

**Fransjohan Pretorius**, *The A to Z of the Anglo-Boer War*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010. ISBN 978-0-8108-7269-3; lvii plus 571 pages. Price: R549.95 at Protea Book House or \$45 at orders@rowman.com or Amazon.com or Kalahari net

In the course of the twentieth century and up to today, approximately 2 700 books, as well as thousands of articles in newspapers and in both popular and scholarly journals, have been published on the history and many other facets of the Anglo-Boer War. After all, that war is thus far the bloodiest conflict that has taken place in Southern Africa. It was also the biggest, most expensive, and in a certain sense the most humiliating war in which the British Army was involved in the course of nearly a century, from the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 to the outbreak of the Great (First World) War in 1914. The war that – according to some people on the side of both the Boers and the British – was supposed to have been something of the past by Christmas 1899, eventually dragged on for nearly 32 months. It was the first modern war of the twentieth century, and a precursor of the bitter and destructive guerrilla and total wars of that turbulent century. The Anglo-Boer War led to much death and destruction, primarily because of the stubborn (and to a large extent futile) resistance by the republican forces, and the concomitant British scorched-earth policy. The traumatic legacy of the war cast a long shadow over the history of twentieth-century South Africa.

So far there have been several attempts to compile and publish general dictionaries or guides with regard to all the facets of the war of 1899 to 1902. See in this regard, for example, D Hall, *The Hall handbook of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (1999) and BJ Barker, *A concise dictionary of the Boer War* (1999). The latest, most comprehensive, most informative and, without any doubt, the most successful attempt in this regard, is Fransjohan Pretorius's 629-page work entitled *The A to Z of the Anglo-Boer War*, comprising the 200<sup>th</sup> publication in the A to Z Guide Series published by the Scarecrow Press, Inc. in the United States of America (2010). Previously, the same text was published in 2009 as the *Historical dictionary of the Anglo-Boer War*, also by the Scarecrow Press, Inc. in the United States of America.

"The A to Z Guide Series" deals with a variety of wars, countries and other topics, for example *The A to Z of Islam* (2002 and 2009), *The A to Z of the Korean War* (2009), *The A to Z of the Holocaust* (2005), *The A to Z of the Persian Gulf War 1990-1991* (2007), *The A to Z of Utopianism* (2009), *The A to Z of Scandinavian literature and theatre* (2009), *The A to Z of the Eisenhower era* (2009), *The A to Z of Ancient Egypt* (2010) and *The A to Z of the Zulu wars* (2010).

In his *The A to Z of the Anglo-Boer War*, Fransjohan Pretorius introduces the reader in various ways to all conceivable aspects of the war. Firstly, in the chronology (pp. xxiii-xxvii), he highlights the major events which took place during the war's 964 days. Then, in the comprehensive introduction (pp. xxix-lvii), he discusses the background to and causes of the war, provides a review of the

three (semi-) conventional phases and the drawn-out guerrilla phase of the conflict, and finally, discusses the consequences, aftermath and historical importance of the war. The main details of the publication are to be found in the dictionary section (pp. 1-510), which comprises more than 600 entries on all the major battles and important clashes of the war, including some lesser-known ones; well-known as well as lesser-known political leaders, military commanders and other important and/or interesting characters; weapons and other equipment; supplies and communications; the role of black people, coloured people and Asians; the role of women; and many other aspects. Where possible and necessary, there are cross-references in the dictionary entries.

The book also contains a list of abbreviations (pp. xiii-xiv), nine maps (pp. xv-xxii), and a comprehensive source list (pp. 511-569), which includes a discussion of the consulted sources. Anyone who would like to know more about the Anglo-Boer War should certainly consult this detailed source list for information on additional literature. Sixteen photographs and other illustrations have been included between pages 262 and 263. One could argue that ideally, more photographs should have been included, for example one for every person included in the dictionary, as well as more maps; but in that case, the already bulky publication would have become unwieldy and difficult to consult.

The dictionary/encyclopaedia entries obviously include the well-known battles at, for example, Stormberg (pp. 434-436), Magersfontein (pp. 259-262), Colenso (pp. 90-92), Spioenkop (pp. 425-428), and Bergendal/Dalmanutha (pp. 33-36, 112); but the somewhat lesser-known clashes that took place at, for example, Blood River Post, Itala and Fort Prospect, are not included. The well-known sieges are covered: Ladysmith (pp. 236-238), Kimberley (pp. 212-215) and Mafeking/ Mafikeng (pp. 255-258), but not the lesser-known ones, for example, Vryburg. There are entries for General Louis Botha (pp. 50-53), General Christiaan de Wet (pp. 120-121), General Koos de la Rey (pp. 114-116), General Redvers Buller (pp. 62-64), Lord Roberts (pp. 388-391) and Lord Kitchener (pp. 217-219), but also for people such as Lambert Colyn (p. 95), Major Henri Gustave Joly de Lothbiniere (pp. 202-203), General "Ou Kat" Joubert (p. 203), Colonel Yevgeny Yakovlevich Maximov (pp. 271-272), Johannes Jacobus Morgendaal (pp. 291-292), Sarah Raal (p. 362) and naval Captain Sir Percy Scott (pp. 410-411). People who do not feature and who could have been mentioned include, for example, Commandant Japie Nesor, a controversial Cape rebel.

Attention is given to countries (and volunteers from those countries) including Australia (pp. 19-21), New Zealand (pp. 301-303), and Canada (pp. 72-75); volunteers in general who fought on the side of the Boers (pp. 480-481); the position and role of the Cape Colony (pp. 75-76) and Natal (pp. 297-298); prisoners of war (pp. 355-359); women, especially in terms of the internment camps (pp. 102-106,

499-501); black people (pp. 42-44), coloureds (pp. 93-94) and Asians (pp. 192-193); medical aspects (pp. 274-278), and the peace negotiations that took place at Middelburg (February-March 1901) (p. 282) and at Vereeniging and Pretoria (May 1902) (pp. 472-474).

Other entries (too numerous to all be mentioned here) include information on maps (pp. 263-265); the role played by towns such as Colesberg (pp. 92-93), Bethlehem (p. 37) and Pietersburg (Polokwane) (pp. 323-324) during the war; the British use of balloons (pp. 26-27); alcohol use and misuse by both sides during the war (pp. 7-8); art and the war (pp. 15-16); martial law (pp. 267-270); punishment meted out by the Boers to fellow republicans, for example “saalpak” (p. 400); food, such as “stormjaers” (p. 436); war correspondents (pp. 482-486) and Zululand’s role during the war (pp. 507-510).

Fransjohan Pretorius’s *The A to Z of the Anglo-Boer War* is indeed a well-balanced, handy and reliable guide to anyone who wants to find out more about the most comprehensive, destructive and influential war that has thus far been fought in southern Africa. The book is the culmination of many years of painstaking research with regard to every facet of the Anglo-Boer War and everything connected to it. The encyclopaedia can be read from A to Z and/or can be kept at one’s side as a useful reference guide when one is reading any other book or article about the war, or watching a television documentary (or listening to a radio programme) that deals with the war. It can be consulted to good advantage by professional historians and other researchers, students at school or university and college level, and also by the interested lay person. It is an excellent publication that will definitely not gather dust, and is strongly recommended, both as essential reading and as an indispensable addition to any Anglo-Boer War collection.

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