

“A MOST AWFUL
EXCITEMENT”:

THE BOER WAR DIARY OF
GERRIT SEM OF PHILIPPOLIS



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“A MOST AWFUL EXCITEMENT”: THE BOER WAR DIARY OF GERRIT SEM

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BY GERRIT JAN CORNELIS SEM

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COVER PHOTO: GERRIT SEM AND FAMILY MEMBERS

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The original diary by Gerrit Sem was transcribed in 1999 by Ms Edna Koorts of Philippolis, and published by the Philippolis Leserskring. This valuable task preserved, for posterity, the record of Sem’s war-time experiences in Philippolis and Springfontein.

This began as a single story – that of Gerrit Sem of Philippolis, who kept a diary during the Anglo-Boer War. As the research deepened, the book became a “story of stories”, providing glimpses of the experiences of Afrikaans and English-speaking people, as well as British soldiers, as their fortunes came together in the streets and district of Philippolis.

This edition has been compiled, partly to make the diary more accessible to the ordinary reader, and partly to add explanatory information. The process of research into the townsfolk, farmers and British regiments is a work in progress, as new sources of information are found.

The NG Church of Philippolis, as sponsor of the first edition of this volume, believes that the community of Philippolis can benefit from a deeper understanding of its own history – particularly the traumatic events of the Anglo-Boer War. There is a great deal of suffering in these pages, and therefore much to be angry about; but there is also a spirit of reconciliation which infuses Sem’s writings. It is this spirit which still infuses Philippolis a century later.

The author would like to express her deepfelt gratitude for two colleagues who contributed greatly to the book: Ms Magriet Doorewaard of Pretoria, who tracked many of the archival sources, and Ms Roesan Schoeman of Philippolis, who transcribed many of the documents. Without their help, this book would not have seen the light of day.

The author would welcome any further additional information, correspondence or photographs on any of the people mentioned in the text. Doreen Atkinson can be contacted on karoo@intekom.co.za or (051) 773 0324. We urge the community of Philippolis, and the descendants of the people in Sem’s diary, to share their family histories for future editions.

Rev Carin van Schalkwyk
NG Church, Philippolis

VOORWOORD AAN DIE EERSTE UITGAWE

Die oorspronklike dagboek van Gerrit Sem was in 1999 deur Me Edna Koorts van Philippolis herskryf, en dit was deur die Philippolis Leserskring uitgegee. Hierdie waardevolle taak het die geskiedenis van Sem se oorlogservarings in Philippolis en Springfontein vir die nageslag bewaar.

Hierdie boek het begin as ‘n enkele storie – dié van Gerrit Sem van Philippolis, wat ‘n dagboek geskryf het tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog. Soos die navorsing verloop het, het die boek ‘n “storie van stories” geword, met ‘n waardevolle blik op die ervarings van Afrikaanssprekende en Engelse mense, sowel as die Britse soldate, soos hulle mekaar raakgehoop het in die strate en distrik van Philippolis.

Hierdie uitgawe is saamgevat om die dagboek meer toeganklik vir die gewone leser te maak, en dit was ook ‘n geleentheid om addisionele inligting by te werk. Die proses van navorsing oor die dorpsmense, die Boere en die Britse regimente is nog steeds aan die gang, soos nuwe inligtingsbronne gevind word.

Die NG Kerk van Philippolis, as befondser van hierdie eerste uitgawe, glo dat die gemeenskap van Philippolis kan baat vind deur ‘n dieper begrip van sy eie geskiedenis – veral die traumatiese gebeure van die Anglo-Boereoorlog. Daar is baie leed en lyding in hierdie bladsye, en daarom baie om oor gegrief te wees; maar daar is ook ‘n gees van versoening in Sem se boek. Dit is hierdie gees wat, na ‘n eeu, steeds in Philippolis ervaar word.

Die skrywer wil graag haar diepste waardering vir twee kollegas uitspreek. Mev Magriet Doorewaard van Pretoria het baie van die argiefbronne nagespeur, en Mev Roezan Schoeman van Philippolis het

bygestaan met die transkribering van die dokumente. Sonder hulle hulp sou hierdie boek nooit voltooi geword het nie.

Die skrywer sal enige verdere inligting, korrespondensie of foto's van enige van die mense wat in die teks genoem word, baie waardeer. Sulke inligting kan in verdere uitgawes ingesluit word. Doreen Atkinson kan genader word by karoo@intekom.co.za of (051) 773 0324. Ons moedig die Philippolis gemeenskap, en die nageslagte van die mense in Sem se dagboek, om hulle familie-geskiedenis vir toekomstige uitgawes met ons te deel.

Ds Carin van Schalkwyk
NG Kerk, Philippolis

INTRODUCTION

The Boer War remains endlessly fascinating, as it involved a range of key stakeholders, each with their own interests, goals, resources and strategies, and each surviving dramatic and unprecedented events in their own way. For Boer farmers, making difficult choices between commando life and collaboration, for Boer and black women herded into concentration camps, for ordinary townsfolk swept along the ebb and flow of occupation and counter-occupation, and for British units, far from home, braving a hostile climate and population, it was a kaleidoscope of rapid shifts in fortune.

Philippolis was not a key centre of the war. Nevertheless, it was a town of symbolic importance, as the oldest Free State settlement, and often frequented by Free State notables such as President Steyn, whose wife Tibbie grew up in the Philippolis parsonage. During the 20 years before the Boer War, Philippolis was a vibrant rural town, with an active, spontaneous and carefree young set of people, riding horses, climbing hills, holding moonlit picnics, dances, games and singing, “a jollification and round of gaiety”.¹

¹ Truter 1997: 14.

Tracing the fortunes of Philippolis captures the moving kaleidoscope of events, and of understanding the lived reality of ordinary farmers, townsfolk (Afrikaners, English, Blacks, Jews and a smattering of other nationalities), and English soldiers. Sem’s diary said nothing about black or coloured people – a topic which will be part of a subsequent study on Philippolis.

The key source of information on Philippolis is the wartime diary of Gerrit Sem, a local law agent, which captures the unexpected quirks of fate experienced by local people. The experiences of war were not always dire – there were intermittent periods of social normality, even fun, with which the local townsfolk comforted themselves. But there were also dramatic upheavals, skirmishes around the town, local burghers relocated to “refugee camps”, and a general anxiety about hunger, disease, and death.

By tracking the experiences of Gerrit Sem, as well as his fellow burghers in the town and the local countryside, the complexity of the wartime experiences can be appreciated. The small town lay in the path of Boer commandos and British columns, which washed, like the tide, in and out of the village. This brought its own moral and political dilemmas, as the townsfolk juggled conflicting demands for their loyalty and obedience.

Although Sem was largely pro-British, he was able to recognize individuals' integrity and decency, and to criticize people's conduct where it was called for. In his diary, he refrained from moralizing, and philosophically accepted the changing fortunes of war as they moved over Philippolis. As the Boer raids became more pressing, and the British forces could not be spared to safeguard Philippolis, Sem and many of his fellow townsfolk agreed to move to the concentration camp at Springfontein, where he kept on good terms with his fellow inmates as well as the British camp officials. While in Springfontein, Sem played a constructive role in recording the inmates' claims for damages and sent these valuable documents off to the war office. It is likely that many of these Philippolis residents received at least some compensation for losses sustained on their farms and in their town houses.

The diary is significant in other respects. It was written when the outcome of the war was radically uncertain, and the residents of Philippolis had to survive each day without any idea of what the next day would bring. It produced a kind of listlessness, where people became accustomed to being moved around the countryside by armed military columns, pragmatically confining

their lives to basic issues of survival – securing food, protecting their household goods, keeping their families together, sending and receiving the odd letter, with no idea what dangers they would face in the future. The residents had to endure the upheaval of a forced relocation to concentration camps, where they resided for at least a year. During their absence, their unguarded properties were looted, damaged and destroyed by British troops and Burgher commandos.



PHILIPPOLIS TOWN GUARD
(PHOTO COURTESY OF PAMELA SMITH)

Throughout these traumatic events, Sem remained ever mindful of the welfare of his friends and compatriots, and also built some friendships with British soldiers. Ordinary people like Sem were a major stabilizing force in the ravaged South African society during the war, and also became important facilitators in reconstruction after the war.

BACKGROUND TO THE EVENTS IN PHILIPPOLIS

War broke out on 10 October 1899, amid a wave of patriotism in Britain, and a sense of grave danger and injustice within the two Boer republics. The British believed the war would be brief, but they totally underestimated the sense of grievance of the Boers. Initially, 35 000 Republicans from the Transvaal and Orange Free State went into the field in the Cape Colony and Natal, against a British garrison of 20 000 men. Later in the war, the Republican ranks swelled to 60 000, while the British troops numbered more than 250 000.

To understand events in Philippolis, it is important to know the main Boer and British commanders, and in particular, those involved in the southern Free State. Philippolis's fate was structured around three major “theatres” of the war: The defensive campaign around Colesberg; the defeat of the Boers at Paardeberg; and the ongoing guerilla war which lasted for almost two years after the fall of Bloemfontein and Pretoria.

Initially, the war was fought primarily on three fronts: In Natal (the eastern front), on the Western front (along the railway from the Orange River to Mafeking, via Kimberley), and in the

Colesberg-Stormberg region of the northern Cape Colony (the central front). Initially, the Boers were successful in besieging the British at Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley, and occupying Colesberg. The Boer successes culminated in “Black Week” (10-17 December 1899), when they inflicted a series of humiliating defeats that shocked the British empire. On the central front, Sir Gatacre was defeated at Stormberg; the next day, General Cronje’s forces defeated the British at Magersfontein on the western front; and at Colenso in Natal, General Louis Botha defeated the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Redvers Buller. Further Boer victories followed at Spionkop and Vaalkranz in Natal.

The Boers were fighting a primarily defensive war, occupying territory in Natal and the Cape Colony, and besieging British-held towns, to prevent the British from bringing the war to Republican soil. After Britain’s defeats, the new Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts of Kandahar, adopted a strategy of striking directly at the two capitals, Bloemfontein and Pretoria. To do this, Roberts continued the engagements with the Boers in Natal and Colesberg areas, primarily as a diversion, to conceal his dramatic new strategy, which was to depart from the railway system (his main supply lines), and march from the Orange River (south of

Kimberley) directly to Bloemfontein, in his historic “great flank march”.² In February 1900, Roberts and his generals undertook their cross-country march towards Jacobsdal and Petrusburg in the western Free State, and annihilated Cronje’s army at Paardeberg, along the Modder River on 27 February. This was an important turning point of the war, as it left the way to Bloemfontein open for Roberts’ advance. Bloemfontein fell on 13 March, and thereafter Roberts marched to Transvaal, capturing Pretoria on 5 June.

After the fall of the capitals, the new-style generals such as De Wet and De la Rey, who had unsuccessfully advocated guerilla tactics in the past against the conservative elderly Boer commanders, now became the face of the new war. No longer would the Boers engage in set-piece battles or laager formations, encumbered by wagons, prisoners, supplies, women and children. Henceforth the Boers would operate in small, highly mobile units, striking and fleeing, and seeking to penetrate behind British lines to hit sensitive military targets. As De Wet attempted (and failed) to stem the British advance to Bloemfontein, he was refining his

² De Wet 1903:41.

new method of warfare, at clashes at Poplar Grove and Driefontein, between Petrusburg and Bloemfontein.

The experiences of Philippolis should be seen in this broader context. Initially, the war hardly touched Philippolis, as the main action took place south of the Orange River, in the Stormberg and around Colesberg. During January 1900, the Boer forces near Colesberg were primarily concerned with halting the British advance, based at Slingerfontein and Arundel near Noupoort.³ However, after the disaster at Paardeberg, the Boer forces at Colesberg were hurriedly withdrawn to defend Bloemfontein⁴, leaving the southern Free State towns undefended against General Gatacre and General Clements.⁵ Clements moved northwards

³ Cloete 2012:100.

⁴ Colesberg was occupied by the British on 28 February 1900 (Cloete 2012: 117).

⁵ Doyle 1999: 360. CLEMENTS, RALPH ARTHUR PENRHYN, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel, was born 9 February 1855 in Lincoln. He was educated at Rossall, and joined the 24th Regiment 2 December 1874; served in the Galeka and Zulu Wars, 1877-79 (Dispatches; Medal with clasp); became Captain, South Wales Borderers, 4 December 1880, and Major 24 February 1886. He served with the Burma Expedition, 1885-89. He became Lieutenant Colonel 1 July 1887, and Colonel 4 December 1896; served in South Africa, commanding the 12th Brigade, and as Major General on the Staff (Dispatches; Queen's Medal and three clasps; King's Medal and two clasps); was created a CB 1904; commanded a First Class District in India, 1904; became Lieutenant General. During the war in South Africa, he served as Major General on the Staff; he received the Queen's Medal with three clasps, and the King's Medal with two clasps. There were numerous accounts of his exploits during the South African War. He was placed in command

from Colesberg, reaching the Orange River Bridge at Norvalspont, *en route* to Springfontein, on 3 March 1900.⁶ The Boer General Lemmer withdrew all his forces to the Free State side of the Orange River by 6 March, and blew up the Norvalspont Bridge.⁷ “With Roberts at Bloemfontein, Gatacre at Springfontein, Clements in the south-west, and Brabant at Aliwal, the pacification of the southern portion of the Free State appeared to be complete”.⁸

of the Slingersfontein operations in Colesberg, with the 1st Royal Irish and the remainder of the 2nd Worcestershire men of his brigade (12th). He took over the forces in the Colesberg area from General French on 29 January 1900. These forces now consisted of the 18th Royal Irish, Worcesters, Berks, Wilts and Essex Regiments, J Battery RHA, 4th RFA, Victorian Mounted Rifles, South and West Australian Mounted Infantry. Early in February they were much weakened by the departure of all the Regular Cavalry, except B and C Squadrons, Inniskilling Dragoons, for Orange River, *en route* to Kirnberley. The Boers at this time were in great strength at Colesberg, nearly 10,000 strong, with many guns. The British captured Colesberg on 28 February 1900. On 7 March, the Inniskillings seized Norval's Pont. On 20 March, "General Clements started to march to Bloemfontein, via Philippolis, Jagersfontein and Fauresmith ... The columns marched to Bloemfontein without opposition, the inhabitants coming in and surrendering their arms. The march occupied sixteen days, the forces arriving at Bloemfontein on 5 April". He died at Quetta in India, of appendicitis, 2 April 1909. (VC and DSO Book, <http://www.angloboerwar.com/unit-information/imperial-units/666-south-wales-borderers>).

⁶ Cloete 2012: 118.

⁷ Cloete 2012: 119.

⁸ Doyle 1999: 363.

While the British continued their march along the railway from Bloemfontein to Johannesburg and Pretoria, the Boer high command regrouped at Kroonstad on 20 March 1900, where the first formal decision in favour of guerrilla war was taken.⁹ Even at this early stage, De Wet understood that he would henceforth operate in the British rear, and he was already contemplating an invasion of the Cape Colony.¹⁰ And never again, resolved De Wet, would “these hampering wagons”, carrying the Boers’ supplies, inhibit the mobility of his forces. Henceforth, his commandos would live off the Boer farms and the veld.

Between March and October 1900, there were only sporadic skirmishes in the southern Free State. But after the fall of Pretoria, once De Wet and the other young Boer generals had regrouped their forces, the Boers became more active throughout the Free State.

De Wet led the British a merry dance throughout eastern, northern and southern Free State, which culminated in an invasion of the Cape Colony in March 1901. During this epic journey, the De

⁹ De Wet 1903:80.

¹⁰ De Wet 1903:111.

Wet commando crossed over the Orange River at Zandspruit, just south of Philippolis.

As the guerilla war became more effective, the British realized that they had to destroy the main source of material supplies and moral encouragement open to the Boer commandos – the Boer farms. The “scorched earth” policy was first launched by Lord Roberts in June 1900, to curtail the activities of the guerilla fighters. This strategy, under Lord Kitchener, resulted in the destruction of 30 000 farmsteads, and the internment of Boer civilians in “refugee camps”, regarded by the British as the only humane alternative to leaving women and children alone and unprotected on the bare veld. These camps rapidly degenerated into “concentration camps”, where almost 28 000 Boers and over 14 000 black people died during 1901-2.

The Free State towns had an ambiguous relationship to the war. Many English-speaking and Afrikaans residents had no quarrel with the English, especially since the original conflict had involved the Transvaal and not the Free State. Many local residents were completely bilingual. Many other residents had pro-Boer sympathies, which led them to join Boer commandos. But there was often not a very strong ideological divide between

pro-British and pro-Boer townsfolk – many people wanted to continue with their lives, and tended to humour whichever forces overran their towns. Some Afrikaans-speakers started out as strongly pro-Boer, but as the British coercive methods took their toll, they were prepared to sign an “oath of allegiance” to Britain, to safeguard their families and properties. (Such oaths often did not have the desired effect, and many families were uprooted anyway, leading to new waves of embittered Boers joining the commandos).

Many Philippolis residents found themselves in the southern-most concentration camps – Springfontein, Bethulie, Norvalspont and Orange River. Conditions were best in Norvalspont and poorest in Bethulie, as reflected in the death rates.

The Boer commandos also had ambivalent feelings towards the towns, regarding them mainly as a source of material supplies, and nervous about possible pro-British sentiments amongst the townsfolk.

For the British, the high point of the war was the march on Bloemfontein and Pretoria. The subsequent guerrilla war was

increasingly dispiriting, and the troops’ frustrations were taken out on the Boer farmsteads and the houses and shops in the towns.

By the time that the peace treaty was signed in Vereeniging on 31 May 1902, both sides were heartily sick of the war, and were anxious to go home.

THE WAR IN THE SOUTHERN FREE STATE

When war was declared on 10 October 1899, commandos throughout the Free State were called up to defend the Republic. In the southern Free State, commandos were called up in Bethulie (under commandants AM Prinsloo and JH Naude); in Fauresmith (under commandants PF van der Merwe, P Fourie and P Jacobs); in Jacobsdal (under commandants DS Lubbe, A Smit and HPJ Pretorius¹¹); and in Philippolis (under commandants ER Grobler, JAM Hertzog¹² and JH du Toit).¹³ The Philippolis commando

¹¹ Commandant HENDRIK PRETORIUS of Jacobsdal was appointed by Genl de Wet to serve under Judge Hertzog in the southern Free State (Jacobsdal, Fauresmith and Philippolis). Commandant Pretorius and Commandant Visser were sent to the southern Free State in September 1900, to re-awaken resistance in the southern Free State (De Wet 1902: 158).

¹² The brother of General JBM Hertzog. Commandant JA MUNNIK HERTZOG was responsible for re-activating the southern Free State during mid-1900.

¹³ Cloete 2012: 36.

consisted of 209 burghers between the age of 18-34 years, and a total of 408 burghers between the ages of 18-60 years.

Philippolis burghers were active in the Colesberg campaign, the battle of Poplar Grove, and in the De Wet campaigns.¹⁴ The local farmers also contributed extensively to the resources of the commandos, including a large number of horses, collected in October 1899 by Commandant FGG Burger, S. Strauss (veld-cornet), and deputy veld-cornet JH du Preez.¹⁵

After the defeat at Paardeberg on 27 February 1900, when General Cronje surrendered with almost 4 000 Burghers, the demoralized Boers attempted to defend Bloemfontein, without success. Paardeberg was significant, not only because it opened a wide gap on the Boer western flank, and left the capital cities defenceless, but because it severely demoralized the Boer forces.¹⁶ Many commando members began to believe that the war could not be won. Furthermore, the withdrawal of Boer

¹⁴ Hall 1999:14.

¹⁵ Free State Archives, Source TG, vol. 3085, part 1 (Report of the Treasurer-General of the Orange Free State), 1900.

¹⁶ De Wet 1903:77.

commandos from the Colesberg area, to protect Bloemfontein, meant that Gatacre and Clements’ forces had an easy march through the southern Free State, towards Bloemfontein. Towns like Philippolis surrendered without a shot being fired. Genl Clements marched into Philippolis on 22 March 1900, followed by Jagersfontein and Fauresmith two days later.¹⁷

While Roberts consolidated his position in the Free State capital, De Wet sent his commandos home for some much-needed rest and recuperation. He required them to report for duty again two weeks later. The response from the southern Free State was not impressive – many Burghers from Fauresmith, Jacobsdal, Philippolis, Smithfield, Wepener and Bloemfontein preferred to stay at home.¹⁸ There followed a quiet few months in the southern Free State. In the words of the pro-British commentator, Arthur Conan Doyle: “Under the wise and conciliatory rule of General Pretzman, the farmers in the south and west were settling down, and for the time it looked as if a large district was finally pacified. The milk taxation was cheerfully paid, schools were re-opened,

¹⁷ Cloete 2012: 126.

¹⁸ De Wet 1903:81.

and a peace party made itself apparent, with [John] Fraser¹⁹ and Piet de Wet, the brother of Christian, among its strongest advocates”.²⁰

Doyle may be overstating the tranquility of the southern Free State. Other sources indicated that the British had destroyed or confiscated numerous properties in districts such as Winburg, Smithfield, Hoopstad, Philippolis and Bethulie.²¹ General Brabant’s Colonial Division was particularly guilty of widespread looting and destruction, which caused concern for Maj-Genl Pretzman, the military governor of Bloemfontein.²² This may have contributed to the local Afrikaners’ willingness to take up their weapons again, once De Wet’s forces began regrouping in the southern Free State.

For the next few months, De Wet concentrated on the eastern and south-eastern Free State, engaging with the British in several

¹⁹ Brother of the Rev. Colin Fraser of Philippolis. Colin Fraser remained loyal to the Boer cause.

²⁰ Doyle 1999 (1900): 535.

²¹ Cloete 2012: 170.

²² Cloete 2012: 167.

skirmishes and inflicting defeats at Sannaspos (31 March) and Reddersburg (3 April), although his siege of Smithfield was unsuccessful.²³ He was very active in the northern Free State, at towns such as Frankfort, Heilbron, and Lindley. De Wet's successes breathed new life in the Boer campaign, and many Burghers began to rejoin his commando. The process of recruitment was assisted by the increasingly prevalent and random destruction of farms - including those of non-combatants - by British forces.²⁴ De Wet's fiery nationalism, and the dedication of President Steyn to the ideal of Free State independence, stimulated the flagging enthusiasm of Boer fighters.

When Lord Roberts realized that the fall of Pretoria did not signal the end of the war, and that guerilla warfare had taken the place of set-piece battles, he re-organised his forces. In the Free State, Major-General CE Knox was appointed to the western district, using Kroonstad as his base.²⁵ Knox was in charge of the southern Free State as well.

²³ De Wet 1903 :105.

²⁴ De Wet 1903 : 106.

²⁵ Cloete 2012: 189.

During the guerilla phase (from May 1900 onwards), the Boers divided the Free State into commandos. In the southern Free State, Commandant J Hertzog and Commandant Munnik were tasked with the Philippolis district; Commandant Hendrik Pretorius was allocated to the Jacobsdal district, and Commandant Charles Nieuwoudt was allocated to the Fauresmith district. All of these were under Vice-Commander-in-Chief Judge JBM Hertzog.²⁶

De Wet's guerilla campaign had mixed success. He could not prevent the capture of Bethlehem by the British²⁷, and the surrender of Marthinus Prinsloo (assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Free State forces, on July 29 1900,²⁸ was a major blow to the Boer campaign. De Wet found himself trapped in the Brandwater Basin in the Eastern Free State, and had a narrow escape across the Vaal, into the western Transvaal.²⁹ During this

²⁶ De Wet 1903: 280. In July 1900, the Free State command was again re-organised. The Fauresmith burghers were then led by Commandant Visser, while Jacobsdal's commando continued under Commandant Pretorius (De Wet 1903: 162).

²⁷ De Wet 1903: 154

²⁸ De Wet 1903: 165

²⁹ De Wet 1903 :169.

time, he had numerous successful clashes with British forces near Potchefstroom and the Magaliesberg. He returned to the Free State in late August 1900³⁰, to renew his control of the rural areas of the Free State.

At this stage, De Wet appointed Judge Hertzog and General Fourie to bring the Burghers under arms again, particularly in the southern and south-western districts of the Free State.³¹ Hertzog would focus particularly on Fauresmith, Philippolis and Jacobsdal. He was assisted by Commandant Hendrik Pretorius (of Jacobsdal) and Commandant Visser. Visser had always impressed De Wet by his loyalty and initiative, but he eventually lost his life at an engagement at Jagersfontein.³²

To assist Hertzog, De Wet sent Captain Pretorius and Captain Scheepers, with a small detachment, to prepare the way for Hertzog's arrival in the villages.³³ Hertzog arrived in Petrusburg on 14 October 1900, and numerous Boers, who had laid down

³⁰ De Wet 1903: 186.

³¹ De Wet 1903:193.

³² De Wet 1903: 201.

³³ De Wet 1903: 201.

their arms, re-joined his commando.³⁴ Hertzog soon had 1200 men under arms, and fought several battles at Jagersfontein and Fauresmith.³⁵ In the words of Arthur Conan Doyle, a “small but very mobile and efficient Boer force skirted the eastern outposts of the British, struck the southern line of communications, and then came up the western flank, attacking, where an attack was possible, each of the isolated and weakly garrisoned townlets to which it came, and recruiting its strength from a district which had been hardly touched by the ravages of war”.³⁶

On 1 October, Rouxville was threatened, and the railway blown up near Bethulie. A week later, the Boer riders were dotting the country round Philippolis, Springfontein and Jagersfontein. On 16 October, Hertzog attacked Jagersfontein (the town of his birth).³⁷ The Town Garrison consisted of Major King-Hall and two companies of Seaforth Highlanders with 2 cannons, as well as 100 members of the Town Guard and Police. The Boers captured the forts west of the town, and captured 25 Highlanders. Charles

³⁴ Cloete 2012: 203.

³⁵ De Wet 1903:201.

³⁶ Doyle 1999 (1900): 434.

³⁷ Cloete 2012: 203.

Nieuwoudt and 25 Burghers crept into town, and fired on the reservists and Town Guards. They released Willie Hertzog (JBM's brother) and several other prisoners from the local jail. The town was retaken from the Boers by King-Hall and the Seaforth Highlanders, and the police. There was fierce fighting in the streets. The Seaforths lost 12 men, and six were injured³⁸, and 20-30 of each side were killed or wounded. Rumours of approaching British reinforcements made the Boers withdraw. A Mrs Hendrina Rabie-Van der Merwe was promptly jailed by the British, for her alleged role in the attack. Until the end of the war, she was kept in various camps and prisons, without any trial.³⁹

On 19 October, Genl JBM Hertzog attacked Fauresmith, but the Seaforths and the Town Guard⁴⁰ managed to fight off the onslaught.⁴¹

³⁸ Stirling 1903: 321.

³⁹ Cloete 2012: 203.

⁴⁰ Fauresmith was occupied by 117 Seaforth Highlanders, 20 members of the Imperial Yeomanry, and a Town Guard of 17 men, under Capt ABA Steward (Cloete 2012: 204).

⁴¹ Cloete 2012: 204.

A few days later, on Sunday 21 October, the British rounded up the civilians of Jagersfontein, while they were on their way to church. A large group of civilians of Jagersfontein and Fauresmith were marched under armed guard, in a convoy of more than 10 kilometers, to arrive at Edenburg four days later.

On 18 October 1900, Capt Gideon Scheepers attacked Philippolis with 60 men. The town was defended by a force consisting of 11 members of the newly-styled “Orange River Colony Police”, a few members of Nesbitt’s Horse under Capt Tomkins, and 30 pro-British citizens under Magistrate Gostling. They refused to surrender, resisted bravely, and the attack became a siege.⁴² In his dispatch of 15th November 1900, Lord Roberts mentioned that when the enemy moved south in force in October, Philippolis was attacked almost daily between 18th and 24th October. The Magistrate with 11 police and 18 British residents were skilfully entrenched at a kopje having a reliable water-supply, and held out till relieved on the 24th. The Burghers at first numbered about 100, but other commandos coming up, their force was increased to 600. When Philippolis was attacked, the British commander at Colesberg sent Lieutenant Hannah and 34 of Nesbitt's Horse to

⁴² Cloete 2012: 204; Amery vol. V, p. 24.

relieve or assist the garrison, on the 20th October. Lieutenant Hannah approached Philippolis on the 21st and posted pickets. These were heavily attacked early on the 22nd by the Boers, and were practically annihilated, but Hannah and six men succeeded in joining Gostling's encampment on the hillside outside Philippolis. The party of Nesbitt's Horse lost nine men killed and 12 wounded.⁴³

Relief for the British forces in Philippolis came a week later, on 24 October 1900, when Col. JS Barker marched from Jagersfontein. Col. WL White arrived with a division of Imperial Yeomanry, having hastened from Bethlehem. Three members of the battered Town Guard died in the siege, and almost half of Tomkins's unit were injured. Scheepers' commando apparently suffered no injuries.⁴⁴

The Boers launched several attacks in the southern Free State: JBM Hertzog and Capt HPJ Pretorius surrounded Jacobsdal on the night of 25 October, killing 14 British troops on the market square, causing the British to burn down several Boer houses in

⁴³ <http://www.angloboerwar.com/south-african-units/440-nesbitts-horse>.

⁴⁴ Cloete 2012: 205.

retribution; the Boers derailed a train near Jagersfontein station, and overran the British garrison in Reddersburg on 26 October; and Koffiefontein was besieged by JBM Hertzog for nine days.⁴⁵

A skirmish at Vetkop, near Philippolis, between Commandant WF Hertzog (an older brother of JBM) and Col. JS Barker, led to Hertzog being injured.⁴⁶

According to Sem’s diary, Commandant Pretorius arrived in Philippolis on 30 October 1900, bearing Hertzog’s legal view that the oath of allegiance was null and void, if the British were not present to enforce it. This was based on Lord Roberts’ proclamation that Burghers who took the oath of neutrality would be given protection.⁴⁷ The British proclivity to burn down all farms near sites of sabotage, and to raid farms for cattle, and steal the property of law-abiding farmers, were cited by De Wet as evidence that the British did not honour their side of the oath of allegiance. Furthermore, De Wet believed, “There is also the obligation which everyone is under to his own Government; for

⁴⁵ Cloete 2012: 208-210.

⁴⁶ Cloete 2012: 210.

⁴⁷ De Wet 1903: 202.

what Government could ever acknowledge an oath which their citizens had no right to take?”⁴⁸

De Wet continued with his activities in the northern Free State, slowly making his way down to the south-eastern Free State, in order to invade the Cape Colony. Captain Pretorius was instructed to fetch fresh horses from Fauresmith and Philippolis, and by 29 November, he met up with De Wet near Dewetsdorp, to deliver the horses.⁴⁹ He was accompanied by 200 Burghers from the Fauresmith and Philippolis districts.⁵⁰ De Wet’s forces now consisted of about 2 500 men with good horses. However, his intended invasion of the Cape Colony was blocked by heavy rain and the swollen Orange River. He also sent Commandant Kritzinger and Captain Scheepers to cross into the Colony near Rouxville – a plan which succeeded.⁵¹ For several months, they were active in the Eastern Cape Karoo region.

⁴⁸ De Wet 1903: 203.

⁴⁹ De Wet 1903 : 229.

⁵⁰ Cloete 2012: 213.

⁵¹ “These bands wandered for many months over the great expanse of the Colony, taking refuge, when hard pressed, among the mountain ranges. They moved swiftly about, obtaining remounts from their friends, and avoiding everything in the nature of an action, save when the odds were overwhelmingly in their favour. Numerous small posts or patrols were cut off, many skirmishes, and one or two

The atmosphere in the southern Free State became increasingly tense. The discontent increased in late 1900, “to a degree which became dangerous”.⁵² During November and December, Capt JB Wild of the Oldham Yeomanry marched through the southern Free State, setting fire to all the houses of “disloyal subjects”, taking their cattle, to prevent the Boers receiving sustenance from the farms.⁵³ Doyle, a pro-British commentator, admitted that this discontent was caused by the fact of the farm-burning in the conquered territories, which raised “a storm of indignation”, including the Cape Afrikaners who met at a well-attended conference at Worcester on 6 December 1900.⁵⁴ It was this support from the Cape Afrikaners which made the threat of De Wet’s invasion of the Cape Colony so dangerous: “The agitation

railway smashes were the fruits of this invasion, which lasted till the end of the war, and kept the Colony in an extreme state of unrest during that period” (Doyle 1999:571). Judge Hertzog’s commando reached Colesberg and De Aar; occupied Britstown (22 December 1900); moved to Prieska and Strydenburg; and reached Fraserburg, Beaufort West, Van Rhynsdorp, Calvinia, Williston and Carnarvon. Kritzinger’s Commando passed through Venterstad, Steynsburg, Middelburg, Graff-Reinet, Murraysburg, Aberdeen, Willowmore, New Bethesda, Cradock, Pearston and Klipplaat.

⁵² Doyle 1999 (1900):569.

⁵³ Cloete 2012: 216.

⁵⁴ Doyle 1999 (1900):569.

in the Colony suggested to the Boer leaders ... that here was an untouched recruiting ground, and that small mobile invading parties might gather strength and become formidable”.⁵⁵

General Charles Knox⁵⁶ (who appears in Sem’s diary, on his visits to Philippolis) was very active in the southern Free State.⁵⁷ It was his mission to conduct the “second De Wet hunt”, in the south-eastern Free State – a task which he never accomplished.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Doyle 1999 :571.

⁵⁶ Born in 1848, General CHARLES EDMOND KNOX was educated at Eton and Sandhurst. On 30 June 1865, Knox was commissioned into the British Army's 85th Regiment of Foot (Bucks Volunteers). This later became the 2nd Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, and the whole of his regimental service was done in that corps. He served in the Bechuanaland Expedition (1884-5). With the outbreak of the Boer War, Knox was given command of the 13th Infantry Brigade, under General Kelly-Kenny. He was wounded at the Battle of Paardeberg, thrice mentioned in despatches, promoted to major-general, and awarded the King's South Africa Medal. Knox died on 1 November 1938. His obituary in *TIME* magazine reads: “Died. Sir Charles Edmond Knox, 92, British lieutenant general who in the Boer War chased elusive Boer General Christian Rudolph de Wet 800 miles but never caught him”. Sir Charles' popularity amongst his fellows may be judged by his nickname "Nice Knox." Invariably cheerful, even in adversity, he had a great appreciation of the good things in life; but he always remembered others, particularly those under his command (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Edmund_Knox).

⁵⁷ Doyle 1999: 539.

⁵⁸ Cloete 2012: 214.

By January 1901, De Wet was ready for his next attempt to invade the Colony, with 2000 men. Interestingly, he was accompanied by President Steyn and the Free State Government.⁵⁹ De Wet’s company undertook “one of its lightning treks once more”⁶⁰, skirting Bloemfontein, Winburg, Smithfield and then west to Springfontein and Jagersfontein, capturing supply trains as he passed.⁶¹

De Wet’s expedition became a duel of wits with General Knox. According to De Wet, “Any person who has had dealings with this General will acknowledge that he is apt to be rather a troublesome friend; for not only does he understand the art of marching by night, but he is also inclined to be overbearing when he measures his strength with that of his opponents”.⁶² Knox soon realized what De Wet’s plan was, and sent troops to reinforce the railway bridges at Bethulie and Norvalspont. De Wet “now had to find some trump card which would spoil the

⁵⁹ De Wet 1903: 249.

⁶⁰ Doyle 1999: 582.

⁶¹ Doyle 1999:585.

⁶² De Wet 1903: 253.

game he was playing”.⁶³ While spreading rumours that he would try to cross the Orange River near Aliwal North, in an attempt to divert Knox’s troops, De Wet sent General Froneman via Trompsburg⁶⁴ (where Froneman captured a British train and valuable supplies), to Zanddrift, on the Orange River south of Philippolis.⁶⁵

This led to the “Third or Great De Wet Hunt”, through the southwestern Free State, with Genl Bruce Hamilton and Genl Charles Knox in hot pursuit.⁶⁶ On 6 February 1901, De Wet reached Jagersfontein⁶⁷, and aimed for Philippolis. Through heavy rain, De Wet’s party (with oxen dragging artillery) followed Froneman. On 8 February 1901, De Wet overtook Froneman at Lubbedrift, six miles to the north of Philippolis. On 9 February, De Wet reached Philippolis, well ahead of the British pursuit, and spent a day or two making his final arrangements for the invasion. His force consisted of nearly 3 000 men, with two 15-pounder guns,

⁶³ De Wet 1903: 254.

⁶⁴ Then called Jagersfontein Road Station, on the north-south railway.

⁶⁵ De Wet 1903:255.

⁶⁶ Cloete 2012: 232.

⁶⁷ Cloete 2012: 235.

one pom-pom and one maxim. At this time, the garrisons of all the towns in the south-west of the Orange River Colony had been removed in accordance with the British policy of military concentration, so De Wet found himself for the moment in a friendly environment.⁶⁸ But the British were alarmed at the prospect of a Boer invasion of the Colony, and Col. Lyttelton at Nouwpoort was appointed to direct the operations to stop De Wet’s advance.⁶⁹

Two days later, Genl Froneman joined De Wet at Lubbedrift, north of Philippolis. On 10 February, the Boers pushed towards Zanddrift on the Orange River.⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, Knox came through Philippolis in hot pursuit on 13 February, as described in Sem’s diary.

Together with President Steyn, De Wet crossed the Orange River at Zanddrift (today located under the Vanderkloof Dam) with an estimated 2 000 men (after 600 men⁷¹ decided to turn back to the

⁶⁸ Doyle 1999 (1900):585.

⁶⁹ Doyle 1999 (1900).585.

⁷⁰ De Wet 1903: 256.

⁷¹ Led by Commandants AM Prinsloo, AJ van Tonder, and PW de Vos (Cloete 2012: 237).

Free State). The convoy consisted of many mule and ox wagons, Steyn’s wagon, De Wet’s wagon with money and documents, Ds HJ Potsma and Gideon Fourie’s ambulance wagon, an Armstrong cannon and a pom-pom. Many of the Burghers had pack horses. As they crossed the river, Veldkornet W Pretorius and four Burghers captured Lt H McAdam and 16 members of the Prince of Wales’ Light Horse, who were en route to capture the drift. A small unit under Cpt Wynand Malan and Manie Maritz went ahead, while De Wet waited for Genl Piet Fourie – a delay which cost him dearly.⁷²

De Wet’s quest in the Cape Colony was difficult in the extreme, plagued by heavy rain which reduced the Karoo plains to swamps, and constantly having to evade British patrols. They found that all the horses in the region had been removed from the farms (they had been gathered at De Aar). De Wet was joined by General Fourie, but a large English force from Colesberg was in constant pursuit.⁷³ Kitchener himself arrived in De Aar to direct operations against De Wet. Fifteen columns, each with about 1

⁷² Cloete 2012: 236.

⁷³ De Wet 1903: 257.

000 men, were deployed between Hopetown to Victoria West.⁷⁴ De Wet passed near Philipstown and Petrusville, moving towards Hopetown, but totally unable to raise any fresh troops from the Colonial Afrikaners. “For a week, the two sodden, sleepless, mud-splashed little armies swept onwards over the Karoo”.⁷⁵ Several skirmishes took place – at Wolvekuil (near Philipstown), Baartman Siding, Gouwspan (north of Strydenburg), and Riethalte (near Hanover Road). On 18 February, Capt Wynand Malan’s Transvaal Verkenningsskommando derailed a train on the farm Taaibos (between De Aar and Hanover), causing the death of three soldiers and two train drivers. This later led to the tragic execution of three local men – Karel Nienaber, Petrus Nienaber and Jan Nieuwoudt – who were falsely accused that they assisted the Boers, and were executed in De Aar on 19 March.⁷⁶

De Wet failed to secure any real victory, despite a heroic ride to Prieska. During this journey, he had collected 90 prisoners of war, which he could not release, for fear of them reporting on his movements. On 19 February, De Wet addressed his Burghers at

⁷⁴ Cloete 2012 : 238.

⁷⁵ Doyle 1999 :586.

⁷⁶ Cloete 2012: 239.

Roosloot, announcing his plans to abandon the invasion. He sent his son, Izak, on a decoy mission with a 500-man contingent in a westerly direction, which succeeded in diverting Knox and Plumer’s columns away from the main body of men, at least for a few days.⁷⁷ After two weeks, the Boer force had been reduced by hundreds of men – many had been taken prisoner, many had deserted, and a few had been killed.⁷⁸ As De Wet battled to find a suitable crossing of the swollen Orange River, they were still harassed by Brigadier Plumer and his Australian Victorian Imperial Bushmen unit. De Wet eventually moved upstream along the Orange River as far as the Seekoeririver north-west of Colesberg.⁷⁹

Seventeen days after crossing into the Cape, De Wet’s party returned to Zanddrift. To test the crossing, two young burghers swam the swollen river, ending up on the Free State side without a stitch of clothing, and had to stop at Boshof’s farm, where the farmer’s wife provided some of her husband’s clothes.⁸⁰ In Sem’s

⁷⁷ Cloete 2012: 239.

⁷⁸ Doyle 1999 (1900): 587.

⁷⁹ Cloete 2012: 241.

⁸⁰ De Wet 1903: 272-3.

diary, it was recorded, on 28 February, that Captain Pretorius who had proclaimed Philippolis for the Orange River Colony, came into town with only four men. “He looked in a very forlorn state, and said that he had been obliged to swim the river and leave all his clothes etc on [the other side].”

In the meantime, De Wet and the rest of his commando had to roam for 14 miles along the Orange River, until they managed to find a suitable drift at Bothasdrift, 25 km west of Norvalspont.⁸¹ How overjoyed the men were to return to their own country! And, miraculously, as soon as De Wet had crossed the river, it became completely unfordable, preventing further pursuit by the English.⁸² Slowly, De Wet’s force made its way back to the farm Lubbeshoop, arriving in Philippolis on 1 March 1901. He left Philippolis 24 hours before the British force under Plumer and Bethune arrived in the town.⁸³ Generals Piet Fourie and GA Brand clashed with Brigadier-General Plumer at Zuurfontein, near Philippolis, and thereafter headed east to Fauresmith. On the same day, Genl De Wet and President Steyn arrived in

⁸¹ De Wet 1903: 273.

⁸² De Wet 1903: 279.

⁸³ Cloete 2012: 244.

Fauresmith, and were pursued by Plumer northwards across the Riet River.

The swollen Orange River delayed De Wet’s pursuers sufficiently for him to have valuable time to re-organise. He divided his force into separate fighting units under his assistant Chief Commandants, including Genl CC Froneman (central and southern Free State) and Genl JAM Hertzog (south-west Free State).⁸⁴

The presence of De Wet had caused the southern Free State, which had, from April to November 1900, “been as peaceful and almost as prosperous as Kent or Yorkshire”⁸⁵, to rise up again. The guerilla bands placed pressure on the farmers to join them. Consequently, from the British perspective, “the work of pacification had to be set about once more, with harsher measures than before”, with barbed-wire fencing and guarded posts throughout the southern Free State.⁸⁶ This was a period of counter-insurgency:

⁸⁴ Cloete 2012: 242-3.

⁸⁵ Doyle 1999 (1900): 589.

⁸⁶ Doyle 1999 (1900) :589.

“There is no striking victory to record in these operations, but they were an important part of that process of attrition which was wearing the Boers out and helping to bring the war to an end. Terrible it is to see that barren countryside, and to think of the depths of misery to which the once flourishing and happy Orange Free State had fallen.”⁸⁷

Judge Hertzog continued his work in the south-western districts. The Free State Boers were now divided into smaller units, who could be more mobile, and were capable of reuniting at a signal from their leader.⁸⁸ The district of Philippolis fell under Commandants Munnik and Hertzog; Fauresmith under Commandant Nieuwoudt; and Jacobsdal under Commandant Hendrik Pretorius.⁸⁹ (De Wet set off to the northern Free State to confer with Generals Louis Botha and De la Rey⁹⁰, and thereafter to the Eastern Free State in early 1902.⁹¹).

⁸⁷ Doyle 1999 (1900):589. With his unwavering loyalty to the British cause, Doyle continued: The Orange Free State, “through joining in a quarrel with a nation which bore it nothing but sincere friendship and goodwill. With nothing to gain and everything to lose, the part played by the Orange Free State in this South African drama is one of the most inconceivable things in history. Never has a national so deliberately and so causelessly committed suicide” (Doyle 1999:590). From the perspective of De Wet and the Boers, of course, the Free State was resisting an imperialist onslaught.

⁸⁸ Doyle 1999:579.

⁸⁹ De Wet 1903: 280.

⁹⁰ De Wet 1903: 285.

The new system of small commandos had severe consequences for the Boers. In De Wet’s words:

“The tactics of dividing our commandos, and thus keeping the English busy in every part of the Free State, or where they were too numerous for us, of refusing to allow them to give us battle, so enraged them that they no longer spared the farmhouses in the north and north-western districts. Even in the south and south-west, many of the houses were wrecked, but the work of destruction was not carried out with the same completeness as in the afore-mentioned districts. The enemy, moreover, did not spare our cattle, but either drove them off or killed them for food. As for our women-folk – any of them who fell into the hands of the enemy were sent off to the concentration camps”.⁹²

In this context, Sem and the Philippolis townsfolk were removed to the Springfontein camp in April 1901. During the winter of 1901, various British columns moved around the southern Free State, “clearing” patches of resistance, and reducing the countryside to devastation. The blockhouse system was developed throughout the Free State, with a line which extended from Basutholand in the east to Bloemfontein and Jacobsdal in

⁹¹ De Wet 1903: 321.

⁹² De Wet 1903: 297.

the west. “The small bands of Boers found it increasingly difficult to “escape from the British columns who were forever at their heels”.⁹³ It became a hair-raising experience to cross these fortified lines, consisting of blockhouses only 600 yards apart, and connected by impenetrable strands of wire.⁹⁴ To the south of the main east-west blockhouse line, “the Boer resistance had practically ceased, although several [Boer] columns moved continually through it, and gleaned up the broken fragments of the commandos”.⁹⁵

During the latter half of 1901 and early 1902, the guerilla war rumbled on in the southern Free State, with various skirmishes taking place, at Knelpoort, near Edenburg on 9 November; and at Reddersburg on 23 November, with Col AC Hamilton and Col. Lowry Cole involved.⁹⁶ When Col. Lowry Cole overran Cmdt Coetzee’s commando near Wepener, it forced Brand and Kritzinger, who had been active in the south-eastern Free State, to

⁹³ Doyle 1999 (1900):686.

⁹⁴ Doyle 1999 (1900):697.

⁹⁵ Doyle 1999 (1900): 687.

⁹⁶ Cloete 2012: 311-314.

fall back towards Philippolis.⁹⁷ Genl Kritzinger crossed the railway line south of Springfontein, and travelled through the devastated southern Free State towards Fauresmith.⁹⁸ The southern Free State commandos under Commandants George Brand, FJ Rheeder, JR Ackerman, P Krog, and G Joubert held a council of war at Boesmansberg, near Edenburg.⁹⁹ These Boer units were attacked by Col. Lowry Cole, with 550 troops and two cannons, at Elandsberg, in a vehement exchange of fire, on 4 December 1901. Most of the Free Staters managed to escape, but Commandant Joubert was cornered and had to surrender. Soon after, Commandant Brand reunited with Genl Hertzog, and harried the English in the southern Free State, leading to a defeat of a company of Sherwood Foresters near Edenburg on 8 December.¹⁰⁰

It was only with the lead-up to peace negotiations in May 1902, that the southern Free State commandos ceased their activities.

⁹⁷ Cloete 2012: 314.

⁹⁸ Cloete 2012: 315.

⁹⁹ Cloete 2012: 316.

¹⁰⁰ Cloete 2012: 317.

SEM’S DIARY, 1900-1902

The Sem family lived in Philippolis at the turn of the century. Gerrit was the fourth child of Gerrit Jan Cornelis Sem, born in Holland in 1824. Gerrit was married to Geertruyda Magdalena Meyer, and they arrived at the Cape in 1858. Gerrit Sem, the author of the diary, was born on 10 December 1858 in Pietermaritzburg.¹⁰¹

Gerrit Sem was for 44 years a law agent in Philippolis. His brother Herman was a trader. Gerrit was Lodge Deputy of Prosperity Lodge, Philippolis, Lodge no. 18 of the Independent Order of Good Templars.¹⁰² He also served as a Justice of the Peace.¹⁰³

During the early part of the war, Gerrit remained in Philippolis, although he was, on several occasions, sent to Springfontein “Refugee Camp”. He was occasionally allowed to return to

¹⁰¹ *Suid-Afrikaanse Geslagsregisters*, Deel 11 (Scho-Sny), Genealogiese Instituut van Suid-Afrika,, Stellenbosch, 2004

¹⁰² Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1313, Ref 445, Archives, Pretoria.

¹⁰³ Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241.

Philippolis. During October 1900, shortly after Major McIntosh had garrisoned the town with the Seaforth Highlanders and some Lovat’s Scouts, Sem was appointed as Acting Resident Magistrate.¹⁰⁴ His brother and his family went back to Holland for the duration of the war, and returned to Philippolis after peace was signed.

Sem’s diary starts with the poignant words:

*Life is passed in desiring what one has not,
And regretting what one has no longer.*

This is one of the few explicit emotions of regret and loss expressed by Sem.

The diary begins simply on 13 October 1899, by noting that “War declared by Transvaal to England”.

LIFE IN PHILIPPOLIS

¹⁰⁴ Information contained in the (Compensation Claim of JP Beck (CJC), vol. 534, Ref. 1, Archives, Pretoria).

Sem’s description of Philippolis events starts in earnest on 21 March 1900. There had been fighting in the Philippolis district. Around 23-24 February 1900, skirmishes took place at Osfontein in the Philippolis district. There are eight British war graves at Osfontein, north of Philippolis, but only four are recorded.¹⁰⁵

Philippolis was occupied by the British on 21 March 1900¹⁰⁶. According to Sem, General Gatacre took the keys to the Magistrate’s Office and Post Office. However, according to Amery¹⁰⁷, as well as Arthur Conan Doyle¹⁰⁸, it was General Clements who occupied Philippolis¹⁰⁹, leading the Inniskilling

¹⁰⁵ Lieutenant Corporal I KETTLE of the First Essex Regiment was killed on 23 February 1900 (no record in Roll of Honour), and Private R JOHNSTONE of the KOSB (King’s Own Scottish Borderers) was killed on 24 February (Oosthuizen 1999: 31). Was this the same Private R Johnstone who was listed as killed on 24 February at Stinkfontein, Paardeberg, and noted as buried Vendusie Drift, Paardeberg (<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Clackmannanshire/AlloaBoer.html>)?

¹⁰⁶ Before this, on 9 March 1900, Burgher FJ Van Zyl died in an accident at Allemansdrif in the Philippolis district (Oosthuizen 1999:30).

¹⁰⁷ Amery 1905: 592.

¹⁰⁸ Doyle 1999 (1900):360. This remains a puzzle – Why did Sem get it so wrong?

¹⁰⁹ According to Amery 1905: 592: By the 15th of March 1900, Clements had built a pontoon at Norval’s Pont. “During the next few days the bulk of his force crossed over, and on the 21st, he started on a military promenade through the south-western Free State. Marching through Philippolis, Jagersfontein, Fauresmith, Koffyfontein and Petrusburg, he collected surrendered arms,

Dragoons.¹¹⁰ The English built their first camps around Philippolis. The “PM Police” took up station in Philippolis.¹¹¹

For the next few months, life in Philippolis continued fairly serenely. Frequently, Sem notes simply, “A quiet day”, “Nothing special happens”, where some semblance of normality continued amongst the periodic upheavals of occupation and counter-occupation.¹¹²

But there were increasingly frequent reminders that the war was raging. There must have been a skirmish outside Philippolis, as

distributed proclamations, addressed local notables, and eventually, on April 4, arrived at Bloemfontein.” This is confirmed by the Official History of the War in South Africa (see extract on <http://www.angloboerwar.com/imperial-units/666-south-wales-borderers>).

¹¹⁰ Yardley 1904:33. The Inniskilling Dragoons initially joined General French in the Colesberg District in December 1899. Thereafter, one squadron under Major Allenby went to Modder River, and took part in the expedition to Koedoesberg Drift and the relief of Kimberley; the other two squadrons remained at Colesberg under General Clements, and with him joined the main army at Bloemfontein in early April 1900 (Stirling 1903:431). Their capture of Philippolis would have taken place during this northward movement.

¹¹¹ The names of the PM Police were given by Sem as: John Keusten, George A Barr, John Rex Meterlekamp, Alex G Budgen, Gordon G Lyle, David Lyle, R Mal, Charles Nickstraum and James Johnson.

¹¹² On 22 November, Sem recorded the “part eclipse of the sun in the morning”.

Private J Jeffreys of the 4th Dragoon Guards was killed on 10 May 1900, and was buried at the farm Osfontein, west of Philippolis.¹¹³

By late 1900, the townsmen were required to defend the town. On 9 October 1900, there were reports of Boer commandos north of Philippolis, advancing from Trompsburg . Three local pickets, armed with rifles and cartridges, ventured to the hills surrounding Philippolis, to protect the town. A few days of quiet followed, with the town maintaining an uneasy calm. But clearly, matters were not normal. As Gerrit Sem set off with the Misses Young and Fraser to go cycling, the pickets reported that the Boer commando was close by, “so [instead] we go for a game of tennis”, wrote Sem. Later that day, the Commando indeed entered the town – and left again.

But everyone remained anxious about the return of a stronger commando. Some 19 men of Nesbitt’s Horse¹¹⁴ came in as

¹¹³ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

¹¹⁴ This corps, about 300 strong, was raised in the eastern portion of Cape Colony in December 1899 by CPL NESBITT, "a veteran South African campaigner". After Pretoria was occupied, the detachment which had accompanied Lord Roberts northwards was taken south of the Vaal because De Wet had attacked the railway, and they afterwards did duty in the Orange River Colony and in Cape Colony. A small party of Nesbitt’s Horse assisted Gostling in fighting off Scheepers’s attack. In the process, Nesbitt’s Horse lost 9 men killed and 12 wounded (<http://www.angloboerwar.com/south-african-units/440-nesbitts-horse>).

reinforcements on 19 October, and took up positions in the kopjes surrounding the town. Matters came to a head on Monday 22 October, as strong commandos, led by Captains Fouche¹¹⁵ and Scheepers¹¹⁶ overran the pickets in the kopjes, and entered Philippolis, “causing most awful excitement”, in Sem’s words. Two men were killed.¹¹⁷ All women and non-combatants gathered in the Dutch Reformed Church.

¹¹⁵ This could have been Commandant WD FOUCHE. He was born in 1874 in Rouxville. During the Boer War, he served with General Kritzinger during his foray into Cape Colony and later in the Orange Free State. He re-entered Cape Colony again in Sep 1901 with General Smuts. He was seriously wounded near Barkly East. During the Great War, he served under General Louis Botha in German South West Africa (http://www.angloboerwar.com/index.php?option=com_grid&gid=3_br_0&p=16).

¹¹⁶ This could have been Commandant GIDEON SCHEEPERS. Scheepers was born in 1878 near Middleburg. In 1894 or 1898, he joined the Staatsartillerie as a heliograph operator. He was seconded to the Free State Artillery to help develop their system of communications. He led General de Wet’s scouts during the Boer War. His area of operation was the Brandwater Basin. In 1900 he was in the Transvaal and undertook attacks against the British lines of communications. He re-entered the Cape Colony in 1901 and operated around Aliwal North and Graaff-Reinet. His hope of starting a revolt in the Cape came to nothing. His commando reached Mossel Bay. After destroying local property, he withdrew to the Ladismith district. He was captured in October 1901. He was charged with offences including murder, flogging a British subject, placing prisoners in the firing line, etc. A guilty verdict resulted in his execution at Graaff-Reinet on 18 January 1902. He was ill on the day of his execution and had to be tied to a chair (http://www.angloboerwar.com/index.php?option=com_grid&gid=3_br_0&p=16).

¹¹⁷ These were Trooper OSCAR W PORCH, of Nesbitts Horse, killed on 22 October 1900, and Corporal J NEWMAN, of the Orange River Colony Police, killed on 29 October 1900 (both now lie buried in the Philippolis graveyard (Oosthuizen 1999:31)).

The Boers took several local townsfolk as prisoners, including Andries Strauss, H Lategan¹¹⁸, Abey Orkin¹¹⁹ and Sem himself. They were locked up in the local gaol, along with about 50 British prisoners, although, according to Sem, “we managed to get some cards and played whist”. Matters looked serious, and the prisoners told that they would appear before a Court Martial. But “after speaking a few words of reproof to Dirk and Andries”, the Boers set the townsmen free, “under condition we would remain quiet and appear when called up again at any time ... Should we disbehave or speak anything disorderly, and against the Burghers, we were liable to be shot in the street at any time”.

¹¹⁸ HENDRIK WILLEM LATEGAN of the farm Pienaarsfontein surrendered under the proclamation of Lord Roberts but joined the Boer Commando again. Later, he voluntarily surrendered under the proclamation of Lord Kitchener and was taken to the camp at Norvalspont. After the war, he lived on Koopmansfontein as a farm manager. He made a living by doing odd jobs. In 1903, he submitted a compensation claim for losses suffered (farming stock, a cart, furniture, a few bags of wheat and fowls, to the value of £150). This claim was denied by the British Compensation Board, probably because he had broken his oath (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1313, Ref 321, Archives, Pretoria)/

¹¹⁹ JOSEPH ORKIN was a General Merchant in Philippolis before the war. He came from Klikul in Lithuania. He arrived in Philippolis in 1887 and started working as a *smous*. He later bought Moritz Liefman’s business, and became a general dealer and a grain merchant. In 1891, Orkin brought out his cousins Edward and Fanny Weinberg from Courland, Latvia, to work with him in his business. After his store was destroyed during the war, for which he received no compensation, he left for East London, returning to Philippolis when peace was restored (Beth Hatfutoth 2012: 397).

By sundown on 24 October 1900, firing was heard, and “in great confusion and excitement, the Burghers cleared away”.

Shortly afterwards, two English columns, estimated to be 800-1000 men, entered the town, and released the British prisoners. On 25 October, wrote Sem, “A good deal of destruction is done by soldiers in houses standing without occupants”. On 26 October, matters looked even more alarming: “There is great excitement because we are told that no force can be left here and the people will have to leave ... All undesirables are notified to be ready to start with column to Springfontein next morning.” Some people went voluntarily, and those who remained had to do so at their own risk. The “undesirables” included Rev. Colin Fraser¹²⁰ and his daughter, Emmeline, who left for Bloemfontein to stay with Colin’s daughter, Mrs Tibbie Steyn.

¹²⁰ REV COLIN FRASER, born on 26 January 1837 in Beaufort West. He met his wife, Isabella Gordon Paterson, in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1862, and studied theology in the Netherlands. From 1863, he led the new NG Church congregation in Philippolis. The congregation flourished under his leadership. The parsonage in Philippolis was one of the largest homes in the town, and consisted of seven rooms, a kitchen, a pantry, a packhouse and a wagon house. The Fraser couple had eight children, including Colin, Tibbie (later Mrs Steyn), Henry Paterson, Annie Emmeline, and Gordon Alexander. The family spoke English (Truter 1997: 10-11).

It is not clear how many people left, but the British departed on 27 October, without leaving anyone in authority. The remaining people met at Edmondson’s Hotel ¹²¹ in the afternoon and appointed some special constables. “Sunday is a beautiful and calm day – Revd C Boshoff being here, service is held in D.R. Church”. Similarly, Monday 29 October passed quietly, with the only disruption being a Boer patrol which entered town, collected all the guns and ammunition from the fort, and left town again.

A strong Boer commando, of about 160 men, returned the next day (30 October 1900). There must have been a skirmish at Driefontein in the Philippolis district, as a Burgher, WP Retief, was killed in action there (Oosthuizen 1999:30).¹²²

The Boer occupiers raised the Free State flag in Philippolis. According to Captain Pretorius, all male residents had to attend a public meeting in the Courtroom at 1 o’clock, where Gerrit Sem was appointed to act as SJP.¹²³ The Boer leaders stated that they

¹²¹ Owned by CH EDMONDSON (Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241).

¹²² WP RETIEF was buried in Waterkloof, and is commemorated on the Burgher monument, Philippolis (Oosthuizen 1999:30).

¹²³ Presumably Special Justice of the Peace.

were aware of the dilemma faced by the townsfolk – what should they do, if they had taken the oath of neutrality imposed by the British? Captain Pretorius notified the meeting of an opinion of Judge Hertzog (“an opinion shared by eminent jurists in Europe”, noted Sem) that the oath holds only as long as the British are capable of protecting the local citizens. “If not so protected, the oath became null and void”. In response, Gerrit Sem told Captain Pretorius that, in this light, as soon as the British came in to town again, he would reconsider his oath of service to the Free State Government”, thus following the Boer argument to its logical conclusion, that the validity of oaths of loyalty depended solely on who was currently in military control.

The Boers promptly set about commandeering local townsmen and horses, although “the Burghers behaved very well”. On 31 October, Webb’s shop was opened by Captain Pretorius, and under the supervision of the SGP, goods were given to the people who were in need, until the shop was “practically cleared of all goods”. Japie Rensburg of Osfontein¹²⁴ was taken prisoner.

¹²⁴ This may have been JOSIAS RENIER JANSE VAN RENSBURG who lived on the farm Ospoot. His mother was the owner of Ospoot, farming in partnership with her son. He had the farm on the half share system and the free run of his stock. The horses he claimed for were not used on Commando. In October 1900, his furniture was destroyed by the men of Col Barker and White: 1 bedstead, 2 featherbeds, 8 pillows, 2 trunks, 1 table, 14 chairs, glassware, a bucket,

More Boer commandos came into town on 1 and 2 November, until Commandant Munnik Hertzog (the brother of General JBM Hertzog) came in with a force of 200 men, accompanied by Captain Pretorius who had been away for about two days . This triggered some pro-Boer patriotism, and on 4 November, women “gather before SR Grobler’s house¹²⁵ and the Volkslied is sung”, after which Judge Hertzog addressed the gathering. On 5 November, many farmers came in and joined the Boer commando.

Two days later, British tents were spotted at Alewynskop, to the north of Philippolis (on the Fauresmith road). The British

a wardrobe, a coffee urn, teapots, 1 small table, a churn, 6 enamel dishes, 1 box with women’s dresses, 1 suit of clothes, a woman’s hat, 2 pictures, and crockery. In May 1901, the following items were taken by the men under Col. Williams: 4 horses, 1 riding horse, 1 mule, 1 stallion, 6 mares, 2 oxen, 6 cows, 300 sheep, 25 chickens, 1 cart, 1 plough, 2 pairs of harnesses, 8 yokes, 2 saddles and bridles, 8 spades, damage to the garden, 2 bags potato seeds, 4 bags wheat, and 1500 sheaves of corn. Van Rensburg had taken the oath of neutrality, and had subsequently rejoined the Boers. He was captured and sent to Bermuda as a prisoner of war. After the war, he had no fixed property. He only had 31 sheep, which he had received from the Repatriation Board. In his claim, he stated that he had not used any of the horses on commando. He claimed a total of £652, and it was recommended that he receive £370 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1317, Ref 458, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹²⁵ This may have been ER GROBLER, who was the Member of the Volksraad in 1899 ((Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241). He also became the Commandant of the Philippolis commando.

apparently took pot-shots at farmer Izak Snyman¹²⁶, who was on his way to town to have a coffin made for CH Boshoff¹²⁷ of Slangfontein. One horse in the buggy was killed, and once he reached town, he could not take a coffin back to the farm, and Mrs Boshoff was obliged to bury her husband without a coffin.

¹²⁶ IZAK DAVID SNYMAN of Vleiplaas, 1196 morgen had a bond of £500 on the farm before the war. He surrendered but joined again and was sent to the Refugee camp at Springfontein. On his return to the farm he found that his stock was taken, the house damaged, his furniture and wagonhouse with contents were destroyed by fire. He claimed £1310 for his losses. He had 600 sheep, 17 horses, 60 head of cattle, a cart with harness, a wagon with gear, furniture and 5 bales of wool. He was compensated with £770 (Compensation Claims (CJC), vol. 1320, Ref 571, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹²⁷ JOHANNA HENDRIKA FRANCINA BOSHOF was the widow of CHRISTIAN HENDRIK BOSHOF, who owned the farm Slangfontein (2000 morgen) which she inherited after her invalid husband died at the beginning of the war. She had 8 children. The eldest a daughter, aged 35, was an invalid. The 23-year-old son, Johannes Matthias, joined, surrendered and rejoined and helped her on the farm. He was captured during the war and sent to India. Her 20 –year-old son, Hendrik Christian, was not on commando. He was allowed to stay with his invalid father, but was taken prisoner and sent to India. He was paralysed in one of his legs while he was in India, and remained crippled. David Hermanus, 18 years, was not on commando. The day that she was taken from the farm on the 13th April 1901 by Colonel Hickman’s column, Johanna saw her cattle taken and her wagon burnt. Hendrik van Rensburg, Albert Retief and a black labourer, called Lustig, gave evidence that they also saw the British column take 88 cattle and burn the wagon and furniture on the day she was taken away. Lustig claimed that they also took 51 of his own sheep. Her claim amounted to £2266 for her losses and damage to the property and the Administrator wrote in his evaluation that the claim was largely exaggerated and therefore put aside (Compensation Claims (CJC), vol. 1307, Ref 108, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

The presence of the British in Alewynskop caused the Boer commandos to rush out and attack the British camp after dark. According to Sem, “There is a great commotion amongst the Burghers in the village”. After vigorous shooting on 8 November, the British entered the town in the morning. Gerrit Sem was appointed as Landdrost by Major G Mackintosh of the Seaforth Highlanders.¹²⁸ The Major ordered that all shops must be closed, and declared a curfew after 6.30 pm. During a melee, A van Straaten, a young man from Waterkloof¹²⁹, was shot near

¹²⁸ The Seaforth Highlanders (Duke of Albany’s Ross-shire Buffs) sailed on the *Mongolian* on about 21 October 1899, and arrived at the Cape about 16th November. Along with the 2nd Black Watch, 1st Highland Light Infantry, and 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, they formed the 3rd or Highland Brigade, first under Major General Wauchope and after his death under Brigadier General Hector Macdonald. They fought at Magersfontein and Paardeberg, where they had heavy losses. When the Burgher commandos moved south of Bloemfontein three companies of the Seaforths were sent, about 13th October 1900, to occupy Jagersfontein and Fauresmith. Both places were attacked before daybreak on the 16th. At Jagersfontein, the Boers got into the town in the darkness, indeed into the camp, but were driven out. The Seaforths, however, lost 12 killed and 1 officer and 5 men wounded. A portion of the battalion had fighting in the Reddersburg district, and moving south to the Rouxville Aliwal district, they operated there for a considerable time (<http://www.angloboerwar.com/imperial-units/661-seaforth-highlanders>).

¹²⁹ Young Van Straaten came from a notable Waterkloof family. WILLEM JACOBUS VAN STRAATEN (SNR) owned 5 erven in Waterkloof, and until the war he had lived there for 23 years. He lived on one erf and used the other four for sowing and planting. About one quarter was planted with a vineyard and orchard, and he kept 600 sheep. He himself did not go on commando. He had had fourteen horses. His sons used his horses on commando but the other horses stayed at Waterkloof from where they and his sheep were taken by Colonel Williams’ column. He got a receipt from Colonel Williams for £328. The amount claimed

the graveyard, and died that afternoon in the schoolroom in Hendrik Street, which was used as a hospital. The coffin intended for Mr Boshoff was then used for Van Straaten.

As the Acting Landdrost, Gerrit Sem noted crossly, “I have got a good deal of bother with women that have come to town during the occupation by the farmers”. Presumably the women on the surrounding farms had come to town to buy supplies or deal with other matters, and found themselves stranded there during the British occupation.

The British were unsympathetic occupiers. On 11 November, Major Macintosh notified Mrs Boshoff¹³⁰ and Mrs Erskine of

included the loss of 60 sheep, 30 goats, a wagon, and a cart. In 1903, he submitted a Compensation Claim for cash (a 5 pound note and gold) which he buried next to the kraal on his Waterkloof erf. During the war, his sons had been on commando in the neighbourhood, and immediately after the British left, his sons found the money gone, thus suggesting that the British troops had uncovered and removed the buried money. His wool, mohair, 1200 sheaves of corn, saddles, dried skins and furniture had been burned. He also claimed for crockery, clothing, dried fruit, a brandy kettle, linen and farming implements. He claimed £1048 but had already received £328 from the Repatriation Board. He was considered well off since he still had considerable unmortgaged property (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1318, Ref 502, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹³⁰ Two Boshoffs had businesses in Philippolis in 1899: A BOSHOFF (undertaker) and A BOSHOFF (mason) ((Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241). Mrs Boshoff may also have been the wife of WILLEM HENDRIK BOSHOFF, who owned the farms Roodepoort, Loopfontein and Paayskloof, in total about 5000 morgen. He had a mortgage of

Rowelsfontein¹³¹ to quit their houses that afternoon.¹³² Gerrit

Sem helped them to load up their furniture and bring it to town.

Hans Schoeman's house¹³³ at Rowelsfontein was burnt down.

£500 on them before the war. He also had a house in town where he kept 15 slaughter hamels. He was too old to go on commando, but his three sons joined and surrendered. One of them rejoined and was captured. The other two would not join again, but were sent to India. His claim of £1761 included damage to the houses and outbuildings on all his farms and the house in town, damage to the fences and the loss of furniture, farm implements, wool, angora hair, cattle, sheep, poultry and 600 angora goats. He was considered a rich man and did not get compensation (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1307, Ref 98, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹³¹ Mrs Erskine was the wife of CHRISTOFFEL PIETER ERSKINE, a mason by trade, who lived in Rowelsfontein, Philippolis. He had one erf with a dwellinghouse, stable and wagonhouse. He had stock running on his mother-in-law's farm, Nieuwerust, and this was taken in October 1900 by the British. All the buildings were damaged by men of the Seaforth Highlanders under Colonel Macintosh. He claimed for damage to buildings, furniture, 2 pairs of harnesses, mason's tools and scaffolding, 6 oxen, 8 cattle, 8 horses, a cape cart four seated, a cape cart two seated, a scotch cart and 2 loads of fuel which were in the wagonhouse. The claim amounted to £609. The claim-commissioner recommended Erskine with the following note: "He served all through the war till Peace was signed. He is a hardworking, trustworthy man and recommenced work as soon as he was settled again at his home. I assessed his claim on even lines with other Ex-Burghers but he is more deserving for consideration than most." He received £289 in compensation (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1309, Ref 188, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹³² It is not clear why he would do this.

¹³³ GERHARDUS JOHANNES ARNOLDUS HATTING SCHOEMAN of Nootgedacht, (1 400 morgen) Philippolis, surrendered to Lord Roberts. He later rejoined the Boers, and surrendered subsequently under the proclamation of Lord Kitchener and was sent to India. He declared under oath that on the 4th November 1900 his dwelling house in Rowelsfontein Philippolis was destroyed by fire under the command of Colonel Macintosh of the Seaforth Highlanders. He was the owner of six erven in Rowelsfontein. On the 14th May 1901, the buildings with

The troops went out to Waterkloof and took six prisoners, who were kept in the Market House where the main guard was stationed. Gerrit Sem managed to get one of the prisoners, Mr Stulting¹³⁴, “off from going with convoy on condition that he signs declaration to discontinue talking politics”.

Two days later, on 13 November, a convoy from Norvalspont arrived, bringing food and ammunition. It seems that the typical British response to pockets of resistance was to uproot people and

contents and the fences on his farm Nooitgadacht were severely damaged and his stock taken by men under Colonel Williams. He claimed for 1023 sheep and goats, 78 cattle, 31 horses, 6 mules, 11 pigs and 50 fowls. The rest of the property consisted of a buckwagon, cape cart, 16 front harness, farm equipment, a harmonium and other furniture and stored products. All to the amount of £2 650. The administrator was not sympathetic and did not think his circumstances admitted of receiving compensation under the grant (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1318, Ref 513, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹³⁴ CHRISTIAAN STULTING submitted to the proclamation of Lord Roberts and never took part in the war. The British deemed it necessary to clean up the district and he was sent to Bermuda but died on the way at sea. His widow, Jonkje Stulting, claimed £211 for goods and stock requisitioned and damage done by His Majesty’s forces about the middle of May 1901 at Waterkloof by Colonel William’s columns. It consisted of furniture, vehicles, implements, tools and money. After the war, she was living in the care of Rev CH Stulting in Venterstad. Her son took the oath of neutrality but was for the most part of the war in Stellenbosch and never joined the Boer commando. He was 58 years old and the British appointed him Minister at the refugee camp in Bloemfontein. Her four daughters were teachers but were inadequate for her needs. She was compensated with £98 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 549, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

send them away with the British columns, either to nearby towns or out of the district. In this way, Mrs H Strauss¹³⁵ of Otterspoort was “sent in” by Major Murray of the Lovat’s Scouts.¹³⁶

Sporadic skirmishes continued to take place, particularly in Rowelsfontein, and Private Vennish of the Town Guard was killed in action on 16 November.¹³⁷ The Burghers drove off with about 250 head of cattle from the commonage. On 18 November, the British put sandbags in the NG church tower in Philippolis, as part of the town’s defense. At the same time, the British column returned from a looting trip on the nearby farms. On following days, the British forage party visited Vogelfontein, Tuinplaats and Waterkloof. Some of the advance scouts were fired on, and

¹³⁵ It is not clear who “Mrs H Strauss of Otterspoort” was.

¹³⁶ Capt and Brevet Lt-Col, the Hon ANDREW DAVID MURRAY (1863-1901), of Lovat's Scouts was killed in action at Quaggafontein in the engagement with Gen P H Kritzinger's commando on 20 September 1901. Shortly before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War, Murray was appointed to the command of Lovat's Scouts. During the Boer attack on their encampment at Quaggafontein, Murray rallied the survivors for a bayonet charge but was shot dead while doing so. He was buried at Elandskloof near Zastron, but his remains were subsequently taken to the UK and interred in Scone Palace, Perth, Scotland. His gravestone, however, is in Aliwal North, where all who fell in the action were later re-buried (Watt 2007).

¹³⁷ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

Private K Lockhardt of the Lovat Scouts¹³⁸ was killed in action on 23 November.¹³⁹

Various families were notified that they had to be relocated to Springfontein. They were allowed to store their goods in the Dopper Church. Old Mrs van der Heever, the Steytlers¹⁴⁰, Misses B Ortlepp and Hettie Villiers¹⁴¹ had to go. The convoy left on 27

¹³⁸ Private Kenneth Lockhart, 8758, Lovats Scouts (<http://www.britishmedals.us/files/iyl.htm>).

¹³⁹ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

¹⁴⁰ JOHN DANIEL HAUPT STEYTLER was a storekeeper in partnership with Mr Conelius, and resident of Philippolis since 1888. During the war the partnership was dissolved, and he managed the store for a salary and percentage of the profit. He was never on commando because his partner was in Europe and he was left alone to attend to the store. He claimed for the sheep of his son. They were being looked after by his brother-in-law, Mr Brink, at Kareefontein. At the end of November 1900, he was taken with his wife and two children by a military convoy to Springfontein and later to the Bloemfontein Refugee Camp. He had to leave all his property and belongings in Philippolis and was later informed that everything was destroyed. He lived at Stellenbosch after the war, and appointed John George Fraser, Attorney at law of Bloemfontein to be his lawyer for the claims of the destruction, removal or looting of his property in Philippolis. When the Boers came back the second time, he packed as much as he could of his things in cases and distributed it among the remaining people in Philippolis, to be looked after. These people were also taken away and everything was lost. He did not have his own house, but rented one from Mr Gertenbach. He forwarded lists of everything that was in his house, and Mr Macpherson said the claim should get consideration. He received £30 ((Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1318, Ref 499, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁴¹ This may have been MRS MARGARETHA ELIZABETHA DE VILLIERS (widow) of Colesberg, formerly from Waaihoek, Philippolis. She and her husband

November 1900: “I get passes for women and children to leave the town. They go on foot only, get some donkey carts and a small wagon from Hendrik Botha. It is indeed a sad sight to see these women folk and children go out like that – Still, they seem happy to leave”.

On the same day, Private C Dingwall of the Lovat Scouts¹⁴² was killed in action and buried at Osfontein.¹⁴³

Daily life continued under British occupation. Miss (Mathilda?) van Zyl brought some wheat to Gerrit Sem, and her mother, old Mrs van Zyl¹⁴⁴, brought some vegetables and eggs. “She

lived at Waaihoek prior to the war. They were both taken away to the refugee camp at Norvalspont where her husband died. She claimed £211 for furniture, 70 sheep, 3 cows and calves, a cart and horses. (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1321, Ref 608, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁴² Closely associated with the Imperial Yeomanry, Lovat's Scouts was the brainchild of Lord Lovat. After the disasters of 'Black Week' in December 1899, he had approached the British War Office with the idea of raising a group of men trained as scouts. Three contingents were raised. The first contingent was enlisted as a special service unit of the 2nd Bn, Royal Highlanders (the Black Watch), but was always known by the commanding officer's name. The second contingent was formed under the umbrella of the Imperial Yeomanry, comprising the 113th and 114th companies (Watt 2007).

¹⁴³ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

¹⁴⁴ They may have been family of ADRIAN ISAAC VAN ZYL, who was the owner of the unmortgaged farm Houthaalberg (5150 morgen). He was not on

outspans at my office and returns at 2 o'clock to Strydfontein". More tersely, Sem noted on 8 December, "The mill is working". But there was clearly a great deal of tension in the local community, in the face of British occupation. "Mrs Krause walked out in the direction of Lovers Walk, passing the picket lines, and her house was put under special guard. Dirk, who slept at the parsonage for Mrs Fraser's protection, spoke over the wall to a guard and was arrested. So I got Evert to sleep at the parsonage for the night". The next day, Sem got Evert off, as well

commando, but was employed by the Free State Government for commissariat work. When the British first came to the town they told him to hand over the books. He took the oath of neutrality and stayed on his farm. A Boer patrol of eleven men came to his farm in October 1900. They did not take anything but he was unable to report their presence because they threatened to shoot the messenger. He did not assist the Boers in any way. On 27 October 1900, the British removed him from his farm and sent him to Green Point from where he was sent afterwards to the camp at Bethulie. After being there for 10 months, he was allowed to go to Uitenhage and later on parole. He returned to his farm in November 1902. The dwelling house had 10 rooms. He claimed for 4164 longwool sheep, 56 cattle, 21 mules, 58 horses, a buckwagon, a springwagon, a4-seated cape cart, dog cart, 6 pairs harness, 2 saddles, farm equipment, 350 full bearing fruit trees, and 2800 yards fencing. Damage was done to the house on the farm and in town, the wagon house, stable for 12 horses, store room, furniture, and linen. The claim amounted to £7677. After the war he recovered 1200 sheep, 700 lambs, 38 cattle, 6 horses, 1 mule and bought 5 horses and 2 mules from the Government Relief Fund. The Administrator remarked that this claim was absolutely unwarranted because he knew personally in what the condition of the claimants buildings were after the war. In his opinion, the damage done was comparatively insignificant and the claim out of proportion. The claimant was very well off and the claim should be disallowed.

as “old Mr W Boshoff¹⁴⁵ and Louis Boshoff¹⁴⁶ who had also been taken under special guard”. Some confusion reigns: “Dr Clarke has something to say about Dr Stuart¹⁴⁷ that he should have attended meeting of farmers but this proves to be just a rumour”.

¹⁴⁵ Probably Willem Hendrik Boshoff, described earlier.

¹⁴⁶ LOUIS PETRUS BOSHOFF wastoo old to join the commando. He lived in Philippolis, and when the British troops came in, he gave up his rifles. A bywoner named Daniel Botha looked after his stock and property at his farm, Knapsakrivier. Isak van der Walt and Stoffel Bloem could confirm that the claim on Meyersfontein was correct. He claimed for the house, the buildings and the dam that were damaged and the fences which were utterly destroyed. Daniel Botha, the bywoner on Knapsakrivier farm, stated that all the buildings were in very good condition and that Boshoff’s claim was far under the mark. In September 1901 Daniel Botha was made prisoner, sent to India and all Boshoff’s stock were taken, the farm was then looked after by the local farm workers. The claim was for £1902. Mr Mac Pherson, the administrator, concluded that Boshoff was not entitled to compensation under article 10 of peace terms because he had two unmortgaged farms as well as property in town. He was considered a well-to-do man (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1311, Ref 266, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁴⁷ Dr THOMAS N. STUART was on commando with the ambulance service till May 1900 when he took the oath of neutrality and returned to his practice in Philippolis until the 3rd August 1901. He was then taken to the Springfontein refugee camp and employed as a medical officer in several refugee camps. He had two brothers, both on commando. He took the oath of neutrality and strictly adhered to it. When Philippolis was occupied by the British, his dispensary was broken into on 7 August 1901. His property was taken by the troops, as there were no Boers in town. Kitchen utensils, crockery and linen were taken away. Among the valuable furniture was an oak roll-top desk which he bought for £20. There were 54 medical text books to the value of £40. The stock of medicines on hand in the dispensary was valued at £170, and surgical appliances and dispensing bottles, £20. The halters were taken with the horses all the doors and windows of the buildings were damaged. He was awarded £200 for his losses. After the war, he became a medical practitioner in Worcester (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1318, Ref 505, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

British troop movements continued, and there must have been more skirmishes nearby, as Burgher WJG Muller was killed in action at Philippolis on 7 December 1900.¹⁴⁸

On 10 December 1900, another British convoy moved into town. It appears that many of the people remaining in town would be forced to depart with the next convoy. Several people were given notice that they have to leave with the convoy: Miss Krause, Miss Janasch, Maggie Sanders, Old Mr and Mrs Boshoff, Mr B van Rensburg and several others.¹⁴⁹ “It is heartrending to see these preparations and there is bitter wail over the Town, but the civil authorities (Gostling¹⁵⁰ and Tonkin¹⁵¹) have no mercy ... Through much persuasion, Miss CE Haupt¹⁵² and old Mrs

¹⁴⁸ According to Oosthuizen (1999:30), he is commemorated at the Burgher monument at Fauresmith.

¹⁴⁹ It is not clear from the diary how these individuals were chosen to leave Philippolis.

¹⁵⁰ The Resident Magistrate.

¹⁵¹ MR TONKIN was mentioned by Lord Roberts in dispatches, for the defence of Philippolis (<http://www.angloboerwar.com/other-information/16-other-information/1843-mentions-in-despatches-army>).

¹⁵² Miss HAUPT ran a private boarding house in Philippolis, before the war (Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241). She was also a teacher at the school. Miss Haupt continued to teach for 3 months at the Philippolis school, and in 1901, was taken to Springfontein Refugee Camp.

Vorster¹⁵³ are allowed to stay. The Gertenbachs, Mrs Liefmann¹⁵⁴ and Cornelius go at their own request”.¹⁵⁵

After 2 months in the camp, she left for Cape Town. Mr Gostling described her as a virulent Boer partisan, dismissed from her post as schoolmistress, and only escaped deportation on account of her frail mother. She claimed £166, because of damages to her furniture. The officials assessed the damage at £100. She claimed for 4 tables, 1 music stool, 1 music stand, 1 oval table, 2 flower vases, 1 ottoman, books and curtains, 1 large dining room table, 1 book case, 1 lamp, 1 paraffin stove, 1 primus stove, 1 dinner service, 2 double bedsteads, 4 wardrobes, 6 looking glasses, 6 chairs, 2 kitchen cupboards, and assorted household utensils. She was left almost destitute, and had to borrow money to make the long journey back to Philippolis to appear before the Compensation Board in person ((Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1311, Ref 265, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁵³ This could be MRS MARIA MAGDALENA VORSTER of Matjiesfontein, Philippolis. Her husband was on commando but surrendered when Bloemfontein was occupied and he took the oath of neutrality. He came back to their farm but rejoined in November 1900. He was captured at Luckhoff in June 1901 and was sent to Greenpoint camp but died on the way at De Aar. She stayed on the farm but the stock was taken away by the column of Colonel Williams. On the 26th July 1901 she saw the British coming but ran away. The cape cart was burnt and the furniture destroyed. She was removed to the Orange River Camp. At the time of the claim she lived with her father (Fourie) who had returned from India and who owned the farms Heilbron and Pampoenpoort. She claimed for 632 sheep and goats, 45 cattle, 15 horses, a cape cart, gear for 10 oxen, 9 bags of corn, 6 bags of mealies and furniture to the amount of £1199, of which she was granted £628 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1321, Ref 612, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁵⁴ MORITZ LIEFMAN was an agent in Philippolis with an office in Kok Street. Moritz was a devoted Freemason, and treasurer of the Philippolis Agricultural Society (Beth Hatefutsoth 2012: 383). He surrendered under the proclamation of Lord Roberts. He stated that he never carried a weapon of any sort. He never joined or assisted the Boers in any way when the British entered the town in October 1900. He left the town on 12 December 1900 on account of his bad health, with the permission of Mr Gostling, the magistrate of Philippolis, and the assistant Provost Marshall. On his departure, the Intelligence Officer, Mr Tonkin obtained his permission to stay in his house until he should return. When Mr Tonkin was ordered off elsewhere he was notified that his residence with all his belongings

On 12 December, Sem got up early to see the convoy leave: “It was indeed a most cruel sight that old women and children were forced to leave in such transport wagons, and that under the excuse that they were undesirable”. For once, Sem abandons his impartiality: “The real originators of this were of course those two gentlemen, Gostling and Tonkin”. At least “Mrs Krause was provided with tent wagon for self and family ... Dr Thomas [Stuart] promised to go and stay in Mrs Krause’s house¹⁵⁶. Dr

was handed over to Mrs Evershed and her family. Later on Mrs Evershed was compelled to leave Philippolis having been removed by the Military authorities to a Refugee Camp. Liefman went to Stellenbosch where he remained until peace was declared in 1902 and came back to Philippolis. He claimed for his property which was lost or destroyed. He had a building in Burgher Street and buildings on an erf in Kok Street. He resided in his house at 25 Church Street. He was in the process of selling some of his property to Mr Sloane and Mr Schalk Strauss and brothers of Strydfontein farm. The properties were not yet registered in their names for them to claim for the damage. He claimed £909 for damage to the buildings, a spider, furniture in his house and office, office equipment, household and personal items. He received £451 in compensation .

¹⁵⁵ They were destined for Springfontein concentration camp (called a “refugee camp” by the British). Some of the local people believed that they would be safer there than to remain in Philippolis.

¹⁵⁶ Dr OTTO KRAUSE was a medical practitioner in Philippolis before the war (Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241). Dr Krause was the first Free State student to take an M.D. degree at the Berlin University. He was registered as a medical practitioner in the Free State in 1877. During the Boer War, he had charge of a field ambulance at Colesberg, where he treated a hundred British wounded. General Clements wired him from Bloemfontein: “From all that I can gather, your treatment of British wounded was all that can be desired” (De Villiers 1944: 303). Emily Hobhouse described Mrs Krause as “a wealthy old lady and much respected, had been torn away from a comfortable and beautiful home to come and live in the camp” (Hobhouse 1902,

Clarke is ordered away too”. Curiously, Major Mackintosh went to Mrs Krause to express his sympathy. Amongst these miserable events, “Mrs Fraser is fairly well but very much broken hearted at all the happenings”.

The British forces were not always in agreement on what to do. On 18 December, Sem obtained a pass from Lieutenant St Clair, to meet Lieutenant Loring, who expressed his disapproval about women being sent to camp as long as there is a British occupation in town.

In the meantime, village life continued, with its own wartime difficulties. On 19 December, Dr Thomas Stuart had to go to Driefontein to attend Philip Snyman’s¹⁵⁷ sick children. A boy of

Van Heyningen 2010). The same Dr Krause and his wife were of great assistance to the guerrilla fighter Sarah Raal, when she was kept in Bloemfontein under armed guard (Raal 1938: 106).

¹⁵⁷ This was probably PHILIPPUS JACOBUS SNYMAN who lived on his grandfather’s farm Druiwefontein, Philippolis. (Was Druiwefontein the same as Driefontein?) The farm was 3000 morgen, of which he would inherit 1500 morgen after his grandfather’s death. He surrendered under the Proclamation of Lord Roberts and did not join again. He was on his way to the town to see a doctor when he was taken prisoner, and for his protection, he was sent to Green Point camp. After 8 months, he was sent to the camp at Bethulie. He received 2 cows and 50 sheep from the Repatriation Board. He claimed £1069 for 38 cattle, 7 horses, 366 sheep, 113 goats, poultry, a wagon with gear, a cape cart, furniture, clothing, 185 pounds of hard soap and received £535 compensation (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 573, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

Paardefontein had a very serious accident picking up a bomb, which exploded and smashed his leg – “not expected to live”.

Rumours of nearby clashes circulated. On 18 December, a boy from Driefontein rode into town with a note signed by C de Wet¹⁵⁸, “telling or rather demanding the surrender of the town within 24 hours”. The British reply was: “No surrender – come and take us”. By 20 December, “there are all sorts of rumours about farmers coming closer by”. Despite these rumours, Major Mackintosh called a public meeting on 21 December and announced that he had received orders to evacuate the town, and that it would probably be unoccupied for a considerable time. He was frustrated and could not understand the meaning of these orders, especially in the light of the rumours of nearby Boer commandos.

On 21 December, some of the townsfolk decided to go with the Convoy. Major Mackintosh took out the principal working parts

¹⁵⁸ Presumably General Christiaan de Wet. De Wet began the war as an ordinary burgher. His talents as a military leader were soon evident, and he was first elected vice-commandant under Commandant Steenkamp, on 11 October 1899, rising to the rank of Vechtgeneraal, on 9 December 1899, after his involvement in the Ladysmith clashes (De Wet 1903: 13, 35).

of the mill.¹⁵⁹ The Munro's¹⁶⁰ departed (from 7 Colin Fraser Street), and asked Gerrit Sem to look after some of the private papers in Dr Eagle's¹⁶¹ house (5 Colin Fraser Street). Dr Eagle's house would be looked after by Mr P van Rensburg.

¹⁵⁹ This would prevent the farmers from milling their grain and therefore assisting the Boer commandos.

¹⁶⁰ ROSA MUNRO was the daughter of the late Dr J.N. Eagle and inherited his house in Philippolis at 5 Colin Fraser Street, when the war broke out. It was the only house in the town with a surgery and a well. She left the town on the 22nd of December 1900 and went to the camp at Springfontein. Mr G.J.C. Sem wrote that he knew her house very well, she had 2 pianos and a large collection of books. Her children had cattle. On several occasions he saw British Troops in the house, destroying and looting things. Dr Thomas N. Stuart wrote that her house was very well furnished and the last time he saw it at the end of July 1901, it was stripped of almost everything, what was left, was smashed and broken. Mr W. Gostling stated that he knew Mrs Munro since the 1st of May 1900 when he went to Philippolis as Resident Magistrate. She was most useful in caring for the sick and wounded. He was convinced that her house was totally wrecked by British Troops. Lieut. G. Bingham stated that he went to the town on the 24th December 1901. The town was occupied by Colonel Hamilton's column since 8 December and by Major Driscoll's column since 22 December. He went to the Mrs Munro's house which was intact the day before and found it in flames. There were British Colonial Troops in the immediate neighbourhood. The house was probably burned by Driscoll's Scouts. Rosa claimed £424 for 5 cows, 3 calves, 3 horses, 2 mares with foals, 1 set of harness, furniture including 2 pianos and a case of bazaar work for the Church of England. She was compensated with £245 and the animals to be returned in kind (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 180, Ref 767, Archives, Pretoria, 1903). At the Springfontein Camp, Mrs Rosa Munro became President of the Loyal Women's Guild (File volume 70, no. 01, Ref 1480/02, part 1, 1902, Free State Archives).

¹⁶¹ DR JOHN NUNN EAGLE was the first qualified practitioner registered in the Free State. He was born at Coggeshall, Essex, on 13 September 1822, and died in Philippolis on 26 March 1900. He completed his medical studies in England and emigrated to South Africa in 1849. During the first weeks after their arrival, he and his family lived in a wooden hut on the beach front and his wife gave birth to their

Matters in Philippolis deteriorated. On 22 December, most of the provisions the military had stored in town, were destroyed by fire, presumably to prevent them falling into the hands of the Commandos. Some provisions were left under Sem’s care for the people remaining in town. “No sooner had the Army left or people rush up from all directions to save from the flames

third child. He trekked across the Drakensberg mountains and settled in Colesberg as district surgeon. Following a dispute with the Cape medical committee who refused to acknowledge his medical qualifications, he moved to the Free State as medical officer at Fauresmith in 1854. On 29 March 1863, he became the first medical practitioner in the OFS <http://boards.ancestry.com/localities.africa.southafrica.general/96.98/mb.ashx>. In 1862 he took up residence in Philippolis where he remained the doctor for the rest of his life. He did sterling service during the Basutho Wars of 1865-1867 (De Villiers 1944: 204). He lived at what is now No. 5 Colin Fraser Street. His compensation claim was submitted by Rosa Munro and Moritz Liefman. Eagle’s furniture included 2 chandeliers, carpets, lamps, a piano, a harmonium, 2 writing desks, 600 library books, 300 medical- and law books, dictionaries, and encyclopaedias. In the wagonhouse was a scotch cart, 3 sets of harness and garden equipment. Kitchen utensils, linen, crockery and silverware were also included in the claim. An amount was claimed for his printing room, dispensary with medicines, and medical instruments. In the schoolroom were 3 school benches and shelves containing printing paper. In the storeroom were 2 sewing machines, a kilting machine, mincing and stuffing machine, medicine chest, a ladies saddle, groceries and soap, 2 cases with books and tools. In his printing room were one large and one small printing press, a cutting machine, a lead and wood cutter, 8 chests of type, a large assortment of cards and paper for printing, a stapling machine and a chest of chemicals. The claim was the joint property of Rosa and her sister Miss Eagle. The house standing on 3 erven was valued at £2500, which brought the claim to £4170. Mr Gerrit Sem stated that he knew the house very well. It was extraordinarily well furnished as Dr Eagle was always improving his property and had everything of the very best. Mr Gostling was convinced that the damage was done by the British Troops. The Boers left Dr Eagle’s alone out of the respect they had for him (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 185, Ref 910, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

whatever is possible ... Herman and I try to save as much of the potted meats as can be, as we do not know when there will be a chance of getting provisions again”. Gloomily, Sem notes, it is “Naturally a very quiet Xmas Eve”.

In the next few days, people came into town from the farms, with news that Commandant P Bothma was now in command of the district Jacobsdal, Fauresmith and Philippolis. On Christmas Day, “a certain Plessis” arrived with 15 men. Plessis rather spuriously called himself Captain, and started confiscating and looting shops. Fortunately, Commdt Bothma himself came to town on 26 December, and restored some order. He instructed Plessis to leave the district.

On 27 December 1900, a commando of about 40 Burghers entered the town and reported that Fauresmith and Jagersfontein were also evacuated by the British. The townsfolk, encouraged by the Burghers, started raiding the goods in Maltman’s shop¹⁶².

¹⁶² WILLIAM MALTMAN was a general merchant in Philippolis before the war ((Donaldson and Hill’s *Orange Free State Directory, 1899-1900*, Cape Town, 241). Maltman was a Free State Burgher since 1895. He was a storekeeper in Philippolis. According to Gostling, he was a thoroughly loyal Britisher, giving valuable information to the British troops. Maltman left for Scotland in September 1900, leaving his shop in the care of a surrendered Burgher (Heinrich Lategan). After his departure, the Boers commandeered many goods from his shop. He had a stock of £4500 at the time, consisting of drapery, clothing, and ironmongery.

For several days, townspeople and farmers helped themselves to goods, and Sem found it “very difficult to make people understand that they will have to pay for what they take”. People were confused about allegiances. Old Mr Hartman¹⁶³ stated that “he kept his oath of neutrality, but that he found it most difficult

The Boers first took goods to the value of £1 000, and subsequently, the Boers and British looted his shop. His shop was severely damaged, and a great deal of household effects were lost. When he returned from Scotland, he was unable to resume his shop in Philippolis, and worked as a clerk for Wright and Schroder in Springfontein. £1850 was allocated to him (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 181, Ref 823, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁶³ ANDRIES HARTMAN of Hartebeestfontein surrendered on March 23rd and took the oath of neutrality. He was 78 years of age. His eldest son, Daniel Godfrey was on commando but not the other two sons, Johan George and Stephanus. They all surrendered with him to General Clements and went with him to the refugee camp. They had to leave all their possessions on the farm. While still on the farm, they often sold stock and forage to the passing commando's and British troops. They submitted the receipts to the claims board. A letter by W.Gostling to the Claims Board stated: “The claimant is one of the very few honourable Boers in Philippolis district. He is well known to me and was on my strong recommendation appointed Justice of the Peace by the late governor of the Colony. He was always opposed to the anti-English policy of the late OFS government and refused to support it in any way. Mr Hartman's sons are as loyal as their father and would have nothing to do with the Boers directly or indirectly. I support Mr Hartman's claim most heartedly.” Andries Hartman, being an old colonial, was against the war. Johan George state that rather than going on commando, his father paid forfeit in horses, wagons and household stores. After the war, the eldest son lived in his own house on the farm while the other two lived with their father. His sons put in different claims. Andries Hartman and son's claim amounted to £9159. It is not stated with how much they were compensated. J. Bulterman of Philippolis stated that he knew Andries Hartman since 1818 and had always done business with him. He had a good class of stock. He thought Hartman would have been worth £8000 before the war (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 190, Ref 1042, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

to satisfy the farmers and only hoped that an end will soon come to all this”.

New Year passed quietly, with a few farmers visiting the town to secure provisions . On 12 January 1901, some Burghers came into town, led by PD Jacobs, GAB Pyper and Leonard Bohmer. They searched Piet Rensburg’s house, and took goods from Maltmans and Sem and Bulterman’s shop¹⁶⁴, and took goods for about £40. “So it is far from a pleasant day”, and Miss Young is particularly aggrieved about “the way things go in Mr Maltman’s shop”. Gradually things settle down, and some days are quiet, with no Burghers coming in. Village life returned to a semblance of normality, and Sem and Mrs Read played billiards. On 1

¹⁶⁴ JOHANNES BULTERMAN was a partner of the firm of Sem and Bulterman. He was a burgher of the O.F.S. but was never on commando. On the 3rd of August 1901, a British column under Colonel Pilcher passed through Philippolis. Bulterman was ordered to leave his house unoccupied and unprotected and he was taken to the camp at Springfontein. Most of the furniture and effects had been destroyed. He also had furniture in the homestead on the farm Doorndam. On his return after the war, everything in the house was missing or destroyed, probably by men of Colonel Byng’s column who sometimes camped on the farm. He had sheep leased on contracts to different farmers in the district of Philippolis and Fauresmith, and this livestock was taken by British columns. He had sheep on the half of the increase on Mr Hartman’s farm, Hartbeesfontein which were taken by Colonel Wyndham’s column on the 1st of June. He presented lists of everything he lost. He claimed 11246 for all his losses, including damage to his house and was compensated with £1000 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1308, Ref 157, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

February, Charlie Maltman’s birthday was celebrated by a moonlight picnic.

The control of the town by the Boers was erratic. Curiously, Mr PD Jacobs wanted to “send off” Mrs Evershed and Mrs Sutherland.¹⁶⁵ Sem managed to persuade him “to leave these women alone”. On 21 January 1901, Mr AP Schoeman came to town with an order from Commandant Bothma to get supplies. A day later, Japie Weideman¹⁶⁶ came into town with two white prisoners (one is called Berry). “The instructions are that these men and the two native prisoners must be taken to Luckhoff”.

A few days later, Commdt Bothma, accompanied by Jacobs and Pyper, came to town. Two days later, the two Mosterts arrived

¹⁶⁵ It is not clear where they would go. Perhaps the Boer loyalists wanted to expel people from the town if they had clear pro-British sympathies.

¹⁶⁶ This may have been JACOB ANDRIES CORNELIS WEIDEMAN, who rented the farm, Modderfontein, Philippolis. He went on commando, surrendered and remained at Modderfontein until October 1900 when he ‘was forced’ to join again. He stayed with the commando for 7 months when he was captured and sent to Bermuda. When his wife was removed in July 1901 to the Orange River refugee camp, the house was damaged and the furniture burnt. Among the furniture was a small American organ. He did not have any receipts and did not recover any of his property. At the time of the claim he had 100 goats and was a bywoner on the farm. He claimed £738 for 750 sheep, 11 cattle, 4 horses, a cape cart and furniture. The payment of £374 was authorized (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1322, Ref 658, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

again, but departed on the same day. On 28 January, Philip Snyman¹⁶⁷ arrived with a letter from Commdt Bothma, instructing

¹⁶⁷ There were several men called Philippus Snyman living in the Philippolis district. These included Philippus Jacobus Snyman and Philippus Jacobus Snyman (presumably father and son) of Linxfontein, and Philippus Jacobus Snyman of the farm Druiwefontein. A Philippus Jacobus Snyman lived on the farm De Poort. PHILIPPUS JACOBUS SNYMAN farmed on Linxfontein (sometimes called Lynxfontein), which belonged to his two sisters, with his brother. They would inherit the farm after his sisters' death. His mother who had married again receives the rental. He went on commando early in the war, surrendered and rejoined in October 1900. He was captured and sent to Bermuda. There were only natives on the farm during his absence when the stock was taken. He buried gold coins and a 10 pound note under the floor of the house. His brother's wife lived in the house and when he returned he found a hole in the floor and the money taken. He also claimed on behalf of his sisters who he described as of "unsound mind". Their stock was always under his care since his father died. The total of the claim was £1264 and he received £548 Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 565, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

PHILIPPUS JACOBUS SNYMAN of Lynxfontein was not on commando at the beginning of the war, but joined in October 1900. The stock was left in charge of his mother and she saw it all taken by the British Columns. He received 25 sheep from the Repatriation board and he borrowed money to buy a cow and one horse. He got a receipt for one riding horse and was given £5 for it. Columns in pursuit of General de Wet took 13 horses in 1901. Columns under Colonel Byng took 150 sheep and goats and 25 cattle in June 1901. He was sent as prisoner of war to India. He claimed £492 and was compensated with £260. (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 556, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

PHILIPPUS JACOBUS SNYMAN, tenant of the farm De Poort was too sick to go on commando and laid down his arms in March 1900. On 19 December 1900 he was taken by a British column to Bloemfontein and afterwards to Norvalspont where he remained till the end of the war. The farm did not have a house and he built it by himself thirteen years before the war. He made his own bricks. He also built a chaff house with rough stones and thatched roof. He had £174 in receipts. The Administrator was sympathetic with his circumstances and from his claim for loss of stock and damage done to buildings and fences he got £406 of the £668 that he claimed (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 573, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

some people to return the things taken from the shops. People who were sent from Philippolis bearing letters for the outside world, soon returned with the news that Burghers would not allow further letters to be sent out.

A trickle of farmers visited the town every day. On 28 January, Mr SS van der Walt¹⁶⁸ and family came in to town and moved on to Randjiesdam.

Mr P du Plessis arrived to have a coffin made for his child.

The community was bolstered on 25 January 1901, when Rev Fraser¹⁶⁹ returned to Philippolis. General Hunter had removed the

¹⁶⁸ SALMON STEPHANUS VAN DER WALT lived on his farm Spioenkop, Philippolis. Two of his married sons joined the Boer forces, but he himself never took up arms against the Imperial Government and remained neutral all through the war. On the occupation of the British Troops of Philippolis he handed in all his weapons to Mr Gostling. He went with his sheep and cattle to the farm Rantjesdam where he remained for five months. From there he was removed to Bloemfontein and afterwards to the camp at Springfontein. His property was taken and destroyed at different times by British columns passing his farm. He had 1394 sheep and goats, 86 horses and mules, 75 head of cattle, cape cart, scotch cart, wagon with gear, 30 pigs, 84 fowls and geese, 1100 bundles of wheat, 600 bundles of oats, 17 bags of wheat, 5 bags potatoes, 70 bars of soap, 3 sets of harness, 3 saddles, farming equipment, furniture, kitchen utensils. Damage was also done to his property in Philippolis. He claimed £3352 in compensation, and was allocated £1556. As with all compensation claims, it is not clear whether the money ever reached him ((Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1322, Ref 642, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

order detaining them as “undesirables”. On 29 January, Mr A Lubbe¹⁷⁰ visited town to see Rev Fraser, and L Bohnen arrived to

¹⁶⁹ REVEREND COLIN FRASER of the Dutch Reformed Church in Philippolis was paid according to his receipts, for 13 bales of chaff, 75 sheep, a cart with harness, 2 mules with halters and 1 saddle. Everything in the parsonage was destroyed when the house was burned. The furniture he had was imported from England and Scotland. The spider had been manufactured in Scotland and had cost him £125 landed in Philippolis. On the 25th October 1900, 2 superior cart horses and 1 saddle were taken from his stables by British troops. On the 24th November Major Macintosh requisitioned 13 bales of chaff. On the 10th May 1901 2 mules with halters and a saddle were taken. On the 12th May, a cart with harness was taken. On the 25th July 1901, 75 sheep and 5 cows with calves, 19 horses and 1 mule were taken. His spider with harness and buggy with harness were lost. The furniture in the parsonage which was insured against fire for £800, was burnt. He returned to the parsonage on 1st April 1903. Mac Pherson recommended him for compensation. Of his claim for £1307, he received £630 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1309, Ref 198, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁷⁰ ANDRIES PETRUS LUBBE of Boesmansfontein (6400 morgen), was taken from his farm in August 1901 to the camp at Springfontein and from there to Uitenhage, where he remained until September 1902. He was 70 years old. He tried to persuade his son not to join again after he took the oath of neutrality but his son did not agree and took his wife and family to Fauresmith. His son was killed in action. James Sharp of Bloemfontein declared under oath on the 20th April 1905: “At the request of Mr AP Lubbe of Boesmansfontein, Philippolis, that while I was Postmaster and telegraphist at Philippolis, he, the said A.P. Lubbe, as soon as the news was received on the 28th February or the 1st March 1900, that ex-General Cronje has surrendered with between 4000 and 5000 men to Lord Roberts, wired to President Steyn to the effect that as the case of the burghers was hopeless, the President should make the best terms possible with Lord Roberts. On receipt of the reply expressing surprise and said that the burghers were more determined to prosecute the war, Mr Lubbe did not conceal his disappointment in failing to bring about what he thought best for the country, namely the immediate termination of the war.” James Peter Beck, law agent and deputy sheriff of Philippolis, was Assistant Superintendent at the refugee camp at Springfontein. He knew Mr Lubbe personally and said under oath that Mr Lubbe never broke his oath of neutrality and had endeavoured to pacify the district as much as was in his power. P.W.G. Snyman, who was Justice of the Peace in Philippolis, gave a similar evidence. Lubbe also owned two farms in the Luckhoff district, and two houses in the town.

have his child christened by Rev Fraser. Church attendance on Sundays improved.

Bohnen appears to be a supporter of the Burghers. On 6 February, he returned to town to search the houses of GG Gertenbach and M Liefman. Towards evening, Zac Botha brought in two English prisoners – MacLuckland and Alvaiz, both belonging to Nesbitt’s Horse. They were lodged in the jail, awaiting further orders, and promptly escaped two days later by unscrewing one of the bars of the cell window.

On 7 February, Gordon Fraser¹⁷¹ entered the village with A Gerber. Genl de Wet had set up a laager at Boesmansfontein, and rumours circulated that Pres Steyn was also there. Fraser and Gerber had notes from Genl de Wet that all shops must be closed, and may not re-open without special orders. A certain Lieutenant

The columns of Captain Gilbert under Colonel Du Moulin, Colonel Byng and Colonel Hamilton took his livestock and damaged his farm. His claim was for 2700 sheep and goats, 55 head of cattle, 49 horses, 120 fowls and ducks, a spider, a scotch cart, 6 bales of wool, 29 bags of wheat, 1 bag of mealies, damage to the fences, houses, wagon-house, storeroom, furniture which includes the piano, and farm equipment. The claim of £6112 was set aside because he was considered a large landowner, owning about 17400 unmortgaged morgen. His financial position was good and he was better of than most men in this part of the colony (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1323, Ref 676, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁷¹ The son of Rev Colin Fraser, and the brother of Tibbie Steyn and Emmeline Fraser.

Cloete took off with “S&B’s brown bles mare” without giving a receipt.

Some skirmishes must have taken place on 10 February, since ambulance carts brought several casualties into town. A large number of Burghers rode into town, raiding orchards, and taking several hundred pounds of goods from the shops. Commandant Steenkamp commandeered a light wagon from Sem and Bulterman, and then most of the Burghers left town.

But on 11 February, the English returned to Philippolis. A strong column of Colonel Pilcher¹⁷² arrived, with Aleck Hockly as one of their guides. They were followed by Generals Knox, Maxwell¹⁷³ and Karoo/Carew¹⁷⁴ [Pole-Carew]: “Their train pass

¹⁷² According to Doyle (1999:539), the small but mobile British columns of Pilcher, Barker and Herbert were operating under the supreme direction of Charles Knox. These units were responsible to head off De Wet from his invasion into the Cape Colony. Col. Pilcher, a Bedford officer, led the 6th Mounted Infantry in the southern Free State (<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~engbdf/Military/BedsRegtinBoerWar.html>). Pilcher was mentioned in dispatches: “Lieutenant Colonel T D Pilcher, Bedford Regiment, has, whilst in command of the 3rd Mounted Infantry, shown remarkable merit as a leader. Although a young officer, he is full of resource, capable of devising an excellent scheme, and resolute enough to put it into execution” (<http://www.angloboerwar.com/other-information/16-other-information/1843-mentions-in-despatches-army>).

¹⁷³ The Hon Major HENRY EDWARD MAXWELL, born 27 November 1857. He served in the South African War, 1899-1902, in command 2nd Battalion Royal

the village the whole night”. The English want information about the road to Zanddrift.¹⁷⁵ “Pilcher’s column bring in all Piet van Rensburg’s stock. Great excitement prevails”.

The next morning, the men of General Bruce Hamilton arrive, with Parr as one of their guides. “A good many things are taken without receipts from people in town”. Towards evening, a pigeon is caught at Mrs A Botha Jr and Mrs G van Rensburg, with a small note fixed to its leg, “in which is stated that all Burghers must come to Norvals Pont”.

Highlanders (from 11 December 1899 to 25 January 1900). Afterwards, he was in command of the Harrismith-Bethlehem Line. He participated in the advance on Kimberley, and saw action at Magersfontein. He was involved in operations in the Orange Free State (February- May 1900, including operations at Paardeberg (slightly wounded); and saw action at Vet River. He participated in operations in the Orange River Colony, including Rhenoster River, Wittebergen, and Witpoort. He was also involved in operations in the Cape Colony, south of the Orange River, 1899. He participated in the anti-guerilla operations in the Orange River Colony, between November 1900 and May 1902. He was mentioned in Dispatches, received the Queen's Medal with four clasps, the King's Medal with two clasps, and was created a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (http://www.angloboerwar.com/index.php?option=com_grid&gid=22_uw_0&p=10)

¹⁷⁴ This may have been Brig-Genl R POLE-CAREW. He was a member of the Coldstream Guards, serving in the Second Afghan War 1878-1880, with Lord Roberts. He was at Modder River, Magersfontein and Paardeberg, the capture of Bloemfontein, Diamond Hill, and Dalmanutha (Hall 1999:102).

¹⁷⁵ This was in pursuit of De Wet, who crossed the Orange River at Zanddrift, invading the Cape Colony.

Thereafter, things settle down for a few days, until A Gerber, P Victor and Adrian Fowler¹⁷⁶ arrive, who report that Genl de Wet and all his men had crossed the Orange River into the Cape Colony, with the English in hot pursuit.

On 18 February, 25 Burghers belonging to a certain Commandant Steyn's commando entered town, and took goods from Maltman's and Sem and Bulterman's stores.

A fragile peace returned to Philippolis. On 21 February 1901, P Rensburg and P Snyman¹⁷⁷ got certificates proving their loyalty to

¹⁷⁶ ADRIAN HENDRIKUS FOWLER of Zuid Windhoek, (Schuilhoek) Philippolis, claimed for property taken, damaged and destroyed by the Imperial Troops operating in the Orange River Colony since the occupation. He owned the farm Windhoek which was 1350 morgen but he had a bond of £700 on the farm. He claimed for poultry, grain, chaff, a wagon, farming implements, furniture, fences and damage to buildings to the amount of £745. Mac Pherson, the chairman of the Board, concluded: “This claimant broke his oath of neutrality but has been paid £455 on receipts. He is a landowner of a farm worth £1300 to £1500 and though mortgaged to the extent of £700, he is not in such circumstances as in our opinion, entitle him to compensation under article 10 of peace claims. He also owns property in the village of Waterkloof. He is a man to be distrusted and his evidence was given very unsatisfactorily” (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1310, Ref 215, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁷⁷ This could have been Philippus Snyman (several people with this name, see footnote above), or PIETER JACOBUS SNYMAN, who was one of the three brothers who jointly owned the farm Faraosfontein. He was sent to the POW camp in India on the 17th March 1901. He had a bond of £370 on his part of the farm.

the British. Mr RD Jacobs gave Mrs ER van Rensburg a note to get goods for £2. “I told her that I could not supply her – to my regret. On 23 February, Andries Strauss goes out of town with his children, to Doornadam. On 25 February, “Koos Botha comes in Town. He causes a lot of trouble but clears out in the afternoon”.

A few days later, on 28 February, Captain Pretorius who had proclaimed Philippolis for the Orange River Colony, came in with only four men. “He looked in a very forlorn state, and said that he had been obliged to swim the river and leave all his clothes etc

General Clements took barley, oats and 36 fowls from his farm. Lieutenant Taylor took 600 sheep and goats, 12 horses, 19 head of cattle, a harness, saddle and bridle, 4 halters, a scotch cart and farm implements. His furniture was destroyed and the dam damaged. Mr Gerrit Sem gave evidence that the brothers had to support their father and were in poor circumstances after their war losses. He felt that they deserve some consideration. From the claim of £1079, Pieter was awarded £500 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 557, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

It could also have been PIET SNYMAN, who was manager on the farm Lynxfontein, which belonged to his mother and after her death would devolve to his two sisters. His stock was taken by British columns under Colonel Williams. His only possession after the war was 55 sheep and goats of which 25 were given to him by the Repatriation commission. He bought 2 horses and 1 heifer on credit. The four horses he mentioned in his claim belonged to Mr Becker and he had the half share of the increase. Mr Becker held him responsible for them. At the time of the claim he was an invalid. He was a prisoner of war at Bermuda. He claimed for 200 sheep van goats, 21 horses, 14 cattle, wagon with gear, cart with harness, 8 bags of wheat, furniture destroyed, damage to the house and fences. Of his claim for £740 he was awarded £396 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1320, Ref 555, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

on [the other side]. He wanted to see Commdt Bothma”.

On the next day (1 March 1901), Burghers came in from all directions. They told the locals that all the Burghers who had gone through to the Cape Colony were back in the Free State. Sem provides a fascinating list of Philippolis townsfolk and farmers who had been part of the invasion of the Cape Colony. These included Hans Boshoff, R Erskine, Hans van der Merwe, D van der Merwe, W Boshoff¹⁷⁸, Hendrik Lubbe, A Strauss¹⁷⁹,

¹⁷⁸ This could well be WYNAND FREDERIK BOSHOFF who owned the farm Meyersfontein (1000 morgen). He wrote in his claim: “I did not really carry arms during the second invasion but was employed to look after the sheep for the Boers until I was captured and sent away as a prisoner of war to Bermuda.” He was in the neighbourhood, watching the British when they took away his cattle, and sheep, angora goats, horses and cart with harness. They broke the front door and smashed all the windows. His furniture, kitchen utensils and crockery was destroyed. (Adam Barnard, of the farm Lemoenboord, an acquaintance of the claimant, supported the claim). He claimed £805. His claim was disallowed because he was the owner of a large, unmortgaged farm, gathered some stock without assistance, and resumed farming after the war (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1306, Ref 79, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁷⁹ This may have been ABRAHAM MARTHINUS STRAUSS, who went on commando at the beginning of the war. He surrendered in March 1900 but rejoined in October 1900. In September 1901 he was taken prisoner and sent to India. He was not a landowner but when he returned in 1902 he claimed for furniture which was totally destroyed on the farm, Waterkloof and some farm animals that were given to him. He also claimed for a 4seated, tented Cape cart which he bought 3 years before the war for £70 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1319, Ref 521, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

Andries and Koos Enslin, A Gertenbach, W Viljoen¹⁸⁰, Commdt Hertzog, Fourie, Steenkamp, Brand, De Vos, and some of General de Wet’s men. “Most of the burghers look worn out and shabbily clothed. There are a good many who, though embittered against the English, feel that it is useless to continue the struggle and would rather it was all over. Most of them leave in the evening”.. A few more trickle in the next day: A Botha jnr, Piet Erskine¹⁸¹, G van Vuuren¹⁸², B Gerber¹⁸³, C and H van der Linde¹⁸⁴. Clearly,

¹⁸⁰ This could have been WYNAND FREDERICK VILJOEN, a bywoner who was sent to India as prisoner of war. During October 1900, Colonels White and Barker took 40 goats,,3 wagons, a cape cart with harness and 2 saddles. His house in Philippolis was damaged by them. During May and July 1901, Colonel Williams’s column took 80 sheep and goats, 17 head of cattle, 26 horses, 4 mules, 8 donkeys, and harnesses. They also took the furniture and wool. He claimed £849 and was compensated with £490 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1321, Ref 596, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁸¹ PIETER DANIEL ERSKINE did not have property of his own. He rented a house in Philippolis and did mason work. After the war he worked in the Blacksmith’s shop. He was on commando until peace was restored. Two of his horses were taken by Colonels Barker and White’s columns. The rest of his property was taken or destroyed by Colonel Williams’s column. It consisted of 4 horses, 18 fowls, 2 bags of corn, 1 bag of barley, 4 bales of chaff, a new harness, saddle and bridle, mason tools, scaffolding, beams, furniture, a washing machine, sewing machine and a perambulator, to the value of £199. He brought back 2 cows from commando and 2 horses which he sold. The commissioner, Mac Pherson, described him as a hard working man who settled down to earn his living after peace was restored. He received compensation to the amount of £85.

¹⁸² This could have been GERT JOHANNES JANSEN VAN VUUREN of Rowelsfontein, Philippolis. He stated that two of his trained horses were running on the farm Kaliesfontein but he did not know who took them. The sheep and goats were under the care of Mr Bezuidenhout at Luiperdsfontein from where they were taken. He surrendered but joined the Boer forces again. He was then

the invasion of the Cape Colony had been a disaster.

Reports circulated that a British column was approaching from Springfontein, and the Burghers were instructed to gather at General De Wet's Lager near Grootfontein. The next day, on 3 March 1901, some Scouts of Generals Paget and Plumer¹⁸⁵ came into town:

captured and was taken Prisoner of War to Umballa camp in India. After the war, he claimed £261 for 6 horses, 160 sheep and goats, cobbler's and lastmaker's tools, furniture, clothing and two saddles (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1322, Ref 636, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁸³ BAREND JOHANNES HENDRIKUS GERBER, a brickmaker who lived in Rowelsfontein, Philippolis, broke the oath and rejoined the commando. After the war, he claimed £150 for 7 horses, 8 donkeys, one and a half bags of wheat and furniture. The horses were running on Hendrik Botha's farm, Rantjesdam and he did not know when they were taken. All the furniture was lost except a sewing machine which his wife took with her to the refugee camp at Springfontein. After the war he repaired fences for the farmers and bought 50 goats (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1310, Ref 223, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁸⁴ HERMANUS VAN DER LINDE, of Waterkloof, Philippolis, was on commando during the whole war. He claimed for furniture, carpenter's tools and buildings which were destroyed. His claim was denied (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1313, Ref 332, Archives, Pretoria, 1903). JOHANNES H. VAN DER LINDE took the oath of neutrality but rejoined. He was a painter by trade and lived at Springfontein after the war. His claim was for 30 goats, 4 horses, painter's tools and furniture, among which was an American organ. All his furniture was lost during the war (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1313, Ref 332, Archives, Pretoria, 1903; and vol 1313, Ref. 333).

¹⁸⁵ PLUMER was described by Arthur Conan Doyle as indefatigable, wiry, and tenacious. After De Wet had returned to the Free State, Plumer set off by train to Springfontein, and thereafter pursued De Wet in the direction of Fauresmith and Petrusburg. They lost the track of the wily Boer general near the Modder River, abandoned the chase, and returned to Bloemfontein (Doyle 1999: 588).

“A certain Carlyle of the Intelligence Department spoke to me and shortly afterwards practically all men were ordered to come to the camp near Springfontein’s gate. After waiting there till about 11 o’clock, when we came about 5 minutes out of town, there was some shooting which however did not last long. It seemed there were no casualties ... About 11 o’clock we spoke to a Mr McKenzie of the Intelligence Department and he saw Captain William and thereafter we were allowed to go home. Mr Piet Rensburg was taken up to camp with cart and horses”.

On 4 March, General-Brigadier Haig¹⁸⁶ came into town, and settled into quarters in Mrs Louw’s house. He was followed by Col Byng’s column. Col Byng’s camp was set up above Koopmansfontein. The troops then moved on in the direction of Vlakfontein, P Roux’s farm. “Some firing was heard about 8 o’clock”. In this engagement, 2nd Lt EH Barker, of the SA Light Horse, was killed in action at Kaliesfontein near Philippolis.

Boer commandos remained active in the district. On the afternoon of 7 March, R Erskine, A Botha Jr and Solomon Oranje came into town, demanding a gun from Sem – a gun that Sem had

¹⁸⁶ After De Wet’s return to the Free State, the British forces, led by (Bruce) Hamilton, Hickman, Thorneycroft, and Haig swept through the southern Free State. Pilcher, Bethune and Byng captured 200 prisoners and a large number of cattle (Doyle 1999:589).

confiscated the previous day from “Botha’s boy Mathews”. Thereafter they all left again.

On 8 March, Sem heard that Jan and Adriaan Fowler had to appear before a Burgher Krygsraad, and would be shot if they did not join the commandos. Adriaan Fowler was let off, but Jan had to go. More Burghers came in the next day, asking A. Gerber what became of the boy Mathews. Apparently, Gerber replied, “He shot him at once”.¹⁸⁷

On 11 March, it was reported that 50 English had been surrounded near Diepfontein, and a wagon and ammunition had been taken. Around this time, Corporal GB McCulloch of the SA Light Horse was killed in action, and buried on the Grootfontein farm, 20 km west of Philippolis.¹⁸⁸ A good number of Burghers entered the town on the 14th and 16th of March. Another search party came into town on 18 March, with Commdt Lategan of Colesberg, Manus van der Linde, Heckroodt¹⁸⁹ and other men.

¹⁸⁷ A curiously extreme statement.

¹⁸⁸ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

¹⁸⁹ WILLEM HENRY LATEGAN HECKROODT was a carpenter before he went on commando. When he came back after surrendering, his workshop next to his house and tools were intact. He joined the commando again on 22nd October 1900. While he was away, the house was destroyed by the Scotch Regiment which also

They went into Liefmann’s, searching for goods, as well as Gertenbach’s house, Beddy’s house (no. 7 Colin Fraser Street), and entered Dr Eagle’s dispensary and the Hotel. More Burghers entered Philippolis on 19 March to get goods from the stores. On 26 March, Commdt Hertzog came in with some of his staff, but they left on the same day. About 60 Burghers of Commdt Hertzog visited town again, under the command of Commdt Lategan. “They intend crossing the [railway] line somewhere at Priors”.

The locals needed to replenish their food. On 13 March, Mr Hartman’s wagons come in with a load of watermelons and melons. The next day, Hendrik Liebenberg slaughtered 3 head of cattle for distribution amongst the inhabitants. Some Burghers also came into town to search for provisions. Hans Boshoff, Evert du Preez¹⁹⁰ and Sarel Louw entered the stores of Sem & Bultermans, but returned back to camp in the evening.

took or destroyed their possessions. He had had a double-seated buggy with harness and two horses. The horses were taken from him by Mr Tonkin. When he rejoined, Hertzog supplied him with a home because his own was too poor. Anna Maria Catrina Heckroodt, his wife, said they also slaughtered their own sheep but they did not kill them all. She claimed for 12 sheep at 20/- (shillings) each, also for 5 bags of wheat, one bag of mealies, half a bag of beans, one and a half bags of meal , 6 gallons paraffin for 15/- and 20 pounds of coffee (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1313, Ref 332, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁹⁰ EVERT NICOLAS DU PREEZ of Kareepoort surrendered, but rejoined when the Boers came back to the southern Free State. He was captured and sent to

Peace returned and some semblance of normal life continued. Old Mr Hendrik Boshoff¹⁹¹ died and was buried by Rev Fraser on 28 March. “Miss Young, Miss Fraser and I go cycling”, wrote Sem in his diary. Curiously, “A certain Marais comes in on a beautiful lady’s bicycle; he states he is going to Hertzog’s Lager”.

On 30 March, Commdt and Judge Hertzog came in with two despatch riders (Marais and Giordinie). All inhabitants¹⁹² were commandeered to go out to Kaliesfontein¹⁹³ where Commdt

Bermuda. He lived with his parents but had his own land and stock. He claimed £1935 for 835 sheep and goats, 79 cattle, 32 horses, a buggy, cape cart, 2 sets of harness, 500 pounds angora wool, farm implements, fences, furniture, kitchen utensils and clothes. He was awarded £1025 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1315, Ref 398, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁹¹ HENDRIK LOUIS BOSHOFF, whose estate was in liquidation. (Gerrit Jan Cornelis Sem was the executor of Boshoff’s estate). His widow was DOROTHEA CATHARINA STOFFELINA BOSHOFF. They had one son, Willem Boshoff, who was on commando. He surrendered, rejoined and surrendered again. Any compensation given would be divided amongst the heirs, her children and grandchildren. The claim was £322 for 20 donkeys, 5 cows with calves, 1 horse, damage to furniture and the house. The compensation was £158 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1307, Ref 105, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁹² Presumably male inhabitants.

¹⁹³ The farm Kaliesfontein was then owned by a Mr Ferreira, according to Marthinus Johannes Schoeman, who was a “bywoner” on that farm. Schoeman was a prisoner of war and sent to India from where he returned on the 5th of November 1902. He

Hertzog was stationed. Consequently, on 2 April, “We all march out to Kaliesfontein – start at 5 o’clock and arrive there about 11”. Sem managed to get some people excused from Commando duty – A Strauss, Dr Lategan, Japie Cronje and C Boshoff. Judge Hertzog came into town in the evening, and Sem managed to get exemptions for Herman Sem and J Bulterman from active service. In addition, a petition was signed by the ladies to return Andries¹⁹⁴ back to town.

THE REMOVAL TO SPRINGFONTEIN

On 5 April 1901, there was a report that Genl de Wet had a fight in Middelveld and many Burghers were killed, wounded and taken prisoner. Five days later, on 10 April, Philip Snyman came into town with a report that a British column was approaching from Springfontein. The next day, Col Hickman’s Scouts¹⁹⁵

claimed £868 for farming stock, a cart and crops which were destroyed. He later became the owner of the farm Nooitgedacht in the Philippolis district (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1319, Ref 517, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

¹⁹⁴ It is not clear which Andries this was.

¹⁹⁵ Col. Hickman’s Scouts were involved in clearing the southern Free State after De Wet’s return to the Free State (Doyle 1999:589). During the winter of 1901, Col Hickman was active in “clearing” the “already twice-cleared” districts of Rouxville and Smithfield (Doyle 1999:638). The country in the eastern Free State was devastated: “A crow must carry his own rations when he flies across it”.

entered the town, and camped above the park. Capt Marshall instructed that all town residents must prepare to leave with this column. By the next day, the officers of the column demanded a list of inhabitants. Sem had to do a round of visits with the doctor to see which people could remain.

The column – which included Sem - duly departed at 2 pm on 12 April 1901, and the wagons camped above Koopmansfontein. “A good deal of looting went on that day and the confusion and consternation was great and the parting rather heartrending ... Col Hickman told me that, in a skirmish near Paardenfontein, he had lost Capt Laurie and Private Lacey”. These two soldiers, both of the R Lanc MI¹⁹⁶ were both killed on 12 April near Philippolis, and are buried in the Philippolis cemetery.¹⁹⁷ Laurie had been a Canadian Member of Parliament.¹⁹⁸

The column arrived at Dwarsrivier, Cornelis Snyman’s farm (on the Trompsburg side of Philippolis) at about 5 pm on 13 April . Gerrie Snyman was lying ill at the farm.

¹⁹⁶ Royal Lancashire Mounted Infantry?

¹⁹⁷ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

¹⁹⁸ Cloete 2012: 253.

On the way, the British burnt houses and provisions at Jackhalsfontein¹⁹⁹, Kalkgat,²⁰⁰ and Slangfontein.

¹⁹⁹ JACKHALSFONTEIN was owned by HENDRIK JOHANNES JANSE VAN RENSBURG. Jackhalsfontein is situated to the south-east of Springfontein, on the Bethulie Road. The farm Jakhalsfontein had been bequeathed to him by his father. Van Rensburg was living on the farm before the war, but since the war was residing in the town of Philippolis, with his father, who was 77 years old. The farm was 1850 morgen in size. He also owned two erven in Philippolis. Van Rensburg surrendered after Lord Roberts’ proclamation, but rejoined the Boers in October 1900. He remained on commando until peace was declared. Some of his stock had been appropriated by Burgher forces at various times: 2 mares, 3 mules, 3 sheep, and 100 bales forage, all worth £84. He had receipts from Commandant Pyper, dated 30 Nov 1900. Col. Byng’s forces appropriated the following items (totaling £1942): 1250 sheep, 14 cows with calves, 13 cows, 18 mares with foals, 6 mules, 9 horses, 1 secondhand buckwagon, 1 buggy with harness, 1 set of mule harness, and household furniture at the farm and the village. On Jakhalsfontein, the doors, windows and frames of the house had been removed. Part of the “brak” roof had been damaged. In the townhouse, the doors and window frames had also been destroyed. The floor of the sitting room had been burnt. In the stable, the door, the manger and the loft had been destroyed. He lost 10 bags of wheat, farming implements and tools, 40 turkeys, 20 chickens, fencing and wire netting. Hendrik claimed £2026 in compensation. After the war, the farm was let to a Mr Jooste from the Cape Colony. The rental of £40 per year was payable to his father. He then owned 2 mules and a buck wagon. Previously, he was a transport rider, but has since then had sold 8 of his 10 mules, so that transport-riding became unfeasible. He also had 200 sheep and goats, and one cow. Some of his livestock was kept on the farms Lynxfontein and Boesmansfontein. This livestock was purchased by means of the sale of one of his Philippolis erven. Source: Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1317, Ref 459, Archives, Pretoria, 1903.

²⁰⁰ KALKGAT: SAREL JOHANNES DU PLESSIS (SNR) lived on Kalkgat, Philippolis. His farm was 2200 morgen but he had a bond of £475 on it and there were £475 interest in arrears. He also had a house in Philippolis. He surrendered under the proclamation of Lord Roberts but re-joined the Boers. He was taken prisoner, removed to Greenpoint and subsequently to Bermuda, from where he returned in September 1902. On the 13th of April 1901, the homestead at Kalkgat

While the Philippolis group rested at Dwarsrivier, the British troops brought in Hans van Schalkwyk and Andries du Toit. It rained that afternoon.

On the next day (14 April), the soldiers went out and brought in some more farmers. “One feels miserable under such circumstances and thinking of your home although you get used to camp life”, Sem noted philosophically. The column took 50 head of cattle and 14 horses from Philip Snyman of the farm Krielsfontein. “There is a talk among the farmers secretly in the Camp that Genl de Wet is close by and that some fighting is most likely to follow before we arrive at Springfontein ... In the

was burned down by British troops and all the furniture and household items were destroyed or taken away. He claimed £2563 for all the contents (including his Bible). His fences were cut to pieces. The Board did not think that he was so badly off as to warrant obtaining compensation under article 10 of peace terms, particularly considering the fact that he had surrendered and re-joined the Boer forces. SAREL JACOB DU PLESSIS (JNR) lived with his father at Kalkgat. He surrendered but joined again. He was captured on the 3rd June and sent away. His livestock were taken away on the 14th June by the British Troops who were at the neighbouring farm, Slangfontein. After the war, he was a “bywoner” with only 30 small stock, a cow and a calf. He claimed £717 for 300 sheep, horses, cattle, furniture, 2 bales of wool, a cape cart, harness, a saddle and bridle. He was awarded £325. Similarly, STEPHANUS JOHANNES DU PLESSIS of Kalkgat lived with his parents. He had 40 goats and a riding horse when he came back after the war. He had been sent as Prisoner of War to Bermuda. He claimed £385 for his war losses which included sheep, horses, cattle, clothing, books, and an accordion. He received £190 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1316, Ref 408, Archives, Pretoria, 1903, and vol. 1316, 411).

afternoon, some farmers were sighted at Buitenzorgnek and the English fired about 100 shells in that direction, apparently without any damage”. Dirk van Schalkwyk was brought into the camp, along with a lot of horses and sheep.

The column departed on Monday 15 April, at 7 am. Along the way, sheep are taken from Mooifontein and Oatlands. “Just other side of Mooifontein poor Miss Young fainted”.

LIFE IN SPRINGFONTEIN CAMP, APRIL-MAY 1901

After a rough journey, the group arrived at Springfontein Refugee Camp, at 5 pm on 15 April.

The next day, Mrs Monro and her daughters came from Norvalspont Camp and moved into buildings near the Springfontein railway crossing. Miss Young joined them. Mr Gostling, the superintendent of the camp, wired Mr Maltman of Philippolis to come to Springfontein.²⁰¹ The Philippolis group

²⁰¹ Possibly Mr Gostling believed that it would be safer for Mr Maltman to live at the Springfontein Camp, rather than in Philippolis.

was still with the Hickman Column, and perhaps they felt that it was safer there than living in Philippolis.

The group moved into the Refugee Camp on 17 April, “where we are fortunate to get a portion of a Marquee tent as there are no more tents available”. The other people “had just to make plans with sails and carts”. Mr Gostling was assisted by Mr Beck²⁰², his clerk, and his assistants Davies and Bryan. Mr Gostling, Mr Beck and Mr Groenewoud were “very obliging”.

Life in the camp is initially very unfamiliar. “The first time one feels rather strange to receive some coffee, sugar, meal, salt in such a way, they gave plenty anyhow, there’s no feeling as if you are going to be starved; the adults get ½ lb coffee, ¾ lbs meal, ½ lb meat and coal for fuel – and children proportionately. It looks a lot at first and one thinks you will not get through it, but then

²⁰² JAMES PETER BECK, the law agent and deputy sheriff of Philippolis, was Assistant Superintendent at the refugee camp at Springfontein (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1323, Ref 676, Archives, Pretoria, 1903). Beck took the oath of neutrality in March 1900. He was a Burgher of the Free State, and served on commando, until he returned to Philippolis in November 1899. He became the clerk of the Magistrate on 24 March 1900. He also served in the Philippolis Town Guard when the town was besieged by the Boers in October 1900. His well-furnished house was damaged by Col. Byng’s column. The Board was of the opinion that Beck was deserving of compensation, because of the assistance he had rendered the British. He claimed for furniture, a safe, 16 bags of wheat, 35 sheep, and a mare and a stallion (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 534, Ref 1, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

you soon notice that this open air life makes you hungry and you feel as if you can eat all day long”.

On 18 April, “there is rather a commotion in the Camp on account of some filthy letter being written and posted to the Commandant and his clerks. The consequence is that the Refugees are prohibited from posting any letter without being censored”.

Some of the inmates resist the camp’s regime. On 19 April, three ladies (Ms B van Schalkwyk, Miss Raal²⁰³ and Miss Jacobs) who had been allowed to go out of camp to fetch wood never returned, and it was subsequently reported that they had joined some of the Burgher commandos.

Conditions were rather grim.²⁰⁴ “There are a good many children sick, and some die”. Rumours spread that many more refugees are headed for this camp. More refugees were offloaded on 19 April – “Unfortunately a rainy and stormy night followed causing

²⁰³ This refers to SARAH RAAL, whose astonishing exploits with the Boer commandos in the southern Free State are documented in her book, *Met die Boere in die Veld*.

²⁰⁴ A good summary of the conditions at Springfontein is contained in Chapter 27 (“Springfontein”) in Owen Coetzer, *Fire in the Sky: The Destruction of the Orange Free State, 1899-1902*.

a good deal of hardship among the refugees for whom no tents had been provided yet”. This happened again on 20 April. By 22 April, a census of inmates revealed that there were about 450 children in the camp. On 2 May, Baby Sem (Maudie)²⁰⁵ was “far from well”.

Sem’s marquee tent was rather primitively divided into two sections, by using planks and trunks. Cups and saucers were scarce. “The great trouble was always the cooking because at that time wood was very scarce and the coal difficult to get the fire to burn, and then only 1 saucepan, 1 kettle and teapot and a sort of round ironstove on which everything must be prepared”. Matters improved gradually. On 1 May, about 100 tents were delivered, as well as some vegetables. On this day, it was learnt that Miss Emily Hobhouse was visiting the camp to inspect conditions.

For several days, around 2 May 1901, a comet lit up the sky.

Sem assisted the “refugees” in several ways. Some of the inmates went about their business as best they could. Sem got a train ticket for Colin Steyn (son of Pres Steyn), who had come with the column with the intention of moving on to Bloemfontein. “Mr

²⁰⁵ It is not clear whose child this was. Gerrit Sem was childless.

Ortlepp gets good news from Dolph, Frank and Dora”. Herman Sem got a permit from the Superintendent to go to Bloemfontein on business. Mrs George Read got word that she could go to Johannesburg. Sem requested Mr Gostling about going back to Philippolis with a convoy, and “I am promised to be granted every facility”. Miss Young got word from Mr Maltman that he hoped to come from Colesberg soon.

Sem left for Philippolis on 10 May, with Col. Williams’ column. Williams was underway to the Philippolis district to conduct cleaning up operations on the Boer farms.²⁰⁶ “We had rather a rough trip still nothing extraordinary happened”. The first halt was made at Kleinzonderhout, and then the column outspanned for the night at Houthaalberg ²⁰⁷.

²⁰⁶ Cloete 2012: 259.

²⁰⁷ HOUTHAAALBERG: This was the farm of the father of ALETTA MARIA VAN SCHALKWYK. Her husband surrendered in March 1900 and took the oath of neutrality. He went back to live on their farm Vlakfontein till 16th October 1900, but was taken away by a British Patrol and sent to Greenpoint where he died. She remained on the farm till March 1901 when she took her cattle to her father’s farm, Houthaalberg. She was there till 11 March 1901 when she was taken to Springfontein Camp by Colonel Hickman’s column. Her son, Dirk, went on commando when she left Vlakfontein. He surrendered in September 1901 and stayed in the camp with her. She lost all her sheep and goats, the ox wagon, the buggy and the cape cart. She stated in her claim that when she came back to the Vlakfontein farm on October 1902, the dam had been damaged in several places with dynamite. Three doors and 5 windows had been taken from the house. Part of the wall at the back of the house had fallen in, because the oven had been broken

BACK IN PHILIPPOLIS, MAY-AUGUST 1901

At about 11 am, on 11 May 1901, the column arrived at Philippolis, and found that the advance guard of the column had come in very early already and had broken into most of the unoccupied places, doing a great deal of damage and looting. “It was rather painful, but nothing could be done and I was rather glad that I was here again to look after some documents and books and assist Mr Bulterman”. At dinner at Mr Bultermans, Sem met Lt Percival and Captain Lily, both of the SA Light Horse.²⁰⁸

down. Part of the roof had fallen in. All of the wooden poles of the fencing had been taken away. She claimed for lost furniture, household appliances and crockery. The repairs were costed at about £150. According to Charles Bryan, who took down her statement, the claimant had said that all the women and children who died in the camps died of starvation. She is still very bitter against the British. She says that God will surely give the country back to the Boers. “Her attitude and sentiments are certainly such as to render her undeserving of any compensation whatever. The claimant, owner of the farm, Vlakfontein, belongs to a wealthy family, owning considerable property and I don’t think her circumstances admit of her receiving a share of the compensation” (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1319, Ref 534, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

²⁰⁸ The calling out of colonial mounted corps proceeded both in the Cape Colony and Natal. Mounted men were urgently needed by all the columns in process of preparation, but, adhering to his opinion that success in the relief of Ladysmith was a most crucial matter, Sir Redvers Buller decided to despatch to Natal the first unit enlisted at Cape Town—the South African Light Horse. The first party of ‘Light Horse’ embarked at Cape Town for Natal on the 22nd November. The South African Light Horse and of Brabant’s Horse were raised respectively in the western and eastern province of the Cape Colony

In the meantime, Col Williams was involved in a skirmish on the farm Metz in the Fauresmith district, and two members of the South African Light Horse were killed.²⁰⁹ He reached Ramah and sent Major Gogarty with four units of the SALH to follow up reports of a Boer commando in Luckhoff. Their night-time mission led to the capture of 32 Burghers and several horses.²¹⁰ He returned to Philippolis with 33 prisoners, almost 1 000 horses, and a large flock of sheep. During this time, the operational strength of the Bloemfontein “flying column” (under Major-General Charles Knox) was 2 152 men, and the column stationed at Edenburg (under Major-General Bruce Hamilton) consisted of 5 543 men. These columns also patrolled the southern Free State, including the Philippolis area.²¹¹

Rather grimly, Sem noted that a good many Waterkloof people were brought in and had to go off with the column. Sem spent 17

(http://www.angloboerwar.com/index.php?option=com_grid&gid=22_uw_0&p=10).

²⁰⁹ Cloete 2012: 260.

²¹⁰ Cloete 2012: 261.

²¹¹ Cloete 2012: 262.

May packing household goods for some of the people in the Springfontein camp.

On 17 May, Commandant Hertzog sent a message to Sem, requiring him to come out to the Lager at Grootvoortzicht. On arrival, Sem found that there was a commando of about 200 Burghers. It seemed that they wanted information about Benjamin Rensburg and Willie Becker. Hertzog believed that the British would soon have to give up the fighting, and that is why so much destruction was done. Curiously, Sem was in contact with Commandant Hertzog, lying low outside Philippolis, while the town was occupied by British columns! It seems that the British occupation left some loopholes for anti-British activity, and that the towns were only effectively occupied when a British column was present. As soon as they departed, the townsfolk continued their relationships with the Boer commandos.

Sem and Ockert van Schalkwyk rode back to town, Sem using “an old uneasy horse”, arriving very tired at 10 pm. “Poor Mrs Bulterman had a bad fit again, and we had to go get Dr Stuart”.

More than a week later, on 25 May, Sem was still waiting for the return of Col Williams and his column. In the afternoon, Commandant

(JAM) and Judge (JBM) Hertzog came to town, and stayed over at Orkin’s house. Hertzog had heard nothing about peace negotiations, but “had heard from trustworthy sources that there was likely to be trouble between France and England”.

On 28 May, a certain Van Rensburg brought a report about a British column coming from Luckhoff, and indeed Col Williams’ column arrived that afternoon. Col Williams took up his quarters in old Mrs Louw’s house. “He was rather strange and first threatened to take me to [Refugee] Camp again, however he changed his mind and I remained”. Shortly after Williams’ arrival, Col Byng²¹² also turned up, and took command of

²¹² GENERAL JULIAN BYNG was a member of a long established military family. He was the seventh son of George Byng, second earl of Strafford and the grandson of Field Marshal John Byng. Despite his aristocratic background, Byng had a relatively impoverished upbringing, entering the army through the 2nd Middlesex militia. His family connections were in the highest places – his father was a friend of the Prince of Wales, and in 1883 Byng joined the Prince’s own regiment, the 10th Royal Hussars, joining them in India in March 1884. At the outbreak of the Second Boer War, Byng was sent to South Africa, where he was given command of the newly raised South African light horse. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Byng was able to adapt to the nature of the war in South Africa, rising from command of his regiment to command of a group of columns in the sweeps of the later years of the war. He was promoted to brevet lieutenant-colonel in November 1900 and brevet-colonel in February 1902, the month before he returned to Britain. After the First World War, Byng was showered with honours. In 1919 he was raised to the peerage as Baron Byng of Vilmy, and was promoted to full general (http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/people_byng_julian.html).

Philippolis the next day. His camp was just west of Rowelsfontein’s lower dam.

On 1 June, Sem assisted Mrs Jas du Preez²¹³ with her two daughters, who were living in Chr. Boshoff’s²¹⁴ house in

²¹³ JOSEPH MARKUS DU PREEZ inherited the farm Kareepoort (3318 morgen) from his parents. He also had a house in town. He took the oath of neutrality and did not join again, but it was found that he assisted the Boers on more than one occasion. The Boers took 22 horses. A British Patrol came to his farm and found three Burghers asleep in his house. Commandant Hertzog had sheep on a neighbouring farm and asked him to keep an eye on them. He assumed that was the reason why they sent him away to the refugee camp at Kimberley. He had two sons on commando: Gert Johannes was sent to Greenpoint and from there to St Helena, while Evert Nicolas was sent to Bermuda. His wife was on the farm till the 1st of June 1901 when she was taken away to the refugee camp at Bethulie, from where she forwarded the claim, while her husband was still at Kimberley. She saw the stock taken away and the property destroyed. There were 2 houses on the farm as well as a stable, wagonhouse, and a storeroom with yellowwood shelves, 10 kraals, 1200 yards in extent. The fences round the whole farm with gates were destroyed. In the storeroom were, bags of corn, mealies, pumpkins, chaff, dried fruit, seed oats, vinegar and 5000 oranges. A total of 2700 sheep, 180 horses, 200 cattle, 18 pigs, 80 fowls and 10 ducks were taken away. The farm implements, buckwagon with tarpaulin, 2 scotch carts, a cape cart, 2 buggies, 1 open cart, 2 sets of harness and the furniture including the harmonium and everything in the house were destroyed. Everything in the house in the town was taken. The amount of the claim was £4978. He had receipts for 70 horses, 170 cattle and 1000 sheep but it was among his luggage which was stolen at Norvalspont station. He also swore that he adhered strictly to his oath of neutrality and had rendered neither active nor passive assistance to the enemies of England and that he had in no way tried to make money out of the war. There was a bond of £1000 on his farm but he raised £600 after the war to enable him to go on farming. Since he was considered a well-to-do man, his claim was rejected (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1315, Ref 399, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

²¹⁴ CHRISTIAAN HENDRIK BOSHOFF, of Langkloof, (500 morgen), was a small landowner and not well off. He also had half an erf in Waterkloof. He was

Rowlesfontein. He helped them collect a bucket, kettle, pot, pan and gridiron. Captain Flood told Sem that these ladies were not allowed to Philippolis, but Miss Fraser and Rev Fraser were allowed to visit them in Rowelsfontein. “They do not seem to mind going to camp – A good many people are brought in to camp”. On the next day, old Mr Stulting was brought in from Waterkloof and taken to Camp. Other “refugees” include Old Mr Cornelis Rensburg of Hamelfontein ²¹⁵, and Koot Snyman. “Although things were packed to send to Springfontein Camp, we got no chance to send, as the columns seem to go in Fauresmith direction”.

on commando at the beginning of the war and did not rejoin. His four sons broke their oaths and joined again. He was sent to Greenpoint and later to Norvalspont and Bethulie camps. He claimed for farming stock, cart and harness, farm implements, furniture, a four seated cart and damage done to the house and fences for the amount of £266 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1306, Ref 63, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

²¹⁵ This could be CORNELIUS VAN RENSBURG of the farm Mauritzkop (on the right of the Trompsburg road, next to Philippolis Road). It was a rented farm. Cornelius was farming with his father. He claimed £377, and the Board recommended that he receive £223. All their property was taken or destroyed. His claim included 14 oxen, 4 cows, 9 horses, 1 wagon and gear, 1 cape cart and harness, clothing and jewellery. Cornelius took the oath of neutrality in March 1900, but in October 1900, he rejoined the Boers. Cornelius was no longer farming in 1903, since he had lost all his livestock. He was working at the relief camp at Kranzdraai. Cornelius had been taken prisoner, and sent to St Helena.

On 7 June, Rev Fraser went out to Tuinplaats and there heard about some Waterkloof women who had gone into the mountains while the columns had passed. This included Mrs Louw and the Raals. But Mrs de Villiers²¹⁶ and her daughters, as well as Mrs

²¹⁶ Mrs de Villiers was possibly the wife of JACOB DANIEL DE VILLIERS, who owned the farm Tuinplaas (4500 morgen) on which he had a bond of £1500. He took the oath of surrender and was too old to go on commando. His oldest son was on commando with the Boers after taking the oath of surrender. In November 1900, Jacob was taken to Greenpoint from where he wrote a letter to Sir Peter Faure asking him to use his influence to get him on parole. The request was denied and he was sent to Norvalspont and afterwards to India. He was under suspicion by the British that he was instrumental in the capture of the men under Lieutenant Chapman, on his farm. He appeared before the Justice of the Peace, Mr Francois Willem van Heerden and gave the following statement under oath: A British detachment of about 50 men under Lieutenant Harold Chapman belonging to Nesbitts Horse came to his farm on the 22nd October 1900 and enquired if he had seen any Boers. He informed them that he had seen four men in the rantjie about 800 yards from his house. He thought that they may be Boers. He did not know if they were armed as he was about 1200 yards away with his sheep. He asked the farm workers who told him that the Boers were armed and went in the direction of Philippolis. Lt Chapman told him that he and his family were British subjects, and that he should not leave the farm, as Chapman was taking position round the homestead. He asked for food for his men and forage for their horses, which De Villiers gave them. While they were outside the house the Boers in the rantjie started firing on them. The firing continued till nearly sunset, when he saw some of the Boers were leaving their position and went in the direction of Waterkloof. They all went into the house where they were given bread and coffee. The Boers suddenly started firing at the house from behind the land wall at a distance from about 400 yards. He ran outside and saw wounded horses. The Lieutenant decided to surrender and asked his men who would walk outside with a white flag. None of them would do it and the Lieutenant asked Jacob if he would take the flag. He was reluctant but had no choice. His wife fastened a piece of white cloth on a reed and at great risk of his life, and under continuous firing, he went out with the flag. Lt Chapman and his men surrendered. One of his men was wounded and his wife attended to him during the night, until the ambulance came from Philippolis to take him away. The British thanked him most cordially for his assistance (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1321, Ref 606, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

Naude²¹⁷ and Mrs Andries Fourie of Waterkloof, were taken to the camp.

The uneasy *interregnum* continued. “As soon as the columns were somewhat out of sight, some Burghers came in again as usual”. On 10 June, a few Burghers arrived again. Two days later, a small Burgher commando came to town with the news that things look so bad for the British in Transvaal, that they will probably have to give up, and on that account, the Burghers in the southern Free State will have to go north to assist the Transvalers. On 13 June, a boy arrived with a report that British were coming in from the direction of Alewynskop (north of Philippolis) and Druiwefontein. The next day, Col Byng’s column came into town and mentioned that they had followed Commdt Hertzog as far as the Riet River. They had many sheep and horses with them. “Lt

²¹⁷ DAWID FRANCOIS NAUDE of Waterkloof, Philippolis was a government teacher at Waterkloof and was captured and sent to Greenpoint. He was considered a hardened agitator for the Boer cause. He was the owner of considerable property in Waterkloof and also had a house in Philippolis. He put in a claim for sheep, cattle, horses, fowls, vehicles, implements, and damage done to the buildings. He also gave a long detailed list of furniture and everything which was in the house. According to his testimony, everything was damaged, destroyed or taken away by the men of Colonel Williams. He claimed £618. According to the Claims administrator, he went to visit them in their house and was not convinced that the losses were to the extent of the claim. He therefore considered the whole claim as fraudulent and suggested it should be disallowed (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1315, Ref 378, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

Percival [was] very kind to us and brought us some things from camp”.

The new column in town was under the leadership of Captain Dansey. He “wants things from shop and also takes a tent of mine, he orders that lights should be out”. Another convoy, under Col Forbes, came to town and most of the Waterkloof people were brought into Philippolis. “There is a good deal of destruction going on”. On 15 June, “About 200 men go out in civil dress to try and get some of the Burghers round about, but they only get a few men. Gerrie Snyman and Mrs Claassen were brought in. Mrs Louw’s house was turned into a hospital. Of the patients there, 2 die, both burial services by Mr Fraser”.²¹⁸

The convoy under Forbes was set to depart for Springfontein, and it was planned that it would take “a good many people to the refugee camp”. A lot of furniture was destroyed and taken to the military camp, mostly as firewood.

²¹⁸ Oosthuizen 1999:31. It is likely that the deceased included Trooper WD Hunt, of the SA Constabulary, who died of enteric at Philippolis, and is buried in the cemetery, but no date of death is provided. Also, Trooper EH Johnson of the SA Light Horse died of disease on 17 June, and Trooper A McMillan of the SA Light Horse died of disease on 28 June.

Sem was getting to know the British officers. “Percival with Byng’s column often comes down to Bulterman. Captain Flood is also here, he is rather kind to people”. On 20 June, a report was confirmed that in a nearby skirmish, one officer was killed and three men wounded. They were brought to the hospital. The officer was Sergeant J Lister, of the Imperial Yeomanry, who was killed in action at Doornhoek near Philippolis.²¹⁹

On 23 June 1901, Mr Fraser had a service for refugees in Mr Kolver’s house.

On 24 June, more farmers were brought into town by a detachment of about 60 SA Light Horse (including Percival). One of their men had been slightly wounded. In the evening, Sem met “Captain Steel, Lt Steel and Green”, who wanted to meet with Dr Oliver. Sem arranged for Captain WE Baker Murray to take some things to the Springfontein camp. He also met Captain Marriot and Lieutenant Stuttgart.

On 28 June, part of the convoy left. There was a skirmish near Waterkloof, and eight men of the patrol were captured by the

²¹⁹ Oosthuizen 1999:31.

Burghers, “but they came to camp again disarmed”.²²⁰ On the next day, the column left for Springfontein. Sem got a letter from Mrs Monro, brought in by Captain Mallock, about some goods to be sent, but the letter came too late. Sem wrote a few lines in reply and handed the letter to “Lt Percival to post wherever he finds a chance”.

On Sunday 30 June, about 200 men of Byng’s column, armed with a cannon, went off in the Waterkloof direction. “One gets quite confused with all the reports brought by some of the Burghers round about here – then you hear all the British left the district and no sooner are the people who tell this out of town or another column is seen coming in”. As soon as the English had left, Sem got a visit by Mr M Heckroodt and Mr Erskine, as well as H Muller, old Mr A Gerber and Pieter van Schalkwyk. About 15 Burghers came to town on 5 July. A certain Fourie and Van Brummelen said that they belong to Theron’s Verkenning’s Korps (Theron’s Scouts). “They assure us again, that things are going very favourable and the English cannot keep it on much longer, because some of the Burgher prisoners of war are sent back to their homes from Cape Town”). On 8 July, more Burghers

²²⁰ Since the Boers had nowhere to send their British prisoners-of-war, they tended to simply disarm them, remove useful objects (such as shoes and clothing), and let them go.

arrived in town, slaughtered four oxen and distributed the meat to the townsfolk. In the afternoon, Commdt Hertzog came into town with many Burghers, and more follow them on 12 July, reporting that “some British columns are coming in from Zwartkoppies”.

On 16 July, Sem recorded the rumours that about nine commandos of the Transvaal and the Free State had invaded the Cape Colony, “but one does never know how much to believe of these reports”. Until 25 July, Sem reported “nothing out of the way, all is quiet”.

On 26 July, Du Moulin’s column arrived. “This is about the best disciplined column that has yet been here, all goes quietly and orderly”. The local people were told to prepare to go to the refugee camp at Springfontein. Sem tried to forestall this, by speaking to one of the Intelligence officers, who agreed to discuss this with Col. Du Moulin. It was agreed that the townsfolk could remain, but they would soon have to move to the refugee camp. But farming families were still rounded up and brought into town. This included the families Jackson, Ferreira, Rall²²¹ and Louw.

²²¹ This was probably FREDERICK RALL of Brandkraal. He lived on the farm Brandkraal (4500 morgen). He surrendered under the proclamation of Lord

“It is reported that Cols Williams and Byng are on the track of Genl Hertzog in Fauresmith District”.²²²

For a few days, Burghers “come in and out”. On 2 August 1901, Col. Pilcher’s column came to town. The townsfolk were notified that practically all who were able to travel will have to go with the column to Springfontein Refugee camp. “Needless to say that this causes a good deal of consternation, but one can quite

Roberts, rejoined the Boers, and then surrendered again under the proclamation of Lord Kitchener. He was taken to the Refugee Camp at Springfontein. The farm was owned by his mother-in-law, Mrs Louw of Zooifontein. Rall’s horse, 150 sheep, 30 cattle, cape carts and buggy were taken by Col. Williams’ column. He was very concerned that his imported stallion (which came from Germany) had been taken away. His wagon house was severely damaged. He lost 2200 sheep and goats, 18 oxen, 11 cattle, 62 horses and mules. De Moulin’s column took 30 head of cattle. Two horses were taken by the Boers. His house was severely damaged. His household effects included one silver fruit stand, 1 table, 1 piano, 1 sofa and chairs, 2 clocks, 2 lamps, 3 enlargings, 1 perambulator, 1 chest of drawers, 1 bedstead with bedding, 2 wash stands, 1 dressing table, 1 dinner set, 1 tea set and 1 coffee set, 1 stove, and 1 soap pot. Rall claimed a total of £4014. The Board only recommended compensation of £80 (Compensation Claim (CJC), Vol. 1317, Ref 476, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

²²² During this time, Col. FH Damant and Major S Bogle-Smith were active in the Fauresmith district, rounding up Burghers and livestock (Cloete 2012: 282). General Smuts, who was moving through the Free State, described the general destruction: “Dams everywhere full of rotting animals; water undrinkable. Veld covered with slaughtered herds of sheep and goats, cattle and horses. The horror passes description” (Cloete 2012: 283). Smuts was *en route* to invading the Cape Colony, engaging in skirmishes near Springfontein, Smithfield, Reddersburg, Zastron and Aliwal North (Cloete 2012: 289).

understand that the British cannot for the sake of a few inhabitants continually send in columns to bring out provisions”.

On the next day, 8 August 1901, the Bultermans and the Frasers packed up to leave for Springfontein. Sem also packed up his belongings. “Only old Mrs Haupt is still left with a few others”. Rev. Fraser travelled with a wagon, and Mrs Fraser and Miss E ²²³ in a mule-drawn cart. The group halted at Kleinzonderhout, and arrived late in the day in Springfontein. “As we learnt that the Frasers had to go to Bethulie camp, Miss E was very sad – but there was no help -they had to go, this later proved to have been the better way, because not long afterwards we learnt that, through Mr John Fraser, the Frasers were allowed to go to East London”.

THE SECOND STAY AT SPRINGFONTEIN CAMP

Camp life brought its own challenges. On 6 August, Sem heard that old Mr Grobler ²²⁴ and Mr D van Schalkwyk of Pienaarsfontein had died at Norvalspont Refugee Camp.

²²³ Emmeline Fraser.

²²⁴ EVERT NICOLAS GROBLER of the farm Groot Zonderhout Ward, Dwarsrivier, died at the Norvalspont refugee camp. Due to illness, he had never

Three days later, another column came in from Philippolis, bringing the Hapts, the Combrinks and “practically all who had still been left behind”. Sem started working on compensation claims, and he went to the station to see Captain Buckle on this matter. Sem gave evidence regarding Mr Maltman’s claim for compensation for the losses he had suffered at his shop.

At the same time, the group started working on constructing a raw brick building next to Mr Beck’s tent. Mr Best’s wagon brought in bricks. Life in the camp was very hard. On 16 August, the camp was covered in snow, and “the south wind so cold that it penetrated to the bones”. The next day, there was a general cleaning and airing of tents in the whole camp.

been on commando. On the 1st of June 1901, he and his wife, Emerentia (73 years old), were taken to Norvalspont by Colonel Williams’ column. Before his death, while still on the farm, British columns passed the farm and took horses and cattle. Captain Laurie of Hickman’s column destroyed 10 bags of wheat for which he gave a receipt. On the 2nd June 1901, colonel Williams’ column took from the farm 2 000 sheep, 35 head of cattle, 4 horses, a carriage, a buggy and a scotch cart for which he gave them a receipt. On the same day the British destroyed all the buildings which was burned and partly broken down. 90 bales of wool, all the poultry and tanned leather and damage done to the watermill (Compensation Claim (CJC), Vol. 1310, Ref 228, Archives, Pretoria, 1903). Their son, ESIAS RENIER GROBLER surrendered and was sent to Springfontein. After the war, Emerentia submitted a claim. She had strictly adhered to the proclamation of Lord Roberts. The claim was for £6300, but £2890 had been extracted, based on the receipts Mrs Grobler had obtained from the British forces (Compensation Claim (CJC), Vol. 1310, Ref 229, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

On 15 August, “It is reported that Commdt Brand surrendered near Bloemfontein”.

Dr Stuart left for Kimberley on 17 August, and Sem received letters from Van der Post²²⁵ in Laingsburg and Rev Fraser in East London.

A BRIEF VISIT TO PHILIPPOLIS, AUGUST 1901

On 23 August, Sem, along with Mr A Lubbe Snr and Philip Snyman, got permission to go to Philippolis. They arrived there in the afternoon. It was a rainy day, and Capt Chapman gave them a tent. They found Col Byng at Mr Bulterman’s house, and Col du Moulin in the teacher’s house.

The British were sensitive about anti-British propaganda. Sem was informed by the Provost Marshall of Du Moulin’s column that he had found a letter in Miss Fraser’s room, of a lady in Germany, speaking strongly against the English.

²²⁵ CWH van der Post, a legal agent in Fauresmith. He was later the father of Sir Laurens van der Post.

Remarkably, “During my short stay in Philippolis there is a concert given in the zaal to which I am invited. Not a bad show at all and very funny and laughable”.²²⁶

The next morning, Sem packed provisions in a wagon to take out to the refugee camp. By 10 am, they reached Osfontein, and stayed a night there. The journey was arduous – it took some wagons about 3 hours to get over the rise at Osfontein, and the party arrived at Springfontein at about 6 o’clock on 28 August 2001. “Mrs Beck rather put out that I did not bring her double bedstead”.

BACK AT SPRINGFONTEIN, AUGUST 1901 – JUNE 1902

Sem started his legal duties at once, sorting people’s papers. Periodically, the columns fetched Sem’s legal papers from Philippolis.

²²⁶ Given that there were so few townsfolk left in Philippolis, and that those who still remained would hardly have been in the mood for a concert, it is likely that this was a concert put on by and for British soldiers.

On 29 August, another 200 refugees were brought to the camp.

Rumours of the ongoing war circulated. “We hear that A Lubbe²²⁷ was killed close to Heenenweerskop, in the Fauresmith district”. The war was not going well for the Boers. “A good many prisoners of war from our district are brought in – Nathan and Callie van Schalkwyk are reported to have been taken prisoners – it is said that General Knox will come to the refugee camps with his column”.²²⁸ On 11 September, Fielding of the Scouts told Sem that some of the Native Scouts had been caught and shot. Apparently Col Byng’s column had gone north to Kroonstad, to pursue De Wet’s commandos. Many other columns come and leave, bringing in prisoners of war and refugees. In late September, it was reported that Jan Snyman of Hachtkraal was shot.

²²⁷ This was probably Hendrik Lubbe, whose death is described by Sarah Raal (1938: 54). Hendrik was accompanied by his 12-year-old son, Andries, at the time. They were part of Commandant Nieuwoudt’s commando.

²²⁸ According to Doyle (1999:638), General Knox spent the winter of 1901 in “clearing” the central-southern Free State, with the columns of Pine-Coffin, Thorneycroft, Pilcher and Henry.

During September, a commission of three ladies came and visited the camp.²²⁹ They were Mrs Dr Waterstone, Lady Knox and Miss Searles MD. Mrs AP Lubbe Senior had a talk with Mrs Waterstone, and heard that the train that they were travelling in was shot at, and a lady traveler was wounded.

On 15 September, a young Hollander named Hagen died in hospital. Dr Stuart, who had visited Bethulie, returned to the Springfontein camp. A few days later, on 24 September, some young farmers were brought into the camp. The dull life in the camp continues, and Sem’s notes become more infrequent. “Mrs B still laid up”; “Marie’s birthday, very nice day”; “Miss Jacobs who left camp with two other young ladies in May is brought into camp again”; “Bessie’s birthday” on 1 October. “Meet Mr and Mrs Kirkham and family and also general hospital nurses”; “I had to make declaration about dynamite found in S&B stores”, “Miss S Haupt’s birthday”.

Mr Gostling, the camp superintendent, was taken to hospital, suffering from pneumonia. He passed away on 17 October. He

²²⁹When they visited the Springfontein camp, the Ladies Commission found that the 2 920 inhabitants were living in bell tents, and that most of them were sleeping on the ground. They organized the distribution of 1 000 ground sheets (Cloete 2012:295).

was buried with military honours, at a funeral attended by about 800 refugees and about 50 infantry soldiers. The local people had become so “used to the Supt Gostling, people seem to feel the loss intensely”. The next day, a new superintendent, Mr Dunhill, arrived. He had previously been the Resident Magistrate in the Boshoff district.

On 21 October, the Haults hear the good news that they had received permits to go to Cape Town. Sem assists them with obtaining train tickets “for 4 and ½ that includes the little native girl ... The old lady is fairly bright and we get a good saloon carriage”.

Discipline in the camp became more relaxed. “The people are now allowed to walk about without special permits in the afternoon”.

A few days later, on 31 October 1901, Superintendent Dunhill departed and J Sinclair, “the great cricketer”, came to the Refugee Camp as the new superintendent. “He is all for sports, seems rather a broadminded chap”. On 9 November, King Edward’s birthday, “a good deal of sports in the camp ... all goes well”. Sinclair was evidently such a great sportsman, that he was called

to Bloemfontein by the Chief Superintendent to play cricket at Ramblers.

A new doctor, Dr Ralstone, arrived in the camp. On 15 November, Bessie Bulterman felt unwell, and the doctor sent her to bed. She only recovered two weeks later, and went for a short walk on 5 December.

The new Superintendent asked Sem to collect the names of people still out on commando, whose families are in this camp. At the same time, Sem was very busy drawing up claims for compensation.

Some social activities took place in the camp from time to time. On 26 November, Sem and his friends played some tennis with a Mr Carter. “There is a sale for the Loyal Women’s Guild”. A Mr Gildenhuis comes into the camp as the assistant of Rev Domisse. It was Sem’s birthday on 10 December, and once again he played a few games of tennis “with A de Vries against Andries S and Maans v S”.

On 15 December, Sem heard reports that 43 Boer prisoners were taken in the Philippolis district, and that this included 13

Philippolis burghers. On 29 December, it was reported that “Col. Hamilton’s forces had been surprised by C Nieuwoudt’s commando and a few wagons with provisions captured ... A good many natives shot” . (Sem’s description referred to General CT Nieuwoudt’s attack on a British convoy of Christmas gifts for soldiers. He sent Commandt HPJ Pretorius to lure the convoy guard away, and used the commandos of Commandants MA Theunissen and Munnik Hertzog to capture the convoy at Kokskraal. In this manoeuvre, one Boer and four British soldiers died, but the delighted Burghers captured 56 vehicles, 500 horses and mules, 100 rifles, a great deal of ammunition, and many welcome luxuries.²³⁰)

Springfontein camp had to deal with health problems. “There is some complaint about the nurses being ... careless about their patients. These are mostly new and young people”. A new doctor, PD Strachan, arrived²³¹. He was “a young but very nice Scotchman; he seems very sympathetic. At night we often hear

²³⁰ Cloete 2012: 322.

²³¹ Dr Strachan accompanied the Boer commando as a medical officer under the Red Cross. When he returned to Philippolis, he frequently attended British troops, especially the Yeomanry under Lieutenant Mainwaring (Compensation Claim of JP Beck (CJC), Vol. 534, Ref 1, Archives, Pretoria, 1903). Gerrit Sem estimated the damage to the furniture at £150, “excluding the cost of the piano”.

him play the flute”. On 29 December, Mr AP Lubbe’s second wife, who had fever, died in the afternoon. “The old man is awfully cut up about it, having had so many losses of late”. Two weeks later, old Mr Lubbe got a permit to go to Uitenhage. Two days later, a commando under General Hertzog captured a supply convoy near Philippolis.²³²

Mrs Bulterman, who had been unwell for some time, had a relapse. Her fever worsened in early February, and Dr Strachan and Dr Webb decided that Bessie must go to the hospital tents. This upset Mr Bulterman very much, “but Bessie must go”. Miss Taylor and some other good friends all promised to do what they can. Her health improved in late February and she managed to get up on 7 March. She returned to the tent on 19 March.

At the same time, Christiaan Strauss was very bad, and there was little hope for his recovery. He died on 11 February: “Poor chap, so young”. PW Snyman’s daughter, Sarie, also died on the 24th February. Old Mr Abel Kotze, of Paljasfontein, died on 13 March 1902.

²³² Cloete 2012: 326.

On 7 January, Sister Oliver came to say goodbye, as she was leaving the camp hospital. January passed with very few noteworthy events, except that Mrs Robertson who had taken a poisonous powder died, and four doctors arrived to do a post mortem.

Christmas 1901 was “not too bright but we make best of it”. The inmates held a big picnic at Rosemount on Boxing Day. About 600 adults and children had a very nice time.

In February, more columns passed by Springfontein, bringing new refugees and an ever-increasing number of prisoners of war, “showing undoubtedly that the commandos begin to realize that although their superiors urge them to continue the struggle, they’re getting tired of it and allow themselves to be taken prisoners”.

On 5 March, new nurses and other teachers came to camp. “Dr Strachan and Guard, the dispenser, are indeed very nice, kind and obliging, whenever they can they invite people to spend evening with them – some music and singing and games ... One begins to feel in general that you can live quite well in camp when people try to be agreeable. All the same, we all hope that there will soon

come an end to it, because there are many people not able to get accustomed to this sort of life”.

In early March, a certain Mr van Zyl came to the Camp, with forms of the Oath of Allegiance for people who want to sign it. “No-one is forced to do so, but it seems about all one can do under the circumstances, as one begins to see more and more that there is no chance for the Republican forces to hold in the struggle much longer”. About 50 people signed the oath.

Old Mr Beck left for Paarl on 19 March 1902.

Sister Macowen, who had been unwell for some time, became very weak, and died on 22 March 1902.

The camp gradually developed better institutions. On 20 March 1902, His Excellency Deputy Administrator Gerald Adams arrived from Bloemfontein, to inaugurate the Dutch Church. Rev Domisse and Rev Robertson (who had accompanied Adams) officiated at the ceremony. Rev. van Huysteen was also there. The church was christened “Bethel”. Mr Adams gave a speech, which was translated by Rev Robertson.

Four new teachers arrived on 24 March, destined for Norvalspont Camp. Miss Rolls and Miss de Villiers set off to work at Bethulie.

Life in the camp had its refined side. On 9 April, Sem dined with Superintendent Sinclair. On 1 May, Lt Palmer, formerly of the SAM Police of Philippolis, visited the camp. In May, Sem recorded that “There is a good deal of polo playing among the military”. On the Queen’s birthday (24 May), Dr Strachan “comes over to us and plays flute, very nice evening”. On 28 May, a concert was held at No. 12 Hospital, with a very good programme.

During April and May, there were rumours of senior Boer Generals making their way to a general conference. These included Generals Schalk Burger, De la Rey, President Steyn and General Botha.²³³ General de Wet’s staff passed through Bloemfontein under escort on 8 May. On 15 May 1902, the conference started, and on 25 May, “Report has it that Peace will probably be declared shortly”. Peace was declared on 31 May at

²³³ On 4 May 1902, Genl Hertzog met his commandos at Koppiesfontein, and representatives of Fauresmith, Jacobsdal and Philippolis were chosen as delegates to the peace conference (Cloete 2012: 362).

Vereeniging, “which naturally fills many a heart with joy”. For several days, there were peace festivities at the camp.

Unfortunately Lizzy Bulterman had “a most awful fit again, worse than I have ever seen her have”, on 6 June 1902. On 9 June, “Poor Lizzie passed away very calmly and is buried in afternoon”. Rev. van Huysteen held a funeral service in the Dutch Reformed Church, and she was buried near Mr Erskine. “It was a sad day, we were all much cut up about it”.

A major snowstorm hit the camp on 11 June, and people awoke to all the tents covered with snow. Sem mused that “This white mass was symbolic of the Peace which had been declared”.

THE RETURN TO PHILIPPOLIS, JUNE 1902

The return to Philippolis was a gradual affair, as families reunited and combined their transport and assets for the long trek home to the town and the farms. Sem returned several times to the camp.



THE WAGONS LEAVE SPRINGFONTEIN CAMP, 1902
(COURTESY OF FREE STATE ARCHIVES, BLOEMFONTEIN)

On 18 June, several Philippolis residents got passes to return to Philippolis: Mr Beck, Andries Strauss, Manus van Schalkwyk, Morgan Norval and Sem himself. On their return in the town,

“we find that Parsonage is entirely burnt out, Doctor Eagle’s property²³⁴ and Joe Beddy’s²³⁵.”



MR BEDDY’S HOUSE: NO 7 COLIN FRASER STREET
DAMAGED BY FIRE
COURTESY OF FREE STATE ARCHIVES, BLOEMFONTEIN

Other properties were much damaged, “but it could have been worse”.²³⁶

²³⁴ 5 Colin Fraser Street, Philippolis.

²³⁵ 7 Colin Fraser Street, Philippolis.

The group stayed for only one night, and returned to camp the next day. On their arrival in camp, “We find a great deal of bustle as a good many Philippolis burghers had surrendered and been brought to the camp”. On 20 June, Mr HJ van Rensburg of Jakhalsfontein, and several others, also came to the camp.

On Sunday, 22 June, most refugees were now allowed to walk about without permits, so there was quite an exodus to the graveyard. “The camp looks quite deserted”.

On 23 June, Mr HN van Heerden passed by the Camp. Sem believed that he would be appointed as Special Justice of the Peace in Philippolis.

Gradually the Philippolis residents trickled back to their homes. On 26 June, “old Mr and Mrs Lee” went to Philippolis, followed on 30 June by Mrs Krause, who was taken by Hendrik van

²³⁶ During the time of Sem’s absence, several more British soldiers died and were buried at Philippolis: (1) Sgt J Lister of the Imperial Yeomanry was killed in action on 20 June 1901, at Doornhoek near Philippolis; (2) Private C Cheal of R Sussex died on 18 August 1901, of disease; (3) Private RS Roy of the SA Light Horse died on 18 August of wounds sustained near Philippolis; and (4) Trooper G Williams of the Imperial Yeomanry died on 27 December 1901, of wounds sustained at Fauresmith (Oosthuizen 1999:31).

Rensburg. On 11 July, Johnny and Lukas Gertenbach²³⁷ went to their farm Grootfontein.

On 24 July, the Bultermans left for Philippolis. By late July, “Many people are beginning to move to farms and I am kept very busy making out claims”. On 10 August, PW Snyman’s wagons left for Philippolis.

This was followed by Lukas van Vuuren²³⁸ and Manus van Schalkwyk’s trek back to Philippolis. Some people travelled

²³⁷ LUCAS PAULUS GERTENBACH of the farm Flooidraai rejoined the Boers in October 1900. When he rejoined he left his property on the farm with his father and mother. Before the war, he owned a buckwagon, a four-seated cart and a buggy which he bought from E. Ferreira. When his parents were taken away, Captain Dickson of Norvalspont also took his wagon, cart and buggy. He lost all his stock, furniture and clothes. He claimed £893 for his losses. At the time of the claim he lived in Springfontein district.

JAN DEDILEFF GERTENBACH was never on commando but all his sons were. He was taken from his farm in December 1900 and sent to Norvalspont Refugee Camp. He wrote that when they took him they also took all his stock and possessions. There were dried products, wool and mohair. He also claimed for farm equipment, damage done to a field of wheat, ready for harvesting, furniture, crockery, and linen to the amount of £1315. After the war he stayed at Corneliassdal, the farm of Mrs Grobler and he paid £20 a year for rental. He also had some land from Mr A. Kolver on the half-share system. He only had 2 cows and 50 sheep which he got from the repatriation board (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1317, Ref 459, Archives, Pretoria, 1903, and vol. 1311, Ref 269).

from the Bethulie Refugee Camp to Philippolis, via Springfontein. Messrs van Heerden and GW Wentworth²³⁹ passed through on 9 August.

²³⁸ LUCAS DANIEL JANSEN VAN VUUREN of Hottentotspoort, Philippolis was a manager of the firm Sem and Mr Bulterman. He joined and surrendered. The Boers often came and tried to persuade him to rejoin but he remained neutral. Ultimately the British took him to the camp at Springfontein for his own protection. Two of his sons surrendered and rejoined again. In his claim, he wrote: “In accordance with proclamation no 4 of 23 April 1901 of His Excellency Sir Alfred Milner, Knight of the Grand Corps or the most Honourable Order of the Bath, Knight Grand Cross of the most distinguished Order of St Michael and St George, His Majesty’s High Commissioner for South Africa etc. etc. I beg to state that the losses suffered by me since the occupation of the Imperial British forces of this state and during His Majesty’s forces operating, are as herein stated. At about the 12 February 1901, these were taken by the columns under Colonel Pilcher and General Knox.” After the war he was a bywoner at Mr van der Watt where he had a bull, and about 200 sheep on the half share of the increase. Mr Gostling, the Superintendent of the refugee camp at Springfontein, described him as quiet and peaceful. He claimed £240 for 5 horses, 2 cattle, 6 donkeys, buggy with harness and furniture. He received £160 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1322, Ref 635, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).\

²³⁹ GEORGE WILL MURRAY WENTWORTH was a farmer on Palmietfontein, in the Colesberg district. He was residing on the farm Bultfontein on the northern bank of the Orange River in Philippolis district, before the war. After the occupation of the Philippolis district by the British forces he was appointed Justice of the Peace for the district. During October 1900 the British forces evacuated Philippolis and he had to take his family for their safety to Colesberg, in consequence of his assisting the British military. With the assistance of a detachment of troops at the Colesberg bridge, he was able to bring most of his livestock across the river. He had been credibly informed that the Boer forces had been in continual occupation on his farm and had at one time kept a laager there. He had every reason to believe that his property had been totally destroyed. Owing to the Boer occupation he had been unable to visit his farm and lived on the farm Palmietfontein in the Colesberg district. He claimed for the loss of property and damage done to buildings and fences and was awarded £950 (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 188, Ref 975, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

Sem himself made several brief visits to Philippolis. On 2 August 1902, he left with a cart and four mules, but he returned to Springfontein on 4 August, just as Dr Strachan left for Philippolis. At Springfontein, a Coronation Sports Day was held on 9 August. Thereafter, on 12 August, Sem left for Bloemfontein to stay with Dr Otto Krause, and to arrange a loan for P Snyman with Fraser and Scott. He returned to Springfontein two days later: “Meet Eben Potgieter in camp, he relates his experiences in Prisoner of War Camp in India, very interesting – It seems a pity he is so deaf”. On 9 September, he returned again, and came back to Springfontein with Mr Bulterman.

The following week, he went to Bloemfontein to arrange a loan of £250 for Mr AJ van Schalkwyk, with JG Fraser. “Mrs Krause very kind indeed – Meet Mrs Bamford²⁴⁰”. While he was in

²⁴⁰ WILFRED HUBY BAMFORD, of British birth, came to South Africa in 1890. He and his family lived in Bloemfontein but moved to Philippolis where he became a resident and general merchant. He wrote: “In October 1900, the Boers under Commandant Scheepers returned to Philippolis and raided the district and town. I joined the Town Guard which was formed to defend the town. We slept in the trenches for about 5 days before the actual fighting took place. After about five days fighting, we were relieved by Colonels White and Barker’s columns. Lieutenant Hannah of Nesbitt’s Horse reinforced the Town Guard with about 20 men. The Boers, during their occupation of the town, looted the stores of Mr WEA Webb and myself being the only merchants in town who took part in the defence of the town. Our loyalty thus being the direct cause for our loss.” He asked compensation for his losses: groceries, foodstuffs, grain, crockery, clothing,

Bloemfontein, he met Miss Janasch, who had received a postcard from Miss Fraser, that she and Mrs Fraser had left to Cape Town, as Rev Fraser was very ill. Mrs Sharp²⁴¹ returned with Sem to Springfontein. Sem was kept busy in the Camp.

On 11 November, Sem relocated to Philippolis. Soon after, he had to defend SD Vorster²⁴², who was prosecuted for having imported a gun and 50 cartridges without the required permit - “I got him off”.

£

On 27 November, Sem visited Mrs DJ Louw of Pienaarsfontein and Mr F de Bruin of Middelwater – “the people are very kind indeed”. Many people came to Sem to have their claims made

fixtures, glass cases, mirrors, 20 cattle, springwagon with harness, 2 carts with harness (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 185, Ref 904, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

²⁴¹ JAMES SHARP was postmaster and telegraphist in Philippolis (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1323, Ref 676, Archives, Pretoria, 1903).

²⁴² This could be STEPHANUS PETRUS MARKUS VORSTER lived at his mother’s farm Schietfontein, prior to the war. He surrendered and joined again. After the war he had a small portion of the farm Knoffelfontein of Mr Weideman where he kept 2 horses and 160 sheep. He also got 50 sheep from the Repatriation Board of Philippolis. He had 313 sheep which he look after for Mr van der Heever for which he received the half of the increase. He claimed for those as well as his own sheep: 700 imported merino ewes, 319 imported rams, 1186 mixed sheep and goats, 30 cattle, 2 horses, a buckwagon, a cape cart and furniture to the amount of £5682. The claim for his own loss was £2487 and he received £924.

out. “So I am kept very busy, only the work must be done on tick, no cash”.



THE FIRST POST CART ARRIVES IN PHILIPPOLIS AFTER
THE WAR, 1902
(COURTESY OF FREE STATE ARCHIVES, BLOEMFONTEIN)

Philippolis life gradually normalized. On 8 December, Mr Japie van Rensburg got married at Vogelfontein. By 23 December, “The tennis courts and the park are put straight again and we start playing there”. Sem spent Christmas 1902 at Doorndam, with

Mrs Norval²⁴³, the Bultermans, Miss du Preez, and Albertha and Sophy van Heerden – “Quite a nice day”.

A major event was the return of Rev Fraser and his family, on 1 April 1903. Sem, his brother Herman, and several others rode out to Houthaalberg to meet them.

On the same day, Sem concluded: “No more notes taken”.

The war was over.

²⁴³ Possibly Mrs HENDRINA LS NORVAL, who lived on the farm Boschduiwepok, near Springfontein. (Compensation Claims (CJC), Vol. 1305, Ref 38, Archives, Pretoria, 1903). Johannes Jacobus Norval died in the Bethulie concentration camp on 29 September 1901. His widow claimed compensation for chaff, wheat, beans, pumpkins and fowls, equipment, and a spring wagon, to the value of £195. She also claimed for 22 horses, valued at £160. She lost 25 cows, 8 oxen, 525 sheep, and 100 merino ewes. Their two farm buildings, and their townhouse, in Bethulie, were extensively damaged.

POSTSCRIPT: WHAT HAPPENED TO SEM’S FRIENDS AND COMPATRIOTS?

Undeniably, the war had a major impact on rural communities. In addition to the large number of deaths of men, women and children, many people were left destitute, and had to leave their towns and farms to make a living elsewhere.

The town of Philippolis was severely damaged during the war. The new magistrate, Mr van Heerden, arrived in the town on 25 June 1902. He wrote to the government of the Free State Colony on 5 July: “I made a thorough inspection of the town, and found (with the exception of one house that is occupied), that not a single house is habitable”.²⁴⁴ He managed to find some building materials and carpenters to start on the process of reconstruction.

The characters who flit so briefly through the pages of Sem’s diary remain tantalizingly obscure. What became of them after the war?

One trend appears to be that those compensation claims submitted by Sem were much more sympathetically done, and more likely to

²⁴⁴ Free State Archives, Colonial Office (CO), Vol. 79, no. 01, Ref 2329/02, 1902.

be successful, than the more dour and judgmental Mr MacPherson, the magistrate in Philippolis after 1902. Sem sat for weeks in the Springfontein camp, defending the interests of his friends and compatriots as best he could; Mr MacPherson, in contrast, was unsympathetic to people who had sided with the Boer cause – particularly those who had broken their oaths. So it is likely that the claimants who applied via Mr MacPherson got a worse deal than those who worked with Sem in the camp.

There are inklings from other sources which help us get a picture of Philippolis after the war. In particular, the Braby Free State Business Directory provide a record, from 1907 onwards, of all urban residents, professionals, shop-owners, and farmers in Free State towns. There are some occasions when the people listed in the Philippolis district can clearly be identified as the enigmatic shadows who weave through Sem’s history.

Of the townsfolk, **Herman Sem**, brother of Gerrit, was still living in Philippolis in 1907. **H Lategan**, who was arrested by the Boers, for being a Town Guard, was working as a baker in Philippolis in 1907. In 1910, **AA Enslin** was working as a carrier, and a **JA Enslin** was noted as an ex-sheriff. **HW van Schalkwyk** was a General Merchant, and **H van Schalkwyk** was

a butcher in 1907. **A Boshof** was working as a mason in 1908. The **Erskines**, who had to pack up their home in Rowelsfontein on 11 November 1900, were still living in Philippolis in 1907, with C Erskine working as a mason and R Erskine as a paperhanger. Mrs Boshoff, who also had to vacate her Rowelsfontein home, may have been related to **W Boshoff** who was living there in 1907. The Steytlers, who had to go to Springfontein in November 1901 were probably related to **JDH Steytler**, a General Merchant listed in 1907. Similarly, the **De Villiers** family was still resident in Philippolis in 1907, with Mr Z de Villiers working as an accountant for the National Bank.

Old Mrs Vorster, who was allowed to stay in her house during the round-up of 10 December 1901, was probably related to the **Vorster** family of Klipkraal, Theefontein, Droogeplaats and Bokpost, all listed in 1907. **W Maltmann** was still working as a General Merchant in 1908. **Mr Bulterman**, the shop owner, was still living in Philippolis in 1907. There were no **Louws** in Philippolis, but PJ Louw lived on Zooifontein. Japie Cronje may have been related to the **Cronjes** of Osfontein and Rowelsfontein in 1907. **Mr Beck**, a staff member at Springfontein camp, may be the JP Beck, Law Agent, listed in 1907. **Mr Kolver**, who hosted at church service for the refugees at his house in June 1901, may

have been related to RJK Kolver of Maritzkop in 1910. Eben **Potgieter** returned from India in 1902, and in 1909, Braby lists Mr JB Potgieter, photographer.

Of the men arrested in Waterkloof by the British on 11 November 1900, several were still linked to families in the area a few years later. “Old Mr Stulting” was rounded up by the British and sent to Springfontein in June 1901. In 1907, **H Stulting** was living in Waterkloof. Van der Linde was probably related to **J van der Linde** of Kaliesfontein and **H van der Linde**, a carpenter. Braby’s of 1911 mentions a **SC du Plessis** and a **DF Naude**.

Some of the Boers who returned from the Cape Colony on 1 March 1901, were Hans van der Merwe and D van der Merwe. In 1907, the **Van der Merwe** family lived on several farms: Smitsfontein, Buitenzorg, Slangfontein and Kleinpaardefontein. W Viljoen was also a member of this group, and a few years later, **Viljoens** were living on Schoonheid and Karreefontein.

Mr **FW van Heerden**, who was appointed as a Special Justice of the Peace in mid-1902, was still the resident magistrate in 1907.

Many farmers were still in the area. The **Gertenbachs** were living in 1907 on the farms Boshofrust, Corneliusdal and Grootfontein. The **Van Rensburgs** were living on Osfontein in 1908, but by 1912, it was owned by Eric Staples. In 1907, Van Rensburgs were living on Hamelfontein, Zonderhout, Druivenfontein and Schuilhoek. Mr **George Wentworth**, who returned to Philippolis from Bethulie in June 1902, was still farming in the district in 1909.

The **De Villiers** women, who were captured by the British in June 1901 may have been related to the De Villiers family of Tuinplaats in 1907. Similarly, **Mrs Naude** may have been related to NJ Naude of Waterkloof, and **Mrs Fourie** to the Fouries of Heilbron and Rhebokrand, listed in 1907. The **Ferreira** family was captured in August 1901; in 1907, Ferreiras were listed as living at Langkuil, Vetkop, Groenvlei, Brandkraal and Kaliesfontein.

The **Raal** women, who escaped from the Springfontein camp on 7 June 1901, were still living at Brandkraal in 1907, as well as Langkuil. (The Raals were recaptured by the British in August 1901).

The **Strausses** were living on Stillewoning and Rietfontein in 1907. The Snymans were living on Dwarsrivier, Vleiplaats, Hamelfontein, Linxfontein and Die Kolke in 1908. On 1 December 1901, Mr W Boshoff and Louis Boshoff were taken under a special guard by the British; several years later, the **Boshoff** family lived on a large number of farms²⁴⁵, but there was no mention of the Boshoff of Slangfontein. Braby (1907) mentioned H van der Merwe as the owner of Slangfontein. Old Mrs van Zyl, who brought vegetables and eggs to Sem, may be related to the **Van Zyls** of Houthaalberg, Vluchtkop and Driefontein, listed in 1907. **John du Toit**, who passed through Philippolis on 24 March 1901, may be the same JH du Toit of Vissershoeck in 1908. **Jos du Preez**, who assisted with the cattle inoculation in April 1901, may be the same J du Preez of Mimosa, or related to E du Preez of Karreefontein, listed in 1907. His colleague, “old Mr Hartman”, may have been linked to D and G Hartman of Hartebeesfontein.

Van Vuuren, who left his farm on 8 December 1901, was probably related to the **Van Vuuren** family who lived on Witfontein in 1907. The **Pyper** family was living on Theefontein

²⁴⁵ Paardefontein, Schoonheid, Jansfontein, Uitzicht, Langkloof, Knapzak, Driefontein, Winkelshoek, Kromdam, Zomersfontein, Rowelsfontein and Kareefontein.

and Appeldoorn in 1907. **L Fourie**, on whose farm the British camped for a month in December 1900, was probably related to the Fouries living on Heilbron and Waterkloof farms in 1908. Gerrie Snyman, who was lying ill on his farm Dwarsrivier when Sem’s party travelled through *en route* to Springfontein, may be the JJ Snyman or CJ Snyman of Dwarsrivier, listed in Braby’s in 1907. The **Van Schalkwyks**, who were rounded up by the British on the same trip, may have been the Van Schalkwyks of Bergpunt, Waaifontein and Swartfontein, listed in 1907.

AP Schoeman, who served in Bothma’s commando, was probably related to the **Schoemans** found on numerous farms in the district in 1907,²⁴⁶ and Japie Weideman to the **Weideman** family living on Vlakkfontein. The **Van der Watts** could be found in 1907 on the farm Kleinzonderhout as well as Philippolis Road. The **Lubbes** were living at Boesmansfontein. **Adrian Fowler** and **W Theron** were living in Waterkloof. **Koos Botha**, who “came to town and caused trouble” in February 1901, may have been related to HC Botha, a general merchant, A Botha, a carpenter, JA Botha, a mason, and FA Botha, a blacksmith, living in Philippolis in 1907. Hendrik Liebenberg, who brought some cattle to town

²⁴⁶ A Schoeman (Kalkfontein), F and M Schoeman (Kaliesfontein), F Schoeman (Knoffelfontein), GJA Schoeman (Rouwelsfontein), JN Schoeman (Zomersfontein).

for the hungry Philippolisers on 14 March 1901 may have been related to the **Liebenbergs** of Hartebeesfontein.

Some families continued in the district, even though individual members had died in the war. A van Straaten of Waterkloof had been shot and killed in Philippolis on 8 November 1900, and in 1907, **W van Straaten** was still farming in Waterkloof. **WJG Muller** was killed at Philippolis on 7 December 1901, and in 1907, **Mullers** were living at Kookfontein, Zomersfontein and Rowelsfontein. In 1908, the **Jacobs** family was living at Poortjie, Joachimsfontein, Mooigenoeg and Doornkop. **SJ du Plessis** of Kalkgat, whose child died on 22 January 1901, was still living on Kalkgat in 1908, and other Du Plessis farmers lived on Klipfontein and Kookfontein.

Some people had disappeared without a trace. There was no mention of Grobler, Orkin, Ortlepp, Munro, Krause, Dr Clark, Dr Stuart, Nickstraum, Janasch, Sanders, Haupt, Beyers, Cloete, Bamford, Bohmer, Read, Evenshed, Sutherland, Combrink, Fraser, Gerber, Steenkamp, Haasbroek, De Vos, Glack, Hockley, Enslin, Roux, Rooi, Brink, Claassen, Louw, Heckroodt, Norval, Jackson, Combrink, Kotze and De Bruin.

APPENDIX: THE HUMAN COST OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Philippolis residents were spread over four concentration camps: Springfontein, Bethulie, Norvalspont and Orange River.

The amount of information publicly available for these camps vary significantly.

A most interesting visit, for the latterday Boer War enthusiast, is Bethulie. Remarkably, many of the gravestones have been preserved. These gravestones were carved out of sandstone in the camp itself. What is particularly important is that the gravestones list not only the names of the deceased, but also their district and farm of origin. It is therefore relatively easy to identify the Philippolis victims. Unfortunately, this information is not provided in other concentration camp cemeteries in the region (such as Springfontein and Norvalspont).

The Table below provides the most up-to-date current listing of deaths in the two concentration camps of Bethulie²⁴⁷ and Springfontein²⁴⁸. This seemingly prosaic list of names, districts

²⁴⁷ Information drawn from Raath and Louw (1991b: 176-210).

²⁴⁸ Information drawn from Raath and Louw (1991: 194-206).

and farms conceals a fascinating set of questions about the social and geographic origins of the deceased of Bethulie Camp. Many of the dead were infants and young children, although there were also many middle-aged and elderly victims.

BETHULIE

Name	Surname	Age at death	Farm	Grave-stones at Bethulie cemetery
Eleanor Elisa	Barnard	2	Driefontein	
Hester W	Barnard	42	Driefontein	
Andries J	Barnard	7	Driefontein	
Harm L	Barnard	3	Driefontein	
Andries S	Barnard	5	Driefontein	
Marie CM	Van Heerden	7	Driefontein	
Willem Hendrik	Boshoff	10	Driefontein/ Kromdraai	
Jan H	Boshoff	1	Driefontein/ Kromdraai	
Johannes L	Schenk	4	Driefontein	
Jan G	Barnard	2	Roodepoort Rooipoort?	
Hester J	Barnard	69	Alwynskop	
Cornelia	Wessels	3	Alwijnskop	
Hendrik P	Wessels	4	Alwijnskop	

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AWC	Barnard	?	Winkelshoek Bethulie district?	
Maria M	Becker	2	Langkuil	
Jan P	Prinsloo	2	Langkuil	
M. Susanna h	Boshoff	3	Langkloof	
Gertruid a E	Boshoff	20	Langkloof	
Jan J	Boshoff	1	Kromdam	
Amarent ia M	Boshoff	3 m	Loopfontein	
Hendrik B	Snijman	8	Leupfontein Loopfontein?	
Susan ME	Botha	44	Elandsdam Colesberg?	
Cornelia M	Botha	3	Elandsdam Colesberg?	
Johanna C	Botha	1	Elandsdam Colesberg?	
Gertruid a ES	Burgher	2 m	Bloedfontein	
Stephan us Janse	De Swardt	4	Vooruitzicht Uitzicht?	
Maria JM	Drotsky	64	Doornhoek Doorndam?	
Aletta SC	Du Plessis	18	Kalkgat	
Hester SC	Du Plessis	14	Kalkgat	x
Lucia F	Du Plessis	8	Kalkgat	
Marie J	Du Plessis	5	Klein Waaihoek	x
Nicolaas H	Du Preez	18	Philippolis	
Catrina S	Du Toit	50	Klein Philippolis	
Willem K	Du Toit	11	Klein Philippolis	

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Franz J	Du Toit	1	Klein Philippolis	
Catharina E	Du Toit	50	(Klein?) Philippolis	
Martinus	Erskine	7 m	Philippolis	
Hester JJ	Ferreira	6	Kalliesfontein	x
James	Hawkins	71	Philippolis	
Annie A	Jackson	32	Klein Draaikloof	x
Richard Kasper	Jackson	1	Klein Draaikloof	
JA	Jackson	?	Klein Draaikloof	
Anna Christina	Jacobs	24	Joachimsfontein	x
Louisa JE	Jacobs	40	Poortje	x
Johanna ME	Jacobs	16	Poortje	x
Louisa JE	Jacobs	10	Poortje	x
Jan J	Jacobs	5 of 15	Poortje	
Jacoba I	Jacobs	2	Poortje	
Margaretha A	Jacobs	?	Poortje	
Isabella S	Jacobs	1	Florence	
Susanna Dorothea	Jacobs	1	Bulskop	
Daniel J	Jacobs	6	Bulskop	
Tobia J (Louis E?)	Kotze	1	Droogeplaats	X?
Nicolina B	Linde	12	Bankfontein	
Cornelia	Marais	21	Baaiskloof	
Christiaa	Marais	1	Baaiskloof	

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n de Wet				
Stephanus P	Naude	7	Wolvekop	
Jurgens J	Naude	4	Wolvekop	
Martha Marie	Naude	2	Wolvekop	
Martha LM	Pienaar	10	Wolvekop	x
Willem	Van Aswegen	2	Wolvekop	
Johannes Gideon	Pretorius	57	Waaiohoek	
Johanna W	Vorster	1	Waaiohoek	
Anna ME	Roelofse	7	Dwaalfontein	
Nicolaas J (James?)	Roelofse	16	Dwaalfontein	X?
Nicolaas C	Roelofse	14	Dwaalfontein	
JHH	Roelofse	?	Philippolis Plaas?	
MME	Roelofse	?	Boesmansfontein	
J	Roelvert	23	Distrik Philippolis	
Hester J	Roux	5	Wildevondrand Wildevondrand?	
Albertus P	Roux	2	Wildevondrand	
Hendrik	Roux	2	Ongelukfontein	
Aletta K	Roux	1	Ongelukfontein	x
Hester S	Saaiman	2	Somersfontein	
Tomas J	Saaiman	1	Somersfontein	x

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Petrus D	Saaiman	23	Pijperfontein	
HG	Sanders	?	Vechtkop	
Fred P	Staander	1	Vechtkop	
Christina Catrina	Schoeman	48	Nooitgedacht	
Helena C	Schoeman	6	Nooitgedacht	
Gerhard us	Schoeman	2	Nooitgedacht	
J	Schoeman	3	Nooitgedacht	x
Hester S	Schoeman	3	Damplaas	
Gerbrec ht	Smith	20	Brandkraal	
Johannes EA	Smith	8 m	Brandkraal	
Martha C	Snijman	18	Krielsfontein	
Johannes D	Snijman	9	Krielsfontein	
Hendrik N	Snijman	12	Draaikloof	
Emmare nzia M	Snijman	79	Koopmansfont ein	
Hester S	Snijman	4	Vleiplaas	
Johanna S	Snijman	2	Druivefontein	
Maria S	Snijman	2	Druivefontein	
Anna MS	Strauss	48	Maagzeer	
Petrus J	Van der Walt	12	Vaalbank	
Marie JM	Van Eeden	8	Doornhoek	
Gert Christiaan	Van Eeden	4	Doornhoek	
Martinus G	Van Eeden	1	Doornhoek	
Gert C	Van Eeden	14	Doornhoek	
Marie M	Van	5	Ospoort	

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	Rensburg			
Martha A	Van Rensburg	1	Ospoort	
Anna Jansen	Van Rensburg	1	Schuilhoek	x
Dirk J	Van Schalkwyk	76	Pienaars-fontein	
Maria H	Van Schalkwyk	55	Pienaars-fontein	
Dirk J	Van Schalkwyk	4	Pienaars-fontein	
Sus P Janse	Van Vuuren	5	Korenfontein	
Maria	Van Vuuren	4	Ziebosch	
Petrus J	Venter	12	Klein Paarde-fontein? Vaalbank?	x
Sophia A	Weidemann	15	Schietfontein	
Wilhelm ina J	Weidemann	12	Schietfontein	
Roelof	Weidemann	5	Schietfontein	
Johannes P	Weidemann	2	Schietfontein	
Stephan us P	Weidemann	6	Schietfontein	
Magdalena S	Weidemann	1	Schietfontein	



GRAVESTONE IN BETHULIE CONCENTRATION CAMP CEMETERY

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SPRINGFONTEIN

In this table, information about the deceased’s farm of origin was not available.

Name	Surname	Age at death	Date of death	Grave no.
Petrus	Pretorius	1	20 Apr 1901	220
Catharina	Van Rensburg	41	10 June	265
Wilhelmina Jacoba	Du Plessis	3	20 Julie	342
Willem Barend	Boshoff	9 months	27 Julie	359
Izak Albertus	Louw	2	26 Julie	364
Hermanus Frederick	Van Schalkwyk	1	7 Aug	381
Elizabeth Gertruida	Louw	4	15 Aug	395
Johannes Lambertus	Nortje	12	18 Aug	399
Cornelius Daniel	Van Vuuren	1	2 Sept	411
Susara Maria	Lodewyk	58	6 Oct	447
Androyost	Afroud?	2	8 Oct	450
Cornelius Johannes	Louw	6 months	15 Oct	458
Christina Catharine	Cimkel	2	26 Oct	485
Anna Elizabeth	Van Schalkwyk	5 months	28 Oct	490
Daniel Jacobus	Jacobs	63	8 Dec	581
Elena Catharina	Van Heerden	2 months	16 Dec	592
Johanna	Van	59	16 Dec	592

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Susanna	Heerden			
Susanna Susara	Lubbe	48	30 Dec	618
Hester Sophia	Louw	1	17 Jan 1902	650
Johanna Magdalena	Du Toit	87	18 Feb	702
Sara Maria	Snyman	14	26 Feb	717
Johannes Frederick	Erskine	73	12 Mei	764



NG CHURCH, PHILIPPOLIS

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