenomenon—the *Glen Innes Examiner* of 19 January 1900 (Cameron, *Boer War*, 26) records an Australian volunteer en route to the city to enlist for South Africa whose 'horse died from eating "shivery grass"'.
28. Stowers, *First New Zealanders*, 3.
29. See, for example, Vernon, *RNSWL*, 54.
30. *Glen Innes Examiner*, 27 April 1900, in Cameron, *Boer War*, 36.
31. *Glen Innes Examiner*, 7 September 1900, in Cameron, *Boer War*, 67.

32. Elgin Report, 47, para 82.
33. C Chenevix-Trench, *A History of Horsemanship* (London: Longman, 1970), 308.
34. Spence, *Cavalry of Classical Greece*, 38.
35. Elgin Report, 47, para 81.
36. *Ibid*, 80, para 147.
37. Field, *The Forgotten War*, 164.
38. Stowers, *First New Zealanders*, 68-69.
39. *Ibid*, 69.
40. M Lawrence, *Flyers and Stayers: The Book of the World's Greatest Rides* (London: Harrap, 1980), 143-44.
41. Vernon, *RNSWL*, 57.
42. Stowers, *First New Zealanders*, 69; cf accounts from Troopers Watson, King and Legh of 27 hours, 34 hours, and 48 hours in the saddle, *Glen Innes Examiner*, 7 September, 21 September, 12 October 1900, in Cameron, *Boer War*, 68, 74, 81.
43. Cf Hill, *Chauvel*, 21; Vernon, *RNSWL*, 46, 51-52. French's Cavalry Division was reduced to 1200 effective men after a day without water during his pursuit of 'Long Tom' at the very end of his arduous flanking march to Kimberley: Amery (ed), *Times History*, III: 413.
44. Vernon, *RNSWL*, 54.
45. Amery (ed), *Times History*, VI: 382 confirms these figures for the larger horses, but states that the authorised ration for smaller horses in South Africa was 10lb each of grain and hay.
46. Elgin Report, 116, para 231.
47. *Ibid*, 116, para 228. Cf Vernon, *RNSWL*, 51, and the various letters of Troopers Cameron, Gribble, and Hands, and Corporal Martin, published in the *Glen Innes Examiner*, 27 April, 18 September, 9 November 1900, and 19 November 1901, in Cameron, *Boer War*, 34-35, 72, 84, 100-01.
48. Elgin Report, 117, paras 232-33.
49. *Ibid*, 118, para 233.
50. *Ibid*, 97, para 186.
51. Amery (ed), *Times History*, V: 171.
52. *Ibid*, 117, para 233.
53. *Ibid*, 98-9, para 188.
54. Amery (ed), *Times History*, III: 413-14.
55. *Glen Innes Examiner*, 9 November 1900, 1 October 1901, in Cameron, *Boer War*, 84, 100.
56. Elgin Report, 97, para 184.
57. *Ibid*, 99, para 189. The situation with remounts began to improve from around May 1900 onwards: cf Amery (ed), *Times History*, VI: 432 ff.
58. Pakenham, *Boer War*, 546.
59. Cf Field, *The Forgotten War*, 159-60, for poor results relative to effort expended at the end of 1901 by Rimington's column.
60. In May 1902 more than 8000 blockhouses had been built, covering 3700 miles manned by 66,000 troops: Pakenham, *Boer War*, 537.
61. RL Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1976), 534.
62. *Ibid*, 389.