THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP IN DURBAN, 1901-1902

by

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PREFACE

Over the past century comparatively few comprehensive historical works have been written on the controversial and emotional issue of Anglo-Boer War concentration camps, leaving ample room for the latter-day historian to attempt to revisit this issue during the time of the centenary commemorations. Studies which have appeared on this topic, cover the historiographical spectrum. J.C. Otto's work, *Die konsentrasiekampe,* published in 1954, was written from a staunch Afrikaner nationalist perspective, which served to call up A.C. Martin's *The concentration camps 1900-1902: facts, figures and fables* in 1957 as the British counter-argument. In the forty years since then, only three Masters degree research projects on the concentration camps have appeared: J.L. Hattingh, *Die Irenekonsentrasiekamp*; J.A. Krugell, *Die Pietersburgse Konsentrasiekamp* and J.J. Roodt, *Die Port Elizabethse Konsentrasiekamp, 1899-1902.* A work of monumental value during this period was S.B. Spies' *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics, January 1900 - May 1902*, which went a long way towards filling the void in the historical understanding of the fate of the Boer civilians. In the past few years, A.W.G. Raath and R.M. Louw have completed studies on a number of concentration camps. Recently, researchers such as S.V. Kessler and B.E. Mongalo shifted the emphasis to the neglected history of black concentration camps.

In spite of the above-mentioned works, no detailed academic research has as yet been done on any of the Natal concentration camps, leaving ample room for examinations into concentration camps in this geopolitical area. Proceeding from the viewpoint that the British concentration camp system during the Anglo-Boer War was part and parcel of the British military strategy and, as such, a necessary evil, this study aims to address and redress this shortcoming by placing the research focus on the largest concentration camp created during the Anglo-Boer War, namely the Merebank Concentration Camp. The study will, *inter alia*, address the following issues from a historical-scientific perspective, in an effort to obtain answers to several central questions: What were the exact reasons for the establishment of the Merebank Concentration Camp? Why was the Merebank Camp unique within the concentration camp set-up during the Anglo-Boer War? What exactly was life like in the camp? What

economic and other advantages did the Merebank Camp bring for the inhabitants of Durban and surrounding areas? What psychological impact did the removal of thousands of women and children to an area outside the Boer republics have on these civilians?

Before the reasons for the creation of the camp are discussed (see Chapter 2), the origins of the British concentration camp system are discussed in the introductory chapter. In Chapter 3, the camp administration and organisation are outlined. In the next chapter the focus falls on the camp inhabitants and their interaction with the environment. Then life in the camp is examined. The latter subject constitutes such a voluminous part of the study that it was decided to divide it into three chapters. The first of these chapters concerns itself with those issues over which the camp inhabitants had no control, namely accommodation, rations and education, while the second deals with those daily activities which were largely in their hands, namely religion, recreation, economics, politics and morals. The relationship between the people of colour and whites is also illuminated in this chapter. The third, and final chapter relating to camp life, is devoted to health matters, for the sole reason that concentration camps are historically associated with ill-health and death. Chapter 8 focuses on the interaction between the Merebank Concentration Camp and the city of Durban. The final chapter deals with events in the Merebank Camp after peace was declared, as well as the breaking up of the camp, and a concluding perspective is given.

This study is primarily based on archival research. Much archival material, especially in the form of official monthly reports, the British Command Papers, letters, despatches and documents exist, proving of great assistance in offering information about the administration and running of the camp. Insight regarding camp life and the influence the internment had on the camp inhabitants was, to a great extent, provided by the camp inhabitants themselves. Published diaries such as *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, personal reports that were included in the compilations of women such as Emily Hobhouse, M.M. Postma, and E. Neethling, provide a wealth of information. Sources in private collections of individuals, who were prepared to share their archivalia, supplied the researcher with fresh historical

perspectives. Newspaper reports, although giving a rather one-sided view, were found to be valuable, especially in ascertaining the attitude of the press and the Colony of Natal towards the Merebank Camp inhabitants. Numerous photographs served as valuable visual images of what life might have been like in Merebank.

As with any historical research, certain obstacles were encountered. No map accompanies the study because, despite a reference to one in the inventory of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, no map of the camp or even a reference to its exact location could be found. However, a photograph of the camp was discovered and donated to the author by Mrs Ina van Rensburg, and has been reproduced (see Appendix 3). Another problem was faced with attempts to locate the Clairmont Cemetery. According to several secondary sources, the Clairmont Cemetery was moved from Mobeni to Stellawood. This was, however, found to be untrue. In actual fact the Clairmont Cemetery and the Jacobs Cemetery proved to be one and the same.

Throughout this study a concerted effort was made to be analytical and explanatory in approach, rather than descriptive and chronological and, for this reason, a thematic approach was employed. Owing to the abundance of archival material available, it was possible to portray an objective social history which sheds light on the relationship between the military and Boer civilians, and between the various political, economic and racial groups within the camp. The greatest value of this study lies, perhaps, in its attempt to address an area which has previously been neglected in the historiography on the Anglo-Boer War, at a time when there is renewed interest in the war as a result of the centennial commemorations.

In the spelling of the names of the camp inhabitants and Afrikaans place names, the British camp officials exhibited great diversity and little consistency. As far as possible, it was endeavoured to keep to the spelling in the archival sources consulted, except where blatant spelling errors occurred, or where a name had a variety of spellings. In such instances the original, or most probable spelling was used. In the footnotes and in the source list, capital letters were omitted, except where absolutely necessary.

Monetary values are expressed in the monetary system of the period under review,

namely pounds, shillings and pence, simply because of the difficulty of converting it into realistic present-day values. Regarding units of weights and measure, the imperial system was applied, while the metric equivalent was provided in brackets.

Numerous people assisted me during this study. As it is impossible to name them all, I would like to record my deep indebtness to the staff of the following archival repositories and libraries who assisted me during my research in a kindly and professional manner: the Durban Archive Repository, the Don Africana Library, the Killie Campbell Africana Library, the National Archives Repository and the War Museum of the Boer Republics. My hearty appreciation also goes to individuals such as the late Mr C. Hollenbach and Mrs A. den Hartog, and several others, who kindly allowed me access to their private collections. A special word of gratitude goes to the following staff of the Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository for their helpfulness, co-operation and friendly assistance during the many hours spent in their reading room: Patrick Dlamini, Neesha Gokool, Pius Mabi, Unnay Narrine, Pieter Nel, Federick Ngidi and Thami Ntuli.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. André Wessels, for his time, practical advice and professional support. Thanks also go to Heather Kohler for the proof-reading and language editing. I am also indebted to Prof. Hennie Kock, the Rector of the Durban College of Education, for his generous financial, logistical and personal support. I would also like to acknowledge the interest shown and assistance rendered by my colleagues at the Durban College of Education, specifically our library staff. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to my friend and colleague, Johan Wassermann, for all his support, encouragement, comments and for the valuable help he provided in so many ways.

All glory to the Heavenly Father.

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CHAPTER 1

THE ORIGINS OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

On 11 October 1899, war broke out between the two small Boer republics and the largest empire in the world, Britain. Although the causes of the war are complex, in summary it would be safe to say that the conflict could be attributed to the two opposing ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism being unable to coexist. Nobody expected the war to last long, but ultimately, instead of being a minor clash, it became a bitter conflict which dragged on for nearly three years and both sides reverted to unusual tactics to achieve their aim of winning. The Boers, in due course, resorted to guerrilla warfare, and the British retaliated by introducing blockhouses, clearing land areas, destroying property, arming black people, and erecting concentration camps for both white and black civilians. These methods led to widespread havoc, misery, starvation, overcrowding and death. It is thus not surprising that the leader of the Liberal opposition party, who later became prime minister of Britain, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, coined the term "methods of barbarism" when referring to the devastation of the country and the system of concentration camps.[1]

After the formation of the first concentration camp in South Africa in 1900, more than 40 such camps were erected for the Boer women, children and old men, and at least 66 were built for black civilians.[2] The concentration camps were to become a breeding ground for hatred and bitterness and would influence the political thinking and emotions of the Afrikaner for many decades after the war, continuing even up to the present.[3]

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1. A. Davey, *The British pro-Boers 1877-1902*, pp. 59, 108; S. Koss (ed.), *The anatomy of an antiwar movement: the pro-Boers*, p. 214.

2. S.V. Kessler, "The black concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902: shifting the paradigm from *sole martyrdom* to *mutual suffering*", *Historia* 44(1), May 1999, p. 131.

3. *Daily News*, 11.11.1999, p. 1. During the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to South Africa in November 1999 she was confronted in Pretoria by protesting Afrikaners demanding an apology for the death of nearly 28000 Afrikaner women and children in the concentration camps.

According to a generally accepted definition a concentration camp is "a place where selected groups of people are confined, usually for political reasons and under inhumane conditions. Men, women and children are confined without normal judicial trials for an indeterminate period of confinement. Camp authorities usually exercise unlimited, arbitrary power. Although many kinds of facilities have served as concentration camps, they usually consist of barracks, huts or tents surrounded by watchtowers and barbed wire. They are also known by various other names such as corrective labour camps, relocation centres and reception centres."[4]

By definition, a concentration camp can therefore be regarded as a place where certain groups or classes of the civilian population are gathered together under supervision to prevent them from engaging in activities which would be perceived as a threat to the ruling power. These activities could include the providing of vital information to the enemy or any other form of support. In the case of the Anglo-Boer War, this would imply that all Boer women and children, and black non-combatants who sympathised with and supported the Boer commandos in any way, would be seen as a threat.

Most Boer women had remained on the farms at the outbreak of the war, taking control and continuing with everyday farming activities. Although it was generally accepted that the woman's role revolved around the household, the Boer women were not always able to live in accordance with their customary gender roles. The men of the two Boer republics often left home for long periods to do commando duty, or they were involved in transport riding or moving livestock for seasonal grazing. They also left on missions to reclaim stolen stock or to go on hunting trips. All the responsibilities of running the farm were then in the hands of the women and their families.[5] The Boer woman was therefore no stranger to managing farms and fending for herself and her family. This in itself already made her, in times of war, a formidable enemy to deal with.

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4. "Concentration Camp", Encarta *(R)* 97 Encyclopedia CD-Rom, 1997.

5. L. Kruger, *Gender, community and identity: women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of Die Boerevrou (1919-1931)*, pp. 107-109.

Further proof of the capability of the Boer women was evident in the spiritual and material support they gave their men on commando, sending them messages of encouragement, letters, parcels of food and clothing and often important intelligence information. Others assisted the Boer commissariat, nursed the wounded and organized relief for indigents.[6] It therefore comes as no surprise that the British realised the importance of these women in the war effort and consequently saw them as an obstacle to ending the war, and they were thus prime candidates for concentration camps.

1.1 Concentration camps in modern history

Modern concentration camps were used for the first time at the end of the 19th century by General Valeriano Weyler Y. Nicolau of Spain, when he was sent to Cuba by his government in February 1896 to stamp out the Cuban insurrection against Spain. Weyler believed that he could do this if he cut off the supplies to the guerrillas. He thus devised a method whereby he divided the island into sections by building lines of fortification ("trochas" in Spanish), and by ordering the non-combatants to be concentrated in towns where they were housed in close confines in small huts, while their plantations were uprooted, their dwellings were burnt and their animals were driven away by Weyler's troops.[7] These fortified towns, to all intents and purposes, were nothing other than concentration camps.

Weyler had resorted to inhumane measures to prevent the guerrillas from receiving logistical support in terms of provision, men and information to carry out their campaign. He paralysed the country's agriculture while thousands died in overcrowded and insanitary camps. These methods aroused a great deal of condemnation in Great Britain, the United States of America (USA), the opposition liberal press in Spain and in articles in the *Cape Argus* in the Cape Colony.[8]

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6. F. Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 54; S. B. Spies, " Women and the war" in P. Warwick (ed.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War*, pp. 162-164.

7. A. M. Davey, "The Reconcentrados of Cuba", *Historia* 5(3), 3.9.1960, pp. 193-194; J. C. Otto, *Die konsentrasiekampe*, p. 41.

8. A. M. Davey, pp. 193-195; J. Ploeger, *Die lotgevalle van die burgerlike bevolking gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902* 5, p. 41 : 2.

Despite the ensuing human suffering and the outspoken condemnation of Weyler's methods, both Britain and the USA were to make use of the same techniques. Not long after the USA started using concentration camps to restrain Filipino guerrilla activities during the 1899-1902 insurrection in the Philippines,[9] the British also implemented them in South Africa to intern Boer women, children, old men and black civilians. This policy and action became synonymous with the British, so that years later when Hermann Goering was questioned by Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador to Berlin about the use of concentration camps in Nazi Germany, Goering replied by quoting from an encyclopaedia article entitled "Konzentrationslager" (concentration camp) which stated that such camps were "first used by the British in the South African War".[10] It should be mentioned, however, that the German concentration camps, where millions of Jews and hundreds of thousands of Russians and gypsies were liquidated, were different in intention to the British camps, as there is no evidence that the British Army or British Government ever had a policy designed to exterminate the Boer people,[11] even if, at the time, some of the Boers feared that this might have been the plan.

Numerous other countries, including Russia, Japan, China, Argentina, Indonesia, Cambodia and Bosnia have made use of concentration camps, albeit under different names, to intern political opponents and enemies during times of war and national emergencies. This phenomenon is still with us today, for as recently as mid-1999, it was estimated that 400 000 North Koreans died through the years in the concentration camps used by Kim Jong Il of North Korea to intern political opponents, and that a further estimated 200 000 are still in these camps.[12]

1.2 The origins of the British concentration camp policy

Immediately after war was declared on 11 October 1899, the Boer armies took the

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9. Kessler, p. 111; *The American peoples encyclopedia: a modern reference work* 5, pp. 350-351.

10. S. B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics, January 1900 - May 1902*, p. 296.

11. Kessler, p. 119.

12. "Let's focus on the North Korean political prisoners' concentration camps!", <http://www.nkhumanrights.or.kr/eng/life/index.html>, *s.a.*

initiative. They besieged the towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafikeng (Mafeking) and defeated the British forces at Magersfontein, Stormberg and Colenso during December 1899. Soon, however, the British started bringing new troops into South Africa and by February 1900, the new Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in South Africa, Field Marshal Lord Roberts, had his military strategies in place.

Believing that the war would end with the occupation of Bloemfontein and Pretoria, Roberts had directed his efforts into capturing the two Boer capitals. He was supported in this belief by his Chief of Staff, Major-General Lord Kitchener, who on 7 June 1900, two days after the capture of Pretoria, expressed the opinion that "the Boers have had nearly enough of it, and in another fortnight or three weeks we may have peace".[13]

With a vision of a soon to be negotiated peace uppermost in his mind, Lord Roberts issued a proclamation on 15 March 1900, two days after the occupation of Bloemfontein, which allowed burghers, who willingly laid down their arms and took an oath of neutrality, to return to their farms, with the promise that they would not be made prisoners of war and that their property would not be confiscated.[14]

Although several thousand Boers accepted this offer, believing that the war was lost, many continued to fight and to harass the British. By 5 June 1900, the British forces occupied Pretoria. A few days earlier, after the fall of Johannesburg on 31 May 1900, a proclamation was issued, as was done after the capture of Bloemfontein, offering those who voluntarily laid down their arms and took the oath of neutrality, the right to return to their farms with the promise that they would not be made prisoners of war.[15]

Once again thousands accepted the offer, believing that the war was over, especially as the Transvaal leaders had decided not to defend Pretoria, but rather to retreat eastwards along the Delagoa Bay railway line to Machadodorp.[16] But in reality the war

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13. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 90.
14. *Proclamations issued by Field-Marshal Lord Roberts in South Africa* (Cd. 426), p. 3.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
16. Pretorius, p. 26.

was not over. The Boer military leaders refused to accept the loss of their independence and claimed that the annexations of the Orange Free State on 24 May 1900, and the Transvaal on 1 September 1900, were invalid, since their forces had neither been defeated nor destroyed by Roberts.[17] The occupation of their capitals and the subsequent annexations did, however, force the Boer military leaders to reappraise their military strategies, and as a result they launched an extensive and well-planned guerrilla war against the British troops occupying their republics.

The so-called hendsoppers (literally hands-uppers; i.e. those Boers who surrendered) were to find themselves in a very awkward position as the Boer leaders did not recognise the right of their own people to contract out of war.[18] President S.J.P. Kruger of the Transvaal advised that if the surrendered Boers failed to forswear Roberts' oath of neutrality they should be treated as traitors and punished by being sent to jail,[19] while General Louis Botha, Commandant-General of the Transvaal, felt that by law he could force all men to join the commandos and if they failed to do so, he could confiscate their property.[20] These factors, in addition to the threat of being accused of treason under the republican martial law, and in the light of the renewed Boer victories, as well as the attitude of many Boer women towards hendsoppers, gave many of them little choice but to dishonour their oath of neutrality as they were also aware that the British forces were not always able to protect them from their fellow Boers in the field.[21] There were others, however, who preferred to remain loyal to the British and to leave their homes to settle in towns or areas under British control, rather than face possible Boer retributions.[22]

The British high command was taken by surprise when many hendsoppers renounced the oaths they had taken. The realisation that their carrot and stick method of offering

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17. P. Warwick, "Introduction" in P. Warwick (ed.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 60.

18. G. H. L. le May, "The Boer War" in *History of the 20th century* 1, p. 18; J. L. Hattingh, "Die Irenekonsentrasiekamp", *Archives Year Book for South Africa* 30(1), 1967, p. 85.

19. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 47.

20. B. Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, p. 396.

21. Hattingh, pp. 81, 85; A. C. Martin, *The concentration camps 1900 - 1902: facts, figures and fables*, pp. 1-2; T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 488.

22. Hattingh, p. 86.

the Boers the right to return to their farms in exchange for taking the oath of neutrality had not worked, forced the British to reconsider the situation. In addition, the renewed vigorous attacks on the British, and their communication lines as well as the raiding of the supply convoy, caused the British to come to conclude that it was necessary to reformulate their military strategies and to employ drastic and extreme measures to end the war.

The first of these drastic measures was introduced on 16 June 1900 when Lord Roberts issued Proclamation No. 5 of 1900. This proclamation declared that henceforth the homesteads on farms in the immediate vicinity of each Boer attack would be burnt, for Lord Roberts was convinced that no such attack could take place without the knowledge of the neighbouring inhabitants and civil residents in the area concerned.[23]

Train-wrecking by the Boer commandos became so frequent, that in a vain attempt to stop it, a series of proclamations, escalating in intensity, were passed, the first of which was issued as Proclamation No. 6 of 1900 on 19 June 1900. It reiterated the threats of the proclamation issued three days previously, but also laid down additional penalties, namely that the principal residents of the town and district would jointly be held responsible for the amount of damage done in their district; that a penalty depending on the circumstances of each case would be levied and recovered from each burgher of the district in which the damage was done; that the Director of Military Railways had the authority to order that one or more of the residents, who would be selected by him from each district, would from time to time personally accompany him on the train while travelling through the district where trains were being blown up, and that the houses and farms in the vicinity of the place where the damage was done, would be destroyed.[24]

The clause regarding the use of civilians to accompany the Director of Military Railways, even if this was an attempt to safeguard the trains and railway lines against

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23. Cd. 426, p. 10.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Boer attacks, was severely criticised by G.V. Fiddes, the former Imperial Secretary, and Major-General J.G. Maxwell, the man who had led the 14th Infantry Brigade on the march to Pretoria and who later became the Military Governor of Pretoria. As a result, Lord Roberts cancelled this clause by issuing Proclamation No. 9 on 27 July 1900, but he continued to favour the destruction of the farm nearest to the point from which the train had been attacked.[25] This meant that an ever increasing number of civilians, both black and white, were being left homeless.

Despite the measures taken by the British and the hardships endured by the civilian population, the Boers vowed that nothing done by the British to the Boer women and children would prevent them (the Boers) from continuing the war.[26] In a further attempt to subdue the Boers, Lords Roberts, on 14 August 1900, issued a proclamation which was more severe than any other issued before. It withdrew certain privileges which he had granted to burghers of the Transvaal by Proclamation 1 of 1900. While honouring the terms already granted to those who had so far taken the oath of neutrality, he refused to guarantee the freedom to those who might surrender in the future. A breach of the oath of neutrality would in future also be punished by death, imprisonment or the payment of a fine, while buildings harbouring the enemy would be at risk of being razed to the ground.[27] Lord Roberts took a further step on 1 September 1900, when he extended this stipulation to include the Orange River Colony (ORC), as the Orange Free State was known after it was annexed on 24 May 1900, stating that all burghers of this colony who broke the oath of neutrality by taking up arms again, were to be punished in the same way.[28] These proclamations were an admission that the lenient terms offered on earlier occasions after the occupation of Bloemfontein and Pretoria, had failed to achieve their purpose and that stricter measures were required.

On 25 August 1900, Lord Kitchener also issued instructions stating that "whilst giving protection to loyal inhabitants in his district, the General Officer Commanding will see

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25. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
26. G. D. Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling van die politieke denke van die Afrikaner* 5: *1899-1910*, p. 133.
27. Cd. 426, p. 14.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

that the country is to be denuded of forage and supplies and that no means of subsistence is to be left for any commando attempting to make incursions".[29] This order was not intended to punish the transgressions committed by the inhabitants, but rather to prevent the commandos from obtaining any support. In order to carry this out effectively the crops and property of every Boer, including those not on commando, were in danger of being confiscated or destroyed in Roberts' effort to bring the war to a close.

In September 1900 Lord Roberts extended his policy of burning down homesteads on farms to include the destruction or removal of all food and fodder supplies within a radius of 16 km of an attack. In practice this meant that an area of 547 km² was stripped of cattle, horses and supplies after every attack on the British lines of communication.[30] In reality, these tactics employed by Lord Roberts as a military solution to his military problem solved nothing. Instead they introduced and put in place principles which were to have far-reaching consequences and which ultimately created more problems.

Nearly all of the farms laid waste had been inhabited by women and children who, as a result, were rendered destitute. This left Lord Roberts and the British Government with three choices. Either the families could be left to fend for themselves on the devastated land, or they could be sent to the Boer commandos who would then be forced to take responsibility for their own people, or alternatively, Lord Roberts could accept the responsibility for their well-being himself.

It was not possible, for humane reasons, for Roberts and the British Government to leave the destitute people to starve. Roberts did, however, feel that he could use the destitute Boer women and children in a psychological ploy to force the Boers to surrender when they realised that their people would depend on them for feeding, housing and clothing. These victims of war were thus to be used as pawns on a military chessboard.

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29. L. S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history of the war in South Africa 1899-1902* 4, p. 488.

30. Pretorius, p. 54; Hattingh, p. 80.

In July 1900 Lord Roberts informed General Louis Botha that although the British had fed the homeless women and children since the occupation of the two republics, they were unable to continue to do so, as the damage done to the railway lines by the Boer guerrillas made it difficult to obtain the necessary supplies. As a result he sent some 2500 destitute women and children to the Boer lines in the eastern Transvaal, hoping they would find the responsibility too onerous and surrender. This ploy failed. When Major-General J.D.P. French occupied Barberton on 13 September 1900, he found that the Boer commandos had escaped into the hills, leaving the 80 British prisoners and approximately 2500 Boer women and children with enough supplies for themselves and Major-General French's troops for a fortnight.[31] Lord Roberts realised, especially after the annexation of the Transvaal on 1 September 1900, that he had no option but to take responsibility for these women and children who were now British citizens.

As early as May 1900 Brigadier-General E.Y. Brabant had suggested that surrendered burghers, as well as their black farm workers, be allowed to live in some sort of camp in the Cape Colony near the Orange Free State border, until they could return to their farms. This idea was also proposed in August 1900 by Major Harold Sykes from Potchefstroom, by Colonel A.H.M. Edwards of Krugersdorp, and reiterated by one H.R. Abercrombie, a British intelligence officer who served in Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen's intelligence section in the ORC.[32] Lord Roberts was, however, still resistant to forming such camps, but he finally consented, and on 22 September 1900 Notice No. 111 of 1900 was published in the *Gazette* in Pretoria, announcing that two such camps were to be formed to protect the refugees and their families in Bloemfontein and Pretoria.[33] Emily Hobhouse, a British humanitarian and social activist who had first-hand knowledge about the camps in South Africa, however claimed that a camp for homeless women and children had already been established near Mafikeng as early as July 1900,[34] while documentational proof exists

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31. Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, pp. 134-141; Otto, pp. 37-40.

32. Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, pp.145-147; Kessler, p. 120; A.M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, p. 56.

33. Cd. 426, pp. 9, 18.

34. Hobhouse, p. 33; N. Devitt, *The concentration camps in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902*, p. 15.

that a camp had been erected in Pietermaritzburg during August 1900.[35]

Although these so-called refugee camps were formed to provide for the families of surrendered burghers who either came in on their own accord or were brought in solely to save them from the reprisals of the enemy,[36] they also contained homeless women, children and old men who had not voluntarily sought British protection.[37] The term refugee camp is therefore a misnomer, and from their inception these camps cannot be classed as camps of refuge, but rather as camps to house hendsoppers, loyalists and republican supporters, who had come into the towns because of a shortage of food and clothing, or because in the absence of their menfolk they had felt threatened by the British and/or neighbouring Africans, thus making the term "concentration camp" far more appropriate.[38] Even certain English-speaking people were eventually to refer to these camps as concentration camps in their official documents.[39] One hundred years later the controversy Kitchener faced when in condoning institutions which were "innocently called concentration camps", still rages on.[40]

The concentration camp system expanded, with other camps springing up and before the end of 1900, seven such camps had been established in the Transvaal, four in the ORC, one in Natal and one in the Cape Colony, i.e. thirteen in total.[41] It had thus already become evident at this early stage that the plan initiated by Roberts to house the destitute people in camps, was to have far-reaching consequences, but just how far-reaching, was only to become evident under the command of Lord Kitchener who took over from Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in South

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35. Ploeger, p. 41 : 4.

36. Otto, p. 44.

37. Pretorius, p. 56; Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, p. 151.

38. Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, p. 128.

39. *Reports, etc., on the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 819), *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853) and others use the term "refugee camps" while *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (Cd. 893) uses the term "concentration camps".

40. *Mail & Guardian*, 11-17.9.1998, p. 19.

41. Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, pp. 150-152.

Africa on 29 November 1900.

1.3 Lord Kitchener expands the concentration camp system

Lord Kitchener inherited a situation which seemed to be worsening in spite of the fact that Lord Roberts believed that the war was over and all he needed to do was to leave the mopping-up operations to Kitchener. In actual fact the Boers under Generals C.R. de Wet, Louis Botha, J.H. (Koos) de la Rey and other officers, were as active as ever, and the British Army appeared totally unable to cope with the guerrilla warfare. In December 1900 the Boers invaded the Cape Colony for a second time, a second rebellion broke out in that colony and in the Transvaal and ORC there were renewed military activities.[42]

By the time Kitchener took over command, Boer optimism was mounting owing to successes with their guerrilla warfare. Kitchener realised that the situation was very much as Lord Alfred Milner, who had become the Administrator of the newly annexed colonies on 8 October 1900, had outlined in a memorandum to the Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain: "every farm had become a supply depot for the enemy, enabling him to concentrate at will and refit his commandos with food and munitions of war."[43] Thus, believing that every farmhouse was a centre of supply, information and rest for fighting Boers, whether the occupant was willing or not to supply this, Kitchener felt the military situation demanded new and stricter measures which deprived the enemy of this support in a planned and organised way. The remaining Boer women, who formed such a vital and important link in the communication chain and who, according to Lord Kitchener, were even more bitter and dangerous than the men,[44] were to be systematically removed "to work on the feelings of the men to get back to their farms".[45] Kitchener therefore selected to implement a threefold strategy which intensified, on a more formal basis and larger scale, the scorched-earth policy and concentration camp system initiated by Roberts.

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42. Pretorius, pp. 29-31.
43. As quoted in Martin, p. 5.
44. Hattingh, p. 90.
45. Spies, "Women and the war", pp. 168-169.

Firstly, Kitchener decided to flush out the guerrillas in a series of systematic drives, employing a method whereby the British columns would drive the commandos out in front of them and trap them against lines of blockhouses and barbed wire entanglements. Secondly, he continued Roberts' scorched-earth policy, sweeping the country bare of everything that could give sustenance to the guerrillas. This implied that all farmhouses, horses, cattle, sheep, crops and fodder had to be destroyed.[46] Kitchener saw the land clearance as a way to deal with the commandos. Closely linked to his land clearance strategy was the third part of his strategy, namely his determination to remove the women and children from their homes.

On 21 December 1900, he issued instructions that all men, women and children, black and white, were to be removed from the districts which the enemy's bands persistently occupied. They would be sent to concentration camps which were to be placed under military rule and erected near railway lines for supply purposes. Burghers who surrendered after this date would be given permission to go and reside with their families in these camps.[47] According to Kitchener this course of action was pointed out to him as the most effective method of limiting the endurance of the guerrillas by surrendered burghers, such as Meyer de Kock, who were anxious to end the war.[48] It might be noted, however, that even if the motive behind this act was the belief that the removal of the women and children would induce the fighting Boers to surrender, it is very unlikely that a man of Kitchener's military experience and his staff would have allowed surrendered Boers of low rank to determine his policy.

To support the three-pronged approach, burghers were encouraged to surrender in order to join their families in the camps. Kitchener believed that he had to make it attractive for them to do so and therefore distinguished between two categories: those whose families were neutral or whose husbands and brothers had surrendered, and those whose families were still on commando. Far better rations and accommodation

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46. Pakenham, p. 493; Pretorius, pp. 31-32, 56-57; F. Pretorius, *Life on commando during the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 14; Scholtz, p. 142.

47. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 183; Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War*, p. 31; Farwell, p. 393; Hattingh, p. 92.

48. Otto, p. 42; Amery 5, p. 86.

were reserved for those who fell into the first category.[49] These "starvation" tactics against the women whose husbands were still on commando failed in their aim to force the burghers to surrender, but resulted in much suffering, death and criticism from the Boers, British parliamentarians, the home and continental press, and British humanitarians.

Along with the above actions, Kitchener also decided to establish and make use of Burgher Peace Committees to send emissaries to plead for peace and to inform the men on commando about the new policy regarding concentration camps and surrendered burghers. When this method failed, Kitchener had to revert to Lord Roberts' version of using civilians such as Louis Botha's wife, Annie, to try to get the Boer leaders to agree to negotiate. With the help of Mrs Botha he did manage to get General Louis Botha to the negotiation table, but by the time he met Botha at Middelburg on 28 February 1901, the concentration camp policy was already well established, and after the negotiations failed, the policy was executed with even more vigour,[50] as proved by the following statistics: at the end of 1900 there had only been thirteen camps,[51] but by March 1901 there were 29 camps - twelve in the Transvaal, thirteen in the ORC, two in Natal and two in the Cape Colony[52] - with a total of more than 35 192 inhabitants.[53] By June 1901 these figures had increased to more than 85 400 and by December there were more than 117 000 inhabitants in some 35 camps.[54] At the end of the war in May 1902 there were 44 camps for whites with a population of at least 116 000.[55] Kitchener tried to justify this more vigorous approach when he wrote to Botha on 10 April 1901 stating: "As I informed your honour at Middelburg, owing to the irregular manner in which you have conducted and continue

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49. Martin, p. 7; Otto, pp. 83-84; Spies, "Women and the war", pp. 167-168; Ploeger, p. 41 : 17.

50. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, pp. 180-183, 202-209; Pakenham, pp. 488-489; G. H. L. le May, *British supremacy in South Africa 1899-1907*, p.96.

51. See p. 11, *supra.*

52. Cd. 819, pp. 35-42.

53. Hobhouse, p. 328. These figures are derived by adding up the totals of inhabitants in the camps in the ORC, Transvaal and Natal.

54. Martin, p. 31. According to Otto, pp.172-173 the total figure for December 1901 is 111 740, while Hobhouse, p. 329 quotes a "corrected" figure of 111 985. The aim of quoting these figures is to show how the camp policy was intensified, and this is obvious despite the discrepancy in the figures.

55. Spies, "Women and the war", p. 169; Martin, p. 31; Otto, pp. 172-173.

to conduct hostilities, by forcing unwilling and peaceful inhabitants to join your Commandos, a proceeding totally unauthorized by the customs of war, I have no other course open to me and am forced to take the very unpleasant and repugnant step of bringing in the women and children."[56]

1.4 The functioning of the camp system

At first the concentration camps were placed under the administration of the military sector, and controlled by military officers detached from the staff of various district commissioners, while all expenses incurred in connection with indigent families were settled as a war charge.[57] Owing to the increase in farm burnings and the forced removal of civilians into the concentration camps after 21 December 1900, the number of camps and their inhabitants grew in size and number. As a result Kitchener decided to bring about changes in the administration of these camps. On 19 January 1901 the Military Governor of Pretoria, Major-General John Maxwell, informed Milner that Kitchener had placed the responsibility of the camps with the civil authorities, believing that they had more time than the military authorities to look after the camps and to control the expenditure.[58] By 1 March 1901 the administration of the white camps in the ORC and the Transvaal were passed over to civil control under Milner. On 1 November 1901 all camps in Natal and the Cape Colony were also handed over to civil government.[59]

Major-General John Maxwell was placed in charge of the Transvaal camps and Colonel Hamilton Goold-Adams headed those in the ORC. At the beginning of 1902 they were replaced by Colonel S.J. Thomson and Colonel J.S. Wilkins respectively. The Natal camps were entrusted to a prominent citizen of the Colony, and member of the Natal Government, Sir Thomas Murray.[60]

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56. Ploeger, p. 41 : 19.
57. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 151.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.
59. Farwell, pp. 399-400; Otto, p. 70.
60. Amery 6, p. 25.

The black camps which had originated partly as camps for refugees seeking protection and partly as a result of the policy of clearing the country, were at first placed under white superintendents and in respect of organizational procedure differed little from the camps for whites. These camps were later, in June 1901, placed under a newly formed and separate department, the Department of Native Refugees under the leadership of Captain G. J. de Lotbinière, R.E.[61]

Each camp was to be run by a civilian camp superintendent who was given full control over the internal management of the camp, subject to orders received from headquarters. The superintendent was assisted by a storekeeper(s), a few clerks, a medical officer(s), a dispenser(s), a hospital matron, a camp matron and a few nurses. Extra medical assistance was provided by camp inhabitants who were paid for their help.[62] The superintendent, although he had a fair amount of freedom in running his camp, was tied to the camp site chosen by the military authorities and any changes regarding the site of an existing camp or the establishment of a new one, had to be approved by Kitchener. The influx of civilians into the camps was also controlled by the military and the superintendents were, in theory, to be informed well in advance of the arrival of new inmates.[63]

In establishing the concentration camps, the British authorities had given little or no thought to what they were doing, or how they ought to do things, or whom they were dealing with, and the camps were, in Lord Milner's own words, made in a "higgledy piggledy" fashion.[64] These camps were placed anywhere without regard to conditions, as long as they were set up in places where it was administratively and logistically convenient (i.e. near a railway line) and as long as they were secure from a military perspective. It seemed as if what happened to the inhabitants in these camps was of secondary concern. As a result, once the process got underway, many serious

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61. P. Warwick, "Black people and the war" in P. Warwick (ed.), *The South African War: the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p.204; Kessler, pp.125-132; B. E. Mongalo and K. du Pisani, "Victims of a white man's war: blacks in concentration camps during the South African War (1899-1902)", *Historia* 44(1), May 1999, p. 150.

62. P. Marais, *Die vrou in die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, pp. 86-122; Otto, pp. 70-82, 119-129.

63. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, pp. 194-195; Hattingh, p. 102.

64. J. J. McCord, *South African struggle*, p. 300.

problems and difficulties regarding accommodation, food, fuel, sanitation and general health conditions developed and these were only addressed after they had become so apparent or so pressing they could no longer be overlooked. In the meantime thousands died.

A detailed examination of the conditions in the camps in general is beyond the scope of this chapter.[65] It is, however, necessary to sketch the removal from the farms to the camps and the conditions in the camps very briefly. Once orders had been sanctioned, small units of British troops began making their way from farm to farm, burning or blowing up the houses after removing all portable contents. Boer families who had had their homes destroyed in this way were rounded up, generally allowed to take as many possessions as they could carry, and then they were taken to the nearest railway station by cart, wagon or made to walk. From there they were then transported to the concentration camps in open coal or cattle trucks with no or very little shelter, food and water. During these trips to the camps they suffered a great deal and were often exposed to such adverse weather conditions that many of them arrived at the camp of their destination weak or ill and with very little resistance. [66]

Once brought into the camp they were first taken to the superintendent's office where their names, ages, addresses, etc. were noted down. They were then escorted to their new homes, where the few earthly possessions they had been able to bring with them were dumped and they were left to fend for themselves.[67] From the available sources - official reports, diaries and accounts written by inhabitants of and visitors to the camps, and newspaper articles - it becomes apparent that the inhabitants suffered much discomfort. According to Emily Hobhouse this discomfort depended on the following five factors: the style and personality of the camp superintendent; natural conditions, particularly the proximity of wood and water; the distance from a base

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65. For detailed accounts on conditions in camps refer, for example, to Otto, pp. 57-168; Martin, pp. 30-71; M. M. Postma, *Stemme uit die verlede: 'n versameling van beëdigde verklarings van vroue wat tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in konsentrasiekampe verkeer het, passim*; E. Neethling, *Mag ons vergeet?, passim*; Marais, pp. 86-124. Also see Chapter 4, section 4.1, *infra.*

66. Marais, pp. 71-74; Postma, *passim*; Neethling, *passim.*

67. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 64; Marais, pp. 89-92.

store; the influence of public opinion, and the date when the camp was started.[68]

From the outset the mortality figures in the white and the black concentration camps were extremely high, especially among children. Inhabitants died largely from diseases such as pneumonia, dysentery, enteric fever and measles. The reasons for the high mortality rate included poor accommodation (initially only in tents), insufficient bedding, unsuitable diet (especially for growing children), a differentiated ration scale as applied by Kitchener during the early stages of the concentration camps, unhygienic and inadequate sanitary conditions, inadequate provision of water and firewood, poor selection of camp sites, incompetent superintendents, overcrowded camps in which contagious diseases spread easily among people who were unused to living in such close proximity, and a lack of medical staff to cope with the widespread disease. This was exacerbated by the fact that many inhabitants were suspicious of the camp doctors and nurses and preferred to use their own remedies (which were subsequently banned) to those prescribed by the medical staff.[69]

The British military also failed to take into account another important aspect of human nature that would influence the stay in the camps, namely the emotions or state of mind of the people they had uprooted and transported to the concentration camps.[70] All the experiences of the camp inhabitants, right from the start of the war - their capture, the destruction of their homes, the journey to the camp, the new living conditions which were so different to ones they were used to in the wide open spaces of their farms - must have been extremely traumatic and left deep psychological scars.

Until recently the whole issue of post-traumatic stress was not associated with the inhabitants of the concentration camps which existed during the Anglo-Boer War, but that it did exist is a certainty. Evidence of this is found in the diary of Susarha Nel, where she tells of women who gave up hope and who were placed in a separate camp

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68. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 197; Le May, *British supremacy*, p. 106.

69. Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War*, pp. 57-62; C. Searle, *The history of the development of nursing in South Africa 1652-1960*, pp. 210-225.

70. Farwell, p. 398.

called the "ooikamp" (ewe camp),[71] and in the writings of Emily Hobhouse where she refers to women who became very passive or virtually paralysed in the concentration camps. According to Professor Johan Snyman of the Rand Afrikaans University, this indicates that people were so seriously traumatised that they became severely depressed. Since 1982 this had been diagnosed as post-traumatic stress, a condition very similar to the Musselmann syndrome suffered by the Jews in the German concentration camps.[72]

These inefficiently administered camps with their extremely high mortality rates led to so much criticism and condemnation from a great many people in government, various humanitarian societies, the press and the Boers, that not only were the military and government authorities forced to try to justify their actions, but they were also compelled to introduce improvements. These improvements were to include a reduction in the size and overcrowding of the camps. It was at this stage that the camps in the coastal area south of Durban, in the form of Merebank, Jacobs and Wentworth, were to play an important role in the attempt by the British Government to rectify the problem.

1.5 Efforts to justify the concentration camp policy

From the outset of the Anglo-Boer War, there had been those, known as pro-Boers in Britain, who had been against the tactics used. It was, however, only once it became clear that farm burning had become a widespread practice that a chorus of protest was heard and that the British authorities were charged with emulating the harsh tactics of Weyler in Cuba.[73]

During the last quarter of 1900, the full impact of the severe military measures applied by Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener began to receive publicity in England. As early as 30 October 1900 there had been a report that people were being "concentrated"

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71. J. Bottomley and C. Luijks, "The diary of Susarha Nel and her ordeal in the death camp at Mafeking, July 1901 - August 1902", *New Contree* 44, November 1998, p. 51.

72. *Die Volksblad*, 15.10.1999, p. 1.

73. A. Davey, p. 57.

in the vicinity of Bloemfontein. On 24 November 1900, a military correspondent of the *Morning Leader* had reported that women and children were being abandoned on barren ground or even worse, herded as cattle and guarded by soldiers with fixed bayonets.[74] Articles like these in the British and continental press, widely publicized reports from humanitarians such as Emily Hobhouse, the condemnation and criticism by churchmen and Liberal Party MPs such as Henry Campbell-Bannerman and David Lloyd George aroused such heated debates and controversy that it made it necessary for both St John Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, and Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to defend the policy and remedy the situation if possible.[75]

Brodrick realised that the British public would not accept it if he told them that they had imprisoned Boer women and children to prevent them from spying, or that they had destroyed the homes of these women. He would have to structure his defence consistent with 19th century ideology about gender relations[76] with its emphasis on protection for women. He did just this when on 25 February 1901 he answered a question put to him in the House of Commons. He told his audience that the camps were voluntary camps formed for protection and that the British men were adopting the duties shirked by the Boers on commando who had deserted their families, leaving them to starve.[77] What he was in actual fact saying, was that the concentration camp system was forced upon the British command by the Boer generals themselves, for by off-loading the Boer women and children onto the British, the Boers relieved themselves of this responsibility leaving them free to fight the guerrilla war. Although it may be true that the Boers did leave their women, children and the old men behind, these men were, as Kitchener had stated, people with a domestic temperament[78] and they would not normally have turned their backs on their suffering womenfolk, but the Boer women insisted that the only way they could really be free would be if their men

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74. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

75. See Koss, *passim* and A. Davey, *passim* for details on criticism.

76. P. Krebs, " The last of the gentlemen's wars: women in the Boer War concentration camp controversy", *History Workshop: a Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historians* 33, Spring 1992, p. 44.

77. W. T. Stead, *The war in South Africa, 1899-19_?: methods of barbarism: the case for intervention*, p. 27; Krebs, p. 44.

78. Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, p. 189.

continued to fight for liberty. To impress their earnestness upon their menfolk they threatened not to feed them if they came home, and even went so far as undertaking to replace them on commando. There were also rumours that women were supposed to have said "Remain and do your duty [...] I can always find another husband, but not another Transvaal" (or Free State).[79]

Joseph Chamberlain used a similar line of defence on 2 August 1901 when he told the House of Commons that the concentration camp system was the only humane alternative to leaving the women and children on the "desert veld". It is, however, difficult to accept this when one remembers that Kitchener made a clear distinction between the treatment of different categories of inhabitants regarding accommodation and rations.[80]

By January 1902, Chamberlain had changed his tune and, as Lord Kitchener had done before him, he blamed General Louis Botha's declared intention of burning the farms of burghers who refused to take up arms against the British and he cited in mitigation Botha's reported statement that he was entitled by law to compel every man to take up arms. Kitchener reacted to this stance with the defence: "I had no choice but to continue my system of sweeping inhabitants of certain areas into the protection of our lines."[81] This was no adequate explanation as to why the concentration camps had been started in the first place, but rather an excuse for their continuation and an attempt to shift the blame to someone else, in this instance the Boer leaders, in a political climate where the opposition was asking more and more uncomfortable questions.

Kitchener himself seemed unconcerned about how the concentration camp policy would be received by the public, the press, the opposition or the people who inhabited the camps, but it soon became necessary for him to justify their existence. Over the

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79. R. Rankin, *A subaltern's letters to his wife*, p. 98; R. W. Schikkerling, *Commando courageous (a Boer diary)*, pp. 311-312.

80. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, p. 185; Spies, "Women and the war", p. 168; Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War*, p. 57.

81. Spies, *Methods of barbarism?*, pp. 186-189.

months he gave divergent reasons, which often contradicted each other, as to why he felt these camps were necessary.

One of his first explanations had been to credit the surrendered Boers with the idea.[82] Later he used the notion of protection as the main reason for the camps, when he stated that women and children had been removed from the veld for humane reasons. According to him nearly all farms were inhabited by women and children and "it was not possible on the plainest grounds of policy and humanity that these defenceless people should be left to the chance of starvation or to the tender mercies of the Kaffirs. Thus, the removal of the families to a place of safety, where they could be fed from British resources, was the inevitable corollary of the policy of devastation".[83] This argument is disputed by S.J. Maphalala who writes that no Boer woman and child who had remained on the farms by themselves while their men were on commando, was attacked or molested by the Zulus. He believes the good relations between the Boers and the Zulus were destroyed by the British.[84] Kitchener's claim must also be questioned, for the British employed blacks in a variety of ways during the guerrilla phase of the war, including using them to help with the destruction of farmsteads and crops, and to transport Boer women and children to the concentration camps.[85] Surely if the black people were a threat to the women and children and they had to be removed from the veld to be protected from the mercy of the black man, Kitchener had no right to use them when and as he did.

Kitchener persisted with the view that the camps were formed for humanitarian reasons in his telegram to Brodrick on 24 June 1901, wherein he stated "when the country was cleared of supplies by columns, women and children would suffer from hunger if not brought in".[86] He was, however, also ready to admit that the camps had also been established as a means of preventing Botha from forcing those who had

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82. Otto, p. 42.

83. Martin, p. 6.

84. S. J. Maphalala, "The murder at Holkrantz (Mthashana), 6 May 1902", *Historia* 22(1), May 1977, pp. 26-31; J. Wassermann, *The Eshowe Concentration and Surrendered Burghers Camp during the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, pp. 17-18.

85. Warwick, "Black people and the war", pp. 199-200.

86. Ploeger 2, p. 15 : 32.

surrendered to once again take up arms, and also to induce the Boers to surrender in order to be able to rejoin their families.[87] He thus saw the camps almost exclusively in their function of getting the burghers to surrender and in this capacity, making it a military solution to a military problem, where the object was to win the war as soon as possible by any means. To him the end justified the means.

Alfred Milner saw the whole concentration camp issue differently. He acknowledged that the establishment of the concentration camps was not a humanitarian act but rather a military solution required to deprive the Boers of their system of intelligence.[88] Similar views were echoed in a letter to a certain Mrs Montefiore on 11 September 1901 when Milner wrote: "The state of the country is horrible, death and devastation everywhere, as the continuance of this wretched and senseless guerilla warfare has forced the military to sweep the country from end to end."[89]

Further proof that the policy was a military measure again comes from the pen of Milner. Writing to the Uitlander Committee of Cape Town, he stated: "The formation of the concentration camps has been adopted purely on military grounds as a means of hastening the end of the war, which is, after all, the first interest of the refugees themselves, and as a military measure it is, I believe succeeding."[90] He failed to mention the suffering it had caused.

The *British Medical Journal* gave further substance to the military rather than the humanitarian argument when it maintained that, "The camps appeared to be a military necessity and it was doubtless regarded as more humane thus to mass the women and children than to leave them to starve on their half-ruined homesteads. The results, however, have been calamitous."[91] It was obvious that they refused to accept Brodrick's idea that the camps had been established purely for protection.

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87. Le May, *British supremacy*, p. 96; Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, pp. 188-189; Spies, "Women and the war", pp. 168-169.
88. Martin, p. 5.
89. McCord, p. 297.
90. Devitt, pp. 16-17.
91. Ploeger 5, p. 41: 21.

Another voice to dispute the rhetoric of protection was the suffragette, Millicent Fawcett, who had been assigned by Brodrick to lead a Ladies' Commission[92] to investigate the conditions of the camps on behalf of the War Office. She was firm in her assertion that Boer farms had been centres for providing information and supplies and that the women had therefore actively participated in the war. The camps according to her were thus a military necessity.[93] It became obvious at this point that while the War Office and Colonial Office felt the need to justify the necessity for white concentration camps, they felt no urge to do the same for the black concentration camps which housed as many inhabitants in even worse conditions, for not one black concentration camp was visited by the Commission.

In January 1902 General J. C. Smuts expressed some similar sentiments when writing to author and publicist W. T. Stead. He maintained that the British military authorities had adopted the policy of devastation and of treating non-combatant women and children as prisoners of war, not from any motives of humanity, but because they had expected it to lead to a speedy conclusion of the war.[94]

No matter how many divergent reasons were given to justify the existence of the camps, the anti-war elements and the opposition party in parliament used every opportunity to dig even further in their search for the truth. The truth was that the British had wanted to strike at the commandos and compel them to surrender by destroying everything and imprisoning all non-combatants. The establishment of the concentration camps had enabled the British authorities to clear the country of all civilians whose presence on the farms was considered to be undesirable from a military point of view. Of secondary importance was that the camps had also enabled the British to provide surrendered burghers with a guarantee that they would be safe from being compelled to fight again by their compatriots in the field. They had

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92. The Commission comprised Mrs M.G. Fawcett, Dr Jane Waterson (the first woman doctor in South Africa), Miss K. Brereton (a former nursing sister), Ms Ella Campbell Scarlett, Lady Anne Knox and Miss Lucy Deane (a government inspector of factories in Britain who had some experience in infant welfare).

93. Krebs, p. 46.

94. Ploeger 5, p. 41: 21.

anticipated that this would cause more Boers to lay down their arms,[95] but such an event did not transpire as Kitchener had hoped, for he and the British authorities had not taken into account the loyalty amongst most Boer men and women to the republican cause, which would not allow them to give up without fighting to the bitter end, regardless of the threat of concentration camps.

This Boer attitude placed the onus back onto the British who now had to accept the consequences of the product they had created. The *British Weekly* of 24 October 1901 included the following apt comment: "It does not involve any question of justice or injustice of the war. It is the business of every citizen to see that what can be done should be done with no regard to the gratitude or the ingratitude of the Boers. The little children must, so far as it lies in our power, be saved."[96] This goal became a major priority by the second half of 1901 and thus the authorities looked towards the Natal coast for sites for new concentration camps.

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95. Spies, *Methods of barbarism*?, p. 189.

96. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository (PAR), Ds. H. F. Schoon Collection (Accession A72): Newspaper cutting of the *British Weekly*, 24.10.1901.

CHAPTER 2

THE REASONS FOR AND THE CREATION OF THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP

2.1 Durban during the Anglo-Boer War

Once the authorities had taken the decision to construct new concentration camps, sites needed to be located. The choice for these sites fell on the Natal coast, specifically in the area just south of Durban.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the port of Durban played a vital role in the economy of South Africa. The close geographical proximity of the two Boer republics were instrumental in assigning this role to Durban.[1] The steady improvement in all forms of communication experienced in Natal during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the heavier flow of traffic to and from the interior after the discovery of diamonds and gold, especially after the completion of the nearly 800 km rail-link between Durban and Johannesburg in 1895, soon led to the port of Durban becoming the natural gateway to the Boer republics and the territory beyond.[2] By 1898 Durban, with its total population of 39 245, of whom 21 000 were blacks and Indians, was the economic heart of Natal and its hinterland and continued to grow in economic importance.[3]

After it had become clear that war was inevitable, it was feared that the Boers would realise the importance of the port and launch an invasion directed at the capture of Durban before the first British reinforcements could arrive.[4] This was a real threat, as the younger Boer leaders, such as General Louis Botha wanted to march to Durban, and as Botha put it some nine years later, it was only General Piet Joubert who

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1. B. Kearney (ed.), *The Anglo-Boer War: Durban - the gateway* (pamphlet), p. 1.
2. B. Guest, "The new economy" in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds), *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910: a new history*, pp. 304-311.
3 W. P. M. Henderson, *Durban: fifty years' municipal history*, p. 178.
4. T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 102; A. Duminy and B. Guest, "The Anglo-Boer War and its economic aftermath, 1899-1910" in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds), *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910: a new history*, p. 345.

"stopped me from coming to Durban in 1899 to eat bananas".[5] As a result, the defence of Durban became an immediate priority.

A year before the outbreak of hostilities, the British War Office, in conjunction with the Natal Colonial Government, had already drawn up a comprehensive strategy for the defence of Durban and when the war did break out in October 1899, this defence plan was retained in its essentials under the command of Captain Percy Scott.[6] Fortunately for Durban there was never any need to put this plan into operation.

As the war progressed, the harbour increased in importance, handling an unprecedented volume of traffic. Large numbers of troops, horses, oxen, sheep, supplies and other items necessary for the British war effort in the former Boer republics entered South Africa through the port of Durban. At the same time thousands of Boer prisoners of war (POWs) were sent to places such as Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) and India via the harbour.[7] Durban had now become the most important axis around which the British war effort revolved.

Several months before war broke out, when hostilities between the British and the Boer republics increased, many British subjects, the so-called Uitlanders, had begun to arrive in Durban, especially from the Transvaal. The outbreak of the war, followed by the initial successes of the Boers, caused an even greater exodus of the Uitlanders from the two Boer republics. Within a short time, all boarding houses and hotels were crowded and a special refugee committee had to be established under the chairmanship of the Deputy-Mayor of Durban, Mr J. Ellis Brown, to arrange accommodation, supplies and clothing for those who were more or less destitute. As a result of the influx of these Uitlander refugees, the population of Durban had leapt from 39 245 to about 60 000 in 1901.[8]

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5. Pakenham, p. 168.
6. Kearney (ed.), p. 4. Also see Public Record Office, London (PRO), ADM/23/134: Defence of Durban: approximate position of guns (map by Percy Scott).
7. Kearney, pp. 6, 14.
8. Henderson, pp. 182-183; J. Malherbe, *Port Natal: a pioneer story*, p. 170.

This rapid increase in the population placed a greater strain and responsibility on the local Durban authorities and the military, who needed to ensure that everything ran smoothly. To assist them, 80 new special constables were sworn in and martial law was proclaimed on 23 October 1899. Martial law prohibited anyone from being out after 23h00 without a pass and required all canteens to be closed by 21h00. Investigations into the private world of the individual became legal, while spies and suspected persons arriving by train or ship were kept under surveillance or jailed for suspicious behaviour. Furthermore, all postal correspondence, telegraphs and printed matter fell under censorship.[9] These measures made the average Durbanite aware of the reality of the war.

Despite these setbacks, the war also brought prosperity to the town and to the Colony of Natal. The large number of imperial troops and refugees from the Transvaal increased the demand for imports, thereby adding to the revenue which was obtained from customs duties. Durban thus benefited as traders acted as middlemen in providing military supplies, warehouses bulged, and heavy-engineering and other manufacturing enterprises responded to wartime demands. Canteens, shops, accommodation establishments and brothels flourished and numerous new jobs were created.[10]

Owing to the fact that Durban was outside the main arena of the war, many aspects of daily life continued as it had before the war. The Durban Corporation continued to hold their monthly meetings, discussing a wide variety of everyday issues such as crime, health, recreation and how much money was to be spent on buying new fans for the town library. [11] An event which proved just how far removed the war was from Durban, was the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cornwell and York in August 1901.[12] Because of their geographical distance from the battlefields, Durbanites had to rely on the local newspaper, *The Natal Mercury*, to

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9. Kearney (ed.), pp. 23-24; Henderson, p. 183.

10. Duminy and Guest, p. 351.

11. See Durban Archive Repository (DAR), Archives of the Durban Corporation (3/DBN) for details. Also see Chapter 8, section 8.4, *infra* for more details.

12. Henderson, p. 194; R. Russel, *Natal: the land and its story*, p. 312.

inform them on the latest developments in the war. Durban's secluded position created an isolated and pro-British atmosphere and it was this ethos which greeted the Boers who were sent to the Merebank Concentration Camp.

2.2 The reasons for creating the Merebank Concentration Camp

The Merebank Concentration Camp was not the first concentration camp to be erected in Natal. Prior to its establishment in September 1901, three concentration camps already existed in Natal, namely at Pietermaritzburg, Howick and Eshowe, the first of these having being erected at Pietermaritzburg in August 1900.[13] From its inception the majority of the inhabitants in the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp were considered to be "undesirables" or people of "suspicious character" or pro-Boer agitators, and these included the wives of Generals J.C. Smuts and C.R. de Wet.[14] The Howick Concentration Camp was established in January 1901[15] to hold similar dubious characters and its inhabitants were branded by Sir Thomas Murray, the General Superintendent Burgher Camps (GSBC) in Natal, as republican die-hards.[16] While these two camps housed mainly people who had been forced to live there by the British, 83% of the inhabitants in the camp at Eshowe were surrendered burghers from the Vryheid district, most of whom were eventually transferred to the Durban camps.[17] These three camps soon increased to four with the opening of the Merebank camp, created for entirely different reasons.

2.2.1 The humanitarian perspective

The horrific conditions in the overcrowded concentration camps in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony (ORC) in which thousands of homeless Boer civilians found

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13. J. Ploeger, *Die lotgevalle van die burgerlike bevolking gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, 1899-1902* 5, p. 41 : 4.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 41 : 5-41 : 7; J. C. Otto, *Die konsentrasiekampe*, p. 44.

15. Ploeger, p. 41 : 24.

16. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 553: H. E. McCallum - J. Chamberlain, 21.2.1902 (inspection report).

17. J. M. Wassermann, *The Eshowe Concentration and Surrendered Burghers Camp during the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, pp. 26-33, 63-66.

themselves, were responsible for the deaths of more Boer children under the age of sixteen than all the fighting men killed by bullets and shells.[18] The death rate in these camps varied from month to month, but during the autumn and winter months of 1901, they showed a steady and worrying increase. During May 1901, the average death rate for the ORC camps was 162 per thousand compared to the 105,15 per thousand in the Transvaal camps for the same month. In June these figures had increased to 178,8 per thousand in the ORC, and 238 per thousand in the Transvaal, and by August 1901, the respective figures were 332 per thousand and 305 per thousand.[19] These figures were substantially higher than the normal death rate of 19 per thousand in England at the same time.[20] These circumstances prompted Emily Hobhouse to approach the Secretary of State for War, St John Brodrick, to take immediate steps to counteract the horrific situation.[21]

The authorities could not plead ignorance of the conditions in the camps. Even before Emily Hobhouse had returned to England on 24 May 1901, bringing the plight of the Boer women and children to the attention of the British Government and public, reports on the concentration camps had appeared in the British and continental press. Brodrick too, had informed Lord Kitchener that very bad reports had been received about the camps.[22] These reports, which were later published in two Command Papers, made known the shortage of primary necessities such as food and shelter as well as the inadequate sanitary conditions in many camps. Randomly selected examples quoted in the reports included the following: in Potchefstroom there were no tents and the refugees had to be housed in crude reed huts, while in Johannesburg, families were put up in stables and had to hang up blankets for privacy. At Irene, water was drawn from an open ditch into which cattle and sheep often strayed. At Middelburg, Transvaal, where it can become extremely cold in the winter, some families only had one blanket each and hundreds of children had no

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18. See Chapter 1, section 1.4, *supra* for more details on the functioning of the camp system.

19. Otto, pp. 130-138. These figures show how many inhabitants died for every thousand people in the camp. If this figure equals 1 000 deaths per thousand it means extinction.

20. B. Farwell, *The Great Boer War*, p. 392.

21. Otto, p. 139.

22. S. B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics, January 1900 - May 1902*, p. 216.

shoes. [23]

These conditions, with the resulting deplorable death rate mentioned earlier, needed desperate and immediate measures. Lord Milner, the British High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Transvaal and ORC, realised this when he wrote to the Military Governor, Pretoria, Major-General J.G. Maxwell, on 20 November 1901: "It is clearly the desire of His Majesty's Government that expense should not be allowed to stand in the way when it is a question of providing anything necessary to improve the health of the camps [...]."[24]

The best way to improve the health and general conditions in the concentration camps was to reduce them in size and number. Various people in influential positions, including Milner and Maxwell, realised that the camps needed to be thinned out. The best way to do this would be to send a number of the inhabitants from identified concentration camps to the coast.[25]

Although it was important and humane to cut down in the size of the camps, the British were in a dilemma. When the camps had first been formed, they had promised the families of surrendered burghers that they would not be moved out of their own districts and country. Many of the Boers had surrendered on this distinct understanding. If they were now to be removed from these camps against their will, the concentration camp inhabitants could accuse the British of a breach of faith.[26] Feeling that they were bound to this promise, the British authorities decided to give the option of remaining or going down to the coast to all camp inhabitants, except those whose husbands or male relatives were still on commando, or those who had forfeited their right to considerate treatment by misbehaviour.[27] Misbehaviour included

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23. *Reports, etc., on the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 819) and *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (Cd. 893) have detailed reports on the conditions in the camps.

24. As quoted in Farwell, p. 408.

25. S. Koss (ed.), *The anatomy of an antiwar movement: the pro-Boers*, p. 223.

26. *Further correspondence relating to affairs in South Africa* (Cd. 903), p. 134.

27. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853), p. 109.

making oneself objectionable to the authorities by showing open contempt, hatred and disrespect or by merely being classed as "morally undesirable females" or bad characters.[28]

By removing some of the people the military authorities hoped to be able to decrease the size of the camps, including the new camp to be erected at Merebank, to below 5000 inhabitants each.[29] This was considerably less than the 7598 in the Potchefstroom Camp and the 6208 in the Middelburg Camp during the month of September 1901.[30] This move, which had mainly been a reaction to the thousands of people dying and the pressure exerted by the British and continental press and the various humanitarian movements and individuals, would make it easier for the authorities to administer the camps, to make better provisions for the people so as to make them more comfortable, and to keep the areas clean and more sanitary, thereby preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and reducing the mortality rate.

This removal of concentration camp inhabitants from the interior to the coastal camps was approved by the Secretary of State, Joseph Chamberlain. His motives for approving the move were, however, not humanitarian, but rather of an economic nature. By moving some of the camps to the coast, the railways would be relieved of the necessity of supplying them.[31]

2.2.2 Economic reasons

There were four railway lines connecting the harbour towns of Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town with the interior of South Africa.[32] The rail link between Durban and the Witwatersrand provided the shortest, quickest and most cost-effective route which could used by the British to convey supplies, remounts, equipment and soldiers needed in the interior to fight the war. It enabled them to build

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28. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.5.1902 (monthly report).
29. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).
30. Otto, p. 172.
31. Spies, p. 223.
32. Pakenham, pp. 6-7.

blockhouses, feed the entire population in the Boer republics, and to provide the arrivals in the concentration camps not only with tents, rations and necessary medicines but also with the numerous appliances and comforts which were so essential for the recovery of the weak and sickly. As a result the spread of disease would be controlled.[33] Consequently the Durban-Witwatersrand rail link became the most important one in South Africa.

Bringing in the much needed supplies from the Cape ports meant an additional expense because of distance and time. The majority of the supplies, including 75% of the foodstuffs required in the Transvaal, were therefore despatched through Durban.[34] In December 1901, the daily average of supplies, stores, etc. sent into the interior was 1247 tons, of which 947 tons was transported from Durban to the Transvaal and ORC by the Natal Government Railway (NGR). In January 1902, the daily average transported by the railways was 1270 tons, of which, on average, 1040 tons was despatched from Durban.[35] This implied that in December 1901, the NGR transported 75,9% of all military goods, and in January 1902, this figure had increased to a staggering 83,4%. This massive amount of truckage sent to the interior via Durban and the NGR was bound to have far-reaching implications. Any delay and congestion on the NGR, as was the case in January 1902, would not only hamper the war effort, but also affect the economy of Natal, and have an impact on the gold-mines which had re-opened when Johannesburg had fallen into the hands of the British.[36]

The delays and congestions on the railway line were bound to lead to letters of complaint to the Natal Government when storekeepers and general importers such as the Nathan Brothers of Bank Street, Pietermaritzburg, failed to get their consigned imported goods from the harbour and suffered an economic loss as a result.[37] This obviously placed pressure on the authorities to solve any problems and to get the economy back to normal. One way to do this would be to relieve the railway line of

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33. Cd. 903, pp. 129-136.
34. PAR, GH, 630: C. H. Hamilton - J. G. Maxwell, 23.1.1902 (letter).
35. PAR, GH, 535: Lieutenant-General Lyttelton - H. E. McCallum, 30.1.1902 (letter).
36. PAR, GH, 707: H. E. McCallum - A. Hime, 21.1.1902 (telegram).
37. PAR, Archives of the Minister of Justice and Public Works (MJPW), 82: Nathan Brothers - A. Hime, 30.1.1901 (letter).

extra consignments.

Table 2.1[38]

Some foodstuffs consigned to certain concentration camps in the Transvaal from Durban on 7 July 1901

DESTINATION	FOOD	TONNAGE	NUMBER IN CAMP
Standerton	flour sugar rice rice	17 tons 5 tons 3¼ tons 6 tons	2996
Middelburg	flour	17 tons	7751
Barberton	flour	8 tons	1994
Belfast	flour coffee sugar milk	8 tons 2¼ tons 3¼ tons 3 tons	1214
Volksrust	sugar milk	3½ tons 4½ tons	5462

Table 2.2 [39]

Beef despatched to the interior from Durban during the month of January 1902

DATE	QUANTITY
4 January 1902	18 179 lbs
8 January 1902	20 356 lbs
13 January 1902	19 723 lbs
15 January 1902	24 393 lbs

The reopening of some of the gold-mines and the consequent revival of industrial activity on the Witwatersrand required the return of the Uitlander population. This was not as rapid as it could have been, for there was simply no space for the returning

38. NAR, DBC, 44: Warrant book, counter-foils November 1901 - May 1903.

39 NAR, DBC, 18: Transvaalsche Koelkamers - General Superintendent, Burgher Camps Department, 1.2.1902 (invoice).

Uitlanders or mining equipment on the already overtaxed railways. By relieving the pressure of supplying the concentration camps, the railways would be left free to supply the mines and to bring back the Uitlanders so that they could get the wheels of the gold-mines turning again, for according to Brodrick, only then would the British profit by victories.[40] It was for this reason that people like Chamberlain urged the removal of the concentration camps to the Natal coast.

When the military started sending even more goods and supplies to Durban from Port Elizabeth, matters became even worse.[41] The NGR was required to despatch a daily truckage of 500 tons to meet the demands of the concentration camps.[42] This massive regular truckage allotted to the concentration camps in the interior made it almost impossible to obtain material beyond the basic essentials in food supply, medical comforts and hospital requisites. Yet this was totally inadequate for the demands required to keep the camps clean and healthy.[43] To enable the NGR to do their work efficiently, they needed more railway trucks and engine power, but this was not always available.[44]

The weight of the demands made by the concentration camps on the railways may be gauged from the fact that in October 1901 the inhabitants numbered approximately 118 000 whites and 15 000 blacks. Although the whites later fell a little below this number, the figures of the blacks in concentration camps rose to more than 100 000 before the war was concluded.[45] All these people needed to be cared for. The problem of obtaining the basic food requirements to do this was exacerbated by the fact that the scorched-earth policy had destroyed any possible food resources which may otherwise have been available to feed the thousands of interned black and white

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40. Pakenham, p. 495; Cd. 853, p. 3; PAR, GH, 516: J. G. Maxwell - H. E. McCallum, 9.10.1901 (letter).

41. PAR, GH, 707: H. E. McCallum - A. Milner, 23.1.1902 (telegram).

42. PAR, GH, 535: H. Livingstone, Assistant Director of Railways, Natal - General Manager, NGR, 20.1.1902 (letter).

43. National Archives Repository (NAR), Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 11: W. K. Tucker - J. G. Maxwell, 17.10.1901 (general report); Cd. 902, p. 45.

44. PAR, GH, 707: H. E. McCallum - A. Milner, 23.1.1902 (telegram).

45. L. S. Amery (ed.), *The Times history of the war in South Africa 1899 - 1902* 6, p. 24; S. V. Kessler, "The black concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)", address at Anglo-Boer War exposition, Kimberley, 10.10.1996, p. 15.

inhabitants. It was thus not surprising that basic necessities such as flour, sugar, rice, milk, coffee, sugar (see Table 2.1, p.34, *supra*) and meat (see Table 2.2, p. 34, *supra*) had to be railed to the interior from Durban in such vast quantities on a daily basis. The inconvenience and far-reaching results of delays in getting the basic necessities required for healthy living in the camps, made the possibility of moving the concentration camps to the Natal coast a viable proposition.

It became a necessity to identify possible sites for new concentration camps in Natal. One such site was at Mooi River, where a camp was erected but never used because it was considered to be too far from the base camp of Durban, and because it had the distinct disadvantage of being situated on the main railway line to the interior.[46] The overloading and congestion of traffic on the railway line between Durban and Pietermaritzburg made a site nearer the break in freight, the harbour of Durban, and off the main railway line all the more attractive. Such a site would be close to the harbour where supplies were readily obtainable, there would be fewer logistical problems and it would be more cost effective. A site along the South Coast line near the port would therefore be ideal.

2.2.3 Military and psychological reasons

The British wanted to end the war as quickly as possible in order to rebuild the now annexed Boer republics. In pursuing this ideal, thousands of black and white civilians were carted off to concentration camps where the appalling conditions started to take their toll. But in spite of this, the concentration camps were not having the desired effect. The war continued to rage on and it did not look as if it would abate soon. Different methods needed to be found.

According to Carl von Clausewitz, as quoted by Liddell Hart, armies need to carry out victory by psychological dislocation. This implied that victory was not necessarily achieved by destroying the enemy's military power. Instead the enemy's will to fight

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46. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 902), p. 37.

was to be the main object of destruction.[47] The Boers had proven that victory was not necessarily achieved when a country's capital was captured or when the country was annexed. The will of the majority of the Boers to fight for their republican ideal had remained intact. It seemed as though the only way to defeat them was by destroying their will to fight.

The women were perceived by many in the British military to be the backbone and the main source of their desire to continue the fight and therefore they needed to be targeted and have their resistance broken. As the concentration camps within the two Boer republics had not achieved the desired results, these women and their families would for military and punitive measures be removed to a foreign region.[48] Especially those women whom the British authorities considered to be troublesome and undesirable elements, were to be deported in an effort to remove their influence, the most prominent probably being the wives or family of some of the Boer leaders such as Mrs Isie Smuts (the wife of General J.C. Smuts), Mrs M.C. de Wet (the wife of General C.R. de Wet), Mrs A.C. and Miss Burger (the wife and daughter of Vice-President Schalk Burger), Mrs J. Smuts (the wife of General Tobias Smuts), Mrs S.C. Scheepers (the mother of Commandant Gideon Scheepers), Mrs W. Hertzog (the wife of General J.B.M. Hertzog) and many others.[49]

These prominent women did not appreciate being sent to Natal, and specifically Merebank, because their husbands and sons were bittereinders who had remained loyal to the republican cause. The view and actions of Mrs Isie Smuts probably represent the feelings of the majority of Boer women who were sent to Natal, when she expressed her displeasure by doing everything in her power to keep the authorities from deporting her to Pietermaritzburg, and by questioning the right of the British authorities to send her, a woman and a non-combatant to what she perceived

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47. Staff College (Camberley), Henderson Society Papers, 1975: Liddell Hart and his times.

48. Ploeger 3, p. 25 : 38; Archives of the Local History Museum, Durban (LHM), Accession 5994/1: Herinneringe van Salla Grobler van haar verblyf in die Irene, Krugersdorp en Merebank-konsentrasiekampe, p. 8.

49. Ploeger 3, pp. 25 : 36-40; M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, pp. 47, 116; E. Neethling, *Should we forget?*, p. 114; M. M. Postma, *Stemme uit die verlede: 'n versameling van beëdigde verklarings van vroue wat tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in konsentrasiekampe verkeer het*, pp. 146-147.

to be a foreign country.[50] The British hoped that this punitive measure of isolating women in the unfamiliar and hostile environment of a British colony, in this case Natal, would change their attitude and behaviour to such an extent that they would encourage their menfolk to lay down their arms.

For many this psychological war was worse than the physical war, and just how traumatic this ordeal was for those who experienced the deportations, is aptly described by Salla Grobler, who was sent to Merebank with her mother because her brothers were still on commando. She wrote: "Die gedagte om uit jou geboorteland weggestuur te word is vreeslik. Dit word vir ons 'n bitter stryd" [51] (The thought of being sent out of your homeland is terrible. It became a bitter struggle for us).

In the end so many undesirables were sent to Natal that Sir Thomas Murray, GSBC Natal, was to comment that Natal had become the dumping ground for all the bad characters from the camps all over South Africa for no other reason than that the others wanted to get rid of them.[52] Many of those sent to the coastal camps were therefore hardened and strong women, who the British authorities felt needed to be sent to Natal to remove them from their own area where they were creating problems, to an area where they were surrounded by pro-British elements, making it more difficult, or virtually impossible, for them to help their own kind with food, shelter, information or intelligence.

Humanitarian, economic, military and psychological considerations thus played a part in the request of the Provost Marshall in Pretoria when in August 1901, he asked that the Prime Minister of Natal, Sir Alfred Hime, form new camps in Natal. The British Government had given their full support to assist Natal in every way they could, from as early as 31 May 1901. They were prepared to set apart any government land that might be available for the purpose, even suggesting that the 340 acres (136 ha) of

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50. Ploeger 3, p. 25 : 38.

51. LHM, 5994/1: Herinneringe van Salla Grobler van haar verblyf in die Irene, Krugersdorp en Merebank-konsentrasiekampe, p. 9.

52. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 5.6.1902 (monthly report).

land belonging to the government close to Botha's Hill railway station be used.[53] It was, however, decided not to use this land, but rather to erect the new concentration camp at Merebank, south of Durban.

2.3 The site and location of the new camp

Durban is located on the 29°49'S line of latitude and on the 31°1'E line of longitude and is bordered in the east by the Indian Ocean.[54] This means that it is situated on the subtropical east coast of South Africa where summers lasting from October to April are hot and humid while the winters are warm with no frost.[55]

The inhabitants of the Merebank Concentration Camp, most of whom came from the interior where the summers were warm with some hot days, and winters were mild to cold with some frosty nights when temperatures dropped to below 0°C, found it difficult to acclimatise. During the summer of 1901 to 1902, the days were so hot that some of the camp inhabitants fainted,[56] while the nights during November were already so warm that no blankets were required.[57] Complaints about the heat became a common occurrence. One such complaint was uttered by Dominee (Reverend) T.H. Enslin who worked and lived at Merebank, when he said that the heat was so tremendous that it was impossible to stay indoors during the day.[58] It was for this reason that the High Commissioner, Lord Milner, would have preferred to have had the new camps in Natal located at a higher altitude where it would be cooler and less humid, especially during the summer months.[59]

In addition to the heat and humidity, winds are common throughout the year along the Natal coast. The prevailing winds are from the north-east and south-west, with the

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53. PAR, Archives of the Prime Minister (PM), 32: Provost Marshall, Pretoria - A. Hime, 2.8.1901 (telegram).
54. G. Philip, *Philips' atlas of southern Africa and the world*, p. 17.
55. J. L. Earle (ed.), *New window on the world* 10, p. 319.
56. E. Neethling, *Mag ons vergeet?*, p. 133; Postma, p. 26.
57. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 66.
58. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 934), p. 69.
59. Cd. 902, p. 38; PAR, GH, 706: A. Milner - H. E. McCallum, 23.11.1901 (telegram).

former being a moisture-laden, pleasant wind from the Indian Ocean, while the latter, called "the doctor" by the locals, is a cool bracing wind from the southern seas.

There always seemed to be a breeze blowing across the camp as owing to the land structure it was open to wind from both the east and the west.[60] These small-scale air circulations occur because of local temperature differences between the coastal area and the adjacent oceans, and they are known as land and sea breezes. At night the air moves from the land to the sea creating a land breeze and during the day the air moves from the ocean to the land resulting in a cool sea breeze.[61] In this way these winds may have helped to make life in the extreme heat a little more bearable and were thus an advantage to the site.

Rain falls throughout the year along the coast, but more particularly during the summer months, when thunderstorms are often accompanied by strong winds.[62] During the summer of 1901 to 1902, these winds were so strong that tents, including the school tent, were blown down and the contents scattered all over.[63] These common environmental hazards, which are recorded in both official documents and private diaries, caused much discomfort, but also humorous situations for the camp inhabitants. In some instances, children needed to seek shelter from the elements under the tables, while the mothers attempted to gather the billowing tents together in the lashing rain and howling winds.[64] At other times, children found it a comical sight to see their teachers rushing to the rescue of a clock and other articles which were being blown about in a storm.[65]

Other than the more localised storms, there were those which affected virtually the whole of Natal. One such storm occurred during June 1902, when gale force winds lashed out and destroyed scores of tents in the Howick and Pinetown Concentration

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60. Cd. 934, pp. 64-66.
61. A. N. Strahler, *Physical geography*, p. 166.
62. Cd. 934, pp. 64-66; Earle, p. 319.
63. I. Uys, *Heidelbergers of the Boer War*, p. 204; Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 2.
64. Uys, p. 204.
65. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 2.

Camps and the Umbilo POW Camp.[66] Merebank was only saved from extensive damage because its tents had by this time been replaced by huts.

The Natal South Coast landscape at the turn of the century was a wilderness of dense natural bush and forest, intersected at odd intervals by footpaths. Trees were generally low, from 10 m to 20 m high, many of them leguminous evergreens bearing gay, bright flowers. The best-known of these, the *waterboom*, the red and white milkwoods, the red ivory, the iron wood, the *umsimbiti* and the coral tree, were intermingled with brambles, monkey rope and wild vines.[67] This vegetation was home to a variety of animals including snakes, monkeys, birds and small game such as duiker and reed buck.[68] This type of bush which surrounded the camp, was probably not only a valuable source of fuel to many of the camp inhabitants, but also a reminder of the life many of them had lived on their farms with the wide open spaces.

The subtropical climate allowed for coffee, tea, sugar, maize and a variety of fruits such as pineapples, pawpaws, guavas and bananas to grow in such abundance that 28 bananas could be bought for one shilling, while pineapples at a penny a piece were a very common sight in Durban.[69] This enabled the Boer inhabitants of the Merebank Concentration Camp to buy fruit to supplement their diets if they had money available.

The site for the Merebank Concentration Camp was chosen and approved by the Principal Medical Officer (PMO) of Durban, Colonel R. McCormack.[70] It was situated at the then almost uninhabitable bayhead area, south of the railway line to Isipingo, near what is today the Clairwood Racecourse. This site was considered ideal for a number of reasons. Firstly, land was available and fairly level, thus facilitating the building of huts and the pitching of tents.[71] Secondly, this site was about thirteen

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66. PAR, GH, 554: T.K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.7.1902 (monthly report).
67. E. Slayter, *Isipingo: village in the sun*, p. 42; Fischer, p. 62.
68. Slayter, p. 72; Fischer, p. 65.
69. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 66.
70. PAR, GH, 474: H. E. McCallum - J. Chamberlain, 21.11.1901 (telegram).
71. A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph); Visit to the site, 17.7.1999; 1:50 000 topographical map, 2930DD & 2931CC Durban.

kilometres south of the centre of Durban on the South Coast railway line,[72] placing it within easy reach of Durban and military supervision, but away from the main congested railway line to the interior. At the same time it was still next to a railway line which was so essential in transporting the inhabitants and the necessary supplies to the camp. Furthermore, the Merebank Siding, about halfway between South Coast Junction and Isipingo Station, had been extended during 1898 in order to accommodate the Merebank Brick and Tile Company.[73] This extension would make the construction and daily running activities of the camp so much easier and convenient and was definitely an advantage when choosing the site.

The site was also outside the then Borough of Durban.[74] This enabled the authorities, in line with the belief that neighbouring towns and villages or military camps needed to be protected, to isolate the camp inhabitants on the outskirts of the city.[75] By placing the Boers outside the city, the authorities believed they were protecting the Durbanites from any possible infectious diseases, such as measles, or from the undesirable elements, but it also indicated that this was part of a larger scheme which involved erecting more camps within an immediate radius of the existing camp.

Another distinct advantage of building the Merebank Concentration Camp on this particular site, was the fact that it was in close proximity to the main pipeline of Durban's water supply from the Umlaas Water Works, an unlimited supply of which was made available to the GSBC by the Durban Municipal authorities.[76] Sufficient and good quality water on a permanent basis was, as T. K. Murray realised, essential to a camp which was to have more than 8 000 inhabitants, especially as clean, good quality water would ensure that stomach related illnesses could be curbed.[77] This also saved the Imperial Government great expense as water from the Durban water supply did not need to be filtered or pumped over a large distance.

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72. Cd. 934, p. 79.
73. PAR, MJPW, 67: Report of the General Manager of Railways for the year 1898, p. 10.
74. Cd. 934, p. 64; DAR, 3/DBN, 5/2/6/1/16: Durban Corporation report book 19, p. 745.
75. Cd. 893, p. 13.
76. Cd. 853, p. 4; Cd. 934, p. 64; PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).
77. J. Wassermann, *The Pinetown Concentration Camp during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*, p. 22.

There was, however, one major criticism regarding the location of this camp site. It lay at the foot of a low dune from which water drained into the site. The flat, swampy ground on which the camp was pitched sloped slightly from both sides towards a central drain or little stream, into which all surface water from rain, wash-houses, etc. ran, and thereafter flowed slowly into a large mere from which there was no outlet. On the side of the camp which faced Durban there was a big morass which drained towards the camp.[78] Even today the area remains swampy and unused.

The terrain was so wet and swampy that not only was it impossible to dig more than 4½ feet (1,5 m) without reaching the water table, thus causing many graves to fill up, but it also caused the tar canvas floors of the tents and huts to become rotten after only six weeks' use.[79] It was no wonder that the inhabitants could hardly sleep on the floor without getting the bed-linen so wet that it could be wrung out in the mornings and needed to be hung out to dry on a daily basis.[80] Nor was it surprising that this was the one camp that the women who had come out from England to teach in the concentration camp schools, did not want to go to.[81] This, together with the fact that inhabitants and visitors often had to walk through a large muddy area when moving from the accommodation sectors to the administrative sector, made conditions far from desirable.[82] Being wet continuously probably made it easier for inhabitants already run down, to contract illnesses such as pneumonia.

The site, being within walking distance of the beach, was bound to be sandy, but just how sandy it was is explained by one of the teachers in her diary: "we waded through the sand - it was a veritable case of wading because Merebank is smothered with sand. If you sink into it over your ankles, the wind blows it into your eyes and clothes and it is altogether disagreeable."[83]

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78. Cd. 893, p. 33; NAR, P.H.S van Zyl Collection (Accession W19/4A): Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 18.
79. Cd. 893, p. 34; Cd. 934, p. 69.
80. Postma, pp. 23, 60.
81. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 1.
82. Otto, p. 67; A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph).
83. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 1.

This sandy, swampy and wet site was teeming with frogs, fleas and mosquitoes[84] and was considered so undesirable and unhealthy by the Indians of the area that they told Mrs I. Kriegler a few days after her arrival: "All die here. Us no live here in summer, Indians go to hills."[85] The Indians were later to comment that some good spirit must have been guarding the Boer people or they would all have died.[86]

From a purely military and logistical point of view the site chosen for the Merebank Concentration Camp could not have been better. It was within close proximity to Durban, next to a railway line with a recently upgraded siding, near good quality and sufficient water and there was room for expansion if necessary. All this made it a fairly good economic proposition for the Imperial Government. From a humanitarian and health point of view, this site was, however, not ideal.

In July 1901, the British War Office and Government had appointed six women under Millicent Fawcett to a Ladies' Commission to go to South Africa to investigate and report on the conditions of the concentration camps. They travelled about for more than three months, visiting 21 white concentration camps only, examining everything pertaining to the camps, for example, water supplies, food, refuse disposal, trenching, latrines, hospitals, fuel, abattoirs, schools, clothing and camp regulations. On the completion of their work, they wrote a report on the conditions as they had perceived them, also giving recommendations for improvements.[87]

The Merebank Concentration Camp was visited by the Fawcett Commission, sometimes also referred to as the Ladies' Commission, on 6 and 7 December 1901. The camp was criticised mainly on grounds of its low-lying location. The deputation summarised their findings as follows: "It is in a swamp, and unless it can be drained it will continue to be hopelessly waterlogged."[88] They realised that it had rained two days prior to their visit and that it had been an abnormally wet season, but they still

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84. J. Meintjes, *Sword in the sand: the life and death of Gideon Scheepers*, p. 124; Uys, p. 206.
85. NAR, W19/4A: Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 18.
86. Neethling, *Should we forget?*, pp. 99-100.
87. Farwell, pp. 411-420.
88. Cd. 893, p. 12.

believed that the rainy season needed to be taken into consideration when choosing an appropriate site. For this reason they condemned the Merebank Concentration Camp site and recommended that it should be moved to another position as soon as possible, in spite of the great expense which had already been incurred, and the many man-hours which had gone into erecting the camp.[89]

Sir Thomas Murray, who had been present at the time of the inspection, informed Lord Milner on 12 December 1901, through the office of the Natal Governor, of the Fawcett Commission report and recommendations. On 16 December 1901, Milner was told that the condemnation of the site was contrary to local advice, and suggested that a Board of Medical Officers be set up to investigate the conditions at the Merebank Concentration Camp and that they subsequently report on the subject. The High Commissioner agreed to this suggestion on 17 December 1901, but felt that until a decision had been reached, no more people were to be sent to Merebank.[90]

The Board met from 21 to 23 December 1901. The President of the Board was the PMO of Natal, Surgeon-General J.A. Clery, CB. The other members were Colonel R. McCormack, RAMC, PMO, Durban and Mr E. Hill, Health Officer of the Colony of Natal.[91] At this point it is essential to remember that two of these members had previously already been associated with the camp. McCormack had chosen and approved the Merebank Camp site, while Clery had visited the camp with Governor McCallum soon after it had been established and had been consulted regarding improvements.[92] It was thus unlikely that these two gentlemen would change their minds and they were therefore not in a position to give a fair and unbiased judgement.

During the hearing the Board interviewed sixteen witnesses. These were Dr W.H. Addison, who had been District Surgeon of the Umlazi Division since 1883; Mr A. Duchesne Millar, owner of Merebank; Lieutenant-Colonel W.H.S. O'Neill from the

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89. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-38.

90. Cd. 934, pp. 10-11.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 62; PAR, GH, 707: H. E. McCallum - A. Milner, 16.12.1901 (telegram); A. C. Martin, *The concentration camps 1900-1902: facts, figures and fables*, p. 67.

92. Cd. 902, p. 11; PAR, GH, 474: H. E. McCallum - J. Chamberlain, 21.11.1901 (telegram).

Commandant's Office, Durban; Dr G.L. Bonner, the medical officer at Isipingo; Sir Thomas Murray; Mr E.L. Acutt, a Durban City Council member; Dr L.E. Hardy, who had been Medical Doctor at the Merebank Concentration Camp since November 1901; Mr A. Head, Acting District Engineer of the Public Works Department; H.M. Bousfield, the Superintendent at Merebank; J.H. Corbett, Organising Inspector of Schools, as well as the following inhabitants of the camp: Mr P.N. Snyman, Mr C.D. Wensel, Mrs J. van Gronening, Mrs A. Klopper, Mrs E. Fritz and Ds. (Reverend) T.H. Enslin.[93]

An analysis of the list of interviewees reveals that it is by no means gender friendly. Although by far the majority of inhabitants of the camp were women and children, only three women were interviewed compared to thirteen men. Of these men, three were residents in the Merebank Concentration Camp. One of these was Ds. Enslin, a surrenderer from the Vrede district, who had been prepared to move to Merebank to take up the religious work in the camp. As a surrenderer and dominee, he lived in a canvas tent and received officers' rations and was therefore not suffering the same problems as the normal inhabitants of the camp did.[94] He was therefore not an ideal candidate to interview, for he was most likely to favour the British.

All other interviewed persons were English speakers. They were the owner of the property on which the camp was erected, and the employees of either the Natal Government, the Imperial Government or the Borough of Durban. None of these gentlemen were likely to condemn the site. The owner would have gained financially from the deal, as the Imperial Government would have purchased or hired the property from him, while the others were all in British employ. The people who were interviewed were thus chosen in such a way that they would favour the site, and for this reason the report was almost certainly not without bias.

By 26 December 1901, the Governor of Natal, Sir Henry McCallum, was able to wire

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93. Cd. 934, pp. 63-69.

94. W. P. Rousseau, "De kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 18(49), 12.12.1901, p. 669; W. P. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie van leeraren, arbeiders en arbeidsters in de burgerkampen in Natal gehouden in het burgerkamp te Merebank op den 24sten en 25sten Juni 1902*, p. 15.

the High Commissioner, Lord Milner, that he had received the report of the Medical Board and that, although the terrain was not ideal, it was unnecessary to abandon the site. Instead the Board concluded that the statements made by the Fawcett Commission were "highly coloured".[95]

Based on the evidence of the Medical Board, the site, with its imperfections regarding elevation and drainage, continued to be seen as the best available for a number of reasons. It was necessary to have the camp on a railway line, but not on the main line as this was already congested. For this reason, sanitary arrangements were of secondary importance compared to military exigencies. The presence of water in a malarial district would have been detrimental to health, but as all evidence suggested that no malaria existed, the authorities concluded that there was no danger and it was thus not necessary to abandon the site.[96] Medical reports and the death register do, however, dispute this fact with entries bearing witness to the fact that some of the inhabitants either became ill with or died of malaria.[97]

Furthermore, the Board felt that the water from the main Durban supply was abundant and wholesome, while the soil was similar to that all along the coast. They also concluded that the ground on which the camp was laid out was approximately fifteen metres above the vlei, and that the western vlei drained away towards the Umlaas River and did not flow towards the camp.[98]

The Medical Board also considered the ridge running from Merebank to Jacobs Siding, south of the vlei, to be suitable camping ground, and was of the opinion that in the winter season the climate and general conditions would be satisfactory for the purpose, while even in the hot season the temperature was greatly modified by the breeze which constantly moved over the ground. Although no part of the camp was built on swamp, they did, however, feel that the western end of the north side and the

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95. Cd. 934, p. 61.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-65.

97. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim*; NAR, DBC 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim*.

98. Cd. 934, pp. 62-63.

extreme western area of the south side were too damp and thus not suitable for accommodation. They therefore recommended that the tents in these areas be vacated and that the inmates be transferred to the south side of the camp. These areas were duly cleared.[99]

Lord Milner was now able to inform the Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, that good camp sites which met all the necessary requirements were scarce and that every suitable site needed to be used to receive the inhabitants from the overcrowded Transvaal camps. Merebank therefore needed to be retained. Furthermore, it was suggested that the Fawcett Commission had visited the camp in unfavourable conditions and the report mentioned all inhabitants had already been removed from the area in the camp condemned by the Medical Board.[100]

The authorities accepted the Medical Board's view that the site was not too damp, and in spite of the recommendation by the Fawcett Commission, the Merebank Concentration Camp was retained and inhabitants were once again despatched to Merebank. The investigation into the matter regarding the appropriateness of the site seems to have been nothing more than window dressing. The military disregarded the recommendations of a committee which was anti-Boer from the start. Millicent Fawcett had been of the opinion that the women had taken an active part in the war on behalf of their country and that it was thus only right that they must share in the consequences. Fawcett had also been suspicious of anyone who might have been pro-Boer.[101] Yet she and her committee condemned the site, and because of her well-published preconceived ideas against the Boer women, this should have been a good indication to the British that the site at Merebank was not ideal. Instead, by not accepting the Fawcett report, the British seemed to be indicating that they were not entirely transparent in their actions.

Merebank was obviously part of a far greater scheme, where military needs

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99. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 60-61.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

101. P. Krebs, " The last of the gentlemen's wars: women in the Boer War concentration camp controversy", *History Workshop: a Journal of Socialist and Feminist Historians* 33, Spring 1992, p. 46.

outweighed humanitarian ones and whereby thousands of Boer women and children were to be moved to the coast in an effort to end the war. To be able to do this, even more camps were required, and by December 1901, the next camp to be constructed on the coast in close proximity to Merebank, the Jacobs Concentration Camp, was well underway. Furthermore, by the end of December, there were already 5327 whites and 73 blacks in the Merebank Concentration Camp.[102] The problem was obvious: where would these people be placed if the Merebank Concentration Camp was closed and, as Milner had informed Chamberlain, available and suitable sites were scarce.

2.4 Construction and layout

By 3 September 1901, preparations for the new concentration camp at Merebank had progressed rapidly.[103] These were undertaken by Lieutenant-Colonel W.H.S. O'Neill, Commandant of Durban, and Colonel Rawson, CRE, Natal.[104] The Public Works Department (PWD) was given the responsibility of constructing the camp with all its necessary facilities.[105] They were also asked to maintain the buildings, water supply and drainage, right up to evacuation, when most of the buildings were to be taken down and forwarded to the Repatriation Department in Pretoria.[106] The cost of all this was paid for from Imperial funds.[107] At the end of the war, expenses averaged out to £4.11.6 per head for the three concentration camps south of Durban, i.e. Merebank, Jacobs and Wentworth. The sale of the building material to the Repatriation Department contributed in keeping costs down. Had the camps consisted of canvas huts and not corrugated iron and/or timber buildings, the costs would ironically have been greater, with less comfort, as canvas decayed in the subtropical climate, making it worthless.[108]

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102. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).
103. *The Natal Mercury*, 3.9.1901, p. 7.
104. PAR, GH, 793: Chief Engineer, PWD - Minister of Lands and Works, 24.9.1901 (despatch).
105. *The Natal Mercury*, 12.9.1901, p. 7; NAR, Archives of the Military Governor, Pretoria (MGP), 249: J. G. Maxwell - H. E. McCallum, 22.9.1901 (telegram).
106. *Statistics of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 942), p. 16.
107. Cd. 853, p. 5; PAR, Archives of the Natal Colonial Publications (NCP), 8/2/2: Chief Engineer's report for the year 1902, 30.4.1903.
108. PAR, NCP, 8/2/2: Coastal District Engineer's report for 1902, p. 17.

The PWD was unable to clear bushes, excavate trenches, lay water pipes or erect all the buildings and infrastructure required to construct a camp the size of Merebank in the short time allocated to them. As a result, half the number of huts in the camp were erected by contract, for which tenders needed to be called.[109] Once a comparison had been made regarding the costs, it was found that the departmental costs were 10,81% less than those contracted out.[110] This could possibly be attributed to the fact that the department was a nonprofit service organisation which paid its employees from tax money, while contractors were out to make money. It is also possible that the PWD obtained their materials at a cheaper rate than the contractors because they were standing clients who bought in bulk.

The arrangement with the PWD for the construction was on the same footing as that which had been obtained for the Howick and Princess Christian (near Pinetown) Military Hospitals, with the exception that the PWD was, in this instance, responsible to Sir Thomas Murray, the GSBC Natal, and not to the military.[111] This implied that all queries and reports of progress or problems were to be directed at Murray and not the military authorities.

One of the most important aspects of the construction which needed immediate attention was the arrangement regarding water. To ensure that water would be available at the Merebank Concentration Camp, an agreement was negotiated with the Durban Corporation. Water was to be obtained from the town's mains, at 3/- per 1000 gallons (4561 litres).[112] Once this agreement had been reached, the construction of the infrastructure to transport the water to the camp could begin.

This undertaking was massive and expensive involving the clearing of bush, the digging of trenches, the laying of thousands of metres of galvanised-iron (GI) and cast-iron (CI) pipes of various thicknesses, as well as the fitting up of four wash-

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109. PAR, MJPW, 88: Chief Engineer, PWD - District Engineer, PWD Coast, 12.10.1901 (despatch).

110. PAR, NCP, 8/2/2: Coastal District Engineer's report for 1902, p. 17.

111. PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 2601: Chief Engineer - Acting Accounting Officer, PWD, 30.10.1901 (minutes).

112. DAR, 3/DBN, 1/1/3/23: Durban Corporation rough minutes, p. 165.

houses and stand pipes (i.e. a vertical pipe extending from a water supply so that a tap can be connected to it).[113] To illustrate the extent of material, finances and manpower involved in the construction, one only needs to be aware that it took 1594 working days to clear the bush, excavate the trenches, lay the pipes, and to erect and fit out four of the wash-houses and stand pipes at Merebank. The cost of this relatively small part of the undertaking came to a sum of £ 674.16.8 (see Tables 2.3 and 2.4, pp. 52-53, *infra*) while the laying of the 2½-inch (6,35 cm) main pipe to Merebank Camp No. 2, cost a further £ 274.18.9.[114] This was obviously to the financial advantage of those firms supplying the materials.

In spite of all the arrangements with the PWD and the Durban Corporation, there seems to have been a shortage of water at the camp, for not only did the inhabitants make mention of the fact, but Murray had to ask the Town Clerk of Durban to arrange for the immediate laying of a further 1600 yards (1463 m) of 2½-inch (6,35 cm) pipes on 16 October 1901, to supply the necessary water.[115] In March 1902, he once again found it necessary to arrange for a further 4-inch (10 cm) connection to transport water from the Durban main supply to Merebank, this time with the District Engineer, Mr A. Head.[116]

Besides the water supply, the most important requirement for the proposed 10 000 inhabitants of the camp was the accommodation that needed to be constructed. Initially bell, or round, and medium sized square and large square marquee tents were erected. The wind and sandy soil made the pitching of these tents very difficult.[117] Gradually the canvas tents were replaced by corrugated iron, or wood and iron huts.[118]

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113. DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/167: E. Noble - Town Clerk, Durban, 12.4.1902 (memorandum).

114. DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/167: E. Noble - Town Clerk, Durban, 8.4.1902 (memorandum and account).

115. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 80; DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/160: T. K. Murray - Town Clerk, Durban, 16.10.1901 (telegram).

116. DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/167: T. K. Murray - Town Clerk, Durban, 19.3.1902 (letter).

117. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7.

118. Cd. 902, p. 39.

Table 2.3 [119]

The cost of material regarding the construction of the Merebank Concentration Camp

MATERIAL			£	s	d
3240 ft	1"	GI pipes	57	7	6
640 ft	¾"	GI pipes	8	13	4
12	1"	bends		11	-
24	¾"	bends		15	-
18	¾"	elbows		11	3
24	¾"	tees		15	-
4	1"	tees		4	-
12	1" x ¾"	diminishing sockets		7	-
18	¾"	plugs		6	-
6	1"	plugs		2	6
4	1"	stop cocks	1	2	-
18	¾"	bib taps	2	18	6
6	½"	bib taps		11	-
24		pipe hooks		1	3
12	1"	sockets		6	-
18	¾" x 1"	tees		18	-
18	¾"	sockets		6	-
12	¾"	nipples		3	-
12	¾"	backnuts		13	-
6	½" x ¾"	elbows		3	9
3 500 lbs		lead	32	16	3
4		coils tarred yarn	12	10	-
NGR freight charge on 450 3" CI pipes			9	9	-
Distributing pipes (Parsons)			1	10	-
NGR rail fares:		Male gang	8	4	8
		Freeborne and M. Alcock	1	8	-
		Lawrence and Vogler	1	10	-
Cost of carting 685 pipes by road			12	10	-
TOTAL			**149**	**3**	-

119. DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/167: Murray - Durban Corporation, 20.3.1902 (account). The total quoted in the table is given in the source, but if the amounts are added up, the total should in fact read £156.13.0.

Table 2.4 [120]

The cost of labour regarding the construction of the Merebank Concentration Camp

LABOUR			£	s	d
Time:	Lawrence	28 days @ 13/-	18	4	0
	Vogler	28 days @ 13/-	18	4	0
	44 Indians	28 days @ 2/6	154	0	0
	Male	6 days @ 13/-	3	18	0
	40 Indians	6 days @ 2/6	30	0	0
	Freeborne	9 days @ 13/-	5	17	0
	Alcock, M.	11 days @ 5/-	2	15	0
	Wallace	2 days @ 7/6	-	15	0
	Appleby	2 days @ 12/-	1	4	0
	4 Indians	9 days @ 2/6	4	10	0
SUB-TOTAL LABOUR			**239**	**7**	**0**
Cost of labour and lifting pipes, carting and transporting on breaking up of camp			224	19	8
TOTAL (MATERIAL)			**149**	**3**	**0**
SUB-TOTAL (LABOUR & MATERIAL)			**613**	**9**	**8**
Supervision charge 10%			61	7	0
TOTAL			**674**	**16**	**8**

Merebank was divided into three sections referred to as Windermere, Hazelmere and Grasmere, with less than 3000 inhabitants each.[121] These sections were also referred to as Refugee Camp No.1, Refugee Camp No. 2 and Refugee Camp No. 3. [122] Eventually these camps accommodated anything between 8000 and 9000 inhabitants. By keeping the numbers in each of the three sections below 3000, Milner and McCallum believed that they were not violating the new unwritten rule of not exceeding 3000 inhabitants per camp.[123] In actual fact this was a mere manipulation of figures and space, for the inhabitants in all three camps had to share the same facilities and staff. The Superintendent of Merebank was thus in charge of a camp

120. *Ibid.* See also the remark in footnote 119, *supra.*

121. Cd. 934, p. 81; PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

122. NAR, Archives of the Staff Officer Prisoners of War (SOP), 22: Various letters from women in the Merebank Camp - Major M. B. Foster give their addresses, e.g. Mrs A. J. Joubert - Major M. B. Foster, 31.10.1901 (letter).

123. Cd. 934, p. 98.

which in actual fact consisted of three camps.

The three camps were separated from one another and it took about 20 minutes to walk the estimated half mile (i.e. approximately 0,8 km) from the administrative buildings, past the Merebank Brick and Tile Factory to the furthest camp, through ankle deep sand or mud when wet.[124] To confine the inhabitants to the camp and to prevent them from having any unnecessary contact with people from neighbouring villages, the camp was surrounded by barbed wire.[125]

Some of the tents or buildings erected in the camp served as the Camp Superintendent's office, the commissariat, staff quarters, the hospital, dispensary, post office, school, church, latrines, wash-houses, bath-houses, and the fuel depot.[126]

The PWD was to face a number of problems during the construction of the camp. As early as 12 September 1901, *The Natal Mercury* reported that the formation of the camp had been delayed by the scarcity of black labour.[127] On 23 September, the Assistant Engineer wired Mr A. Head, the District Engineer, that he understood that there was a serious delay in the construction of Merebank due to the PWD's inability to obtain labour.[128] This news must have reached J.G. Maxwell, the Military Governor in Pretoria, for he queried the progress, believing things were moving too slowly.[129]

Mr Head responded to this query on 24 September 1901. He admitted that progress had been slower than anticipated due to wet weather, but said that the Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel O'Neill, was quite satisfied with the way construction was going, while the Staff Sergeant in charge of works at the camp was satisfied with the supply

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124. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 1; J. H. Enslin, "Het kamp te Merebank (Natal)", *De Kerkbode* 18(45), 14.11.1901, p. 623.

125. Cd. 893, p. 13.

126. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum (monthly reports); *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7. The facilities created by the construction of the Merebank Camp will be evaluated in Chapter 5, *infra* when focus is placed on life in the camp. See also photograph of camp, Appendix 3, *infra*.

127. *The Natal Mercury*, 12.9.1901, p. 7.

128. PAR, MJPW, 88: Assistant Engineer, PWD - District Engineer, Durban, 23.9.1901 (telegram).

129. PAR, GH, 793: J. G. Maxwell - H. E. McCallum, 22.9.1901 (telegram).

of labour.[130] Initially the PWD had only employed 120 black men and 44 white men to work at Merebank, but the Commandant had advised that a few more white men needed to be put on the job.[131] More men, especially those skilled at their work, would enable the PWD to complete their task much faster.

The District Engineer was, however, concerned that a query regarding the labour issue had been raised. He felt that this was unfair considering that everything possible was being done in a climate where white worker militancy was becoming more active.[132]

Another, perhaps not unusual problem arose, regarding the wages and bonuses paid at Merebank. On the suggestion of the Officer Commanding, Natal District, Lieutenant-General W.G. Lyttelton, gratuities were awarded to the staff of the PWD for services rendered to the military on the same lines as those given to the troops, i.e. in shares, varying with the amount of responsibility and labour involved in each individual case.[133] Forty-seven employees of the PWD were identified as having had an increased work load and responsibility because of the construction of the camp. To ensure that the bonus allocated to them was shared in accordance with the work done and not with the salary drawn, many despatches were sent between the various parties involved.[134]

The bonus system created tension between the accounting and engineering staff of the PWD. The accounting staff were left out in the allocation of the bonus, but felt that they had done a fair share of the work in connection with the camp. They had to check most of the vouchers which they had trouble getting from the coast. They also felt that

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130. PAR, GH, 793: Chief Engineer, PWD - Minister of Lands and Works, 24.9.1901 (despatch); PAR, MJPW, 88: Acting District Engineer, PWD - Assistant Engineer, PWD, 24.9.1901 (letter).

131. PAR, GH, 793: Sub-Accounting Officer, PWD, Durban - Assistant Engineer, PWD, Pietermaritzburg, 23.9.1901 (telegram).

132. PAR, MJPW, 88: Acting District Engineer, PWD - Assistant Engineer, PWD, 24.9.1901 (letter); D. B. van der Tang, *White worker militancy in Durban: a study of tramway workers, 1900-1933, passim.*

133. PAR, Archives of the Public Works Department (PWD), 2/97: Chief Engineer - District Engineer, 18.2.1902 (circular); PAR, CSO, 2601: Lieutenant-General, Commanding Natal District - H. E. McCallum, 8.9.1901 (despatch).

134. PAR, PWD, 2/97: H. E. McCallum - A. Hime, 5.4.1902 (despatch); PAR, PWD, 2/97: J. F. E. Barnes - A. Hime, 11.4.1902 (despatch).

the vouchers in connection with the burgher camps, including Merebank, had caused them more trouble than the vouchers of all the military accounts combined. To prevent any unpleasantness, the Acting Accounting Officer, Mr A.C. Griffin, even advanced wages to men employed at the PWD Head Office in Pietermaritzburg to work on the Merebank accounts, out of his own pocket.[135] This matter was solved when the accounting staff, who had worked overtime on the Merebank accounts, were compensated accordingly.[136]

The actual amount of money allocated to be divided amongst the PWD workers who were to receive a bonus, also caused a problem. Initially there was a doubt in the mind of Governor H.E. McCallum regarding the correctness of the amount of commission which was to be paid. McCallum had been under the impression that more contract work had been done at Merebank.[137] The commission had been worked out at 2½% for departmental work and 1½% for contract work.[138] Sir Thomas Murray was, however, able to put McCallum's mind at rest that the accounts had been carefully examined and that the figures were correct.[139] By 31 January 1902, £36 644.4.8 had been spent on departmental work at Merebank compared to the £10 768 on contracts. [140]

The question about the high rate of wages being paid to the black labourers at Merebank Camp also caused some concern.[141] Murray felt that something needed to be done about the salaries paid to blacks working for the contractor Mr P. Logan at Merebank. As the job of constructing the camp was taking much longer than expected, he felt that Logan should consider reducing the wage rate.[142] The Sub-Accounting Officer (SAO), W.A. Paterson, went to negotiate with Logan who was prepared to

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135. PAR, PWD, 2/97: Acting Accounting Officer - Chief Engineer, PWD, 28.2.1902 (letter).

136. PAR, PWD, 2/96: J. F. E. Barnes - District Engineer, Coast, 22.5.1902 (despatch); PAR, PWD, 2/96: Sub-Accountant, Midlands District - J. F. E. Barnes, 14.1.1903 (letter).

137. PAR, PWD, 2/97: A. Hime - H. E. McCallum, 11.4.1902 (despatch); PAR, PWD, 2/97: H. E. McCallum - A. Hime, 12.4.1902 (despatch).

138. PAR, PWD, 2/97: J. F. E. Barnes - A. Hime, 11.4.1902 (despatch).

139. PAR, PWD, 2/97: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 16.4.1902 (despatch).

140. PAR, PWD, 2/97: W. Bosman - J. F. E. Barnes, 13.3.1902 (despatch).

141. PAR, CSO, 2601: Chief Engineer - Acting Accounting Officer, PWD, 30.10.1901 (minute).

142. PAR, CSO, 2601: T. K. Murray - J. F. E. Barnes, 31.10.1901 (despatch).

reduce the rate of black wages from 3/- per day to 2/6 per day, on the assurance that the job was now a longer one than had at first been anticipated. This agreement, which came into effect on 1 November 1901, made a difference of £6.5.0 per day.[143] This saving may seem as though the black labourers were the ones who were losing out and being exploited. In fact Logan was prepared to make less profit per day over a longer period in order to keep the contract, while the black labourers continued to receive the same wage.

In their effort to keep prices down and in their negotiations with Logan, the PWD needed to consider the possibility of bringing Mr Poole's Native Labour Corps (NLC) of approximately 50 blacks down from Ladysmith to help with the construction. As there was no certainty of the NLC being able to provide the total number required, for services of the NLC were being fully utilised elsewhere, and because it was felt that it would be very difficult to keep Poole and Logan's labour separate, the PWD decided that it would be better to continue using only labour from Logan until the work was complete. Furthermore Logan had agreed to reduce the rate of the black labourers' wages and in this way contributed to a reduction in construction costs.[144]

The black wage issue had not only created problems outlined above, but had also caused internal tension and dispute when the Acting Accounting Officer of the PWD, Mr A.C. Griffin, ignored all bureaucratic rules, taking it upon himself to inform Colonel Rawson, CRE, on the issue without informing either J.F.E. Barnes, the Chief Engineer or Sir Thomas Murray. This was contrary to prior agreements that the responsibility lay with Murray and not with the military authorities. As a result, the Acting Accounting Officer was reprimanded and told that his job was to meet payments, implying that he should not interfere in matters that did not concern him. He was also told to write a letter which Barnes would forward to Rawson, explaining that he had unintentionally overlooked the fact that the responsibility in connection with all matters regarding

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143. PAR, CSO, 2601: W. A. Paterson - J. F. E. Barnes, 1.11.1901 (despatch); PAR, CSO, 2601: P. Logan - District Engineer, 4.11.1901(despatch); PAR, CSO, 2601: J. F. E. Barnes - T. K. Murray, 2.11.1901 (despatch).

144. PAR, CSO, 2601: J. F. E. Barnes - Sub-Accounting Officer, PWD, 31.10.1901 (letter); PAR, CSO, 2601: Supt Native Labour Corps, Ladysmith - J. F. E. Barnes, 31.10.1901 (telegram); PAR, CSO, 2601: J. F. E. Barnes - T. K. Murray, 2.11.1901 (despatch).

Merebank lay with Murray, and that he was not aware that the wage issue regarding blacks had been the subject of careful consideration and represented the best arrangement that could be made under the circumstances.[145]

Barnes felt that this action by Griffin had placed an undeserved and unfair slur upon Mr A. Head and himself. He also objected to the Acting Accounting Officer, or any other officer in his department, going over his head, or behind his back, to any other division with respect to matters for which the PWD was responsible. This had happened three times in the previous twelve months.[146]

The fact that some accounts pertaining to the burgher camps, including Merebank, were paid directly by the Burgher Camps Department, also created problems for the Accounting Officer of the PWD. As a result his books failed to reflect, at a glance , the expenditure relating to departmental and contract work. This caused his first statement to be inaccurate, and it therefore needed amending.[147]

Another problem faced during the construction of Merebank, as well as the new camp at Jacobs, was the shortage of building materials such as corrugated iron and timber. The extraordinary demands on the railway made by the military authorities, had created shortfalls which almost brought construction to a standstill at the end of January 1902. The Governor of Natal was, however, able to arrange with the General Manager of the Railways for the provision of a certain number of trucks and a shunting engine for two hours a day. In this way they provided about 100 tons of corrugated iron and timber a day.[148]

In their bid to obtain the necessary corrugated iron as soon as possible, the PWD supervisor, Mr John Simpson, invited three different firms in Durban, who were known to have corrugated iron in stock, to tender. The order was then placed with the firm

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145. PAR, CSO, 2601: Chief Engineer - Acting Accounting Officer, PWD, 30.10.1901 (minutes).

146. *Ibid.*

147. PAR, PWD, 2/97: W. Bosman - J. F. E. Barnes, 13.3.1902 (despatch).

148. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - J. Chamberlain, 21.2.1902 (despatch); PAR, GH, 707: H. E. McCallum - A. Milner, 23.1.1902 (telegram).

Warden & Hotchkiss which quoted the lowest figure, with the distinct understanding that any corrugated iron they "bought out" to make up the order, was to be charged at the rate they had been quoted.[149]

This safety precaution was to stand the PWD in good stead, for the firm Warden and Hotchkiss was unable to supply all the required corrugated iron from their own stock. They were forced to buy the extra corrugated iron to make up the order. They bought this from another merchant, Messrs A. Fass & Co. This upset A. Fass & Co. who had not been given the opportunity to tender for the contract. They complained to the Minister of Lands and Works that they felt that it was grossly unfair to large holders of stock for such orders to be placed with smaller firms, which did not hold a large enough stock, while the larger companies with enough stock, such as themselves, were overlooked and thus missed out on a lucrative proposition.[150]

To prevent such an incident from occurring again, A. Fass & Co. suggested that, in the general interest of all parties involved, a broker was to be employed to buy the required materials for the PWD in the cheapest market. The broker's salary was to be paid for by the seller and not the PWD.[151] The PWD was not prepared to accept this suggestion, but instead considered the introduction of an improved system of action when calling for quotations to get the cheapest price.[152]

Despite these problems, the authorities continued with the construction of the Merebank Concentration Camp. This involved an ongoing process of upgrading and enlargement which continued until after the war had ended. The camp was part of a master plan of creating a series of camps close to the harbour of Durban for economic, military and psychological reasons. The close proximity to Durban of approximately 15 000 inhabitants in three camps, would make the administrative and managerial matters relating to the Boer civilians much easier.

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149. PAR, MJPW, 88: Minister of Lands and Works - A. Fass & Co, 19.10.1901 (letter); PAR, MJPW, 88: John Simpson - District Engineer, PWD, Durban, 17.10.1901 (despatch).

150. PAR, MJPW, 88: A. Fass & Co. - Minister of Lands and Works, 10.10.1901 (letter).

151. *Ibid.*

152. PAR, MJPW, 88: Minister of Lands and Works - A. Fass & Co., 19.10.1901 (letter).

CHAPTER 3

THE ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP

During Lord Roberts' command, the concentration camps were administered by military officials detached from the staffs of various district commissioners. Central control had been in the hands of the military governors, who, in turn were responsible to the Commander-in-Chief. When the number of camps and number of inhabitants increased after 21 December 1900, Lord Kitchener, the new Commander-in-Chief, decided that changes should be effected in the administration of the concentration camps. On 19 January 1901, the Military Governor of Pretoria, Major-General John Maxwell, informed Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner in South Africa and Administrator of the Orange River Colony (ORC) and Transvaal Colony, that Kitchener had henceforth placed the responsibility of the camps with civil authorities. This meant that Milner now took over the administration of the camps, while the Military Governor of Pretoria and the Deputy Commissioner, ORC, were responsible for the creation and maintenance of the camps. Military officers and commandants were responsible only for the external protection of the camps and were ordered to give the superintendents of the camps all the help which they needed.[1]

Kitchener felt that a change in administration was necessary because army officers could not be spared to look after the camps and to control the expenditure.[2] In reality, the military authorities had not recognised the necessity of treating women and children differently from soldiers, and this had far-reaching consequences. It was necessary to have more capable people in charge, who were able to recognise and cope with the demands and requirements of the civilian camp inhabitants, and in this way counter the extremely high mortality rate and negative publicity bestowed on the British war effort.

Although the administration of the white concentration camps in the Transvaal and the

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1. S. B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics, January 1900 - May 1902*, p. 193.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

ORC was passed over to civil authorities during March 1901, the four Natal concentration camps in existence at the time, Merebank, Pietermaritzburg, Howick and Eshowe, were only handed over to civil administration on 1 October 1901 with the understanding that the entire control should be gradually transferred. By 7 November 1901 this had been completed.[3] During military rule all matters regarding the Natal concentration camps were relayed to the headquarters of the British Lieutenant-General in Newcastle, who, depending on the nature of the material, forwarded it to either Kitchener or Maxwell.[4] The new administration by a civilian staff under the direction of the Governor of Natal, Sir Henry McCallum, had to report to Milner who, in turn, had to report to the Colonial Office.[5] This proved to be a radical change in the administration and organisation of the concentration camps in Natal.

Milner gave McCallum, who took a keen interest in the camps, carte blanche in dealing with the administration and any problems or questions that might arise.[6] This made the construction, organisation and administration, the curtailment of expenditure, and the initiation of movements to improve the living conditions and environment of the camps, much easier to manage more effectively than was the case under military rule.

3.1 The General Superintendent Burgher Camps: Thomas Keir Murray

Governor McCallum entrusted the administration and organisation of the camps in Natal to the Natal Burgher Camps Department, which had its Head Office in Timber Street, Pietermaritzburg. At the head of this department was the General Superintendent of Burgher Camps (GSBC) for Natal, Thomas Keir Murray, a Natalian

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3. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).

4. *Reports, etc., on the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 819), p. 39.

5 *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853), p. 6 ; PAR, GH, 793: H. Kitchener - H. E. McCallum, 30.9.1901 (letter).

6. National Archive Repository (NAR), J. Ploeger Collection (A 2030): H. E. McCallum - A. Milner, 15.10.1902 (letter).

by birth, and a man who spoke fluent English, Zulu and Dutch/Afrikaans.[7] This placed Murray, who had to report directly to McCallum, in charge of all the concentration camps in Natal. In this position he took responsibility of the 27 750 people who had been admitted to the Natal camps by October 1902. [8]

Each of the individual concentration camps eventually created in Natal, i.e. Pietermaritzburg, Howick, Eshowe, Merebank, Jacobs, Wentworth, Pinetown and Tin Town (Ladysmith), were placed under the control of a civilian Camp Superintendent who in turn needed to report to the GSBC. The Camp Superintendent, Hugh Moberley Bousfield in the case of Merebank, was responsible for the running of his camp and was invested with the entire control of its affairs, subject to orders and instructions from Murray.[9]

As part of his duties, Murray had to select the staff to run each individual camp, and in the final instance he had to answer for the construction of the camp, sanitary arrangements, the transport, hospitals, purchasing of all stores, and for the financial circumstances of these camps. To enable him to fulfil his task, he was permitted to open an account with the Chief Paymaster, Natal, who in turn opened a banking account on behalf of the Natal Burgher Camps at the Standard Bank in Pietermaritzburg.[10]

Murray's ability to speak Dutch/Afrikaans, his understanding of the Boer way of life and habits, which he had gained to a large extent during his railway link negotiations with President Paul Kruger and the Transvaalers, together with his experiences in a great variety of disciplines, made him an ideal candidate for this position. Murray had gone through all the departments of a large general business, was director of the Natal Bank, had entered the political arena as a member for the predominantly Dutch/Afrikaans-speaking district of Klip River in 1886, become Minister of Lands and Works in 1893, Colonial Secretary in 1897, and even acted as Prime Minister while

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7. Cd. 853, p. 3.
8. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 14.10.1902 (annual report).
9. Cd. 853, p. 39.
10. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).

Harry Escombe was at Queen Victoria's Jubilee Festivities in 1897.[11] After the outbreak of the war, as a loyal member of the British Empire, he had supported the British war effort by raising and commanding his own units, the Murray's Horse and Murray's Scouts. He had also participated in the relief of Ladysmith as Chief of General Intelligence to General Redvers Buller.[12]

As GSBC, Murray took a keen interest in all the camps under his jurisdiction, including the Merebank Camp, which he visited and inspected at least once a month between November 1901 and June 1902. Furthermore, he accompanied important delegations such as the Fawcett Ladies' Commission to the Merebank Concentration Camp in December 1901.[13] The experience Murray had gained in both the private and public sectors stood him in good stead and he proved to be competent at his task. Under his administration, the concentration camps were economically and efficiently managed and organised, so much so that he was duly thanked and commended by the British Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain.[14]

At Head Office Murray was assisted by various staff members such as the Assistant GSBC and Chief Accountant, Mr Edward Noble; the Sub-Accountant, Mr A.W. Cullingworth; the Chief Clerk, Mr R. Sharp; the Junior Typist, Mr E.G. Noble; the Medical Inspector, Dr T.W. Hime, and the Chief Buyer in Durban, Mr H.E. Povall.[15]

The buyer was not allowed to purchase supplies without the sanction of Head Office. Each camp sent its requisitions for the month, certified by the Camp Superintendent, to Head Office and after careful examination by Murray and Noble, these requisitions were passed on to the buyer to obtain quotations in the open market. On a fixed day all tenders were closed and passed to the GSBC for consideration in respect to prices and quality. Authority was then given to the buyer to place the orders for the month's supply with the approved tenderers, and to see to it that the goods were forwarded as

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11. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 13.3.1902 (letter).
12. E. Rosenthal (compiler), *Southern African dictionary of national biography*, p. 267.
13. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum (monthly reports of November 1901 - June 1902).
14. PAR, GH, 214: J. Chamberlain - H. E. McCallum, 2.5.1902 (despatch).
15 PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, 30.6.1903 (final report).

required. Buyers' notes were then immediately forwarded to Head Office, reflecting quantities, description and prices. Simultaneously, advice notes which were filed pending the arrival of the goods, were sent to the camp superintendents for their records.[16] This process mirrored the business and administrative competence of Murray.

Despite his heavy workload and competence, Murray received a salary lower than that of the Camp Superintendents he had to oversee. He therefore felt that his salary of £2 per day was both insufficient and unfair. Subsequently he approached the Governor and requested an increase in salary.[17] Governor McCallum sent the request to Milner, who agreed to increase Murray's salary to three guineas per day.[18] This was a small price to pay for such a competent administrator.

3.2 The Camp Superintendent: Hugh Moberley Bousfield

Murray selected Hugh Moberley Bousfield as Camp Superintendent for Merebank. Bousfield was a small, polite and Natalian born man who understood, but spoke only broken Dutch/Afrikaans.[19] As a Captain in the Imperial Light Infantry during the early stages of the war, he had gained experience which would come in useful in his appointment as Camp Superintendent of the largest concentration camp in South Africa.[20] His acquaintance with the manners, customs and language of the Boers also made him an ideal candidate for Superintendent, even if he had taken on a position for which he had no training.

Bousfield's task was a strenuous and difficult one, as he was always on duty, fulfilling various functions. He had to oversee the simplest of tasks; administer supplies, equipment and personnel; apply rules and regulations, and deal with and

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16. *Ibid.*
17. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 13.3.1902 (letter).
18. PAR, GH, 631: A. Milner - H. E. McCallum, 22.3.1902 (despatch). One guinea was equivalent to 21 shillings or £1.05, and used especially in determining professional fees.
19. M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, p. 43.
20. PAR, CSO, 1666: Principal Under-Secretary - H. M. Bousfield, 12.1.1901 (letter).

listen to complaints and demands whilst remaining impartial, patient and just. He was also required to have a knowledge of sanitation, water, education, business, gardening and half a dozen other industries such as brick-making, tanning and carpentry and then report all the matters to Murray, the GSBC.[21]

As Superintendent of Merebank, Bousfield held the highest authority in the camp and was held responsible for the running of the camp and the staff required to do so. For this he needed an Assistant Superintendent, to which position Mr Woodgate was appointed. He also required medical staff; sanitary staff; a camp matron and her staff; a storekeeper and his assistants; clerks, and other administrative and educational staff. For this responsible task he received a salary of 30/- per day, accommodation and rations.[22]

The logistics of administering a camp the size of Merebank were very complicated. One of Bousfield's first duties was to document and supply Head Office with a list containing all the personal details of each inhabitant, his or her date of arrival and amounts debited to each family. Furthermore, a register containing this information and details regarding the position of each family, was kept in his office.[23] At the end of the war, Bousfield co-ordinated repatriation and acted as a Commissioner of Oaths to assist Boers in taking the Oath of Allegiance. In addition to this, he was required to supply the office of the Natal Government Railway every Friday, with particulars of the total number of Boers that were ready to be transported the following week, and their destination.[24]

In most instances Bousfield was competent at his task of receiving the new camp inhabitants, providing food and shelter, organising sanitary measures, arranging transport and the general administrative functions. He and his clerical staff did,

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21. *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (Cd. 893), p. 7; *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7.

22. PAR, GH, 631: H. F. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report).

23. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report). This information is recorded in the NAR, Archives of Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 126, 127, 128, 129 and 130.

24. PAR, GH, 1453: Assistant GSBC - H. M. Bousfield, 30.6.1902 (letter); PAR, Archives of the Prime Minister (PM), 30: Acting General Manager NGR - Acting Prime Minister, 4.7.1902 (letter).

however, make mistakes and were not always sure of what to do. For instance, no record existed of the departure of one Lucie Smuts, on 15 April 1902 to reside with her mother at the Jacobs Concentration Camp.[25] In another incident in August 1902, Bousfield failed to sign the Oath of Allegiance taken by Mr H.W. Huysen. The Secretary of the Prime Minister therefore had to return the form. Bousfield had to sign it and return it to the GSBC, who in turn had to send it back to the Prime Minister's office.[26] These oversights may have caused some unnecessary logistical problems, but are understandable in a system dealing with a large staff of varying ability and a camp population approaching 9000.

Another incident showed that a lack of communication between the military and civil authorities proved problematic to Bousfield's administration. Although superintendents were supposed to be informed well in advance of the arrival of new camp inhabitants, this did not always happen. In December 1901, for example, Bousfield had not been advised that a certain Nicholas Johannes Grobler, aged 72, who had missed the Merebank station and had been picked up in a weak state near Isipingo, was to be sent to his son at Merebank from the Prisoner of War (POW) Camp at Tin Town, Ladysmith.[27] As this caught Bousfield by surprise, and because he felt that he should have been informed, he wrote to GSBC Murray who, in turn, forwarded the letter to Major M.B. Foster, the SOP Ladysmith. Major Foster reacted by justifying his actions and by criticising Bousfield, saying that in future Bousfield should address all correspondence regarding prisoners of war and surrendered burghers in Natal directly to him, as laid down in Natal District Orders of 20 July 1901.[28]

To Bousfield's credit, he was prepared to ask and communicate with the authorities, and ask for clarification on issues. A further example of this occurred after the war, when he was unable to supply answers to questions concerning the date by which claims for compensation had to be submitted and what sums camp inhabitants could

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25. Fischer, pp. 107, 133.

26. PAR, CSO, 1710: Secretary of the Prime Minister - H. A. Hime, 19.8.1902 (despatch); PAR, CSO 1710: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray 22.8.1902 (note).

27. NAR, Archives of the Staff Officer Prisoners of War (SOP), 25: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 4.12.1901 (memorandum).

28. NAR, SOP, 25: Major M. B. Foster - T. K. Murray, 6.12.1901 (correspondence).

claim for war damages. [29] He was thus honest enough to admit if he was unsure, rather than inventing an answer which might have been incorrect.

Superintendent Hugh Bousfield, who wore no uniform, had a friendly disposition and treated the Boers kindly, making no differentiation between people, irrespective of whether they came from the best society in Pretoria or the backveld.[30] He was as helpful, compassionate, kind and accommodating as circumstances allowed. He tried, as far as possible, to make things easier and more comfortable for the inhabitants. Examples of how he did this are numerous, but only a couple will be elaborated on. In one such instance he tried to get the seventeen-year-old son of a widow, Mrs van den Heever, despite her good health, transferred from the Umbilo POW Camp to Merebank, for he believed it would make life easier for her when she had her son around to be of help to her.[31] On another occasion he wrote to Major M.B. Foster, SOP, Ladysmith, on behalf of Petronella Catherina van Wyk to enquire regarding the whereabouts of her husband Barend Matheus.[32] He also organised with the SOP at the Umbilo POW Camp, requesting that the Merebank inhabitants should be allowed to visit relations and friends in the neighbouring POW camp on either a Friday or Saturday.[33] As a result of these compassionate actions, many of the camp inhabitants respected him.

Bousfield took his responsibility to safeguard those under his protection seriously. According to instructions from Pretoria strict supervision was to be exercised when allowing people from outside to visit the camp. Permits were only issued to those who had a good excuse to come into the camp and they had to be signed by Bousfield.[34] This was not always an easy task, for unwelcome visitors sometimes tried to enter the camp, and if they could not, they resorted to other more underhand means. In one

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29. NAR, Archives of the Law Department (LD), 156: H. M. Bousfield - Secretary Repatriation Board, Pretoria, 9.9.1902 (memorandum).

30. *The Natal Mercury*, 13.2.1902, p. 7; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 96.

31. NAR, SOP, 29: H. M. Bousfield - SOP, Point, Durban, 22.2.1902 (despatch).

32. NAR, SOP, 22: H. M. Bousfield - Major M. B. Foster, 5.11.1901 (letter 2194).

33. NAR, SOP, 31: H. M. Bousfield - SOP, Natal, Umbilo, 7.4.1902 (despatch).

34. NAR, DBC, 12: General report for month of April 1902, circular 134, 9.4.1902.

such instance a young man from Durban, Charles Hamilton, wrote a vulgar letter to a young Boer lady in the camp. The letter was intercepted by the censors in the censor office, who referred it to Bousfield. He, like a chivalrous gentleman, felt obliged to act. Determined to trap the writer, Bousfield assumed the identity and language of the young lady. Pretending to be her, he wrote to Hamilton, asking him to call, saying that she would be glad to see him and that she could get him a pass. Hamilton arrived at the camp six weeks later on a Friday afternoon at 13h00, when the Superintendent's office was closed. Upon learning his name, Bousfield told him to return at 14h00 and began preparations for his arrest. The girl and her mother, so far still ignorant of the letter, were called to the Superintendent's office together with the staff, the Burgher Police, and some representative Boers. Hamilton was arrested and handed over to the military court for trial and punishment, and duly sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour.[35]

As required of an administrator, Bousfield also had to deal with staff matters, and other problems and enquiries. One example of such a staff matter was the issue regarding Mr Arthur H. Goadby, who despite his salary of 10/- per day did not send any money to his wife and two children in England. As a result his family were forced to reside with Mrs Goadby's sister. Goadby's brother-in-law, Mr C.J.E. Richards, asked the Imperial Government to remit Goadby's salary directly to Mrs Goadby. The authorities declined, saying that this was a matter between Goadby and his wife and had nothing to do with them.[36]

Bousfield's kindness, friendliness and willingness to listen endeared him to many of the camp inhabitants. This was testified to amongst others by Ds. J.H. Enslin in *De Kerkbode*, and by one of the ration issuers at Merebank, who referred to himself as "Gratitude" in *The Natal Mercury*, in a letter to the press.[37] It must, however, be remembered that a person who issued rations received a salary of 6/- per day as well

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35. *The Natal Mercury*, 17.3.1902, p. 7.

36. PAR, CSO, 2593: A. Barnett - Principal Under-Secretary, 26.2.1902 (letter); PAR, CSO, 2593: Principal Under-Secretary - Office, 5.3.1902 (letter); PAR, CSO, 2593: C. J. E. Richards - Colonial Secretary, 17.1.1902 (letter).

37. J. H. Enslin, "Merebank Kamp", *De Kerkbode* 18(51), 24.12.1901, p. 694; *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7.

as accommodation and extra rations, while the minister of religion, a surrendered burgher, received officers' rations and a salary.[38] Both these gentlemen therefore had a better deal than the majority of inhabitants and were thus more likely to favour the system than the normal camp inhabitant. On the other hand, someone like Miem Fischer, who had been in the Standerton Concentration Camp before coming to Merebank and who remained very cynical about both camps, wrote the following of Bousfield: "Die kommandant is 'n klein, beleefde man en blykbaar nie gewoond om vroue in so 'n toestand te sien nie"[39] (The superintendent is a small, polite man who apparently is not used to seeing women in such circumstances). Petrus Jacobus Malan, a teenager who had been sent to the camp because his father was still on commando, also referred to Bousfield as *beleefd* (polite) and "De Kommandt Bousfield, vroeg hen op vriendelyken toon, hunne gevoelens te onderdrukken [...]"[40] (Superintendent Bousfield asked them in a friendly manner to suppress their feelings). These comments by individuals from both the advantaged and disadvantaged groups in the camp, seem to indicate that Bousfield was a courteous, friendly and compassionate man, who was respected by most of the inhabitants.

In conclusion, it can be said that Hugh Bousfield fared reasonably well under the extreme and foreign circumstances under which he had to work. As Superintendent, he was in charge of the largest concentration camp in South Africa, both in size and numbers, and he had to deal with the recommendations of the Fawcett Commission and maintain the camp in the swampy area which had in fact been rejected by the said commission. Despite these constraints, the inexperienced, but willing gentleman, Hugh Bousfield, as well his staff, proved that it was possible to administer the largest population that existed in a concentration camp, in a confined area, without arousing ill-feelings and without inducing a high mortality rate. In comparison with the concentration camps in the ORC and Transvaal Colony, it was relatively easy for Bousfield to be efficient because he had the support of an efficient superior, Sir Thomas Murray, and a system which worked.

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38. PAR, GH, 631: H. F. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report); W. P. Rousseau, "De kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 18(49), 12.12.1901, p. 669.

39. Fischer, p. 43.

40. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 96.

3.3 The medical and sanitary staff

Medical staff at an institution the size of the Merebank Camp needed to be comprehensive and, as a result, the hospital staff totalled 45 by March 1902. Five of these were medical doctors, the rest comprising the hospital matron, her assistant, and certified as well as uncertified nurses and probationers. [41]

When the Merebank Concentration Camp opened in September 1901, its health care was placed under Dr I.B. Ruddock, while the nursing staff was placed under the control of his wife. Dr Ruddock's services were terminated on 31 October 1901 when Dr Leonard Hardy, a loyal British subject 35 years of age, took charge as Senior Medical Officer (SMO) on 1 November 1901, and continued in this position until 31 October 1902. As SMO, he was responsible for the running of the hospital and staff, and he liaised with and reported to Bousfield regarding health and sanitary matters. Hardy appointed the camp and hospital matrons with the approval of Superintendent Bousfield.[42]

During the existence of the camp, Hardy had the assistance of the following doctors: Dr J. O'Reilly (8 November 1901 - 3 September 1902), Dr H. Rademeyer (26 November 1901 - 31 August 1902), Dr Lyle (24 December 1901 - ? 1902), Dr W.O. Pou (1 January 1902 - 18 October 1902), Dr Cole (15 April 1902 - 30 November 1902), Dr Spence (15 April 1902 - 30 November 1902) and Dr Llewellyn-Jones (26 September 1902 - 8 December 1902).[43] The doctors received rations, accommodation and a salary of 25/- per day. The only exception was Dr Hardy who, as SMO, received a salary of 27/6 per day as well as other benefits.[44]

Dr James O'Reilly and Dr Hendrik Rademeyer were the two Boer doctors in the camp, and they found it much easier to obtain the trust of the inhabitants. Many of the camp

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41. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 12.3.1902 (monthly report); NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 1.
42. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7; NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 1.
43. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 1.
44. PAR, GH, 631: H. F. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report).

inhabitants had known Dr O'Reilly, who was sent to the camp as an undesirable from his practise at Wakkerstroom, and they expressed their delight at his being in the camp, with comments such as "Dit is te hope dat die hospitaal, waar al verskeie pasiënte is, iets anders as 'n slagplaas sal word"[45] (It is hoped that the hospital, which already has a number of patients, will become something other than an abattoir). Dr Rademeyer, who also had a diploma and certificate in midwifery, had been employed by the Afrikaner community in Greytown in order to establish a boycott against English practitioners. As this was considered undesirable for both civil and military reasons, he was removed to the Merebank Concentration Camp and employed there.[46]

As a result of the high patient to doctor ratio, which peaked at a ratio of 1 to 1668,[47] the doctors were kept very busy in the hospital and during their daily rounds, visiting the sick in their quarters, assisted by an interpreter. The SMO, or one of his assistants, also paid a visit to the schools twice a week to inspect all the children, with a view to detect any who might be suffering from the early symptoms of infectious diseases. Many children who had not yet recovered fully from the effect of an illness, on occasions came to school. They needed to be taken note of and given tonics or special food to build their strength.[48]

The Hospital Matron, M. Cochrane, was a trained and certified nurse and midwife.[49] Her duties included managing the hospital, its personnel, and all related medical matters under the direction of the doctors, subject to the control of Bousfield. All cases of illness in the camp outside the hospital were also brought to her attention. She received a salary of £15 per month, a 16/8 uniform allowance, accommodation and

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45. Fischer, p. 58.

46. PAR, CSO, 1690: Colonel Rawson - A. Hime, 18.11.1901 (letter); PAR, CSO, 1680: H.v. N. Rademeyer - Colonial Secretary, 5.7.1901 (letter and declaration of identity for a medical practitioner).

47. This figure was reached by making use of the monthly population statistical returns and the number of doctors in the camp in that month. This stated ratio was reached during the month of February 1902 when there were five doctors in the camp and a population of 8342. See Table 7.2 in Chapter 7, *infra* for more details on population statistics.

48. NAR, DBC, 11: Circular 158, 5.5.1902.

49. PAR, CSO, 1706: M. Cochrane - H. A. Hime, 19.6.1902 (letter); Cd. 893, p. 36.

rations.[50]

The hospital matron was assisted in her task by her assistant matron, nurses, probationers and hospital servants. The fully trained nurses on her staff received a salary of £10 per month, while the uncertified nurses received £7.10.0 per month. Both groups also received a uniform allowance of 16/8 per month for their blue uniforms with white aprons and caps, as well as rations and quarters.[51]

Probationers were needed to help the nursing staff at the hospital. To fill these positions at the Merebank Concentration Camp hospital, the GSBC, Murray, approached both the camp inhabitants and the Durban Uitlander Committee. Suitable applicants from the Uitlander population were promised a salary of 5/- per day, rations and accommodation. Any applications for these positions had to be sent directly to Bousfield, who made the appointments, and then forwarded the names to Murray.[52] Probationers taken from the camp inhabitants were treated differently from those of the Uitlander population. Their salary at 2/6 per day was only half of that received by the Uitlander ladies, and although their uniforms were supplied, they remained the property of the hospital. Their rations were the same as the other nurses and replaced ordinary refugee rations.[53] Despite this obvious discrimination and exploitation, a number of young Boer women, about whom glowing reports were received, accepted the offer out of need. The money earned helped to buy food to supplement the rations their families received and possibly a few personal extras.

Not everyone in the camp felt convinced that these young women, among them Margarita and Ellen Scheepers (the sisters of Commandant Gideon Scheepers, executed in Graaff-Reinet),[54] Katie van Rooyen, Johanna du Toit, Sophia Horn,

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50. NAR, DBC, 14: General Superintendent - Superintendent, 16.12.1901 (circular); PAR, GH, 631: F. H. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report).

51. NAR, DBC, 14: General Superintendent - Superintendent, 16.12.1901 (circular); *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7.

52. PAR, Uitlander Committee Collection (Accession A 1538): T. K. Murray - B. W. Brayshaw Esq., 10.10.1901 (memorandum).

53. NAR, DBC, 14: General Superintendent - Superintendent, 16.12.1901 (circular).

54. M. M. Postma, *Stemme uit die verlede: 'n versameling van beëdigde verklarings van vroue wat tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in konsentrasiekampe verkeer het*, p. 146.

Maggie Roux, Cecilia Robinson, Lena Francis, Marisa van Vuuren, Catrina Smit, Elin Leibbrandt, Maggie Biccard, Mattie Barnard and others, should be prepared to work as probationers.[55] Instead there were those, such as Miem Fischer, who considered this practice undesirable, ridiculing anyone who worked in the hospital or who cleaned the wash-houses and toilets. Those in opposition seemed to feel that by doing these menial tasks the girls were not only compromising their dignity, but also collaborating with the British and thus betraying the Boer cause.[56]

Medicines were only dispensed on order of a doctor's prescription. The dispensary, which was generally well-stocked, was manned by the 56-year-old chemist, T.R. Morris, who received a salary of 10/6 per day, accommodation and rations. He was assisted by the 30-year-old Arthur Greene.[57] Likewise, medical comforts such as blankets, brandy, etc., were only dispensed on doctors' orders, and then, by the storekeeper and not the chemist.[58]

Sanitary matters received careful attention in the camp and every endeavour was made to render the sanitary arrangements as acceptable as possible. At the time of the visit by the Fawcett Commission on 6 and 7 December 1901, there were 25 latrines in use at Merebank for the more than 4437 camp inhabitants. This meant that approximately 177 people needed to share one latrine. The latrines were made of corrugated iron, with 32 pails and seats each, and they were reasonably clean and well looked after. This was thanks to the fact that disinfectants were used freely on a daily basis. Toilets were cleaned with carbolic powder while hydrated lime was used for the buckets. Furthermore, sanitary inspectors were appointed from the camp population to see to it that ablutions were clean.[59] To further illustrate the emphasis on cleanliness the rules and regulations of the camp stated that "Any person fouling the Latrines must be made to clean same; anyone noticing this should at once report

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55. NAR, DBC 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

56. Fischer, pp. 54, 93; I. Uys, *Heidelbergers of the Boer War*, p. 208.

57. PAR, GH, 631: F. H. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report); NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 49.

58. Cd. 893, p. 36.

59. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 (monthly report); Cd. 893, p. 34; Cd, 819, pp. 219, 261; Fischer, p. 54.

the matter".[60]

At Merebank, the dry earth pail system was adopted, and initially a sanitary contractor was employed to remove and disinfect all pails, slop pails and dust bins on a daily basis. In December 1901, this contractor had a staff of 26 Indians under a Sirdar, two sanitary carts, twelve horses, and fourteen oxen to remove the excreta to some distance from the camp. The contents of the latrine pails were buried in trenches, but owing to the fact that the groundwater was so close to the surface, the constant danger existed that this could soak into the surrounding soil.[61] Moreover, the contractor was not very trustworthy. Instead of doing his work conscientiously, he went drinking at Isipingo. As a result Murray commandeered his plant, cancelled the contract and employed his own staff.[62] Mr F.C. Webb was placed at the head of the Sanitary Department and he was assisted by men such as the indentured labourer, Magamothoo, from India, and black men such as Abanthu, Mnxenena, and Kunjan ka Umkiohle from Umzinto, and Umxingo ka Ushesha from Umsinga.[63] Their workload was eased in August 1902, for a small tramway had been constructed to make the transporting of the pail contents easier.[64] This meant that less reliance was placed on ox and mule carts plodding through the thick sandy roads at Merebank. It was also quicker to clean and empty the buckets.

During December 1901, when there were between 4437 and 5327 camp inhabitants at Merebank, rubbish was collected into three small three-sided enclosures of corrugated iron, and then carried away daily in five rubbish carts to the depositing ground. The Fawcett Commission complained about these enclosures, feeling that they were too shallow and that the dust and rubbish were often blown out of them. Furthermore, they considered the depositing ground to be too near the camp and felt that it needed to be moved, as indeed it was. Slop water was placed in slop buckets

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60. PAR, GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902. See also Appendix 2, *infra.*

61. Cd. 893, p. 34; PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 12.2.1902 (monthly report).

62. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

63. PAR, CSO, 1718: Private Secretary of H. E. McCallum - Mayor, Durban, 22.4.1903 (letter); PAR, CSO, 1718: Mayor, Durban - Secretary, Royal Humane Society, 12.1.1903 (enclosure in despatch).

64. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

on wheels scattered throughout the camp. The buckets were then carted to the depositing ground where they were emptied.[65]

In reaction to the Fawcett Commissions' recommendations that the general cleanliness of the camp should be improved, six young Boer boys were employed at 10/- a month each, serving about 1000 people and working under a Boer overseer. Their duty was to pick up all the rubbish, and arrangements were made that this did not interfere with their schooling. Boys were chosen to do this job, for they were perceived to be more readily taught than men, what a clean camp should look like.[66] In addition, the Camp Police walked around the camp to ensure that the inhabitants adhered to the rules and kept their premises and surrounding areas clean by sweeping and picking up the rubbish, which even included the coffee grounds.[67] Such petty application of the rules generally served the greater purpose - to keep the camp clean and hygienic.

3.4 The Camp Matron

Numerous duties regarding the general management of the camp were conducted by the Camp Matron (whose name could not been ascertained from the sources consulted), and her assistants. The Camp Matron's duties included administrative matters such as drawing up lists of medical comforts required by the camp inhabitants; distribution of medicine; referring cases of need to the Relief Matron for investigation; aspects of and educating the Boer women on the British view of child-rearing.[68] She also took charge of all goods for free distribution. For this she was provided with a depot for the reception of all parcels and articles intended for distribution from whatever source. She was expected to keep a register of all parcels received, giving the date of receipt and the name of the donor. Under orders from Bousfield, goods were distributed to those inhabitants in need. The names of the recipients, as well as

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65. Cd. 893, p. 34; PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum).
66. NAR, DBC, 12: Report by Major W. Anstruther Thomson, 15.3.1902; Cd. 893, p. 37.
67. PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum); Fischer, pp. 48, 59.
68. NAR, DBC, 14: General Superintendent - Superintendent, 16.12.1901 (circular).

the camp addresses, were recorded for reference.[69] In the process of distributing these goods, the committee of camp inhabitants selected for the purpose of determining who needed clothing, the Camp Matron and other staff members were present. If the donors wished to be present at the presentation of the goods, they were generally permitted to attend.[70]

According to the regulations, the Camp Matron was entitled to assistance if the camp had more than 2000 inhabitants. At Merebank, with its population of more than 8000, she had the help of an Assistant Camp Matron, and a trained nurse for every 1500 inhabitants over and above 2000. For logistical reasons, the Camp Matron divided the camp into districts or blocks, containing approximately 1000 inhabitants in the block she reserved for herself, and approximately 1500 inhabitants for each of her nurses.[71]

The Camp Matron was also entitled to select women, younger than twenty years of age, from amongst the camp inhabitants as probationers, and then to see that they were trained to wash and bandage patients, to take temperatures, dispense medicine, and to ensure that medicines were properly administered and that provisions were properly cooked and prepared. These probationers had to visit allocated points before 08h30 every morning and they had to report to either the Camp Matron or head nurse of the particular district, on the cleanliness of their delegated area as well as on the condition of the sick. The Matron or nurse then passed this information on to the doctor.[72]

The Camp Matron received a salary of £10 per month, which was slightly less than that earned by the Hospital Matron, as well as a uniform allowance of 16/8 per month, accommodation and rations. The rest of her staff received salaries and benefits similar to that of the hospital staff.[73] Another benefit received by the Camp Matron and

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69. PAR, GH, 553: GSBC, Pretoria - GSBC, Pietermaritzburg, October 1901 (rules and regulations).

70. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 14.10.1902 (annual report).

71. Cd. 893, p. 22; PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum).

72. *Further papers relating to the working of refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 902), p. 48; NAR, DBC, 14: General Superintendent - Superintendent, 16.12.1901 (circular).

73. PAR, GH, 631: F. H. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report).

her staff, were the services of a 29-year-old Indian cook, Ramge, and other servants who were employed to attend to their mess and quarters.[74]

Unfortunately the Camp Matron did not seem to be very competent in all aspects of the duties allocated to her. In April 1902, people from Germany sent a variety of goods to the camp. The consignment included large rolls of linen, flannelette, chintz and a roll of dark-green sheet linen. When half the roll of green sheet linen disappeared, the Matron was found to be implicated. She had kept the key to the room, but had insisted that the window remain open at all times, apparently to let enough air in.[75] Regrettably, other than Fischer's reference to her inefficiency, no official records could be found to verify the Camp Matron's competence or lack thereof.

3.5 The Head Commissariat and his staff

Other focal points in the camp were occupied by the four rationing houses under the supervision of the Head Commissariat or storekeeper, Mr Peten [sic], an elderly man who lived next to the commissariat. He was given the nickname Ou Bokbaardjie (Old Goatee) by the camp inhabitants because of his goatee.[76] He was assisted by six white men employed in each rationing house. Eight black men were also employed to perform duties in all four rationing houses. The rationing houses were iron buildings with large tables and shelves. Outside the window through which the inhabitants were served, there was a bar which prevented crowding, and which also controlled the movement of the people as they queued for their rations. The inhabitants received their rations in the block system at an allocated ration house. To streamline this process, rows, for example "A" Row, Block 8 were served on an indicated day and time. An account was kept against every family for all the rations, clothing, etc. which were issued to them with a view to recover their value when the war was over.[77]

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74. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 47.

75. Fischer, pp. 105, 135.

76. War Museum of the Boer Republics (WM), Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession 5890/90): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders; Cd. 893, p. 35.

77. Cd. 893, p. 35; PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum). The type and amount of rations received by the inhabitants will be examined in Chapter 5, section 5.1, *infra.*

The storeman and chief ration issuer of each ration house, for example Mr Hennessy of Ration House No. 2, each received a salary of 10/- per day, accommodation and rations. Issuers of stores received 6/- per day, accommodation and rations, while the surrendered Boer assistant-issuers only received 2/6 per day and rations.[78]

New stocks arrived at the camp at regular intervals, as only sufficient stocks to meet the monthly requirements were purchased. When this stock arrived at Merebank, either by rail or by wagon, it would be received, checked and entered into the "Goods Received Books", reflecting the consignee, packages, description and quantity. Deliveries were then passed on to the general stores where they were received by Mr Peten, who in turn passed the supplies to the chief ration issuer in each ration house. Here vouchers were signed by the Quartermaster for distribution to the inhabitants. At the end of each month, records of rations and medical comforts issued were prepared, and the balances struck, showing anticipated stock on hand compared with the actual stock which remained. These returns were then passed on to Head Office, examined, checked by the Chief Clerk and, if correct, filed.[79]

The system of issuing rations, despite employing the block and row system, was not as satisfactory as it could have been. Camp inhabitants complained that those who worked in the ration houses were dirty and slovenly, that the weights in the storehouses were not accurate, and that they, both young and old, had to stand in queues in the hot sun for a very long time before they were able to receive their rations. Children who came to stand in the queue on the behalf of their parents, thus missing school, often became so bored that they put down their dishes in the queue, and then played, to the annoyance of the commissariat.[80] A fair amount of jostling, pushing and shoving must have taken place while standing in the queues, making the conditions ripe for tension.

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78. PAR, GH, 631: F. H. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report); Cultural History Museum, Photograph Collection: The burghers receiving their rations from the commissariat store number 2 at Merebank Burgher Camp, April 1902 (original photograph).

79. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

80. WM, 5890/90: Merebank konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders; E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 35.

3.6 The educational staff

Education in the Merebank Concentration Camp, where there was supposedly a collection of "schools" which were in fact one school, was placed under the Transvaal Department of Education, with Mr Sargant, Director of Education, at the helm. The school inspectors, who during the existence of Merebank were Mr Kemball Cook, followed by Mr Corbett and eventually Mr C. Mansfield, visited the school in the camp to ensure that education ran smoothly.[81] Although there were some Boer teachers, the education was conducted mainly by tutors who had come from Britain, the first of these having arrived in Durban from Southampton on board the RMS *Scott* on 22 March 1902. They were Misses Ethel Smith, and Kate and Charlotte Smith. [82]

Mr W. H. Hambly, an Australian who understood no Dutch/Afrikaans, was appointed as the headmaster at Merebank.[83] He was assisted by at least 25 teachers, including Mr D.J.H. Viljoen of Potchefstroom, Mr Petrus van Straten of Wepener, and Mesdames E. Meiring, A. Schutte, S. Prinsloo, M. Erasmus, K. French, C. French, M. Macalister, E. Smith, F. Wellings, M. Halliwell, A. George and H. Ladley.[84]

Teachers seem to have received a lower salary than hospital matrons, camp matrons and nursing sisters, as deduced from the fact that one of the teachers, Ethel Smith, who could be seen as representing all British teachers in general, received a salary of £100 p.a. (or just more than £8 per month), as well as rations and accommodation, compared to the £10 or more, 16/8 uniform allowance, rations and accommodation earned by the nursing sisters, hospital matron and camp matron. (See Appendix 1, *infra*.) Despite this, £ 1 012.3.7 had been spent on teachers' salaries by the end of November 1902 when the schools closed.[85]

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81. Cd. 893, p. 37; PAR, Archives of the Minister of Justice and Public Works (MJPW), 94: Inspector of Education, Transvaal - Minister of Lands and Works, 18.6.1902 (letter).

82. NAR, Archives of the Secretary of the Governor-General (GG), 25/347: E. F. Smith - Secretary, Board of Education, 4.5.1923 (letter); Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 1.

83. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 72-73.

84. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

85. NAR, GG, 25/347: Memorandum, Archives Office, Pretoria, 12.10.1923; NAR, A 2030, 48: Transvaal Blue Book 1902-1903 (return of burgher camp schools).

Not all who became involved in education in the Merebank Camp were trained teachers. For example, Mr W.F. Mitchell was not a teacher by profession, but a man who had received a scholarship at the Royal College of Science and who had finished a course at the Engineering School where he had obtained a diploma. When he came to South Africa he was obliged, probably due to the lack of suitable occupations, to become involved in education. He was sent to Merebank, Jacobs and Wentworth, where he was teacher-examiner, and operator of the lantern used to project slides during lectures.[86] He also did a great deal of the headmasters' general administration. For the month prior to 23 August 1902 he was engaged clerically, making out return reports, certificates and dealing with general administration matters of the schools at Merebank. After the war, although he was appointed to the Transvaal Education Department, he applied to the Surveyor-General for an employment position more in line with his professional training.[87]

3.7 The camp police

Merebank also had a police guard who were required to keep watch, some by day and some by night, to see to cleanliness and order, to ensure that lights were out by 22h00, and that unauthorised persons did not enter the camp. They also had to prevent inhabitants from leaving the camp without a pass signed by the Superintendent. Persons found attempting to enter or leave the camp without authorisation were arrested by the camp police and brought to Bousfield, who dealt with the matter according to his discretion. This task of policing was, where possible, given to Natal Afrikaners such as Hendrik Huyser, Pieter Andries Bentum and Petrus van der Westhuizen, all of Newcastle, or surrendered burghers between the ages of sixteen and 50.[88] This was, however, not always possible, and at times this task fell on either black policemen or the Natal Police stationed at Merebank.[89] The Burgher

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86. See pp. 133-134, *infra,* for more details on the lantern lectures.

87. PAR, Archives of the Surveyor-General's Office (SGO), III/1/155: W. F. Mitchell - Surveyor-General, Natal, 23.8.1902 (letter).

88. PAR, GH, 553: GSBC, Pretoria - GSBC, Pietermaritzburg, October 1901 (rules and regulations); PAR, CSO, 1732: List of Natal Boers over 16 years of age in Merebank Burgher Camp as on 21.1.1902; Fischer, pp. 48, 57.

89. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 65.

Corporals, as overseers of the Burgher Police, earned a salary of 2/6 per day, while the Burgher Police earned 1/6 per day. In addition they were given a pair of boots and rations of 1 lb (450 g) sugar, 4 oz (115 g) coffee and 1 lb (450 g) meat in addition to their ordinary weekly camp rations.[90]

The camp inhabitants in general found these joiner men, i.e. Boer men who crossed to the British forces, despicable, and therefore taunted and teased them. They were not only referred to as traitors and murderers, but were also given derogatory names such as *kierie-meide*,[91] which showed the strong feeling of disgust most women harboured towards these men. This poses the question: why did these men join the camp police if they were despised, shunned and verbally abused while receiving so few benefits? One possibility was that they could have been tempted by the extra rations, but perhaps more important, their masculinity was being challenged. The only way in which they could defend it was by joining the military establishment, even if it was that of the British.

3.8 Camp rules and regulations

For the Merebank Concentration Camp to function properly, rules needed to be adhered to. Natal concentration camps had their own set of rules which were very similar to those of the Transvaal and ORC concentration camps. They were translated from English into Dutch/Afrikaans and posted up at the Superintendent's office.[92] Ideally, a copy was to be placed on a board in all living quarters. Any persons convicted of contravening these regulations, set out in Appendix 2, *infra*, were liable to be punished.[93]

To keep the camp clean, healthy and as safe as possible, certain sanitary, cleanliness

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90. PAR, GH, 553: GSBC, Pretoria - GSBC, Pietermaritzburg, October 1901 (rules and regulations); PAR, GH, 631: F. H. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report).

91. NAR, P. H. S. van Zyl Collection (Accession W19/4A): Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 19. The term "meide" in this instance referred to cowards. The term "kierie-meide" would therefore refer to stick carrying cowardly servants of the British.

92. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 936), p. 19; Fischer, p. 49.

93. PAR, GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902.

and safety rules had to be adhered to. These included keeping the area surrounding the living quarters clean, airing the living quarters, restricting washing and bathing to the wash- and bath-houses supplied, and hanging up washing in demarcated areas only. Furthermore, cases of illness and distress needed to be reported to the Camp Matron, and alcohol was only permitted in the camp in cases of illness, or with permission. [94]

Passes were required from the Camp Superintendent for outsiders to enter the camp, or for residents to leave in order to visit friends and family elsewhere in Durban, or for them to go to the beach or to collect firewood. Application had to be made for passes, but only a certain number were issued per day. Residents who were given a pass for the day were allowed to leave the camp at about 09h00 and in some instances even earlier, but had to be back at sunset.[95] This rule made it possible for the camp authorities to know the destination of camp inhabitants and to prevent possible escape.

All letters had to be posted, unclosed, at the camp post office where all letters and parcels coming in and going out of Merebank, were checked.[96] This implied that the post office was nothing other than a censor office where strict care was exercised according to martial law. Superintendent Bousfield and the military authorities were therefore always aware of what was happening. This was done to prevent literature or rumours that were calculated to disturb the peace of mind of the recipients or to incite them, from reaching camp inhabitants.

To safeguard themselves against any claims by camp inhabitants that they had not received money or parcels sent to them by friends and/or family, inhabitants had to sign for the parcel or money at Superintendent Bousfield's office. One such example was Mrs M.F. Eksteen, who had to sign for the £5 she received from her husband, Mr

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94. PAR, GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902; Fischer, p. 95; Uys, p. 207.

95. PAR, GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902; Postma, p. 99; Fischer, pp. 109, 133.

96. PAR, GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902.

H. Eksteen, a POW on board the SS *Bavarian*.[97] In the same way, money sent to families outside Merebank also had to be sent via Bousfield, who would send a letter accompanying the money, to the person in charge of the concentration or POW camp where the recipient resided. Here the recipient would be made to sign for the money.[98] In this way all were safeguarded and ensured that the money had reached the recipient and had not disappeared along the way.

Despite the discomfort these regulations may have caused the camp inhabitants, the majority of these rules were fair under the circumstances, and made it easier for Bousfield and his staff to administer the more than 8000 camp inhabitants.

3.9 Financial expenditure

If the administration, management and facilities of the Merebank Concentration Camp were to function efficiently, the Imperial authorities needed to incur enormous expenses. Funds to meet the expenditure of construction, the running of the camp, salaries and all sorts of miscellaneous expenses such as renting the land, were drawn from the District Paymaster, Natal up to 4 December 1901. Thereafter all funds were sent directly from the Financial Controller of Burgher Camps in Pretoria.[99]

When civil administration took over the camp on 1 October 1901, they made a number of changes in the financial administration of the camp. Several existing contracts were found to be too costly, and it was decided to cancel them as the opportunity arose and, in this way, considerable monthly savings would be made for the Imperial Government.[100] One of the first contracts to be terminated, was the meat contract which the military had signed with Sparks and Young Limited, Purveyors of Meat and Provisions, and it was replaced with an undertaking with the Transvaal Cold Storage Company. Meat was an important part of the diet and rations' quotas, but costs

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97. NAR, SOP, 29: H. M. Bousfield - SOP, Natal, 6.3.1902 (memorandum and receipt).
98. NAR, SOP, 27: H. M. Bousfield - SOP, Ladysmith, 27.12.1901 (memorandum).
99. PAR, GH, 631: F. H. Hamilton - A. Milner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor General's report).
100. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).

needed to be kept as low as possible.[101] Despite signing a new contract with the Transvaal Cold Storage Company, the cost of meat supplied to the Merebank Concentration Camp remained fairly high. The war had disrupted farming. Not only were farmers no longer farming effectively, but the Army also needed oxen to draw their wagons. As a result meat had to be imported, and this increased the cost of meat.

The meat destined for Merebank had to be transported to the camp on a daily basis. It was first carted to the Durban Station, and from there it was transported to Merebank on the 06h15 passenger train, at a cost of 3/9 per ton.[102] The cost of this meat, including railage and cartage, amounted to £646.14.6 in November 1901, £1367.16.7 in December 1901 and £1713.5.0 in January 1902, totalling £3727.16.1 at the end of the three months.[103] These figures may seem to suggest that the cost of meat was escalating, but it must be remembered that from the end of November 1901, when an estimated 11 000 lbs (5000 kg) of meat was required, to the end of January 1902, the total number of inhabitants in the camp had increased from 4437 to 6364.[104] With the increase in the camp inhabitants, the amount of meat consumed increased accordingly, and with this there was an increase in cost.

To keep the prices of all the other necessary supplies in the camp as low as possible, the chief buyer for the Burghers Department, Mr H.E. Povall, called for tenders and quotations on a monthly basis in the local newspapers, and in the case of Merebank, *The Natal Mercury*. The competition for business was great and, as a result, the prices of many goods provided to the camp started to drop.[105]

In another move to save money, the Natal Burgher Department preferred not to buy their foodstuffs and clothing through the office of Colonel Evans of Dundee, as the

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101. *Ibid.*; PAR, GH, 503: John Boaston - Lord Kitchener, 7.3.1902 (letter).

102. PAR, GH, 793: Palmer, Transvaal Cold Storage - T. K. Murray, 11.11.1901 (letter).

103. PAR, GH, 1452: Statement showing cost of meat including freight, 1.2.1902.

104. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 and 12.2.1902 (monthly reports); PAR, GH, 793: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 11.11.1901 (letter).

105. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report); PAR, GH, 503: John Boaston - Lord Kitchener, 7.3.1902 (letter).

Transvaal Burgher Camps had done while under military administration. Instead they preferred to use their own officer.[106] In this way they were not only showing their independence, but also the competence of Murray, whose sound financial administration adopted at Merebank saved the Imperial Government thousands of pounds. Proof of this was that, had the Imperial Government been called upon to pay the military rates it had been charged during October and November 1901 for bread, meal, sugar, fresh meat, coffee, salt, condensed milk, wood and candles consumed in the four concentration camps in Natal at the time, an additional expenditure of £6078.12.3 would have been incurred. This saving of 45½ %, or nine shillings and eleven pence halfpenny per head, had taken place because the mentioned articles were bought at almost half the price of what the military had paid for them.[107] (See Table 3.1 below.)

Table 3.1[108]

Comparative statement of cost of certain rations at Merebank

Article	Prices paid under Military Administration	Prices paid under Civil Administration
Bread	3d. per lb	10/5 per 100 lbs
Meal	11/5 per 100 lbs	13/6 per 183 lbs
Fresh meat	10d. per lb	4/ ⅝ per lb
Coffee	1/3 per lb	5½ - 5¾ per lb
Salt	2d. per lb	5/- per 200 lbs
Sugar	4d. per lb	12/6 per 100 lbs
Condensed milk	6d per lb	4/5 per dozen
Potatoes	2d. per lb	8/4 per 100 lbs
Wood	2/- per lb	25/- per ton
Candles	8d. per lb	4¼ per lb

Expenditure at Merebank went to rations, fuel and water, sanitation and transport, medical comforts and other items such as clothing, equipment and maintenance. (See

106. PAR, PM, 24: Robert Evans - Albert Hime, 16.11.1901 (letter); PAR, PM, 24: Albert Hime - Robert Evans, 22.11.1901 (letter).

107. PAR, GH, 793: Enclosure in despatch 78, 15.3.1902 and enclosure in despatch 91, 14.3.1902.

108. NAR, GH, 793: Comparative statement of cost of certain rations at Merebank, 14.3.1902 (enclosure in despatch 91).

Table 3.2 below.) Rations consumed a very large portion of the expenditure incurred, with the inhabitants from the Transvaal absorbing a staggering £82 761.16.10 of the ration costs. The group from Utrecht and Vryheid, who were listed separately because they had been part of the Transvaal when the war broke out but incorporated into Natal in 1903, absorbed £9320.4.0, while those from the ORC £2247.12.11 and those from Natal £1045.11.8.[109]

Table 3.2[110]

Account by Financial Controller for Natal Burgher Camps

31 October 1901 - 31 March 1903

Commodity	Value		
	£	s	d
Stores	56 575	18	6
All salaries	19 677	6	2
Housing	3 580	11	5
Equipment	849	7	3
Clothing	965	3	2
Fuel and water	7 331	12	11
Maintenance	62	16	11
Medical comforts	2 718	12	4
Sanitation and transport	4 991	14	9
Supplies and sundries	5 733	4	5
Total	**102 489**	**11**	**10**

Although it was felt that large savings were made by concentrating the three concentration camps established south of Durban along the Durban main water supply, the amount spent on fuel and water remained high. This was probably due to the fact that the water required in the camp needed to be bought from the Durban Corporation, first at 3/- per 1000 gallon (4546 litres), and after 7 April 1902 at 1/6 per 1000 gallon.[111] The weekly supply of 14 lbs (6,4 kg) of wood to each adult and 7 lbs (3,2 kg) to each child younger than five years for cooking purposes, presented

109. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1903 (final report - dispersements enclosure).

110. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1903 (final report - cash book, enclosure).

111 Durban Archive Repository (DAR), Archives of the Durban Corporation (3/DBN), 1/1/3/23: Durban Corporation rough minutes, pp. 165, 227.

another continuous expenditure, which by 31 March 1902, together with the water expenses, amounted to £7331.12.11. A similar continuous expenditure was the upkeep of the camp toilets, which was of vital importance if the camp was to be kept healthy and hygienic. This amounted to £4991.14.9.

In a camp the size of Merebank, illnesses were likely to occur, and thus the medical officers and hospital required medicines and medical comforts on a continual basis. The mere £2718.12.4 spent on this thus seems to be very low in comparison with some of the other expenses, but was apparently adequate, for the death rate at Merebank was considerably lower than in many other concentration camps.

Salaries paid to the staff employed at Merebank made up a large chunk of the total expenditure. By 31 March 1902, this had totalled to £19677.6.2, making it the second highest expenditure on the account sent to Pretoria by the financial controller in Pietermaritzburg.[112]

Any system, including the concentration camp system, is only as effective as its parts. At Merebank, the parts making up the system were generally effective and competent. Thomas Keir Murray, as the GSBC, controlled the concentration camp system in Natal from Pietermaritzburg, while the staff dealing with the management of the Merebank Camp was skilfully and diligently led by Superintendent Bousfield who had a very good reciprocal working relationship with his GSBC, Murray. Those who benefited most from the sound administration at Merebank were the more than 8000 inhabitants of the camp.

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112. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1903 (final report - cash book enclosure).

CHAPTER 4

THE INHABITANTS OF THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP

Once the decision had been taken to send people to the newly erected Merebank Concentration Camp, the British authorities needed to identify possible candidates for this camp. The first group to be identified were those whom the British considered to be undesirable, either for security or moral reasons. Boer families and individuals were classified as undesirable for security reasons when their husbands, fathers or brothers were still on commando, or if they had made themselves objectionable to the authorities, especially by entertaining bitter feelings towards the British.[1] The second group to be sent to Merebank were those who volunteered to be sent. This group included hendsoppers and joiners. This meant that men such as W.H. Moolman, who had taken the Oath of Allegiance and thus qualified for release from a prisoner of war (POW) camp, were allowed to become inhabitants of the Merebank Concentration Camp.[2]

4.1 The journey to and arrival at the Merebank Concentration Camp

The thousands of men, women and children earmarked for Merebank were sent down to Durban by train, normally on open cattle or coal trucks. Sometimes passengers were transferred from these open trucks to third class carriages at certain points of their journey, for example, at Charlestown or Newcastle.[3] As trains were not always readily available owing to the war effort, the authorities were forced to make use of trains whenever the railways could spare trucks, often at very short notice.[4] It was thus not surprising that people were not always given ample warning about their

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1. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853), p. 31. For details on the reasons for sending people to the Merebank Concentration Camp refer to Chapter 2, pp. 29-38, *supra.*

2. National Archive Repository (NAR), Archive of Staff Officer Prisoners of War (SOP), 23: Major M. B. Foster - Commandant, Durban, 19.11.1901 (despatch); NAR, SOP, 23: Commandant, Durban - Major M. B. Foster, 20.11.1901 (despatch).

3. War Museum of the Boer Republics (WM), National Museum Collection (Accession, 4486/5): Correspondence of Elsie Meiring, Merebank, 17.10.1901; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 64.

4. NAR, Archives of the Military Governor, Pretoria (MGP), 249: Major-General J. G. Maxwell - H. E. McCallum, 19.9.1901 (telegram).

transfer to Merebank.[5] In other instances, people were told they were to prepare to leave for Merebank on a specific day, only to have the date of departure postponed.[6] This only confirmed that the Boers in the concentration camps were at the mercy of and under the power of the British, who were in the position to use these transfers as a psychological tool to threaten the women and children into submission, or even to softening the men still on commando, thereby encouraging them to surrender.

In spite of this, not everyone identified to proceed to Merebank accepted the transfer from one area to another without resistance. Mrs Christina Adriana Geldenhuis and her five children had been interned in the Klerksdorp Concentration Camp. Her husband Evert and son Hendrik were still on commando with General Koos de la Rey and consequently she was warned that she and her children, Christina (19), Martha (13), Evert (10), Cornelius (7) and Jacobus (2) were to be sent to Merebank. Mrs Geldenhuis was obviously not going to accept being sent to Natal without a fight, for she absconded on the night of 12 January 1902, before she could be sent away.[7] Unfortunately it has not been possible to ascertain whether Mrs Geldenhuis and her family were recaptured.

Collectively, camp inhabitants recalled most vividly, details of the trip to the Merebank Camp, and this remained foremost in their minds long after aspects of camp life had faded. This becomes clear in the reminiscences, memoirs and diaries kept by those who inhabited the Merebank Concentration Camp. It must be remembered that the trip, which was the second or third such journey for many of the camp inhabitants, was psychologically traumatic, perhaps more so than in other instances, for now they were being transferred to new surroundings into, what was to them, foreign territory, and the home ground of the enemy at that!

On their journey to Merebank, the passengers generally faced much humiliation and a variety of extreme weather conditions. Not only did they often have to wait for hours

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5. P. J. van der Walt, *Vroueverdiet: herinneringe uit die konsentrasiekampe van Petronella Johanna van der Walt (Olivier)*, p. 22.
6. E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 29.
7. NAR, MGP, 145: Refuge Klerksdorp - Refuge Pretoria, 14.1. 1902 (letter).

at a railway station before boarding the train, but in many instances they also had to endure the wind, dust, rain, cold and heat without any form of protective covering during their journey. As testified to by numerous inhabitants, many arrived at Merebank sunburnt and dirty, after a trip which lasted anything up to five days in filthy, overcrowded trucks without toilets. This forced passengers to follow the call of nature in front of their fellow travellers, regardless of age or gender. Making matters worse, people who were ill or who had not yet recuperated from an illness, were also transferred to Merebank if they fell into one of the given categories. This resulted in deaths along the way and the rapid introduction of infectious diseases such as measles into Merebank.[8]

According to official documentation, sufficient rations for the journey as well as an extra day's rations were supplied to those being transferred to Merebank, while hot water was arranged for them at Heidelberg, Standerton and Volksrust.[9] Most Boer diaries and memoirs dispute this when they recall that the prisoners never received any drinking water. Instead, when the train stopped long enough, they sent the children to fetch water where the water was being pumped into the locomotive. A certain Mrs Z.W. Joubert even claimed that they went to fetch hot water for coffee from the locomotive.[10]

The first 24 camp inhabitants arrived at Merebank from Pretoria on 13 September 1901. Two days later, approximately 500 more inhabitants, some of whom were ill with measles, arrived from Standerton.[11] These new arrivals, and those which followed during the next couple of weeks, arrived at the camp before proper sanitation and other arrangements had been completed.[12] This, together with the fact that there was

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8. Van der Walt, pp. 23-26; WM, Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession, 5890/91): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders; L. M. Fick, *Stemme uit die vrouekampe gedurende die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog tussen Boer en Brit van 1899 tot 1902*, pp. 8, 98; M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901-Augustus 1902*, pp. 39-43.

9. NAR, MGP, 249: Major-General J. G. Maxwell - H. E. McCallum, 19.9.1901 (telegram).

10 Van der Walt, p. 25; Fick, p. 8.

11 *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and Transvaal* (Cd. 893), p. 33.

12. *Further papers relating to the working of refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 934), p. 65.

steady rain for 21 days almost immediately after their arrival, made settling into a camp still under construction difficult and awkward for staff and camp inhabitants alike.

One of the first to arrive at Merebank was Miem Fischer, renowned for her strong anti-British sentiments and author of the published camp diary, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek, Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902.* She was one of the group of about 500 who were informed on 10 September 1901 that they were to prepare to leave for Merebank. Three days later, they left Standerton on open coal trucks, but were transferred to third class railway carriages at Newcastle. After a 36-hour long journey, they arrived at the Merebank Station at sunrise on 15 September 1901.[13] Like other new camp inhabitants who arrived at Merebank during the day, they were escorted to Camp Superintendent Bousfield's office almost as soon as they had disembarked. Those who arrived at night, however, remained on the train until morning, before being escorted to Bousfield's office.[14]

The new camp inhabitants, who were generally greeted as they arrived by women coming from all directions, eager for information on the war and their loved ones, were taken by-mule cart from the train to Bousfield's office near the entrance to the camp. Here they were given *kaartjies* (tickets) for their accommodation and all other requirements. They were then taken to their quarters by one of the officials. Other inhabitants then normally came to help the new arrivals, who had to organise food, wood and a kettle before they could get something to eat or drink, or begin to settle in.[15] Those who required the necessary comforts such as a kettle, beds and clothing, were supplied, provided they were debited for the cost of the material.[16] They were to pay this back at the end of the war, but in actual fact this never happened.

The Merebank Camp inhabitants had thus arrived in a foreign place, where the

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13. Fischer, pp. 39-43; WM, Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession 5890/90): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders. .
14. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 64.
15. Van der Walt, p. 27; Hobhouse, p. 33.
16. *The Natal Mercury*, 18.10.1901, p. 7.

physical surroundings and the climate were totally different from what they had been used to. In many cases they were separated from their immediate and/or extended families, making this transfer even more traumatic and frightening.

4.2 The demographics of the Merebank Concentration Camp

The number of inhabitants in the Merebank Concentration Camp fluctuated from month to month.[17] According to the census figures, the highest population count in the camp at any month's end during the war, was registered at the end of February 1902, with a total of 8342. The highest number of inhabitants at any month's end, however, was recorded after the end of the war on 30 June 1902, when men who had still been on commando or who had been prisoners of war (POWs) in the Umbilo or one of the overseas POW camps, came to the Merebank Camp to be reunited with their families before repatriation. At this point, the population count reached 8886.[18] The highest daily population count for Merebank was reached on 8 July 1902, when there were 8924 people in the camp.[19]

The Merebank Camp inhabitants were mainly women and children. This is substantiated by the fact that on 23 December 1901, when there were 5365 inhabitants in the Merebank Camp, 2552 or 47,6% of these were children. As *penkoppe* (young bulls), i.e. boys between the ages of twelve and sixteen could be on commando, they were counted separately and totalled 367 or 6,8% of the group. In reality, however, they were still children and should have been counted as such. In this case, the total number of children in the camp would have totalled 2919 or 54,4%. The women made up the second largest portion with a total of 2230 or 41,6%, while the men made up a mere 216 or 4%.[20] This ratio did not alter dramatically after the war when the men returned to Merebank to collect their families. On 30 June

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17. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 554: Monthly reports by T. K. Murray. Also refer to Table 7.2 in Chapter 7, *infra.*

18. PAR, GH 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.7.1902 (monthly report); PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

19. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

20. Cd. 934, p. 65.

1902, when there were 8886 residents in the camp, 1633 or 18,3% were men, 3445 or 38,8% were women and 3808 42,9% were children.[21] By 11 September 1902 the total number of inhabitants had decreased to 4316 of which 886 or 20,5% were men, 1618 or 37,5% were women and 1812 or 42% were children.[22]

In the patriarchal Boer society at the beginning of the twentieth century, men and women had distinct gender identities and roles to play. According to Boer custom, the male, as the physically stronger of the two sexes, was responsible for and concerned with the "man's job" of hunting and farming, as well as with political and military activities, while the women primarily concerned themselves with child-rearing and the maintenance of the home. In his domestic circle the man was the master, making all the decisions, and his wishes were law. He represented the household in the public sphere, i.e. church and state. The women on the other hand had no formal political rights, and even if they had some influence over their menfolk in the home, formally at least they were regarded as inferior to men.[23]

The absence of men in the concentration camps in general, including Merebank, not only disrupted the known and familiar family structure, but also created difficulties in maintaining the camp, as the men could have done a fair amount of the manual labour, as well as alleviating the women of many domestic duties such as collecting rations, chopping wood, or even helping with the cleaning and maintenance of their quarters. Without their menfolk there to help them, women were now forced, with the help of the children, to perform the required camp tasks and to take on the responsibilities for and make decisions relating to their families. This in itself was a liberating experience, and it prepared many who lost their husbands during the hostilities, to fend for themselves in the harsh circumstances which prevailed after the war. At the same time, it was bound to create problems for many women who had become independent, when they were expected to return to their pre-war subservient position in the family.

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21. NAR, J. Ploeger Collection (Accession A 2030), 91: Photocopy of statistics found in KK collection, 83.

22. PAR, GH, 553: Assistant GSBC - H. E. McCallum, 12.9.1902 (weekly mortality return).

23. L. Kruger, *Gender, community and identity: women and Afrikaner nationalism in the Volksmoeder discourse of Die Boerevrou (1919-1931)*, pp. 102-109.

The bulky, detailed and comprehensive camp registers, comprising two volumes, with their information regarding the names, age, gender, date of arrival, address and districts from which each camp inhabitant came, whether they owned property or not, particulars about the whereabouts of husbands, records of deaths and details of dates of departure, provide important insights pertaining to the life of the Merebank Camp inhabitants. From the register it can be deduced that the majority of inhabitants came from the Transvaal. Wilhelmus Doyer (63) of Ermelo, who was sent to Merebank from the Umbilo POW Camp on 31 May 1902, was the last to enter the camp before the war officially ended. After this, many bittereinders and POWs entered the camp when they came to collect their families. The last Transvaaler to enter the camp after peace was declared, was No. 9546, Johannes Jacobus Breedt of Piet Retief, on his return from Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) on 5 December 1902. He and his family left for Volksrust five days later and were amongst the last to leave Merebank before its final closure. The districts from which the Transvaalers came included Amsterdam, Balmoral, Barberton, Belfast, Bethal, Bloemhof, Boksburg, Bremersdorp, Carolina, Christiana, Ermelo, Heidelberg, Germiston, Johannesburg, Klerksdorp, Krugersdorp, Lichtenburg, Lydenburg, Machadodorp, Middelburg, Nylstroom, Paulpietersburg, Pietersburg, Piet Retief, Potchefstroom, Potgietersrust, Pretoria, Rustenburg, Soutpansberg, Standerton, Swaziland, Utrecht, Volksrust, Vryheid, Wakkerstroom, Waterberg, Wolmaransstad and Zeerust.[24]

There were concentration camps in many of these districts, for example, Balmoral, Barberton, Belfast, Johannesburg, Heidelberg, Irene, Klerksdorp, Krugersdorp, Middelburg, Nylstroom, Potchefstroom, Standerton and Volksrust. By transferring people from the listed Transvaal concentration camps to Merebank, the British authorities had succeeded in what they had set out to do with the erection of the Merebank Concentration Camp. They had thinned out the Transvaal camps and, in this way, lessened the burden on these camps, while creating a society with inhabitants from all over the Transvaal.

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24. NAR, Archive of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 128: Nominal Roll Transvaal, *passim*. Swaziland has been included in the Transvaal because it was administered by Transvaal and a number of Boer families lived there.

The second largest group to be interned at Merebank came from the Orange River Colony (ORC). The first Free Staters to arrive were Elizabeth Lourenza Fourie (26), wife of Willem Jurgens Pretorius Fourie, and her five children, Marthinus Philipus (6), Alida Maria (5), Catrina Maria (4), Elizabeth Lourenza (3) and Hendrina Cecilia Susanna (10 months), from Runnymede in the Vrede district. They arrived on 15 September 1901, and left Merebank on 4 September 1902, when they headed for Standerton. The last of the Free Staters to enter Merebank were Hendrik Jacobus Ebersohn (22) from Bethlehem, and Johannes van der Linde (34), who were transferred to Merebank from the Umbilo POW Camp on 2 December 1902. The Free Staters came from the Bloemfontein, Harrismith, Kroonstad and Vrede districts.[25] Initially all four of these towns had their own concentration camps, but the Harrismith Concentration Camp was eventually transferred to the former Ladysmith (Tin Town) POW Camp during February 1902, after the majority of the POWs had been moved to the newly created POW camp at Umbilo.[26] Those not accommodated at Tin Town were amongst others sent to Merebank.

The third group of camp inhabitants were the Natal rebels or families of Natal rebels who had supported the republican forces against their own government. The first of these to arrive on 24 October 1901, were Judith Margaret Rall (26) and her five-year-old son Adriaan Matthys from Klippoort, Newcastle. Her husband Johannes was convicted as a rebel and sentenced to nine months imprisonment in the Pietermaritzburg prison. By 12 November 1901, there were 65 Natal Afrikaners in the Merebank Concentration Camp from either the Newcastle, Dundee or Melmoth (known as Proviso B, Zululand) districts. The oldest in this group were the 83-year-old Adrian Johannes Rall and his 75-year-old wife Johanna Susika, while the youngest was the six-month-old Fredrika van der Walt from the farm Belfrey in the Dundee district.[27]

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25. NAR, DBC, 129: Nominal Roll Orange River Colony and Natal Residents, *passim.*

26. J. Wassermann, *The Pinetown Concentration Camp during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*, pp. 9-10.

27. PAR, CSO, 1732: Reply by Bousfield to a request for the number of Natal refugees in his camp, 12.11.1901.

In analysing Bousfield's returns, it becomes obvious that the ratio regarding the gender analysis of the Natal rebel families at Merebank is very similar to those of the camp as a whole. Within this group of 65, thirteen or 20% were males older than sixteen years of age, while 23 or 35,4% were women, and 29 or 44,6% were children. This confirms the status of Merebank as a camp inhabited greatly by noncombatants.

By the end of the war, 41 Natal families had been interned at Merebank comprising a total of 129 individuals. These included Mrs Swart, the wife of P.J. Swart who owned a farm near the ORC border. He had been a policeman in Newcastle for about two months during the Boer occupation and was consequently convicted of treason and sentenced to a fine of £10 or 30 days imprisonment. When he failed to pay the fine imposed as a sentence he was jailed in Pietermaritzburg, since the prison in Newcastle was already full of Natal rebels.[28] Yet another family of a Natal rebel which resided at Merebank, were the wife and family of Daniel Stephanus Abraham Landman of the farm Kameelboomkop, Waschbank Station, Dundee district. He had taken up arms against the British but had surrendered on 16 February 1902 at Middelburg, Transvaal. Hereafter his wife requested that he be transferred from the Tin Town POW Camp to join them at Merebank, because he had repented of his actions.[29] Unfortunately it has not been possible to ascertain if her wish was granted.

Surrendered rebels or those who had completed their sentence were also sent to Merebank. One such rebel was Mr C.J. Uys of the farm Leslie in the Newcastle district. At the beginning of 1901 a warrant for his arrest had been sent to Utrecht, but the District Commissioner (DC) for Utrecht, which at this time was still part of the Transvaal, had not allowed the order to be executed. Uys surrendered at Weltevreden on 11 April 1901 on the recommendation of Major Graham, the late DC of Utrecht. With the consent of the Attorney-General, G.A. de R. Labistour, Uys was released on bail at Utrecht and, in about November 1901, he was sent away from Utrecht, by order

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28. PAR, Archives of the Minister of Justice and Public Works (MJPW), 94: Watt & Pike - General Officer Commanding Newcastle, 23.5.1902 (letter); PAR, MJPW, 94: Goaler, Newcastle - Inspector Marshall, 1.6.1902 (note).

29. PAR, Archives of the Attorney-General (AGO), 1/8/84: M. M. E. D. Landman - Attorney-General, 19.4.1902 (letter).

of the military, to Merebank. Here he resided with his family in Block 9, Row B 18.[30] While in the camp, Uys seems to have tried to sell the 1502 acre (608 ha) farm he had bought in June 1875 at 14/- per acre. Although he had paid two instalments of £52.9.11 each by January 1902, two other payments had been suspended and interest had been paid on two others. It was obvious that the hardships of the war and the accompanying deterioration of economic conditions made it impossible for him to keep up the instalments. Despite the instalments being overdue, the Minister of Lands and Works, Mr A.H. Hime, ordered that the farm could not be sold until Uys had either paid his fine of £20 or served four months imprisonment for treason.[31]

Other Natal citizens or British subjects were sent to Merebank by the military authorities for security reasons, and remained there until they took the Oath of Allegiance. Amongst this group were Joachim Phillipus Kemp of Dundee, and Petrus Johannes Swart, Joshua Joubert and Abraham Johannes Swamers all of Newcastle.[32] The Merebank Concentration Camp had thus not only been erected to intern people from the two former Boer republics, but also for British subjects who had proved problematic.

The ages of the Merebank Camp inhabitants ranged from the newly born to old men and women who had experienced some of the major events in South African history. One such gentleman was Christoffel Lombaard, 80 years of age, who had left his place of birth, Somerset East, at the age of fifteen as a member of the Great Trek. Thereafter he had fought at Blood River (1838) and Congella (1842). In 1847 he had left the Colony of Natal for the Transvaal, but during the war he was brought back to reside in the Merebank Concentration Camp. At this point one of his greatest wishes was to visit the old laager at Congella and to see if the roses, which they had planted from slips brought from the Cape, were still growing. Unfortunately he was unable to

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30. PAR, AGO, 1/8/82: Sgt Humble [?] (Sgt N.P.) - Clerk of the Peace, Newcastle, 5.1.1902 (letter); PAR, AGO 1/8/84: C. J. Uys - Attorney-General, 19.4.1902 (letter); PAR, AGO, 1/8/82: C. J. Uys - Attorney-General, 16.12.1901 (letter).

31. PAR, AGO, 1/8/82: Surveyor-General - Minister of Lands and Works, 14.1.1902 (despatch); PAR, AGO, 1/8/82: Attorney-General - Minister of Lands and Works, 18.4.1902 (despatch); PAR, AGO, 1/8/82: A. H. Hime - Surveyor-General, 18.4.1902 (despatch).

32. PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1719: H. M. Bousfield - Colonial Secretary, 12.12. 1902 (counterfoils of oath of allegiance).

visit the site, which during the war was being used as the Umbilo POW Camp, but a journalist from *The Natal Mercury* tried to grant him his wish by bringing him some of the roses which grew there.[33] On the other end of the scale there were 51 registered births in the camp, 24 of these being female babies.[34]

The demographic make-up of Merebank was completed by black and coloured people who had accompanied Boer families to the camp as servants, playmates and, in unusual circumstances, as foster parents. Amongst the camp inhabitants who brought servants with them were Mrs de Clerq of Nooitgedacht, Mr and Mrs Daniel from Kwaggadrift, Utrecht, and the Davidts family of Potchefstroom.[35] In a rather unusual instance a young girl, Gertruida Erasmus, aged ten, arrived at Merebank from Ventersdorp on 5 February 1902, in the company of a black boy and girl. This little group returned to Krugersdorp on 16 August 1902.[36]

Camp registers did not always provide an accurate record of the admission and departure of people of colour. They often omitted to record either the arrival or the departure or in some cases both events. Examples of where only the departures of people of colour were recorded, include the servants of Mr and Mrs Johannes Combrink of Rietfontein, Potchefstroom; Mr and Mrs Louis du Toit of Brandvlei, Krugersdorp; Mrs Maria Potgieter of Hartbeestfontein, Krugersdorp; Mr and Mrs James Medford of Elandsvlei, Krugersdorp; Maria and Paul Erasmus of Krugersdorp; Mr and Mrs Johannes Bothma of Krugersdorp; Mr and Mrs Christoffel Bornman of Potchefstroom; Mr and Mrs Johannes Pretorius of Belfast, and a number of others.[37] Such discrepancies makes it extremely difficult to determine just how many people of colour there were in the camp. Whatever their numbers and positions in the official records, the black camp inhabitants suffered the same hardships as those of their white counterparts, and this mutual suffering was bound to change the race relations between these individuals and eventually transcend the war, bringing them closer

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33. *The Natal Mercury*, 20.11.1901, p. 7. Also refer to Chapter 8, section 8.3, *infra.*
34. NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in the Merebank Burgher Camp, *passim.*
35. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A-L, pp. 158-175.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
37. NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, pp.203-253. The are many more examples in the book.

together.

Merebank with its more than 8000 camp inhabitants was therefore not only the largest concentration camp in South Africa, but like most other camps, also a very complex one. As in the other concentration camps its inhabitants, predominantly women and children from the entire political and economic spectrum, came mostly from the Transvaal and contained relatively few black inhabitants. To add to this, people of all ages and from across geographical and cultural divides were forced to live in close proximity, making the possibility of tension amongst them so much greater. Yet it was also to serve as the cornerstone of Afrikaner nationalism as it fostered a greater feeling of unity amongst those suffering the imprisonment.

4.3 Family structure

The impact of the war on the family structure of those at Merebank was enormous. In most cases the father, who in the paternally-ruled Afrikaner family of the time, was the head of the family unit, was generally either away on commando, dead, or in one of the South African or overseas POW camps. The mothers, widows and even daughters thus had to raise children and deal with the traumas of the war and camp life without the help or support of the male figure. In other instances individuals, both young and old, for example, Cornelia Badenhorst (18)[38] or Susanna Elizabeth Breedt, a widow of 77[39] and Johanna Catrina Minnaar (24)[40] to mention but a few, had to deal with the traumas they experienced as individuals without any family.

In extreme instances children were left to raise children. Fifteen-year-old Maria Potgieter, the daughter of Commandant F.J. Potgieter of the Krugersdorp Commando, was sent to Merebank with her four brothers. Here they had to fend for themselves and in due course received the news that their father had been wounded. This caused much worry and, after several fearful nights, they received the news that he was to be deported to St Helena as a POW. This gave Maria and her brothers, the youngest

38. NAR, DBC, 128: Nominal Roll Transvaal, p. 187.
39. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A-L, p. 73.
40. NAR, DBC, 127: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents M-Z, p. 9.

who was sickly, the opportunity to go into Durban to see their father off.[41] This meant that despite her age, Maria as the head of the family, had to carry the full burden of organising a permit for the five of them. Soon after having bid a sad farewell to their father, Maria and her remaining brothers had to cope with the death of their youngest brother, Gert, who died of catarrhal enteritis on 13 March 1902.[42] These responsibilities and the traumas she had to deal with, probably made her old before her time, but also developed skills that stood her in good stead later in life.

Most families at Merebank were required to deal with illness and/or death either in their immediate or extended family. There were, however, also numerous families who carried a heavier emotional burden than others, especially if they were confronted with the death of more than one family member. One such family was the Wolmarans family of Driefontein, in the Standerton district, where the mother, Susanna (26), and her two daughters, Catrina Jacoba (4) and Catrina Maria (6) all died within a week of each other during October 1901.[43]

The war and the concentration camp system left another sad legacy, namely orphans. According to a circular sent out to all Camp Superintendents during the war, the Camp Matron was to be provided with the necessary accommodation to organise an orphanage within close proximity of the school.[44] There is, however, no reference to an orphanage at Merebank in any of the official documents, or in diaries kept by the Boer inhabitants. This is not so surprising as the Boers generally took in or adopted those who were orphaned. Examples of those adopted by families are numerous. These include Jacobus du Toit (7), who was adopted by Maria Elizabeth Geldenhuis, and Isabella Hendrika Rall (8), who was adopted by the widow Beatrice Petronella Maria Rall. Others, such as the five Van Rooyen children, Johanna Susanna (19), Johanna Catrina (14), Cornelius Johannes (10), Gert Helgard (9) and Johannes Theodorus (4) were taken in and went to live with C.J. Combrink,[45] while the three

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41. Mrs N. Venter Private Collection (Alberton): Ontberinge van 'n kind, pp. 1-3.
42. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901-December 1902, p. 25.
43. NAR, DBC, 127: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents M-Z, p. 510.
44. NAR, DBC, 12: General report for month of February 1902, Circular 114, 8.2.1902.
45. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A-L, p. 315.

Kruger children, Christina (12), Hendrina (9) and Helena (2) left the camp with Mrs Christina Cronjé on 12 July 1902.[46] Orphans also went to live with their grandparents, as did the seven young Van der Walt orphans, Anna Catrina (16), Helena Hendrina (12), Petronella Johanna (11), Gert (8), Hendrik Willem (9), Frans Alwyn (6) and Anna Catrina (2) who went to live with their 61-year-old grandmother, Petronella van der Walt. They eventually left the camp for Klerksdorp on 6 November 1902, with Petronella and her 63-year-old husband Jacobus.[47]

Unlike the Boers, their British counterparts in the Uitlander camps and the Uitlander community of Durban, did not seem to have the same attitude towards destitute children. When the mother of three young Uitlander children, Stephen (11), Claude (10) and Freddy (7) Penn took so ill that she was admitted to hospital, they were sent to the Merebank Concentration Camp on 16 June 1902 by the Durban Uitlander Committee.[48] What the Uitlander Committee and community did not consider was the fact that these young children were probably unable to speak Afrikaans, and that this would make matters even more difficult for the three youngsters. To add to this trauma, they were dumped amongst the people whom the British had just fought, many of whom who were extremely bitter towards them.

A further trauma experienced by some women at Merebank was the separation from their children. One such woman was the 30-year-old Mrs Wilhelmina (Mynie) Hertzog, the wife of the Boer General, and later Prime Minister of South Africa, James Barry Munnik Hertzog. She had been sent to Merebank as an undesirable from the Port Elizabeth Concentration Camp, and had arrived on 19 November 1901. She remained there until her release from the camp on 3 June 1902, shortly after peace was signed, at which time she joined her husband, making her one of the first to leave the camp. Her only child, which had been slow in learning to walk, had been left in the care of her parents in Stellenbosch. Mrs Hertzog was extremely concerned about the child and the lack of information made matters worse. In order to reassure Mrs Hertzog and

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46. NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, p. 17.

47. NAR, DBC, 128: Nominal Roll Transvaal, p. 163; NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, p. 216.

48. NAR, DBC, 127: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents M-Z, p. 185.

to prove to her that the child had learnt to walk, she was sent the child's worn-through shoes, which were brought to her by Mrs Isabella Rowntree, a Quaker who had gone to visit the Port Elizabeth Camp.[49] Another woman who had a similar experience, was a certain Mrs Heytmayer, who was sent to Merebank irrespective of the fact that her youngest child was so ill that it could no longer open its eyes. She had to leave the child, which eventually died, in the care of the nurses of the Red Cross at Standerton.[50]

The uncertainty of the whereabouts of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers was yet another traumatic experience many of the inhabitants of the Merebank Camp had to deal with. This led to much correspondence between the Merebank Camp inhabitants and the various officers in charge of the different POW camps in South Africa as well as elsewhere in an effort to find their loved ones, but mainly involved Major M.B. Foster of the Tin Town POW Camp. Examples of such correspondence are numerous, and the following are mere random selections of those who had to go through the harrowing experience of not knowing where their loved ones were, and if they were dead or alive. Mrs Fleetwood tried to obtain information regarding the whereabouts of her two sons, Thomas John, who had been captured on 14 December 1900, and Lawrence John, who had been captured on 8 May 1901.[51] Another Merebank Camp inhabitant who was unsure about the whereabouts of her husband and son after their capture, was Mrs Susanna Maria Prinsloo.[52] There were also those who did not know whether their menfolk had been captured or whether they were still out on commando. One such person was Mrs A.S.Y. Joubert who enquired from Major Foster if her husband, J.F. Joubert, was in Tin Town, and should he be, she asked Major Foster to give Mr Joubert her address.[53]

The Merebank Concentration Camp, as was the case with the other concentration

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49. NAR, DBC, 129: Nominal Roll Orange River Colony and Natal Residents, p. 4; E. Hobhouse, *The brunt of the war and where it fell*, p. 85.

50. Hobhouse, p. 252.

51. NAR, SOP, 22: Mrs Fleetwood - Major M. B. Foster, 6.11.1901 (letter 2193).

52. NAR, SOP, 22: Mrs S. M. Prinsloo - Major M. B. Foster, 2.11.1901 (letter 2161).

53. NAR, SOP, 22: A. S. Y. Joubert - Major M. B. Foster, 31.10.1901 (letter 2136). Numerous letters of such a nature are to be found in SOP, 22, 23, 25 and 29.

camps, had thus, temporarily at least, destroyed the traditional patriarchal family structure, while people resided in the camp. Whereas the male had been considered the head of the Boer household before the war, in the camp the woman had taken over this role, forging a new family unit, which was often extended to embrace persons outside their nuclear family, especially orphans, into their fold.

4.4 Political, social and economic divisions amongst the Merebank Camp inhabitants and how a new unity was forged

Before the outbreak of the war there had been a clear economic and social divide amongst Afrikaners, especially in the towns. This, however, made no difference when the British authorities selected candidates for the Merebank Concentration Camp. People of all economic and social backgrounds were sent to the concentration camp if considered undesirable, or if they volunteered to go. Some of the camp inhabitants came from the sub-economic areas of Johannesburg such as Ferreirastown and Vrededorp, while others came from the opulent areas of Pretoria and other towns where they had never tasted economic hardships, and where they moved in the highest circles of society. These were the wives and daughters of men who had graduated from Oxford and Cambridge or who occupied high positions, and they included the wife and daughter of the late Landdrost of Pretoria, Mrs and Miss Schutte; the wife of a doctor, Mrs Kruger, and the wife of the Landdrost of Ermelo, Mrs Kleynhans.[54] Some others, such as Elsie Meiring who had been to Europe, were well travelled and educated.[55] Others were real farm people who were down to earth and without pretences, and there were also the *bywoners* and blue collar workers.

Camp life made no distinction between the people from different economic positions. Rich families such as the Schuttes, who had lived in relative comfort in their more luxurious and better-equipped quarters, suffered the same humiliations, emotional traumas and hardships as those from a less fortunate economic background.[56] The

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54. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7; Fischer, pp. 87-88; Hobhouse, *The brunt of the war and where it fell*, pp. 254-255.

55. WM, 4486/5: Correspondence of Elsie Meiring, Merebank, 17.10.1901.

56. Hobhouse, *The brunt of the war and where it fell*, pp. 254-255.

traumatic experiences of people and the sharing of a similar fate and grief brought them closer together and created and nurtured a certain feeling of solidarity. The camp had thus become a melting-pot in which suffering and politics transcended the economic and social class barriers. As a result a new class divide was created along political and not economic or social lines.

The political ideology which inhabitants supported became the new yardstick, and was carried into the postwar era where people were to be judged according to their political convictions during the war. Politically, inhabitants were classified either as hendsoppers, joiners or bittereinders. The bittereinders made up the largest political group at Merebank. This group consisted not only of the faceless masses, but included the wives, mothers, sisters, sons and daughters of prominent Boer generals and army leaders, comprising, for example, Mrs Mynie Hertzog, Mrs Schalk Burgher (the wife of the Vice-President of the Transvaal),[57] Mrs Johanna Smuts (the wife of General Tobias Smuts),[58] Mrs Maritz (the wife of General Manie Maritz),[59] Mrs J.M. Geldenhuis (the wife of Field-Cornet Geldenhuis),[60] Mrs Sophia Scheepers (the mother of Commandant Gideon Scheepers),[61] as well as the wife and adopted daughter of General Celliers and the wife and five children of Field-Cornet Izaak van Heerden.[62]

By October 1901, Lord Kitchener and his advisors believed that measures of greater severity were necessary to put an end to the war. In an effort to do this, they decided to focus on the leaders, and to deport the wives of certain Boer Generals to any place of their choice outside South Africa, except England. Consequently, a plan, which was to be kept secret, was devised, proposing that the wives of Generals Christiaan de Wet, Schalk Burger, Tobias Smuts, P.H. le Roux, J.B.M. Hertzog as well as Mrs

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57. PAR, GH, 553: H. E. McCallum - J. Chamberlain, 21.2.1902 (inspection report).

58. Fischer, p. 47.

59. D. Jenner, "Merebank Camp", *Africana Notes and News* 29(7), September 1991, p. 283.

60. NAR, Archives of the Provost Marshal's Office (PMO), 49: Commandant, Klerksdorp - Provost Marshal, 28.3.1902 (telegram).

61. J. Meintjes, *Sword in the sand: the life and death of Gideon Scheepers*, p. 76.

62. PAR, GH, 514: H. Kitchener - H. E. McCallum, 15.5. 1901 (telegram); PAR, GH, 514: H. M. Bousfield - Burghers Department, Pietermaritzburg, 16.5.1902 (telegram).

Rachel Isabella Steyn, the wife of President Steyn of the old Orange Free State, were to be sent to and accommodated in a special location at Merebank, where they would wait and be ready to accompany their husbands into banishment when the latter had been captured. [63] Only once the Boer women had already been informed of the plan, was Kitchener instructed by London that such a measure would provoke much criticism, and that deportation was thus not to take place.[64] As these women had already been informed of the proposed plan, it can be assumed that this news must have travelled at great speed throughout all the camps in which each of these ladies resided, intensifying the tension that already existed in the camps. As nothing could be done to these women, it can also be considered to have been a victory for them, for it showed that the authorities could not do anything drastic if they did not want to become international scapegoats again.

The bittereinders, who remained loyal to the republican cause to the end, despised those who belonged to the hendsopper and joiner group. To the bittereinders, the difference between the hendsoppers and joiners was marginal, for both had, they believed, committed the ultimate crime of forsaking the Boer cause. It was thus not surprising that the wife of General Manie Maritz, a short stout woman, and one of the bittereinders, even sjambokked one of the hendsoppers who had ill-treated her twelve-year-old son.[65] This act may have been extreme, but it indicates how passionate the bittereinders were about their political views.

The tensions between the bittereinders on the one hand and the joiners and hendsoppers on the other hand, became so extreme in the various camps in South Africa, that not only was the decision made to give these opposing groups their rations at different times, but it was also agreed that the families or parents of National Scouts would not be sent to Natal without the consent of Head Office, even

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63. PAR, GH, 497: H. E. McCallum - Lord Kitchener, 16.10.1901 (telegram); PAR, GH, 497: Provost-Marshal - H. E. McCallum, 5.11.1901 (telegram); PAR, GH, 497: H. E. McCallum - Lord Kitchener, 5.11.1901 (telegram).

64. PAR, GH, 497: Lord Kitchener - H. E. McCallum, 11.11.1901 (telegram); PAR, GH, 497: H. E. McCallum - Lord Kitchener, 11.11.1901 (telegram).

65. D. Jenner, "Merebank Camp", *Africana Notes and News* 29(7), September 1991, p. 283.

if the families of this group behaved badly.[66] In spite of these orders, some individuals and families with joiner ties arrived at Merebank. These included the wives of two National Scouts, namely, Mrs A.C. Fourie, the wife of Trooper P.J. Fourie of the farm Witput in the Ermelo district, who had been sent to Merebank from Volksrust, and Mrs A.M. Fourie, the wife of Trooper Theunis Fourie of the farm Randfontein in the Krugersdorp area, who had been sent to Merebank from Pretoria.[67]

At one point it was unclear as to why the wives of these two gentlemen had been sent to a camp such as Merebank. After investigation it was discovered that Mrs A.C. Fourie had incorrectly been sent to Merebank as an "undesirable", because her husband was supposed to be on commando. As this was incorrect, instructions were immediately issued that she should return to Standerton where she was to report to the Officer Second in Command, National Scouts of the area.[68] Although no information regarding Mrs A.M. Fourie could be traced after the initial correspondence querying the reasons for her being in Merebank, it can be presumed that she too had been sent to Merebank as a result of incorrect information and administrative mistakes.

There were also a fair number of hendsoppers at Merebank. A group of 170 such surrendered burghers had arrived at Merebank from the Eshowe Concentration Camp between 20 October 1901 and 15 April 1902. They, as with all other hendsoppers, were housed in the joiner section of the camp to protect them, as far as possible, from the relatives of the bittereinders.[69]

According to the Fawcett Commission, morally undesirable persons were also sent to Merebank where they were placed in a separate enclosure and had to be in their quarters an hour before sunset. Although it was not possible to ascertain why all

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66. Wassermann, p. 74.

67. NAR, PMO, 53: Thos. S. Allison - Adjutant National Scouts, 16.4.1902 (despatch); NAR, PMO, 53: H. M. Bousfield - Provost Marshal, 9.5.1902 (despatch); NAR, PMO, 53: R. M. Poore - Director Burgher Camps, 12.5.1902 (despatch).

68. NAR, PMO, 56: Geo. Thompson - Director of Burgher Camps, 20.5.1902 (despatch): NAR, PMO, 56: R. M. Poore - E. M. H. Leggett, 23.5.1902 (despatch).

69. J. M. Wassermann, *The Eshowe Concentration and Surrendered Burghers Camp during the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, pp. 62-63.

persons classified as morally undesirable were sent to Merebank, some such as Mrs Hester Paulina Swartz, Mrs Christina Elizabeth Vermeulen, Mrs M. Barkley and Mrs M.C. Henning were sent to Merebank in September 1901 because they were held to be prostitutes.[70] Others were sent, not for their undesirable sexual conduct, but rather because they failed to distinguish between what was considered right and wrong, or because they had broken accepted rules and regulations. One such person was Mrs Swarts of Bethal, who had spent eight days in the Standerton jail prior to her arrival at Merebank, for giving a black man who wanted to escape from the Standerton Concentration Camp, some cotton reels to give to her son who was still in the veld.[71] As a punitive measure, a certain Mrs Venter, who had been found playing cards with seven blacks in her home, was also labelled as morally undesirable, and consequently sent to Merebank.[72] In the course of his duty, Bousfield found it necessary to send some of these men and women to Durban where they received various sentences.[73]

The political groupings at Merebank Camp therefore added tension and anxiety to an already tense situation caused by the war and concentration camp system, and this was not going to disappear after the war. Instead it would cause much heartache for many years to come.[74]

4.5 The mobility of the camp inhabitants

Although the greatest majority of the camp population remained constant, there was also some fluidity amongst them. Because friends and families were sometimes in different camps, applications were made for permission to be transferred between concentration camps. In this way people were transferred from Merebank to the

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70. PAR, GH, 736: List of undesirable females as drawn up by the Commissioner of Police, Pretoria, 8.1.1902.

71. Fischer, p. 61.

72. PAR, GH, 736: List of undesirable females as drawn up by the Commissioner of Police, Pretoria, 8.1.1902.

73. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - J. Chamberlain, 21.2.1902 (despatch); Cd. 893, p. 36.

74. For more details on the hendsoppers and joiners refer to A. M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" en "joiners": die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad, passim.*

Howick, Pietermaritzburg, Pinetown, Wentworth and Jacobs concentration camps.[75] These include such people as Mrs A.M. Craig and her seven children, who were transferred to Jacobs, Magdalena Coetzer who went to Jacobs and Francina Albertina Collien who went to Pietermaritzburg.[76]

Transfers also took place in the opposite direction, as people were transferred to the Merebank Concentration Camp from other concentration camps, as well as from POW camps, to join family members. Examples of such transfers, as a result of applications, include the two sons of S. W. Odendaal from the Kroonstad Concentration Camp, the wife and sister of Mr M. van Rensburg from the Standerton Concentration Camp, the wife and son of Mr D.P. Celliers from the Standerton Concentration Camp, Mrs van der Westhuizen and four orphans from the Howick Concentration Camp who went to join her father, Mr D.S.C. Badenhorst,[77] and the two sons, Jan Hendrik (15) and Petrus Johannes (10) of Mrs Maria Magdalena Combrink from the Tin Town POW Camp where they were POWs with their father. [78]

Though there were not a great many applications to Bousfield for permission to leave Merebank to go and reside with family or friends, he and the General Superintendent Burgher Camps, T.K. Murray, encouraged this policy. It was also possible to take up an occupation outside the camp, or in rare instances to leave the country to go overseas. Permission was, however, only granted if applicants were considered unlikely to cause trouble for both the civil and military authorities. In this way, Mrs J.R. Adshade and her two children, aged four and six, were granted permission to leave the Merebank Concentration Camp to go to Pretoria, so that she and Mr Peter Carstens, a general dealer, could get married.[79] In a similar way Mr L. J. Lotter and Mr R. van Rooyen, both of the Weenen district, applied for permission to be granted to Mrs E. Pretorius and family and Mrs Martha C. Roos, to come and reside with

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75. NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, *passim*.
76. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register for Residents A-L, pp. 104, 107.
77. Cd. 934, p. 86.
78. NAR, SOP, 21: Mrs M. M. Combrink - Major M. B. Foster, 25.10.1901 (letter 2061).
79. NAR, MGP, 156: P. Carstens - J. G. Maxwell, 24.3.1902 and 11.4.1902 (letters).

them.[80] Other Merebank inhabitants went to friends and family in Greytown, Ladysmith, Estcourt, Helpmekaar, Noodsberg, East London and even Bulawayo, to mention just a few places.[81] Many of the families who took in the Boer concentration camp inhabitants were Afrikaners, who were sympathetic towards the Boer cause, but who felt that they could not take up arms against their government. One way in which they could support the Boers, and at the same time alleviate the financial burden on the British, was to house Boer concentration camp inhabitants.

Some Merebank Camp inhabitants, mostly single young ladies of fourteen and older, left the camp to reside with various English families in Durban, such as the Woods, Wilsons, Campbells and Millers, where they mostly did household chores to earn an income, but they generally did not stay with these families very long before returning to the camp.[82] There could be various reasons for their brief stays, but the most probable was that, in spite of the income, they felt alone in the foreign environment away from their friends and families. It would also have been very difficult for them to adapt to the very different type of life within the British-style family structure.

In exceptional cases, Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants, such as Mrs Elize Maria van Aardt and her son, left the camp for an overseas destination. In the case of Mrs van Aardt, she left for the Netherlands.[83] This was only possible for those who had the financial ability to do so.

While it was possible to give permission for people to leave Merebank or to get visitors, those who were considered a security risk to the camp and the war in general, were deported. This did not occur often, but when seven young men, Johan Danie Roussouw (18), Francois Nicholaas van der Berg (18), Jacobus Stefanus de Kock (16), W. J. Lowies (21), Charles G.C. Rocher (21), Julius Rocher (18) and Johan D. Balt (15), were arrested in March 1902, on the charge that they wanted to escape

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80. PAR, Archives of the Magistrate of Weenen (1/WEN), 3/1/2: Magistrate Weenen - OCMSD, Pietermaritzburg, 13.1.1902 (letter); PAR, 1/WEN, 3/1/2: Acting Magistrate Weenen - Officer Commanding, Maritzburg Sub District, 4.1.1902 (letter).

81. NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, *passim*.

82. *Ibid.*

83. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A-L, p. 1.

from the camp to join the commandos, thanks to the intervention of the fathers of the Rocher brothers, and of Roussouw, Balt and Van der Berg, Bousfield perceived it necessary to take action. Even though Bousfield felt that the younger boys had not realised the seriousness of the offence, and that only Roussouw and Lowies had been on commando before, he was obliged to act, as the mood of the camp was generally anti-British. For this reason he sent the young men to the Commandant, Durban, where they confessed that it had been their intention to escape and join the commandos. The Commandant sent them on board ship for safe custody, but advised that not all of them be deported.[84] As a result, only the two with previous war experience, Lowies and Roussouw, were deported to India, while the other five were returned to Merebank.[85]

The Merebank Concentration Camp with its more than 8000 camp inhabitants had become a melting pot of different social and economic classes blended with different political ideologies and race groups. Here young and old, mainly female and children, had to carve out a living in a confined space, in a strange environment and in circumstances they had not chosen for themselves. The majority had the zeal to survive and make the best of their life in the camp. What was this life like? The following three chapters will expand on this.

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84. NAR, SOP, 30: H. M. Bousfield - Commandant, Durban, 10.3.1902 (memorandum); NAR, SOP, 30: Commandant, Durban - DAG, Durban, 11.3.1902 (letter).

85. Fischer, p. 96.

CHAPTER 5

LIFE IN THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP (1): FOOD, ACCOMMODATION AND EDUCATION

Once they had arrived at the Merebank Concentration Camp, the camp inhabitants became the responsibility of the Natal Burgher Camps Department. This was not an easy task, for they needed to be educated, fed, provided with fuel, housing, sanitary facilities, and generally kept as happy and healthy as circumstances would allow, to prevent the high mortality rates and unhealthy situations that the inmates of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony (ORC) concentration camps had experienced.

Within the boundaries set by the authorities regarding food, fuel, housing, medical facilities and education, the inhabitants had to live their daily lives and build relationships with their fellow camp inhabitants.

5.1 Food and fuel

A good diet is a basic human need and it was the responsibility of the Natal Burgher Camps Department to provide the Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants with this. In their effort to carry out their task, camp inhabitants received a weekly ration, fuel and other household necessities as outlined in Table 5.1. on p. 112, *infra.* The contents of this ration scale, which had improved greatly from the days when the families of men still on commando had only received half rations, varied somewhat from time to time. Half the potato ration was replaced by a pound (450 g) of rice and a pound (450 g) of onions every other week, while tea was substituted with coffee when desired.[1] One possible reason for the exchange of potatoes for other rations every alternate week could possibly have been the problems which the camp authorities experienced with regard to the acquisition of potatoes at various times of the year. According to official reports, it was difficult to obtain good potatoes during the late spring and early summer of 1901, when the new potato harvest was coming

1. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

in, as well as during the winter months of 1902.[2] By making this substitution the authorities did not deprive the camp inhabitants of an important source of carbohydrate, as both rice and onions were nourishing sources of carbohydrates.

Table 5.1[3]

Ration scale in Natal concentration camps per week

Ration Scale No. 1 Adults 12 years and older	Ration Scale No. 2 Children 5 to 11 years	Ration Scale No. 3 Children under 5 years
Meat 4 lbs (1,8 kg)	Meat 3 lbs (1,4 kg)	Milk 4 tins
Bread 7 lbs (3, 15 kg)	Bread 3½ lbs (1,6 kg)	Meal 3½ lbs (1,6 kg)
Potatoes 3½ lbs (1,6 kg) or Potatoes 1½ lbs (675 g) Onions 1 lb (450 g) Rice 1 lb (450 g)	Potatoes 3½ lbs (1,6 kg) or Potatoes 1½ lbs (675 g) Onions 1 lb (450 g) Rice 1 lb (450 g)	
Sugar 14 oz (400 g)	Sugar 14 oz (400 g)	
Coffee 7 oz (200 g)	Coffee 7 oz (200 g)	
Salt 3½ oz (100 g)	Salt 3½ oz (100 g)	
Wood 28 lbs (12,6 kg)	Wood 28 lbs (12,6 kg)	Wood 14 lbs (6,3 kg)
Candles 3½ per tent		
Soap 8 oz (230 g)	Soap up to 8 oz (230 g)	Soap up to 8 oz (230 g)

The rations given to each family were determined by the size and age of the family members. The only difference between rations received by adults and by children of five years and older, was the quantity, while children under the age of five only received milk and meal. It was therefore possible for one family to receive no milk, but more than enough meat, while another family experienced the opposite by receiving a lot of milk and virtually no meat. In these instances families could swop or exchange some of their rations amongst themselves.

If a family had one of its members admitted to hospital, its ration scale was adjusted. The patient had his/her name removed from the ration list for the duration of his/her

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2. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 and 6.8.1902 (monthly reports).
3. PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

stay in hospital and, for this period, the issue of rations to such a person was discontinued. In order for this to work, Camp Superintendent H.M. Bousfield had to supply the storekeeper with a list of names of persons admitted to hospital and their readmission to the camp on a regular basis, so that the ration issues could be adjusted accordingly.[4]

As a balanced diet is required to supply certain nutrients present in proteins, carbohydrates, lipids and vitamins in the correct proportion for the need of the body at a particular time, the question needs to be posed whether the rations supplied were sufficient in quantity and quality for the camp inhabitants. The local newspaper, *The Natal Mercury*, seemed to believe that they had an answer when they wrote that "each inmate is dieted on a liberal scale" and that the "Boers have little to complain [about] regarding the quantity". A little further in the same article they claimed that the ration scale was "better than what the poorer classes are used to, but town-bred and educated classes [would have been accustomed to] more and a greater variety".[5] This was a little presumptuous, and probably intended to place the British authorities in a better light at a time when they were receiving much criticism from humanitarians such as Emily Hobhouse. On the other hand, Dr Sydney Martin, who had been appointed by the British Government to study the revised ration scales in South African concentration camps, raised concerns regarding the dietary scale. He was of the opinion that, although the amount of protein in the diet for adults may have been sufficient, the amount of carbohydrates, fats and the total number of calories were too low. He also considered the diet, prescribed for children between the ages of five and twelve, insufficient in all aspects of nutritional value. When commenting on the daily rations allocated to children below the age of five, he was of the opinion that, despite the sufficient calorie count, the protein and fat count were below normal.[6]

From Dr Martin's report it thus becomes obvious that the diet supplied to the Merebank Camp inhabitants was not a balanced diet providing the necessary

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4. National Archive Repository (NAR), Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 12: Circular 117, 20.2.1902.
5. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7.
6. PAR, GH, 491: Memorandum by Dr S. Martin on the rations in the concentration camps, 2.12.1901.

nutrients. It was very restricted in variety, and especially lacking in the necessary fresh fruit and vegetables, eggs and cheese so necessary for growth in children, and as a source of energy. Especially deficient in the diet were carbohydrates found in such foods as milk, honey, fruit, vegetables, wheat, flour, bread, rice, maize and potatoes, necessary to provide the heat and energy required for the functioning of muscles. The lack of proteins in the diet for children younger than five, was also bound to have far-reaching results, as a protein deficiency results in retardation of growth in children and in a shortage of antibodies, which makes the body more susceptible to disease.[7] Furthermore, even small children require solids and cannot live solely on milk and porridge or bread. Instead they should be encouraged to eat a varied selection of foods in order to grow. These provisions could therefore never be sufficient for a family with mainly small children and, in this instance, either Dr Hardy, the medical officer in charge of the camp, or Camp Superintendent Bousfield, had permission to increase the meal rations by authorizing that one or two of the older children be rationed as adults; or if the children were less than five years of age, they would be regarded as being between five and twelve.[8]

Bousfield was also given discretionary power to issue extras in the form of fresh milk, meal and eggs to weak persons and children, on the advice of his medical officer, so as to prevent sickness. In this case the extra issue was classified as medical comforts.[9] Men who were doing work in the camp received an extra ration of a pound (450 g) of meat, a pound (450 g) of sugar, and four ounces (115 g) of coffee per week. All nurses also received full staff rations.[10] The extra ration given to camp inhabitants who did physical labour, speaks for itself. The authorities had obviously realised that the rations were not enough to sustain the men and women who had to do both their own household tasks as well as camp duties.

To improve the nutritional value of the food, camp officials were instructed not to

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7. D. Madden, *Food and nutrition*, pp. 6-9.

8. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report); PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 (monthly report).

9 PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

10. PAR, GH, 491: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 19.3.1902 (letter).

accept food supplies that were damaged or of an inferior quality, and according to the final report handed in by E. Noble, the Assistant General Superintendent, Burgher Camps, there was not a single complaint about rations, regarding the quality or quantity, during the whole period of civil administration.[11] Visitors to the camp, such as the Australian journalist Mrs Dickenson, also seemed to think that the food and rations were sufficient, for she wrote that while mothers would have appreciated some juice for their children, the rations were adequate.[12]

The aforementioned testimonies are not borne out by memoirs and camp diaries kept by Merebank Camp inhabitants, many of whom complained about both the quality and quantity of the rations. There were numerous complaints that children cried because they were so hungry, and that they had eaten all the rations before they reached their quarters. In addition to this, various camp inhabitants maintained that the frozen meat had no taste, that the potatoes were awful, that there was bluestone in the sugar and that they were dissatisfied with both the quantity and quality of the bread, which was brought into the camp by black men who carried it on their naked shoulders.[13] According to *The Natal Mercury*, however, uneaten bread was gathered and thrown away every day during the early months of Merebank's existence. The newspaper interpreted this as too much bread being given to the inhabitants.[14] It could, nevertheless, just as well have been that the bread was virtually inedible.

The lack of fresh milk caused much dissatisfaction. Fresh milk was substituted by condensed milk, and to make the milk go further, it was diluted with water. This decreased the nutritional value and caused the milk to be blue.[15] To supplement this, inhabitants with money bought fresh milk from an Indian trader,[16] while fresh milk for

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11. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).
12. E. Hobhouse, *The brunt of the war and where it fell*, p. 255.
13. NAR, P. H. S. van Zyl Collection (Accession W19/4A): Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 18; Archives of the Local History Museum (LHM), Accession 5994/1: Herinneringe van Salla Grobler van haar verblyf in die Irene, Krugersdorp en Merebank-konsentrasiekampe; E. Neethling, *Mag ons vergeet ?*, p. 128; M. M. Postma, *Stemme uit die verlede: 'n versameling van beëdigde verklarings van vroue wat tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in konsentrasiekampe verkeer het*, p. 26.
14. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7.
15. J. Wassermann, *The Pinetown Concentration Camp during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*, p. 54.
16. Neethling, p. 133.

the hospital was obtained from Mooi River.[17] In spite of all the shortcomings in the food and rations, camp inhabitants seemed to feel that they were better than those they had received in concentration camps such as Klerksdorp and Standerton, but still not sufficient.[18]

In order to supplement their food rations and to introduce variety into their diet, Merebank Camp inhabitants bought fruit and vegetables from the traders who entered the camp or they purchased them in Durban.[19] Fruit for sale was reasonably cheap and abundant. "Bananas could be bought at 28 for one shilling"[20] or a large basketful at 2/6.[21] Pineapples, which were seen to be good preventatives of illness, were also readily available, and four large pineapples were sold for 6d.[22] With this abundance of cheap fruit, it seems a little absurd that these were not introduced into the rations by the camp authorities to make the diet more nutritious, especially in the light of Dr Martin's report.

Local residents sometimes took pity on the Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants and their dietary predicament. One of them once came into the camp with a wagon-load of fruit and vegetables and handed them out amongst the camp inhabitants. Unfortunately, with so many camp inhabitants, only a few were lucky enough to receive some of the fruit and vegetables.[23] In another similar incident of compassion sweets, cake, syrup and tea were handed out to all the children, which no doubt succeeded brightening up their day.[24]

Rations were dispensed to the camp inhabitants in a block system from the four ration

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17. PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum).
18. War Museum of the Boer Republics (WM), Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession 5890/91): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders; Postma, p. 61.
19. WM, 5890/91: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders.
20. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 64.
21. WM, Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession 5890/90): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.
22. NAR, DBC, 12: J. H. Corbett - Director of Education, 13.1.1902 (report on Natal concentration camps).
23. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 80.
24. J. H. Enslin, "Merebank", *De Kerkbode* 19(4), 30.1.1902, p. 40; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 73.

houses.[25] Fresh meat, one of the cornerstones of the diet, was bought from contractors in a frozen state and issued three times a week, while bread, either white or brown, depending on the order of Camp Superintendent Bousfield, was issued daily.[26] This process implied that the collectors, many of whom were children, had to stand in long lines on a daily basis, generally for a considerable length of time in the hot subtropical climate. These long delays were probably due to the large number of inhabitants who needed to collect their rations, their lack of co-operation with the staff commissariat and the low ratio of commissariat personnel to inhabitants.

The long delay in the ration queues sometimes caused tempers to flare, and young children to start crying, but the wait sometimes also stimulated the creative mind of certain camp inhabitants, especially the children. If people had other important things to do in their quarters, such as cleaning, cooking or looking after some ill fellow inhabitant, they would merely place their dishes, basins or whatever container they had brought with them in the queue, and leave with the intention of coming back later, when they would once again take up their position in the queue where they had left the dish.[27] Children would do the same, except they would play with their friends. Once the rations had been received, the inhabitants carried them back to their quarters in their pots, pans, basins, baskets, buckets and even in their aprons.[28]

To keep and enhance the nutritional value of food, it needs to be properly prepared. The protein content of meat, for example, increases considerably when cooked, owing to the evaporation of water.[29] Camp regulations therefore stipulated that enough fuel - wood in the case of Merebank - was to be supplied to the camp inhabitants.[30] Consequently, every camp inhabitant, irrespective of age, received wood for the preparation of their food. Up until January 1902, the camp inhabitants received only

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25. As explained before in Chapter 3, section 3.5, *supra.*
26. PAR, GH, 491: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 19.3.1902 (letter).
27. Neethling, p. 128.
28. WM, Herinneringe (Accession, 5697/1): Herinneringe van T. Corbett.
29. Madden, p. 5.
30. *Further papers relating to the working of refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853), p. 11; PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

half of the amount indicated in Table 5.1 on p. 112, i.e. fourteen pounds (6,3 kg) for every inhabitant older than five, and seven pounds (3,15 kg) for those under the age of five. This was not enough to enable inhabitants to prepare and cook their food effectively, and many camp inhabitants were thus forced to augment their wood supply by either obtaining permits to collect wood in the bushes nearby or, if they had no permit, to leave without permission. In other instances they burnt dung from the animals in the camp, or made fire with *teerlappe* (tarred cloths) which children picked up at the work-yard.[31]

The authorities realised that the fuel rations needed to be increased, and by the end of January 1902, the fuel rations had doubled for each of the given categories.[32] This made the preparation of food easier, for there was now enough fuel, but the increase in the fuel quota created a new problem, in that each inhabitant had to collect his/her own wood from the wood depot near the entrance of the camp and carry it back to the family quarters.[33] Miem Fischer described what happened: "Dis muilwaens met hout agter en surrender burghers met stokkies voor, met 'n ruimte van sowat vyf voet daartussen vir die vroue om hul blokke weg te sleep of te dra, al na gelang hul kragte is, in 'n vloer van dryfsand van 'n halwe voet dik onder 'n brandende son."[34] (There were mule wagons with wood at the back and surrendered burghers with sticks in front, with a space of about five feet in-between for the women to drag or carry their logs away, depending on their strength, in half a foot of quicksand under a blazing sun.) To carry these logs back to their quarters was a strenuous task, and the hands and backs of the women and children bore the brunt of this energy-sapping task.

At one point, in February 1902, matters must have become almost unbearable for the camp inhabitants when the wood had to be collected from the station. This added hundreds of metres to the already long journey to the living quarters, and it became

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31. M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, pp. 53, 62; E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, pp. 36, 38; Neethling, p. 196.

32. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1902 (final report); PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 (monthly report).

33. A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph). See also Appendix 3, p. 241, *infra*.

34. Fischer, p. 75.

virtually impossible for the women, many of them elderly and frail, to carry the logs to their part of the camp. Bousfield therefore made arrangements that the firewood was to be collected from the wood depot once again.[35]

Other than the transportation of the logs to their living quarters, camp inhabitants at Merebank faced yet another problem with their wood - the size of the logs. While the official monthly reports maintained that the wood was supplied in convenient sized logs cut up by gangs of Indians and blacks,[36] they were contradicted by the camp inhabitants themselves and by a detailed study of the size of the logs in the wood depot enclosure on the Merebank Concentration Camp photograph.[37] The logs needed to be chopped into smaller pieces and this was a difficult task, especially as there were not many axes available and, those that were, had to be shared to serve a number of rows in the camp.[38] Although there was now enough wood, the logs were very difficult to transport, but the authorities seemed to have been oblivious to this.

As there had been no communal ovens at Merebank in the beginning, people were forced to construct their own ovens and the food was cooked on open fires. Camp inhabitants used bricks, and corrugated iron and paraffin tins to construct their fireplaces which, in general, were 300 - 600 mm high, 300 - 600 mm long and about 300 mm wide. On this they placed two empty paraffin tins, one at the back, and the other flat on the ground. The tins were cut open at the top and bottom and the fire was made inside these tins while the pots were placed on top. This was done to protect the fire against the wind, to save fuel, and to keep the sand out of the food. These tins were burnt through very quickly, so new ones had to be bought, fortunately at a low

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35. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 80; Fischer, p. 85.

36. PAR, GH, 553 : T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report); *The Natal Mercury*, 22.11.1901, p. 7.

37. A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph). See Appendix 3, p. 241, *infra*. For comments on the size of the logs, see Neethling, p. 132; P. J. van der Walt, *Vrouweverdriet: herinneringe uit die konsentrasiekampe van Petronella Johanna v.d. Walt (Olivier)*, p. 28; I. Uys, *Heidelbergers of the Boer War*, p. 205.

38. LHM, 5994/1: Herinneringe van Salla Grobler van haar verblyf in die Irene, Krugersdorp en Merebank-konsentrasiekampe, p. 8.

price.[39] Other camp inhabitants, such as Miem Fischer, who was one of the financially strong persons in the camp, were able to buy a primus stove on which they could cook their food or boil their water.[40] The smoke from these fires hanging over the area must have resembled a modern-day informal settlement. This situation changed during February 1902, when proper kitchens were erected so that each family had access to a constructed kitchen, and thereafter the camp became a tidier and healthier place.[41]

The women in the Merebank Concentration Camp were dependent on their own resources. For most of the time they had to collect the wood, chop it into smaller pieces, and cook in the open, an almost impossible task in pouring rain. Furthermore they needed to be inventive to stretch the meagre rations to feed their hungry children, while ensuring that the food was as nutritious as possible to keep their families healthy.

5.2 Accommodation

For the first few months of the Merebank Concentration Camp's existence, the camp inhabitants were accommodated in 330 bell tents, 135 marques, and 90 canvas huts. As a rule, bell tents were not supposed to accommodate more than five persons, while small marquees were designed to accommodate twelve persons, and a large one no more than twenty to 25 persons.[42] These tents and marquees, which were not designed for adverse weather conditions, were generally subjected to three climatic pressures: temperature, rain and wind. Merebank experienced a subtropical climate with a mean annual temperature of 20,5°C, high humidity and possible rainfall throughout the year, but with more than 60% of the rain falling during the summer months, during which season inhabitants were also exposed to the full force of the

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39. Neethling, pp. 133-134; M. P. Klem, "Die alledaagse lewe in die konsentrasiekamp, 1", *Tydskrif vir Volkskunde en Volkstaal* 2(32), April 1976, p. 23.

40. Fischer, p. 61.

41. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - J. Chamberlain, 21.2.1902 (despatch).

42. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report); Cd. 853, p. 11.

wind.[43]

Marquees, which were manufactured in India, had a double lining, and were generally heavier, stronger and warmer than the British-manufactured bell tents. The marquees were therefore cooler in the day and warmer at night, when compared to the bell tents.[44] Although it would therefore have been more comfortable because of this to live in a marquee, the humidity and extreme heat still had to be coped with, even if it was compulsory for flaps to be rolled up during the day to allow for ventilation.[45] Furthermore, tent inhabitants had to contend with the exceptionally rainy season during the summer of 1901-1902, which not only made the already swampy area even wetter, as the ground water table rose, but also resulted in camp inhabitants getting their belongings, which lay on the ground, drenched. The tents also leaked. In addition to this, the wind caused discomfort, as tents were blown down, and possessions scattered, while sand penetrated every crevice. As a result, the camp authorities soon realised that with climatic factors playing such a vital role, few of the tents and marquees would remain after a couple of months.

It thus soon became obvious that the issue of substantial accommodation at Merebank needed to be addressed, and it was deemed advisable by the Natal Burgher Camps' Department that wood and iron buildings be constructed to replace the bell tents which were rapidly wearing out.[46] Making this project even more attractive, was the prospect that these wood and iron buildings could be sold to Indians or others who wished to buy them, once the war ended and the camp no longer required them. In this way, some of the costs could be recovered.[47] This, and the fact that it was anticipated that it would be unnecessary to do any maintenance for the first year, made these wood and iron huts seem a better proposition than the

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43. R. A. Preston-Whyte, *Climate of Durban*, p. 15.

44. *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (Cd. 893), p. 204.

45. Cd. 853, p. 11.

46. PAR, GH, 474: H. E. McCallum - J. Chamberlain, 27.11.1901 (despatch).

47. Cd. 853, p. 5.

tents, as they would save the Imperial Government thousands of pounds.[48]

Once the decision had been made to replace the canvas accommodation, the construction of the wood and iron huts was started, and by the end of January 1902, the General Superintendent for Burgher Camps (GSBC) in Natal, T. K. Murray, could report that all 6364 camp inhabitants residing in the camp at the time were being housed in wood and iron accommodation.[49] These corrugated iron and wood buildings were about 96 feet (30 m) long and they were divided into six rooms, roughly 16 ft (5 m) x 16 ft (5 m) in size, with windows on the one side and an outside door on the other to allow for a through draft of air. A few metres separated two adjacent buildings and there were eight to ten such buildings in one row. Consecutive rows were separated by streets which the Fawcett Ladies' Commission considered to be too narrow. There were five to six such rows in one block, with each row and room being numbered.[50] This accommodation was preferred by the camp inhabitants in spite of numerous disadvantages, including the fact that these rooms were extremely hot as they had no ceilings and were also not well-ventilated. An added drawback was the fact that the walls were so thin that privacy was virtually unheard of, as one could hear what went on or what was being said in the room next door. Besides this the buildings started leaking during April 1902.[51]

Where possible, the total number of inhabitants in each room was restricted to six. This was, however, not always possible, as some families were larger than this and they generally preferred to live in one room rather than sharing a room with strangers.[52] In some instances, this resulted in eight to nine people sharing a room. According to the Fawcett Report such crowding in one room was unhealthy, and should not be permitted at Merebank where the rooms were so close together.[53]

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48. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1903 (final report).
49. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 12.2.1902 (monthly report).
50. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 78; Cd. 893, p. 34; A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph).
51. Cd. 893, p. 34; Fischer, pp. 77, 87, 108.
52. PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum).
53. Cd. 893, p. 35.

In spite of constructing the wood and iron huts, the problem regarding the dampness of the soil remained. As there were no floor boards in the huts, camp inhabitants found that their bedding and linen would be so wet in the mornings, in spite of the groundsheets, that they could wring them out before hanging them out to dry.[54] Although the Fawcett Commission had recommended boarding the floors at a cost of £6 per hut, the authorities decided to buy two wool packs per room to make "good floor covers" at a cost of 1/6 per room. This, they believed, would prevent camp inhabitants from having to sleep on the wet sandy floors and also keep their clothes and bedding dry, as effectively as the floor boards would, while at the same time saving money for the Imperial Government.[55] This seemed to have worked because, after the first couple of months, there were no more comments about this problem in any of the diaries and memoirs consulted.

Another problem faced by both the Boer camp inhabitants and staff alike, were the fleas, lice and mosquitoes.[56] This was a common difficulty in all coastal concentration camps, and in the Wentworth Concentration Camp, some five kilometres north of Merebank, a camp inhabitant wrote a poem on the flea infestation.[57] Fleas and lice covered the floor in the quarters of all camp inhabitants. The way in which this problem was approached, underlined the great cultural divide which separated the two groups of camp inhabitants at Merebank. The Boers got rid of the fleas using ingenuous methods such as cutting grass and then covering the floor with it. Once the fleas had crawled onto the grass, the grass was burnt and swept away and the problem was temporarily solved.[58] The staff members, especially the English teachers, did not seem to have the same ingenuous means of getting rid of the bugs, for Kate French wrote: "All through the small hours [our companions] were a hunting. By the dim light of a candle, thro' the haze of my dreams, I heard, 1-2-3-4 etc."[59] Kate's room-mates had spent the night catching what they referred to as "Boer Bugs", killing them

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54. Fischer, p. 46.
55. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1903 (final report).
56. WM, 5890/90: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.
57. M. C. E. van Schoor and C. G. Coetzee, *Kampkinders 1900-1902: 'n gedenkboek*, p. 47.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
59. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 2.

one by one - an extremely tedious, but useless exercise, and much less effective than that used by the Boers.

The tents and wooden huts served as bedroom, diningroom, lounge, kitchen and pantry all rolled into one, and they were of such a size that there was not much room, especially when there were little children. As a consequence, children had to play and amuse themselves outside, becoming dirty in no time. Within these quarters, women tried to recreate home and recapture their dignity with the few possessions they had. This must have been difficult, as many of the women, even though they had come from large well-furnished homes, had arrived at Merebank with little or no clothing, carpets, furniture or other essentials. In most quarters, furniture and bedding were in short supply, and it was not an uncommon sight to see milk or paraffin boxes acting as tables and chairs. Although the contents of the living quarters were very scanty, they normally contained the following minimal items which were supplied by the camp authorities to those who lacked them: a basin, kettle, bucket, broom, pillow, blankets and clothing.[60] To add to these possessions, camp inhabitants were also encouraged to buy and sleep on cartels and stretchers which were made by Boer men at Merebank. The cost of each of the cartels or stretchers bought was charged to the account of the family concerned, so that some of the outlay costs could be recovered.[61] It seems as if this never occurred and these costs were thus calculated into the total costs of the war.

To make their quarters as homely as possible, camp inhabitants were very innovative and prepared to go to great lengths. Those with little furniture and other essentials, but with money, such as Miem Fischer who bought chairs in Durban, were able to buy some of the items they needed, either in one of the camp shops or in Durban to make their home less stark.[62] Those who had no money or possessions were nevertheless required to be more innovative, using their creative potential to make their accommodation as attractive and appealing as possible.

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60. J. van Helsdingen, *Vrouwenleed: persoonlijke ondervindingen in den Boerenoorlog*, p. 87.

61. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 936), p. 25.

62 Fischer, p. 71.

Within the Merebank community there were, however, also a select few who had arrived with enough of their possessions to create a welcoming atmosphere in their home. These, such as the Schuttes of Pretoria, had arrived with, amongst others, the remainders of a beautiful lounge suite, chairs which were covered in velvet or Moroccan leather, a gold-plated clock, a wooden cupboard, a Chinese vase and an oil stove which allowed them the luxury of cooking their meals inside.[63]

The staff at Merebank were generally faced with similar problems to the inmates in respect of accommodation. During March 1902, the educational staff, for example, were still accommodated in five dilapidated marquee tents pitched at the end of the camp, 1,6 km from the hospital. Twelve teachers shared these five marquee tents, using three for sleeping in and two as living areas. Their food was cooked outside their tents on an open fire by a black cook, their cabin trunk acted as a table, and their tents blew down in wind storms. When this happened, their possessions scattered in all directions. Adding to this dilemma, when it rained, the water poured through the canvas, creating pools of water inside the tent.[64] It almost seems as if the educational staff, in particular, resided under worse conditions than the Boer camp inhabitants.

Bathrooms and wash-houses were constructed to enable camp inhabitants to take care of their personal hygiene. Each of the blocks within the Merebank Concentration Camp had its own bathrooms and wash-houses. Three months after the opening of the camp, during the Fawcett Commission's visit to Merebank on 6 and 7 December 1901, only one of the bath-houses had been completed. Like those to follow, it was made of corrugated iron and contained ten full-length baths for women, two for men and two for boys.[65] According to official reports there was plenty of water, but camp inhabitants dispute the fact. Instead they wrote that water was scarce, and that as a result, the bathrooms were locked for most parts of the day, except during bathtimes in the mornings and evenings. This probably resulted in the extra supply of water that

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63. Hobhouse, *The brunt of the war and where it fell*, pp. 254-255.

64. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): The South African diary of Kate French, pp. 2-3. From the consulted sources it is not clear where all the other staff members were housed.

65 PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report); Cd. 893, p. 34.

was laid on during May 1902.[66]

Corrugated iron wash-houses, which were erected opposite the first row of the accommodation quarters, were equipped with four taps each, two inside and two outside, as well as tables and benches to enable inhabitants to do their washing. According to camp regulations, washing had to be done during certain times of the day, but as a result of the scarcity of water during the day, women were forced to do their washing at night. Bousfield realised and understood the water problem and withdrew the regulation that washing could only be done during the day, thus allowing women to do their washing whenever water was available.[67] This situation improved when more water was laid on.

As often happens when many people live together in close confinement, the Merebank ablution blocks were not always in good order and, on occasions blocked drains were reported to the authorities. Drains were blocked by either sand, or because camp inhabitants used the bath-houses and wash-houses to do their dishes or their washing, despite the fact that camp regulations forbade them to do so. To keep the drains clean, and to prevent foul water from becoming stagnant, in this way creating a breeding-ground for mosquitoes, the drains needed to be brushed out on a regular basis.[68] To do this and to ensure that the toilets, bath-houses and wash-houses remained clean, a team of Boer women were appointed to the task, and given permission to report those who did not keep the ablutions clean to the Camp Superintendent's office.[69]

The wood and iron huts in the Merebank Concentration Camp were a vast improvement on the overcrowded tent accommodation many of the camp inhabitants had experienced in one of the Transvaal or ORC concentration camps before coming to Merebank, but living in such a confined space had its disadvantages. Although not

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66. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 80; PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 and 11.6.1902 (monthly reports).

67. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report); Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 78-84; Cd. 893, p. 34.

68. Cd. 893, p. 34; GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902.

69. Fischer, p. 54.

overcrowded, it must have been uncomfortable to share the same room with people of different ages and genders. Privacy was thus an unheard of luxury, and to make matters worse, the camp terrain had been cleared of all bush when construction started resulting in a treeless area with no shade to escape to for a quiet moment. Without trees to provide shade for the huts, the temperature inside the buildings rose higher than would have been the case if there had been some shade. This, together with the extreme humidity which the camp inhabitants were unused to, made the quarters extremely uncomfortable, especially during the summer months.

5.3 Education

A vital part of any child's formative years is education. The High Commissioner (Lord Milner), T. K. Murray and the Fawcett Commission, not only realised just how important the education of Boer children was, but also recognised the potential of using the situation to include principles and ideals, which they, the British, held dear. According to the Fawcett Commission "the most is to be made of the present unique opportunity for instilling ideas of truth and discipline into these children".[70] The purpose behind creating schools in the concentration camps was therefore not merely educational, but also to anglicize the Boer children by imposing British values upon them.[71] To be able to do this, the British authorities could not rely on the Boer teachers in the Merebank Camp, but instead needed to bring in teachers from England and other parts of the British Empire, such as Australia and New Zealand, to share with Boer teachers the very important task of educating and indoctrinating the Boer children.

At this point consideration needs to be given to why teachers were prepared to come to concentration camps such as Merebank. The diary of Kate Helen French, the daughter of Reverend W. French, of Tiverton, Devon, who came to South Africa with her sister Charlotte, provides some insight. According to Kate, there were a variety of reasons as to why young women were prepared to leave their homeland and sail

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70. Cd. 893, p. 207.

71. F. C. Symington, *Die konsentrasiekampskole in die Transvaal en die Oranje Vrystaat*, p. 9.

off into the unknown. These included a sense of adventure, patriotic feelings and a desire to further their profession. She concludes: "For cannot a girl, by her influence in the home and among the children she teaches, do more to bring peace than numberless peace delegations? Chamberlain's great move, to get at the younger generation, was to be made more successful or otherwise by the bands of teachers leaving the shores of good old England."[72]

In November 1900, Alfred Milner had appointed E.B. Sargant as Commissioner for Education in the Transvaal and ORC.[73] As such he also became the Commissioner of Education in Natal, when the Natal concentration camp schools, including Merebank, were placed under the control of the Transvaal Education Department in October 1901 when administration became a civil matter.[74]

In Merebank the schools, the first of which were organised by the then Inspector of Schools, Mr Kemball Cook, followed the same prescribed syllabi as did those in the other concentration camps. To achieve the ideal of imparting knowledge while indoctrinating their learners, it was necessary that the medium of instruction in all secular subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, history and geography, was English, even for the young children.[75] The language of instruction for religious education, which was in the hands of the ministers of religion, was the exception, and in the mother tongue of the inhabitants.[76] The authorities realised that the Merebank Camp inhabitants were almost all of Boer origin and that they used the Dutch language and Bible in their spiritual realm, even if they spoke Dutch/Afrikaans when communicating with one another. If the British authorities had dared to introduce the English Bible, this would have caused a great outcry.

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72. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): South African diary of Kate French, p. 1.

73. S. B. Spies, *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer republics, January 1900 - May 1902*, p. 86.

74. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

75. *Reports, etc., on the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 819), p. 204; PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report); D. Jenner, "Merebank Camp", *Africana Notes and News* 29(7), September 1991, p. 283.

76. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 and 12.2.1902 (monthly reports); Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 97.

During the early months of Merebank's existence, teaching was undertaken in Dutch/Afrikaans by inhabitants employed as school teachers, under the guidance of the headmistress of the school, Miss Meiring. This did not coincide with the anglicization philosophy and needed to be changed. An ideal time to do this proved to be after the Christmas holiday. The school closed for the Christmas period on 19 December 1901 and reopened again on 6 January 1902, when Miss Meiring was replaced first with an English lady who spoke no Dutch/Afrikaans, and soon afterwards by Mr Hambly.[77]

The school year was divided into four terms which were separated by school holidays. Each school day started at 08h00 and ended at 13h00. School attendance was compulsory, and the employment of boys under the age of fourteen in doing camp duties was considered undesirable, as it interfered with their school attendance, and thus the Director of Burgher Camps asked that this practice be discontinued. He also asked that the issuing of rations to children during school hours be prohibited.[78]

The number of children attending school at Merebank varied, as did the size of the classes. On average there were 30 learners, ranging from eight to seventeen years of age in one class, making the task of teaching the learners all the more difficult and challenging.[79] On 30 November 1901, there were 328 learners on the roll.[80] These numbers increased very rapidly as more and more people were sent to Merebank and, by the end of January 1902, the number of learners on the roll had tripled to approximately 1000.[81] By the end of February the number of learners rose to approximately 1300.[82] The average enrolment figure at Merebank was 639 compared

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77. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 67, 70; *Further papers relating to the working of refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 934), p. 83.

78. NAR, DBC, 12: Circular 104, 20.12.1901; NAR, J. Ploeger Collection (Accession 2030), 46: Circular 130, 5.4.1902.

79. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): The South African diary of Kate French, p. 2.

80. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 (monthly report).

81. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 12.2.1902 (monthly report).

82. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 12.3.1902 (monthly report).

to an average attendance of 562.[83] This meant that statistically an average of 88% of the enrolled learners attended school regularly. This figure may seem high, considering that the majority of camp inhabitants had been sent to Merebank because of their political ideology, but for many children school/education was a means to pass the time in the otherwise dull and monotonous routine of the camp, and served to ease the harsh circumstances the families in the camp had to endure. At the same time, it was convenient for many mothers to send their children to school, for at least they knew where their children were while they proceeded with their daily chores and attended to the sick. Some, on the other hand, were keen to have their children educated, while a few feared the authorities if they went against them.

To enable teachers to educate learners, school buildings, books and other equipment were required. With approximately 1300 learners attending classes during the peak of its existence, Merebank needed more than one school. This resulted in a number of school buildings being erected. These ranged from marquee tents to corrugated iron and wood buildings with a verandah.[84] By the beginning of December 1901, the four main school buildings had been erected near the entrance to the camp. Two of these were wood and iron buildings, with roomy verandahs, each capable of seating 200 children, while the other two were large huts originally intended for the South African Constabulary as police barracks.[85] The latter two wood and iron buildings were 112 feet (36,7 m) long and 20 feet (6,6 m) wide. Their good ventilation arrangements, ample verandahs and numerous windows made them suitable for school purposes.[86] These buildings were, however, not sufficient to accommodate all the learners and, as a result, a number of marquee tents were pitched in various parts of the camp and used as classrooms.[87]

The schools at Merebank do not seem to have been well-equipped. Although the

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83. NAR, A 2030, 48: Transvaal Blue Book 1902-1903 (return of burgher camp schools).

84. *The Natal Mercury*, 30.10.1901, p. 7; Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): The South African diary of Kate French, p. 3.

85. Cd. 893, p. 37; PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).

86. NAR, DBC, 12: J. H. Corbett - Director of Education, 13.1.1902 (report on Natal concentration camps); Cd. 893, p. 37.

87. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): The South African diary of Kate French, pp. 1-4.

Transvaal Education Department sent crates with schoolbooks, such as spelling books, to the Merebank Burgher Camp School, there were hardly any desks for learners to sit at, and not enough reading material and other books to go round, with the result that learners had to share books. In addition to these shortages, there were not enough pens, or slates for learners to write on.[88] Although crates with educational material donated by sympathisers to the Boer cause, such as a Mr Schulz from Cape Town, were received, [89] this situation does not seem to have improved much as time passed, for after Kate French arrived at Merebank at the beginning of April 1902, she wrote in her diary that "they had to be taught, without slates, blackboards or books".[90]

As a reaction to the educational problems and philosophy, some camp inhabitants decided to boycott the government schools by getting Boer ladies to teach their children privately in Dutch/Afrikaans, following a curriculum they approved of. The authorities imposed restraints on this resistance by banning private teaching after 27 April 1902. Any attempt to start small schools where tuition was in Dutch/Afrikaans, was also prohibited. All children had to attend the government schools which, in line with the philosophy of anglicization and indoctrination, contained portraits of the yet uncrowned King Edward VII and his wife.[91]

In another step to demonstrate their disapproval with the education system forced onto them, some Merebank Camp inhabitants ignored the regulations regarding compulsory school attendance by continuing to send their children to collect rations, or allowing their children to stay at home if they wanted to. One such person was Miem Fischer, who allowed her son and other children to stay at home when they complained that they had only done two sums from 08h00 to 13h00.[92]

The children were clearly influenced by the political thinking of their parents, especially the mothers, who had taken over the role as head of the family in most

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88. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 67.
89. J. H. Enslin, "Merebank", *De Kerkbode* 19(4), 30.1.1902, p. 40.
90. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): The South African diary of Kate French, p. 2.
91. Fischer, pp. 89, 115; W. P. Rousseau, "De kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 18(49), 12.12.1901, p. 669.
92. Fischer, pp. 98-99.

cases in the camp, and this created clashes between ideas stemming from formal education received at school, and non-formal education received at home. In one such clash, the learners of the elementary class at the Merebank School decided to use the school as a political tool to show how strongly they felt about their heritage, and to demonstrate their republican feelings. When an article, which made the Boers out to be an immoral nation who did not care much about either their country or their language, appeared in *The Natal Mercury*, these learners were so disgusted and offended that all, with the exception of two, decided on 7 June 1902 to boycott classes. Their headmaster, Mr Hambly, was very surprised, as he did not consider the article insulting and threatened to suspend all learners unless they returned, but the learners persevered in their opinion, refusing to return to school for a time.[93]

Despite the attitude towards education by some camp inhabitants, children who had attended the Merebank schools did benefit as they were given the opportunity not only to learn English and other subjects, but also to prepare for national examinations. At Merebank a class of 30 trained for the School Elementary Examination of the Cape University.[94] On leaving the school, normally when they were returning home with their families after the war had ended, children were also issued with leaving certificates by the Transvaal Education Department. These certificates contained information regarding the name of the learner, the duration of attendance, the conduct of the learner, how good or bad school attendance was, his/her ability to speak English, and the grade on entering and leaving.[95] This enabled the learner to enrol in the appropriate class at a school back home, while it also gave the teacher an indication of what the child had achieved and what he/she might be like.

At Merebank, as in all other concentration camps in Natal, it was decided not to confine education only to children, but to involve the adults as well. This informal adult education was part of a two-pronged approach applied by the British to anglicize all

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93. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 101-102.

94. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.5.1902 (monthly report). The Cape University is today known as the University of Cape Town.

95. Free State Archive Repository (FSAR), Accession A 119.767: R. Zerwick, 24.11.1902 (leaving certificate).

the camp inhabitants in order to make them better British subjects. Sir Thomas Murray, GSBC, believed that the concentration camps would be worth the money spent on them if they were used as a tool to produce "a great change for the better in both adults and children", by allowing them to gain knowledge and by forcing British values onto them. With this object in mind it was decided to start night classes and to hold a series of lectures on the British Empire.[96]

By February 1902, about 150 adults were attending the night classes which included classes in cooking, needlework, clay modelling, drawing, kindergarten work, science experiments and entomological collections.[97] These lectures seem to have been fairly popular with the camp inhabitants. Examples on record of clay ornaments made by camp inhabitants include two clay dogs made by Miem Fischer and a Mrs van der Walt, whom they named Bousfield and Mara; a Zulu warrior made by a young Badenhorst girl; a bull, and an English officer on a horse.[98] No person under the age of sixteen was permitted to attend night classes and, those who did, had first preference at lantern lectures.[99]

The lantern lectures, which were introduced at Merebank with the sole purpose of enabling the inhabitants to learn something more about the British Empire, were held in the evenings and they were well attended by the adults in the camp. The arrangements for these lantern evenings were made by the principal of the Merebank school, Mr W. H. Hambly. The Inspector of Schools, Mr J.H. Corbett, instructed that on such an evening a certain amount of singing was to take place, to allow for an occasional break in instruction.[100] As a result, a choir of 30 young Boer ladies resident in Merebank, would sing only English songs during the interval, under the guidance of their conductor, Mr D.G. Viljoen.[101]

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96. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - J. Chamberlain , 21.2.1902 (despatch).
97. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 12.3.1902, 5.6.1902 and 7.7.1902 (monthly reports).
98. Fischer, pp. 110-111.
99. PAR, GH, 1543: J. H. Corbett - T. K. Murray, 17.6.1902 (letter).
100. *Ibid.*
101. *The Natal Mercury*, 19.5.1902, p. 7.

At these lectures the camp inhabitants listened to talks, delivered amongst others by Mr J.H. Corbett, Mr W.F. Mitchell of the Merebank School, Mr E.A. Belcher of Durban High School, and the Reverend C.K. Hodges. To illustrate their talks on subjects such as London, Scotland, Canada and the Royal Navy, they made use of slides and a lantern operator.[102]

When commenting on these lantern evenings, the journalist from *The Natal Mercury* wrote of the Boers: "They may be lacking in school training and in book learning, but the Boers in general are intelligent, receptive and keen to improve."[103] An equivocal compliment, but one nevertheless. The backhanded compliment paid by *The Natal Mercury* reporter was justified, as many Merebank Camp inhabitants were avid readers of newspapers and magazines. Fourteen-year-old Petrus Malan even commented in his diary on articles he had read in *The Natal Mercury*, including reports on the volcanic eruption on the island of Martinique and the serious illness of the Queen of Holland.[104] Similar comments were passed on articles in *The Natal Mercury* by Miem Fischer.[105]

If the ordinary schools for children, night schools and lantern lectures at Merebank were established with the sole purpose of anglicizing and indoctrinating the Boers, they did not succeed. The education system and teachers failed to have a permanent influence on their learners with regard to anglicizing them. The teachers lacked the logistical support system, the necessary equipment, and the time to do this. In addition, the general attitude of the Merebank Camp inhabitants to the language barrier, and absenteeism owing to various reasons, made it difficult for teachers to facilitate change. The schools did, however, achieve success by keeping the children constructively occupied while teaching them elementary knowledge in reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography and hygiene.

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102. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.5.1902 (monthly report); *The Natal Mercury*, 4.6.1902, p. 7 and 19.5.1902, p. 7.

103. *The Natal Mercury*, 4.6.1902, p. 7.

104. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, 96.

105. Fischer, pp. 89-91.

CHAPTER 6

LIFE IN THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP (2): RELIGION, RECREATION AND RACE RELATIONS

As far as possible, the camp authorities tried to care for the physical needs of the Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants in that they supplied housing, fuel, food, sanitary and medical facilities and they provided education in order to teach the children, but also to prepare them for a future as British subjects. Although they realised the importance of the spiritual and recreational dimensions of the camp inhabitants' lives, they did not take full control of this. Instead they left these aspects of life largely in the hands of the camp inhabitants, even encouraging them in their ventures, as long as their actions and activities did not clash with the official policy of the British or undermine the war effort.

6.1 Religion

The majority of the Boers were deeply religious people. The Calvinist Christian religion, embedded in the so-called three sister churches, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), Gereformeerde Kerk and Hervormde Kerk, was the foundation of the Boer social system. It would have been difficult to find a home that did not contain a Dutch Bible, a hymnal and baptised child.

During the Anglo-Boer War, the deep religious beliefs, entrenched by the teachings of men such as Andrew Murray, were clung to more fiercely than ever before, and this was also the case in the Merebank Concentration Camp. The belief that God was their personal God and Protector, who displayed goodwill to those who obeyed His commands, and who would not forsake them in their times of trouble, gave them the strength to survive and to bear the hardships of the war, as well as to face the daily problems and sufferings in the camp. Furthermore, the conviction that nothing would happen to them without the will and permission of the Father, and the belief that His day of reckoning would come, even if they had to wait a long time, enabled many

camp inhabitants to continue in their praise of the Lord.[1]

Most of the Boer women did not doubt that God's sympathy lay with the Boers and that He would eventually lead them to victory. As the war progressed without swaying in their favour, some of the Merebank Camp inhabitants started losing faith and questioning God.[2] One of these was Miem Fischer, who asked: "Wat van al die gebede, die smekinge wat al die maande opgestuur is, al die bloed en trane, al die ellende in hoop en vertroue op 'n seker verlossing? Niks, niks van dit alles. As die Heer Hom nie oor al die duisende wil ontferm nie, hoe sal Hy dan een ellendige soos ek gedenk? O, hoe sou die behoud van ons land my geloof versterk het!" [3] (What about all the prayers and petitions that were sent to God all these months, the blood, the tears, and the misery, endured in the hope and belief that deliverance would be assured? Nothing, nothing has come of it. If the Lord has not had mercy on the thousands, how will He remember one miserable soul like me? Oh, how the survival of our country would have strengthened my faith!) This raises issues such as: Where did the overriding loyalty of the people and church lie? Whose voice was heard the loudest - God's or the people's? These issues are not really the concern of this study, but need to be considered in order to take cognisance of the fact that religion and political beliefs were sometimes difficult to separate. At times political beliefs dominated, while at other times religious faith and a belief in God were of primary importance, providing comfort and a source of strength in difficult times.

The pastoral work and religious services in the Merebank Concentration Camp were conducted by Dominees (Reverends) Johan Hendrik Enslin of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk and Jac van Belkum of the Hervormde Kerk van de Transvaal.[4] The co-operation of these two clergymen in the camp, in spite of serious divisions between the two churches, formed a strange, but necessary unity across church divides.

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1. C. Landman, *The piety of Afrikaans women: diaries of guilt*, p. 15; E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, pp. 29-35; M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, p. 120.
2. Fischer, pp. 114, 120; E. Neethling, *Mag ons vergeet?*, p. 136; Landman, p. 83.
3. Fischer, p. 120.
4. W. P. Rousseau, "Een bezoek aan de kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 19(19), 15.5.1902, p. 374.

Dominee (Ds.) J. H. Enslin, a surrendered burgher of Vrede who had been living on parole, first in Durban and later at Verulam, offered to move to the Merebank Concentration Camp to take up religious work in the camp. He arrived at the camp with his wife and seven children on 16 October 1901, and left again for Standerton on 18 September 1902, well before the final closure of the camp in December 1902.[5]

Ds. Jac van Belkum of Rustenburg, an inveterate pipe smoker who was never without his large, hooked meerschaum, was born in Leeuwarden, in the Netherlands in 1851. He entered the ministry and came to South Africa to serve the Heidelberg Hervormde Kerk. During the war, he served the congregation in the field and in the concentration camps. He arrived at the Merebank Concentration Camp, together with his family, at the beginning of December 1901 to help Ds. Enslin. He also worked with the Hervormdes in the Pinetown, Howick and Jacobs Concentration Camps.[6]

The ministers of religion were provided with quarters and officer rations, with an additional honorarium if good work was done and if they confined themselves to the spiritual requirements of the inhabitants. By not paying a fixed salary, the British gained a hold against any mischievous teaching these ministers might become involved in.[7] Ds. Enslin received his honorarium, namely a cheque of £100, when he left.[8] He had obviously toed the line and not preached any inciting sermons.

It was an almost impossible task for the two ministers in the camp to reach, visit or minister to the spiritual needs of much more than 10% of the inhabitants. They realised that the need for the Word was great, and that at least another two or three active and energetic preachers were needed if they were to reach all the Merebank Camp inhabitants. An appeal was thus made to other clergymen to consider coming

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5. W. P. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie van leeraren, arbeiders en arbeidsters in de burgerkampen in Natal gehouden in het burgerkamp te Merebank op den 24sten en 25sten Juni 1902*, p. 15; National Archive Repository (NAR), Archive of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 129: Nominal Roll Orange River Colony and Natal, p. 11.

6. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, p. 15; I. Uys, *Heidelbergers of the Boer War*, p. 200.

7. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archive of Government House (GH), 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report); PAR, GH, 737: Assistant Secretary of the High Commissioner - H. E. McCallum, 21.1.1902 (despatch).

8. PAR, GH, 1065: T. K. Murray - H. M. Bousfield, 25.8.1902 (despatch).

to work in the camp, but without success.[9] They were therefore dependant on the help of fellow church brethren such as J. Balt, G. Rousseau, P. van Staden, C. Lötter, J. P. Celliers, J.J. van der Merwe and S. Odendaal to bring the gospel to the camp inhabitants.[10] Although most of the men in the camp were either hendsoppers or joiners, and therefore despised by the majority of the other camp inhabitants, they still took the traditional role as leaders in the church or the head of the home. After the war, they remained so unwelcome in many of the congregations that they formed their own church, the Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerk van die Transvaal Kolonie, better known as the Scoutkerk, in December 1903.[11]

In their endeavour to reach as many people as possible, regular church services were held by a dominee every week in each of the three camps in Merebank. On a Sunday two services were held and, during the week, another service was held on either Wednesday or Thursday. The church services were usually in the school building, but as the camp was so large and the venues often too small to accommodate all the churchgoers, services also took place in the open air, weather permitting. Attendance of the Sunday services was generally good, but according to the clergy, could have been even better. The services during the week were poorly attended and a sense of carelessness and indifference was noticeable in the attitude of many camp inhabitants towards the ministry.[12] Although reasons for this could not be ascertained, poor attendance might be attributable to the fact that Enslin and some of the lay preachers were either hendsoppers and joiners, or that the sermons were always the same. Besides, the people were not used to going to church regularly, especially not during the week, in spite of being extremely religious. It should be remembered that the Boers were rural folk, who often had to travel far to get to town and, as this took some time, they often only attended church once a month.

The church services were hampered because many of the congregation members

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9. Rousseau, "Een bezoek aan de kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 19(19), 15.5.1902, pp. 374-376.

10. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, p. 10.

11. A. M. Grundlingh, *Die "hendsoppers" and "joiners": die rasionaal en verskynsel van verraad*, pp. 314-322.

12. J. H. Enslin, "Merebank Kamp", *De Kerkbode* 18 (51), 24.12.1901, p. 694; Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, p. 27.

were without Bibles and hymnals.[13] In an attempt to improve this situation, 86 Bibles were sent to the camp by the Britsche en Buitelandsche Bijbel Genootschap (British Foreign Bible Society) of Durban, and religious tracts (fly-sheets) were donated by Ds. Pienaar on behalf of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Bijbel Vereeniging (South African Bible Society). In addition, a singing class and a choir consisting of 60 members, mostly for psalms and hymns, were started.[14] The formation of this choir must have had far-reaching effects. Not only would it have contributed to improved singing during the church services, but it would also have been a therapeutic measure. For a short while, at least, while practising or performing, the choir members were likely to forget their personal problems.

Special church services were held over the Christmas and Easter periods. On Christmas Eve 1901, an outdoor service attended by thousands of camp inhabitants, was held. At the service the women and children formed a procession. They hoisted the Vierkleur (the Transvaal republican flag) and sang the national anthem of the Transvaal at the top of their voices. Afterwards, all collected on the green behind the houses in block 9 where they sang several hymns.[15] On Christmas Day, Ds. van Belkum held the church service in Camp No. 2, while Ds. Enslin held the children's service. During the latter, both Ds. H. F. Schoon of Ladysmith, who was visiting the Merebank Camp from 25 to 27 December 1901, and Ds. van Belkum gave a speech. In the afternoon, Ds. Schoon gave an appropriate Christmas message when he preached a sermon based on Luke 2 verse 10.[16] The camp inhabitants who attended the services in the other sections of the Merebank Camp, were disappointed that the Christmas services were not held by one of the dominees, but by Mr Luther, a hendsopper.[17]

Visits to the Merebank Camp by clergymen and missionaries, including Dominees

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13. Enslin, "Merebank", *De Kerkbode* 19(4), 30.1.1902, p. 40.
14. Enslin, "Merebank Kamp", *De Kerkbode* 18(51), 24.12.1901, p. 694.
15. Uys, p. 200.
16. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 71: PAR, Ds. H. F. Schoon Collection (Accession A 72): Dagboek van ds. H. F. Schoon, pp. 749-750.
17. Fischer, pp. 68-69.

H.F. Schoon of Ladysmith, D.J. Malan of Albertina, A.M. Murray of Weenen and W.P. Rousseau of Pietermaritzburg were not uncommon.[18] The services held by these visiting clergymen were well attended, even in wet weather. Camp inhabitants did not always get a place inside the school/church building on these occasions, and consequently had to stand outside in front of one of the open doors or windows, to hear what was being said.[19] The sermons conducted by these gentlemen might have been popular for precisely the reasons that the services held by the resident dominees were not well attended. The visiting dominees brought a different message, and in addition to this, they were largely from the Cape or Natal, and were thus British subjects who cared enough to pay the Merebank Camp inhabitants a visit. This probably earned them a measure of respect.

The young people in the camp received special attention, but it was impossible to reach all the children and do religious work amongst them. The dominees received assistance in this all important task from Mr Petrus van Straten and his team of 130 Sunday School teachers, who taught the 2650 children attending Sunday School. On a Friday afternoon, the coming Sunday's lesson would be discussed with the Sunday School teachers, either by Ds. Enslin or Ds. van Belkum. To accommodate the older children, two confirmation classes were run, one each under the direction of Ds. Enslin and Ds. van Belkum. The names of those who attended and of those children who were baptized, were registered and eventually sent to the congregations to which they had originally belonged.[20] A number of young people attended these confirmation classes, held in Dutch, and many were confirmed. On 20 April 1902, Ds. van Belkum confirmed 42 or 43 of his congregational members, while Ds. Enslin introduced 84 young church members to the congregation on the afternoon of 1 June 1902.[21]

A Vereeniging tot Chritelijk Streven (VCS; Society for Christian Endeavour) was

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18. *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 135; Rousseau, "Een bezoek aan de kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 19(19), 15.5.1902, p. 374.

19. Rousseau, " Een bezoek aan de kampen in Natal", *De Kerkbode* 19(19), 15.5.1902, pp. 374-376.

20. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, p. 28; NAR, Reverend & Mrs P. F. van Straten Collection (Accession W 173, 1): Testimonial by W. H. Hambly, 5.8.1902.

21. Fischer, p. 109; Hobhouse, p. 38.

founded in Merebank on 12 December 1901, by fourteen working and fifteen other members of the different societies in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony (ORC). Ds. Enslin was appointed Superintendent, P.J. van Straten President, and J. Schoon Secretary of this organisation. The organisation was subdivided into an External Committee, which consisted of all working members of the committee, a Management Committee under Mrs E. Berning, a Social Committee under Mesdames W. Borrius, M. Pienaar and S. Muller, and a Prayer Committee under Mesdames S. Pienaar, B. Bosman, B. Pienaar, C. Pienaar and J. Slabbert. These committees had many different duties. The Social Committee, with the help of the Sunday School teachers, amongst others, organised a picnic for the Sunday School children on 2 April 1902, while the Prayer Meeting Committee organised prayer meetings to be held in all blocks of the camp. [22] At the prayer meetings, the dominee or one of the members of the VCS took the lead in discussions relating to a variety of topics, and in the prayers which were said for peace and deliverance, for independence, courage, perseverance and for the men on commando.[23] Many camp inhabitants did not find it easy to attend these prayer meetings, as they found it difficult to pray "U wil geskied"[24] (Thy will be done). In the belief that God was on their side, many camp inhabitants had prayed for victory, making God an instrument of their political desire, and where His will did not coincide with that of the individual and/or nation, they found it difficult to pray.

Evening family worship, led by the men who were considered to be the heads of the patriarchal families, had been an almost universal institution amongst Boer families prior to the war. The women, however, did not neglect *huisgodsdiens* or evening devotion in the absence of their husbands, but took over the role of the head of the household, and continued the tradition.[25] The fact that the woman had taken the lead in religious issues in the camp did not mean that her position in the traditional family structure had changed in any way. Once the war was over, she resumed the lesser,

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22. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, pp. 30-31; NAR, W173,3: P. F. van Straten - A. Knobel, 10.3.1902 (letter).

23. Hobhouse, p. 38; Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, p. 31; NAR, P. H. S. van Zyl Collection (Accession W19/4A): Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 24.

24. Fischer, p. 114; NAR, W19/4 A: Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 24.

25. D. H. van Zyl, *In die konsentrasiekamp: jeugherinneringe*, p. 47.

almost submissive role in religious matters.

Visiting the sick, both in their living quarters and in hospital, and praying for them, formed an important part of the spiritual life of the Merebank Camp. The dominees, their wives, visiting clergymen and others in leading positions in the church, such as Mr Hermanus Potgieter and Mr Luther, were often asked to come and pray for the ill and the dying.[26] Unfortunately the dominees were not always informed about the seriously ill, and sometimes people died without their knowledge. When this happened, they were criticised and blamed for not having visited those concerned.[27]

It was the task of the clergy to conduct the burials in the camp. During the first months of the camp's existence, these were a daily occurrence and, in the absence of a clergyman, they were even conducted by lay preachers, such as Mr Luther.[28] Sometimes there were as many as three or four funerals a day, and on Tuesday 3 December 1901, eight burials were recorded.[29] These sad events continued even over the Christmas period when funerals were conducted on Christmas Day and on 26 December 1901, by Ds. van Belkum and Ds. Enslin respectively.[30]

By December 1901, the funeral costs in the Merebank Concentration Camp, normally borne either by the family or friends of the deceased, had been fixed at 15/- to 25/- per funeral. This was considerably less than the £4.10.0 to £6.10.0 which camp inhabitants had originally been charged per funeral. This massive drop in price was probably because the soap-box coffins for all four coastal concentration camps were manufactured in the Merebank Camp by Mr J.L. Rothmann of Utrecht and his helpers.[31]

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26. Hobhouse, p. 34; NAR, Accession A 1221: Memoirs of H. P. Potgieter, p. 12; PAR, A 72: Dagboek van ds. H. F. Schoon, pp. 750-751.

27. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, p. 28.

28. Hobhouse, p. 34.

29. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 69.

30. PAR, A 72: Dagboek van ds. H. F. Schoon, p. 751.

31. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 (monthly report); Hobhouse, *Brunt of the war and where it fell*, p. 211; NAR, W19/4 A: Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 21.

The corpses were taken to the mortuary, a wood and iron building which was situated on the road to the station, and which contained fixed tables. Bodies were kept in coffins, which were either stacked on the tables or placed on the ground.[32] From the mortuary the coffins were transported to either the Merebank, Isipingo or Clairmont (Jacobs) cemetery. Mule-wagons were used to transport the coffins to Isipingo and Clairmont cemeteries, while young boys were generally used to pull the carts with the coffins to the Merebank cemetery. At the latter, the mourners were often confronted with graves which had filled up with water, and thus needed emptying before the burial.[33]

According to various camp inhabitants, up to three corpses were buried in one grave.[34] No evidence of this exists in official records or on the cemetery list. The only record of more than one person being buried in the same grave, is that of Baby Hincliff and Marie Stell, in grave number 381 in the Merebank Cemetery. (See Appendix 4, p. 260, *infra*.)

Once the deceased had been buried, the friends or family would mark the grave either with a simple wooden cross, a heap of stones, or a bottle containing a piece of paper with the name, date of birth and death of the deceased.[35] This temporary measure enabled them to find the grave again when visiting the cemetery.

It was not always possible for friends and family to attend the funeral of the deceased. One of those buried without any of her family attending the funeral, was the fourteen-month-old Sibella Margaretha Schabort, whose mother was too ill to attend and whose

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32. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 70.

33. *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (Cd. 893), p. 34; War Museum of the Boer Republics (WM), Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession, 5890/91): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders.

34. WM, 5890/91: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders.

35. Mrs N. Venter Private Collection (Alberton): Ontberinge van 'n kind, p. 2.

father was still on commando.[36] Another recorded case was that of Mrs Spies, the wife of Field-Cornet Spies of Middelburg. Her children did not attend her funeral, but perhaps as she was only 32 years old, her children would still have been fairly young.[37]

The church and dominees also had other duties. Many Boer women and children had come to the camp virtually destitute, with little to no clothing. To help these destitute camp inhabitants, the camp authorities, relief committees in South Africa and Europe, the church, and a number of individuals, made a concerted effort to get money and clothes to relieve the situation. In addition to the clothes supplied by the military authorities to the destitute, men, women and children were given second-hand clothing and boots, linen, flannelette, chintz, sheet linen and other goods which were sent from Switzerland, France, Germany and the Netherlands, the Cape Town Relief Fund and other individuals, to be distributed amongst the camp inhabitants.[38] Permission was granted that these charitable goods, especially the large consignments from Germany, could enter the country free of customs duties and then be forwarded to their destination, in Natal, on the Government Railways, free of charge if clearly marked "Concentration Camp Relief Stores". The cases were, however, liable to be searched.[39]

Once the goods had passed through customs, the superintendents of the designated concentration camps were informed. These cases would then be opened in the presence of the members of the specially appointed Local Relief Committee consisting of - in the case of Merebank - Camp Superintendent Bousfield, the Camp Matron and Ds. Enslin. The contents of each case had to be carefully searched and examined, and all second-hand clothing fumigated by the steam disinfector at

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36. South African Library (SAL), A. S. Schabort Collection (MSB 437): Unpublished family history, p. 208.

37. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 38; NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, p. 21.

38. PAR, GH, 707: A. Milner - H. E. McCallum, 17.12.1901 (telegram); PAR, GH, 867: H. E. McCallum - T. K. Murray, 29.4.1902 (despatch).

39. PAR, GH, 867: J. Chamberlain - A. Milner, 13.3.1902 (telegram); PAR, GH, 867: Hunter, General Manager - Collector of Customs, Point, 22.4.1902 (despatch); PAR, GH, 867: Baron von Gebsattel (German Consul) - H. E. McCallum, 9.4.1902 (letter).

Merebank, before distribution. Once the goods had gone through this process, they were distributed by the Local Relief Committee. Ds. Enslin, as secretary of this committee, gave receipts for each consignment.[40] This aid for the destitute by the German people may only have provided for a small percentage of those in need, but it was greatly appreciated by the Afrikaner people and not easily forgotten.[41]

Under the leadership of Ds. W.P. Rousseau of Pietermaritzburg, a fund was established to collect money to buy clothes for the most needy. In January 1902, Ds. Rousseau sent £150 to Ds. Enslin to be used for this purpose.[42] Within the Merebank Camp itself, money was also collected at the exit of the church every Sunday for the destitute. [43] These collections and donations brought relief to some of the needy in the camp, but failed to reach all who required assistance.

In another effort to ensure the well-being and to consider the future of its members, the church organised a conference to be held at Merebank on 25 and 26 June 1902, for all the key role-players in the religious activities in the Natal concentration camps. At this conference, which was under the chairmanship of Ds. Rousseau, the chairpersons of the various committees gave reports on their activities in the camps. In addition to this, the conference discussed issues such as the preservation of the Boer nation, as well as the future of the Dutch/Afrikaans language and the church. After these discussions, the conference-goers came to the conclusion that their language, and in this way their nation and church, could only be preserved through co-operation and the establishment of church schools.[44]

The work of the dominees in this, the largest concentration camp, was taxing and

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40. PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report); PAR, GH, 867: W. P. Rousseau - H. M. Bousfield, 14.5.1902 (letter); PAR, GH, 867: T. K. Murray - All Camp Superintendents, 29.5.1902 (memorandum); Fischer, pp. 85, 89, 97, 99, 104-105.

41. Mrs E. Vorster Private Collection (Australia): E. Krauss - L. van den Berg, 5.9.1948 (letter). After World War II several Afrikaners sent food parcels to German families.

42. PAR, GH 1452: T. K Murray - H. M. Bousfield, 28.1.1902 (letter).

43. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 73.

44. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie, passim.*

difficult. Despite the support they received from their wives, lay preachers and other selected congregational members, it was virtually impossible for them to successfully complete their daily and weekly tasks. These ranged from church services, catechism classes, Sunday School preparation classes, prayer meetings, conducting funerals and visiting the sick, to satisfying the needs and demands of all their congregation members. Both dominees in the Merebank Concentration Camp realised just how important their task was in the unusual situation they found themselves in, and thus tried to do their duty to the best of their ability. In this way they, in conjunction with the unquestioning faith which many of the camp inhabitants had in God, played a vital role in helping many to cope with their problems in the camp.

6.2 Recreation

Daily life in the camp did not only exist of chores, school, tending the sick and religious activities. The routine was broken by much needed recreational activities for all. To most of the Merebank Camp inhabitants the opportunity to leave the camp, even for only a couple of hours, was a pleasant interruption in their daily monotonous camp life. In order to leave the camp, permission had to be obtained from the authorities by applying for a pass, which contained not only the name of the applicant, but also the destination, the date and the length of time to be spent outside the camp. Only once someone had received a pass could they leave the camp to go to a declared destination.[45]

A popular destination for many Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants, especially the children, was the beach for picnics, swimming and fishing, even if they had to trudge through the coastal bush and across dunes for three-quarters of an hour to Wentworth Beach where sea-bathing was safe.[46] Many of the camp inhabitants had never seen the sea before, and a first view of the ocean often led to exclamations

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45. Archives of the Local History Museum (LHM), Accesssion 3582/8: Pass to Mrs Bodenstein, 25.6.1902; LHM, Accession 3582/9: Pass to Mrs Meyer and six others, 16.4.1902.

46. NAR, DBC, 12: J. H. Corbett - Director of Education, 13.1.1902 (report on Natal concentration camps).

such as "Hoe groot is God's werke"[47] (How great are God's works). Strict segregation existed between the sexes as they enjoyed their swim in the Indian Ocean, "en behoed die seun wat vir ma kom soek!" (and heaven forbid the boy who came looking for his mother!). The reason for this was that women wore long nighties instead of costumes while the males swam in the nude.[48]

One group of people, who complained to the Camp Superintendent about the Boer women and children going to the beach, were the Indian sugar cane farmers through whose territory the Boers walked. According to them the Boer women and children damaged their sugar cane.[49] It can be assumed that the children, and perhaps even the women, feeling adventurous, pinched some sugar cane sticks.

Other pastimes for the Merebank Camp inhabitants included visiting friends and family in either the Jacobs and Wentworth Concentration Camps, or in the Umbilo Prisoner of War (POW) Camp, as well as going into Durban for shopping, sight-seeing, or to see the menfolk off, as they boarded a ship taking them to one of the overseas POW camps.

On their trips to Durban, a town with a very English and colonial atmosphere, the camp inhabitants experienced a number of new things - both exciting and frightening. It must have been relatively easy to get lost or to lose sight of the group in the strange town, as is borne out by the incident in which Maria Botha's eight-year-old son disappeared. All those in the group of Mrs Botha formed part of the search party who went to look for the young boy. He was eventually discovered and reunited with his mother.[50] On visiting Durban, the camp inhabitants would either go to the boarding-houses of Mrs van Reenen and Mr van der Merwe, local Afrikaners who opened their doors to the camp inhabitants, or perhaps be a little more adventurous, sometimes in the company of local Afrikaners such as Herman and Jettie Sluiter and the Van der

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47. NAR, W 19/4A: Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 25.
48. M. C. E. van Schoor and C. G. Coetzee, *Kampkinders 1900-1902: 'n gedenkboek*, p. 36.
49. Fischer, p. 56.
50. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 35.

Merwe boys and go sightseeing, visit the sea or even take a riksha ride.[51]

Visits by the Merebank Camp inhabitants to the Umbilo POW Camp were organised for Fridays. A maximum of 30 visitors a time was allowed, for two reasons. Firstly, the Umbilo POW Camp only had one official interpreter who could interpret between the administration and the visitors, and secondly, only one tent was available for visits.[52] In spite of restrictions and difficulties which had to be overcome in order to obtain a pass, the visits remained popular, for they enabled the Merebank Camp inhabitants to see their menfolk before deportation, to get news about the war and/or other family members, and to voice some of their emotions and fears to people outside their own environment, while the sights of Durban helped them to forget about their problems for a short while.

Camp inhabitants also spent a fair part of their day visiting neighbours, discussing the newest developments on the war front and the events in the camp. This led to a lot of speculation, gossiping and rumours which could not always be trusted or believed. This is confirmed by the words of Petrus Malan, when he wrote the following in his diary on 19 December 1901: "Hier lopen allerlei geruchten, in welke allen echter overeenstemmen, dat vrede al, zoo goed als gesloten is. Doch wij hebben bij ondervinding geleerd niet aan 'geruchten' zoor spoedig het oor te leenen"[53] (There are many rumours here, which are in agreement, that peace is as good as settled. We have, however, learnt from experience not to believe "rumours" too quickly). Much time was also spent welcoming and chatting to the new camp inhabitants in order to listen to the latest news on the war, and to hear about friends and family in other concentration camps.[54] In addition to this, residents were allowed to receive visitors from outside the camp who needed to obtain passes before entering, and who were not allowed to stay for more than a day, unless they had received permission to do

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51. *Ibid.*, p. 35; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 75-77; NAR, W173, 3: P. F. van Straten - A. Knobel, 7.5.1902 (letter); Fischer, p. 84.

52 NAR, Archives of the Staff Officer Prisoners of War (SOP), 31: H. M. Bousfield - SOP, Natal, Umbilo, 8.4.1902 (memorandum); NAR, SOP, 31: SOP, Natal, Umbilo - H. M. Bousfield, 9.4.1902 (response).

53. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 70.

54. *Ibid.*, *passim*; Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 35.

so.[55] If their passes were not in order, the visitors were not permitted to enter the camp, and then camp inhabitants and their visitors were compelled to sit next to the fence, in order to spend time together.[56]

Although permission was not often granted for longer visits, exceptions to the rule did occur. When Mrs J.P.D. Strydom of the Klerksdorp Concentration Camp applied for permission to visit her seriously ill father, Mr N.J. Theunissen, in the Merebank Concentration Camp, the Superintendent of the Klerksdorp Concentration Camp, S.D. Cawood, recommended the granting of Mrs Strydom's application to visit her father, on the grounds that Mr Strydom was a voluntary surrender, a good man and the overseer of all the work people in the Klerksdorp Concentration Camp.[57]

Apart from the visits to the camp by friends and family there were also visits by official dignitaries, and others who merely came out to the camp on a pleasure trip to see what they termed the "wild Boers". Official dignitaries who came to inspect or investigate included people such as the Fawcett Commission, Mrs Dickenson (an Australian journalist), H. E. McCallum (Governor of Natal), Sir Thomas Murray (GSBC), and Lord Alfred Milner (High Commissioner).[58] Milner visited the Merebank Concentration Camp on 29 October 1901 and was escorted around the camp by Bousfield and Murray. He approved of what he saw, including the party of black school children who had come to add interest to the ceremony by singing "God save the King". At the end of the visit the photographer, Middelbrook, took a photograph of Milner together with some Boer youngsters, joiners, two titled noblemen and four knights.[59]

Many Merebank Camp inhabitants kept themselves occupied in a variety of ways,

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55. Fischer, pp. 60-61.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

57. NAR, Archives of the Provost Marshal's Office (PMO), 44: S. D. Cawood - R. M. Poore, 30.4.1902 (letter); NAR, SOP, 44: R. M. Poore - S. D. Cawood, 6.5.1902 (response).

58. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901, 9.1.1902 and 12.2.1902 (monthly reports); *The Natal Mercury*, 10.10.1901, p. 7; Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 36.

59. *The Natal Mercury*, 29.10.1901, p. 7 and 30.10.1901, p. 7.

ranging from reading and writing letters, to making assorted objects which could be sold or given to friends and family as gifts. The clay at Merebank was good for pottery, and creative inhabitants used it to make clay pots, pans and ornaments. Others made bead necklaces and, in some instances, even added pendants made out of cardboard and covered with material.[60] Still others joined the choir and organised concerts. The concerts, generally held in the school hall, were sought after and enjoyed by most camp inhabitants. Programmes were printed by P. Davis & Sons of Durban for the more formal concerts, and normally included choir singing, piano and vocal works and recitals.[61]

Some camp inhabitants also realised that there were a large number of very poor and needy people in the Merebank Concentration Camp, and saw this as an opportunity to help, and to use their time constructively to raise money to buy the boots, shoes and clothing so urgently needed. A committee, consisting of four young female teachers at the Merebank School, Misses A. Schutte, M. Erasmus, S. Prinsloo and E. Meiring, hoped to raise £100 for this purpose by holding a bazaar in the camp, which was also to be attended by patrons from Durban. Permission and assistance for this venture was obtained from Superintendent Bousfield, who made a large iron building near the railway station available for the occasion. The event created great excitement in the camp, and in preparation, the interior of the hall was decorated with palms and evergreens. On the day of the bazaar most stalls made good business selling cigarettes, chocolates, sweets, tea, coffee, needlework and pottery. In addition to these sales, a short musical programme was given in the afternoon, while a more extended concert took place in the evening. At the performances solos, duets and recitals were performed.[62] The day was a success and raised not only much sought after money to buy necessities, but also provided the camp inhabitants with some excitement, dignity and self respect, as they realised they could still help others who were worse off than themselves.

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60. Fischer, pp. 106, 110-111; C. C. van Greunen, "Merebank Camp", *Africana Notes and News* 29(7), September 1991, p. 283.

61. "Merebank Camp", *Africana Notes and News* 29(7), September 1991, p. 284.

62. PAR, GH, 1452: Minute Paper, 8.1.1902; *The Natal Mercury*, 16.1.1902, p. 7.

Children in the camp were generally no different from children anywhere else. They, especially the boys, were the ones who brought flashes of humour and life into the camp. Young boys entertained themselves by romping around, playing mysterious games, teasing black workers and girls alike, and even playing pranks on each other, such as throwing out the water someone had gone to collect for his mother.[63] Like boys the world over, they played war, tops and marbles, got involved in fist fights and smoked, even though their parents forbade them to do so. On one occasion the hendsoppers organised a fight between twenty young British boys with pellet guns and twenty Boer boys with *kleilatte* (clay-sticks) and *rekkers* (slings). The fight started and the Boer youngsters stormed with their arms in front of their faces. They overwhelmed the English boys and took away their pellet guns. When the organisers wanted to take the guns back, the Boer youngsters refused, saying that it was their spoils of war.[64] Even in their games the children were mimicking the war situation.

In another incident, on 6 April 1902, a number of young boys, blatantly ignoring the camp regulations stipulating that no-one was allowed to go near any railway line or station without special permission, played on an empty railway truck that was standing somewhere along the railway line. When the truck started moving, another boy who was in the vicinity, the ten-year-old Stoffel van der Merwe, tried to stop the truck by pulling the breaks. A policeman grabbed him and brought him to the Camp Superintendent, and as punishment, Stoffel was sentenced to fifteen lashes with a cane and fourteen days' hard labour. In spite of some of the women going to ask for mercy, the young boy was given his fifteen lashes in the middle of the street by a surrendered burgher name Kassie Snyman. This brutal treatment of a mere child, and an innocent one at that, shocked and upset the camp inhabitants. They compared this to an incident that had occurred a few days earlier, when a black man had been given his punishment in an iron building behind closed doors.[65]

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63. WM, Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession 5890/90): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.

64. Van Schoor and Coetzee, pp. 34-35; Van Zyl, p. 43.

65. PAR, GH, 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902; Fischer, pp. 105-106.

Little girls were less boisterous, and enjoyed activities such as skipping, picking berries, crocheting objects such as ties, and singing. Some, such as the girls of the Willemse family, sang almost all day long - anything from "Rots der Eeuwen" to "Vierperdewa" to "On the green grass".[66]

Camp authorities believed sport and exercise played an important part in every child's life and thus they encouraged these activities, especially participation in cricket, football and hockey. For this reason Bousfield provided the funds to acquire the equipment for these sports.[67] Camp authorities felt so strongly about recreation that they allowed camp inhabitants to bring along their pets such as dogs and parrots and, occasionally, with the support of surrendered burghers, even organised sporting activities such as high jump, running, skipping and tug-o-war for the camp children.[68] On one such sports-day, organised by Bousfield for 6 April 1902, a band was commissioned to play music, including the British national anthem, to create a festive atmosphere, especially as this event was also to be used to generate some money. All boys participating in any of the sports on this day therefore had to pay three pennies, while the girls participated free of charge. In anticipation, participants and spectators arrived at the track well before the starting time of 11h00. The day was enjoyed by most, but not by all camp inhabitants, as there were some who felt that such joyous festivities were not proper at that time.[69]

An unusual political and social experience for the camp inhabitants occurred after the signing of the conditions of surrender on 31 May 1902. Festivities were organised for 26 and 27 June 1902, to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII. To allow the new British subjects to share in this moment and, probably as a public relations exercise in propagating newfound freedom, a number of activities were organised.

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66. Fischer, p. 89; WM, 5890/90: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.

67. Cd.893, p. 37; PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - J. Chamberlain, 21.1.1902 (despatch); NAR, DBC, 12: J. H. Corbett - Director of Education, 13.1.1902 (report on the Natal concentration camps).

68. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7; Fischer, p. 103.

69. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 91.

During the first day of celebrations a picnic was organised for all children in the camp, a lunch for the adults in the afternoon, and a dinner and ball for the staff in the evening. The camp authorities were even given permission to secure the services of a band for the occasion should it not be too expensive.[70] Furthermore, a sports programme was organised for 27 June 1902, and firework displays for both evenings of the celebrations. To complement these arrangements, each camp inhabitant was to be provided with what was termed a "coronation ration", consisting of one pound (450 g) of meat, one pound (450 g) of flour, a quarter pound (115 g) of raisins and half a pound (225 g) of sugar in addition to their normal rations. All children above two and under the age of twelve, received a tin of jam instead. Despite not all inhabitants receiving these rations, the total cost of the extra rations at Merebank amounted to £202, almost half the total cost of £421.4.8 spent on the coronation rations in the four concentration camps in the Durban area.[71] Owing to the King's illness, the coronation itself had to be postponed, but the planned celebrations went ahead.[72] Miem Fischer was to comment sardonically in her diary that the coronation had been postponed as the new King was "te swak is om sy sware kroon wat nou nog die gewig van twee klein, op geen edele manier oorwonne state, bykry, te dra - of, soos 'n vrou hier gesê het: te verpes is om 'n kroon te dra"[73] (too weak to carry his heavy crown which now had the added weight of the two small states ignominiously aquired - or as a woman here said: too cursed to carry the crown).

Life within the Merebank Concentration Camp was not altogether dull, even if organised recreation for the older men and women was practically non-existent. Inhabitants broke the monotony of their daily lives by participating in cultural activities such as joining the choir, organising concerts, attending the lantern lectures, writing letters to friends and loved ones outside their camp, receiving and reading letters and

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70. NAR, DBC, 11: Circular 161, 6.5.1902.

71. PAR, GH, 1453: H. E. McCallum - J. Chamberlain 23.7.1902 (despatch); *The Natal Mercury*, 24.6.1902, p. 7 and 26.6.1902, p. 7.

72. PAR, GH, 707: A. Milner - T. K. Murray, 20.12.1901 (minute paper). Edward VII was eventually crowned on 9 August 1902.

73. Fischer, p. 127.

newspapers, doing needlework, visiting neighbours, chatting to newcomers in the camp to hear news, and if they were lucky enough to obtain a pass, to leave the camp to go into Durban on a sightseeing trip, to shop or to visit friends and family. The highlight, and experience remembered most after the war, however, remained, the opportunities of visiting the ocean.

6.3 Economic experiences of the inhabitants

A different way of dealing with the monotony of concentration camp life was to find employment, either in or outside the Merebank Concentration Camp. The idea of camp inhabitants working appealed to Lord Kitchener for a variety of reasons, as long as the inmates did not compete with loyalists or other deserving classes for positions.[74] Employment would keep the camp inhabitants busy, and make it possible for them to earn some money to buy something extra to add to their comfort or to supplement their rations, while it would also help to maintain the self-image of many camp inhabitants. Merebank Camp inhabitants were therefore encouraged to seek employment outside the confinements of the camp. Boer men, women and children, who only had skills for manual labour, thus started looking for employment in and around Durban with women doing housework, or working as seamstresses, while men worked on trolleys, or were employed in brick-making and at the Natal Brewery.[75] This was possible because of the increased demand for black labour in military employment, on the railways, at the harbour, in construction work, in service industries and in manufacturing. The increased demand for labour was accompanied by a rise in the salary of black workers while the Boers, desperate for an income, were prepared to work for lower wages.[76]

Virtually from the beginning of the Merebank Camp's existence, Boer men and boys were employed at 6d per day at the Merebank Brick & Tile Co. Limited, just outside

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74. PAR, GH, 497: Lord Kitchener - H. E. McCallum, 25.5.1902 (telegram).

75. *The Natal Mercury*, 18.10.1902, p. 7.

76. P. Warwick, *Black people and the South African War 1899-1902*, pp. 142-143.

the camp. The Merebank Brick & Tile Co., which had only formally opened on Tuesday 25 February 1902, had all the newest machinery to change clay into bricks. The clay was placed on trolleys which ran up inclined trolley-ways by steam haulage, to the dumping floor. Here it was deposited into feed pools, and within a short space of time emerged on a lower floor in the shape of long blocks of compressed clay, the exact size of a brick, after having being cut by a wire. The cutting operations were managed by the Dutch boys, who worked hard. The bricks were then taken from the machine on trolleys and pushed by other Dutch boys to the drying-beds, where they were aired. When sufficient moisture had evaporated, they were taken to the kilns to be fired. Here they remained for twelve days before they were ready to be sold. According to *The Natal Mercury*, the Boer boys who pushed the trucks were so capable and willing that by 27 May 1902, the three new brick-making machines had produced so many bricks with the help of the cheap labour of the Boer men and boys, that 300 000 bricks were available.[77] The employment and exploitation of Boer men and boys, desperate to improve their self-image or, in the case of the boys, to fill their fathers' shoes in helping to keep the family and to earn some money and respect, had far-reaching benefits for the factory and its owners. Their cheap labour, together with the new brick-making machines, enabled the brick factory to produce thousands of bricks cheaply and efficiently, and thus helped boost the local economy by providing bricks to a town which was continuing its normal functions during the war.[78]

An effort was also made to provide employment for the Boers in the camp and the most fortunate, as far as employment was concerned, were those who were employed by the camp authorities for a small salary and extra rations as apprentice nurses, probationers, toilet guards, camp police, carpenters, teachers, ration issuers and for other administrative tasks.[79] A good deal of the building in the camp was done by paid burghers, as was the manufacture of school furniture, coffins and bedsteads.[80] When the carpenters at the Merebank Camp went on strike, they were replaced on a

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77. *The Natal Mercury*, 26.2.1902 and 27.5.1902, p. 7.

78. See Durban Achive Repository (DAR), Archives of the Durban Corporation (3/DBN).

79 See Chapter 3, sections 3.3-3.7, *supra* for more details.

80. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 14.10.1902 (annual report).

permanent basis by Boer men at a far cheaper cost.[81] Coffins for all the coastal concentration camps were made at Merebank by Mr J. L. Rothmann from Utrecht and his helpers, saving the Imperial Government hundreds of pounds per month.[82] Stretchers and cartels were also made in the camp and then sold according to a two-tier price system - one for those who could easily afford them, and one for those who had less money. According to documentation, those who could easily pay for their stretchers and cartels were charged 2s per stretcher and 4s 6d per cartel, while those with little money, were charged 1s and 2s 6d respectively.[83] Although it might at first seem as if providing employment to the Merebank Camp inhabitants to enable them to earn some money and self-respect was a humanitarian consideration, this was not the case. The real underlying principle for this move was an economic one.

Although the majority of women would probably not have found the time to work, as their daily tasks and domestic duties such as preparing food, cooking, washing and tending to the sick filled up most of the day, women also occupied some positions. As their skills were mostly of a domestic nature, one of the more common ways for women to earn money outside the employment offered by the camp authorities, was to do laundry for others, including for the Merebank staff. One such lady was Mrs Pieterse, who did the laundry for Scottish people at one tickie per bundle, and even involved her children in this task. Her son, David Jacobus, had to collect and return the bundle of washing.[84] Another woman who did laundry was Mrs B. Kleinhans, who started out doing the laundry of two doctors and eight nurses at £3.10.0 per month. As time passed she was given more washing and eventually she was doing the washing for sixteen people, but was exploited by still being paid £3.10.0 per month, in spite of her numerous protests.[85] She could, however, not walk away as this was

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81. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.4.1902 (monthly report).

82. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report); NAR, W19/4 A: Mrs I. Kriegler's memoirs, p. 21.

83. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 936), p. 25.

84. WM, 5890/91: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders. The writer of the source, Mr D. J. Pieterse, does not give the name of the Scottish people, but merely refers to them as "die Skotte".

85. Fischer, p. 94.

one of the few ways in which she could earn an extra income.

Children did their share to earn money to supplement a family's income by performing tasks for the camp authorities, such as raking leaves between the corrugated iron and wood huts, keeping the drains clean, doing washing and even needlework.[86] Sometimes boys, who probably enjoyed doing it, walked the horses belonging to the British soldiers guarding the camp for a small fee. Not all women in the camp appreciated this gesture and some were known to reprimand the boys for dealing with the enemy. In one instance the boys who walked the horses were given a hiding, by the aunt of Mrs Sophia Elizabeth van der Merwe, and forbidden ever to do so again.[87]

The six shops in the camp, which were situated in one long line next to the road as one entered the camp, proved to be the centre of many of the activities in the camp. The shops were wood and iron buildings with floors up to 35 ft (10,7m) by 18 ft (5,5m) in size.[88] To obtain the right to open a store in the camp, prospective shop-owners had to apply for permission from the camp authorities to put up a general store and pay a guarantee of £5 and a licence of £1 per month, in addition to erecting his own store. The money obtained from the licences was paid into a Sutlers' Fund and used in the camp for sports or charitable purposes.[89] Camp Superintendent Bousfield had the right to inspect the books, accounts, and papers relating to the businesses at all times. Each storekeeper had to supply Bousfield with articles of clothing required for free issue to refugees at current prices, and the settlement of this account was made monthly from the Natal Burgher Camps' head office in Pietermaritzburg.[90]

To the few camp inhabitants with money, the shops were important, for they gave

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86. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report); Postma, p. 99.

87. WM, 5890/90: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.

88. A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph); *The Natal Mercury*, 19.6.1902, p. 13.

89. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.11.1901 (monthly report).

90. *Reports, etc., on the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 819), p. 19.

them the opportunity to buy food when rations were inadequate. The prices in these shops were not much higher than those in town, even if Mrs Dickenson, the Australian journalist who visited the camp, claimed that biscuits sold at twice the price in the camp compared to the price in Durban.[91] It is to be remembered that people could go into Durban to buy, and in order to compete with the shops in the town, the camp shops needed to keep their prices reasonable. Murray also reported that costs were the same as in town and that there "were no complaints [about] prices charged".[92] Shops were generally well stocked and sold a variety of goods including iron bedsteads, chairs, trunks, clothing, gramophones, watches, sewing machines, calico, linen, flannel, cotton, crochet cotton, needles, candles, matches and foodstuffs such as tinned fish, bacon, butter, orange juice, coffee, tea, sugar, syrup, jams, and other goods which may have been in demand. In actual fact they were allowed to sell anything except alcohol.[93] The shops sold no fresh vegetables or fruit. These were sold relatively cheaply by Indian traders who came into the camp with supplies.[94] The fact that there was a market for goods such as tea, coffee, sugar and candles, despite the fact that they were provided by the camp authorities, confirms that rations were inadequate.

Business ventures were an important part of the camp life jigsaw and without them many would have been unable to survive. The few extra pounds earned by those few who were economically active, despite the exploitation of some, helped to relieve the pressure and hardships faced by many. The employment of the Merebank Camp inhabitants in the economic sphere outside the confines of the camp, also made an impact on the economic activities in Durban, in that it allowed industries such as the brick factory to continue, despite the shortage of black labour.

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91. E. Hobhouse, *The brunt of the war and where it fell*, p. 254.

92. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 and 12.2. 1902 (monthly reports).

93. Cd. 893, pp. 4, 35-36; WM, 5890/90: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.

94. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 10.12.1901 (monthly report).

6.4 Politics in the camp

All concentration camps were politically divided between those siding with the British as National Scouts, i.e. the joiners, those who had no fight left in them and had surrendered, i.e. the hendsoppers, and those who remained loyal to the republican cause to the last, i.e. the bittereinders. The vast majority of those in the Merebank Concentration Camp belonged to the last group, and clashes regularly occurred between the few hendsoppers who had volunteered to come to Merebank, and the bittereinders.

Just how severe these clashes turned out to be, and how despised the joiners and hendsoppers were, can be deduced from an incident on 18 December 1901, which was recorded by Mrs A.M. van den Berg: "In the afternoon a troop of girls and boys hoisted the *Vierkleur* and sang the *Volkslied*. A couple of hands-uppers took away their flag. This aroused a great disturbance in the camp; afterwards they went around the camp with two flags and sang both our volkslieds. Presently they divided themselves into groups, one party Gen. Botha's and the other Gen. de Wet's. These two parties stood opposite each other and sang spiritual songs; the party of Botha sang Psalm 146 and the party of De Wet sang Psalm 134. There came a hands-upper and threatened to take away the flags; the girls seized him and struck off his hat; his walking-stick fell out of his hand; believe me he had a rough reception."[95] This most unusual act of disrespect by Boer boys and girls towards an older person, not only demonstrated the depth of the divide which separated the bittereinders and hendsoppers, but also showed how deeply feelings of contempt and hatred towards hendsoppers were entrenched in the young, who took their lead from the older camp inhabitants.

Even Christmas, an occasion which was supposed to foster a spirit of goodwill, could not cross the distance between the hendsoppers and bittereinders, and another clash occurred on Christmas Eve 1901, when people collected behind the huts after an

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95. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 37.

outdoor church service to sing hymns and psalms. In one of these groups there was a hendsopper holding the *Vierkleur* singing hymns. He had been asked by the women of this group to sing bass, but a group of bittereinders would not allow this and gave the hendsopper a piece of their mind, calling the likes of him dirty scoundrels and cowards, whom the sea could never wash clean again. He was then forced to give the flag to a woman.[96]

In an act which confirmed that they had been sent to Merebank because of their rebellious nature, some women started the whole flag issue again when they hoisted the *Vierkleur* on 1 January 1902. The hendsoppers informed Bousfield, who then came out to diffuse the situation in an effective and diplomatic manner. He talked to the women and asked them to stop, adding that he hoped they would not have to spend another New Year in the camp. When a hendsopper began to say something, Bousfield told him to be silent.[97] Bousfield had probably realised that the camp inhabitants had not deliberately insulted the Union Jack, but that the *Vierkeur* had great symbolic value for them and he probably understood their hatred towards the hendsoppers.

Very few hendsopper men escaped the sharp tongue of the women loyal to the Boer cause. It was not unusual to hear one of the women saying "Jou hensopper, jy is te lafhartig en te sleg om vir jou land te veg - en nou lê jy hier en vrouens oppas"[98] (You hendsopper, you are too cowardly to fight for your country - and now you are here looking after women). Hendsoppers were most likely to have feared these continual verbal insults, as they humiliated them and further diminished their already deflated male ego, as much as the physical act of having to hand over the *Vierkleur* flag to a woman, or being told to keep quiet by Bousfield.

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96. Uys, pp. 200-201.

97. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 72; Fischer, p. 71.

98. WM, 5890/90: Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 1, vir die boek Kampkinders.

The Merebank Camp inhabitants also enjoyed undermining the authority of the hendsopper doing gate duty. Two or three families would co-operate in the "fun". If, for example, they wanted to go to the beach without a pass, they could not go beyond the gate. On these occasions, one family would crawl under the barbed wire fence, and while the hendsopper guard was busy chasing them, the next family would crawl under the fence elsewhere. The guard would then give up chasing the first family to chase the second family. While the guard was chasing the second group, the third group would crawl under the fence. Eventually the guard would give up, threatening to take them to the Camp Superintendent in the evening. To get back into the camp, other plans had to be devised. Those who had earlier escaped from the camp either divided into groups to crawl back into the camp, or they merely showed the guards any slip of paper in a language that the guard did not understand. Not all guards were equally strict. Some turned a blind eye to those leaving and entering the camp. Only those who wanted to be in the good books of the camp authorities were strict. The latter caused many of the Merebank women to despise the hendsoppers.[99]

Just as the hendsoppers in the Merebank Concentration Camp feared being insulted and ridiculed by the predominantly female inhabitants, so did the National Scouts who had the opportunity of visiting the camp. When P.J. du Toit, the only National Scout whose war diary has been published, went to visit Mr H. Schuster of Klerksdorp at Merebank, he did not go to see any other people from Klerksdorp because he feared being insulted by them. Instead he returned to the safety of Durban.[100]

The majority of Merebank Camp inhabitants remained republican at heart. This is confirmed by the many republican-related activities in the camp. On 10 October 1901, the women in the camp celebrated President Kruger's birthday and prayed for him. At noon on this day, a number of women and children hoisted the *Vierkleur* and a white flag and then proceeded through the camp carrying these flags. On another occasion they made a *Vyfkleur* by combining the flags of the Orange Free State and Transvaal.

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99. Neethling, p. 130.

100. J. P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout: P. J. du Toit 1900-1902*, p. 99.

Similarly, on 16 December 1901, the women in the camp celebrated Dingaan's Day, not in a festive style, but each in her own room, thinking about how the Lord had helped and blessed the Boer people in the past.[101] Further proof that the republican sentiment was alive and well, became evident when a British officer, sent to the camp by Lord Kitchener to look for men in Merebank to join the British troops, was told in no uncertain terms that the men of the camp considered a joiner to be a traitor.[102]

Women in the concentration camps, including Merebank, experienced diverse emotions. On the one hand they developed lifelong friendships with other women who had suffered the same fate as they, and on the other hand they experienced a great deal of anxiety, distress and fear. Within the camp environment they learnt much about empathy, sympathy and the value of the support of friends and family in times of need. On a negative note, they also learnt that not everyone could be trusted, and that a neighbour could be a spy for the enemy. Many a bittereinder woman was afraid of airing her emotions or speaking her mind in the camp, even in her own quarters, for fear that what she said would be reported to the Camp Superintendent, who would summon her to his office and punish her by reducing her rations for a certain period of time or by sending her away to yet another camp, such as Wentworth or Jacobs.[103] The spy system which existed only aggravated the agony and anxiety already experienced.

Added to this fear, there was the fear amongst many women that their husbands might surrender. To many a Boer woman it would be a shame and a bitter disappointment if her husband laid down his weapons. It would be more acceptable to her to hear that her husband had been killed rather than to be confronted with the news that he had become a hendsopper. In the Merebank Concentration Camp these feelings were so strong amongst certain individuals, that an unnamed woman refused to see her husband, or allow him into her room after he had surrendered, and it was left to the

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101. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, pp. 34-37.

102. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 89.

103. E. Stockenström, *Die vrou in die geskiedenis van die Hollands-Afrikaanse volk*, p. 176; Fischer, p. 54.

dominee and her friends to change her mind.[104]

The actions of some of the women clearly showed their political feelings, underlining why most of them had been considered irreconcilable to British rule and therefore sent to Merebank as a punitive measure. Nevertheless, by confining them to the Merebank Concentration Camp, the authorities had not put out the strong republican flame burning in their hearts. The hatred towards those who were disloyal continued, and in the camp they had the edge over the hendsoppers and joiners.

6.5 Camp morals

The Merebank Concentration Camp had been started, not only to relieve the population pressure on the Transvaal and ORC concentration camps, but also to receive those who were considered undue troublemakers and undesirables. Amongst these undesirables were political agitators and those of dubious moral character. In the context of this study, the latter refers to those who committed sexual offences, swore and verbally abused the camp authorities. It was thus not surprising that Sir Thomas Murray was to comment on the conduct of the camp inhabitants in his monthly reports, even implying that the Natal concentration camps had become the dumping ground for all the bad characters.[105]

Rumours quickly spread that there were some women who had been sent to Merebank for being morally undesirable. The women suspected of such conduct were ostracized by the other women in the camp, who felt aggrieved, disgusted and distressed that some of their fellow Boer women could stoop so low, and then even give birth to children of illegitimate parentage.[106] In reality, this rumour did not do justice to the morals in the camp, as there were only a handful who succumbed to and

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104. Neethling, p. 135.

105. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 11.6.1902 (monthly report).

106. LHM, Accession 5994/1: Herinneringe van Salla Grobler van haar verblyf in die Irene, Klerksdorp en Merebank-konsentrasiekampe, p. 9; Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 35.

were guilty of immoral behaviour.[107]

The first of these women were sent to Merebank from Pretoria on 14 September 1901, because they were considered to be prostitutes. They were Mrs Martha Martina Barkley, Mrs Cathrina Elizabeth Vermeulen and her three children, Mrs Hester Paulina Swartz and her three children, and Mrs Martha Cornelia Henning and her family of five.[108] By 20 January 1902 the number of morally undesirable females at Merebank had increased to 29. Nine of these had been sent from the Volksrust Concentration Camp, five from each of the Irene, Pietersburg and Vereeniging Concentration Camps and two from the Standerton Concentration Camp.[109]

There are few references in both official documents and diaries kept by camp inhabitants of illegitimate births in the camp. There are only three citings of illegitimate babies in official documents when they refer to the birth of Maria Elizabeth Groblaar (daughter of Elizabeth Susanna Groblaar) on 17 February 1902, and the deaths of Johanna Maria de Beer (daughter of Gerbry Elizabeth de Beer) on 17 April 1902, and Thomas Thompson (son of Elizabeth Strydom) on 14 October 1902.[110] A further reference to illegitimate births is made by Miem Fischer when she mentions the births of Hester Paulina Swartz's twin daughters, the first illegitimate children to be born in the camp.[111]

In later documentation, Bousfield again makes special mention of another of the first 29 women of questionable character sent to Merebank, namely Mrs Elizabeth Cornelia Pretorius, who had been sent from the Pietersburg Concentration Camp. She gave Bousfield considerable trouble, was prone to using filthy and abusive language

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107. Rousseau, *Notulen der conferentie*, pp. 28-29.

108. GH, 736: List of undesirable females as drawn up by the Commissioner of Police, Pretoria, 8.1.1902; PAR, GH, 737: Lieut Bruce - R. N. Randall, 17.1.1902 (list).

109. PAR, GH, 736: List of morally undesirables as drawn up by H. M. Bousfield, 20.1.1902; PAR, GH, 736: Return of morally undesirables sent to Natal as drawn up by R. N. Randall, 9.1.1902; PAR, GH, 737: Lieut Bruce - R. N. Randall, 17.1.1902 (list).

110. NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in the Merebank Burgher Camp, p. 4; NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, pp. 22,27,35.

111. Fischer, p. 72.

if she did not get her way and, according to Bousfield, was a "woman of not particularly bright morals". Together with another woman, not positively identified, but possibly a Mrs du Plooy, she went to reside in the Umbilo ward on release from the camp after the war. The exaggerated dress and appearance of these two women, whom Bousfield refers to as two of his "Really show [sic] & fancy children", could be an indication that they had gone to elicit business near the Umbilo POW Camp.[112]

An area of concern for both the church and the parents, was the influence camp life had on children. According to Ds. D.J. Malan of the Jacobs Concentration Camp, life in the concentration camp definitely had a negative impact on children and, to a lesser extent, on adults. Malan believed that camp life was largely responsible for the increasing mischievousness and lawlessness of children as well as the increase in swearing, quarrelling, stealing and breaking of the Sabbath. He believed that the solution to these problems would be to remove all unmarried males from the concentration camps to separate camps closeby.[113]

The Merebank Camp authorities needed to maintain discipline in the camp and this they did in a number of different ways. These included measures such as deducting sugar or coffee rations, halving the rations of a specific person for a certain period, and sending the extreme transgressors, such as the seven young men who escaped from the camp, to Durban.[114] Transgressions of a moral nature were treated harshly, and this included sending Boer women to Durban, where they were submitted to three days hard labour, on account of immorality.[115]

Like any group of people in any society, all types of people were present in the Merebank Concentration Camp. It does, however, seem as if there were only a handful of loose women in the Merebank community. This could probably be attributed

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112. PAR, GH, 736: Return of morally undesirables sent to Merebank as drawn up by R. N. Randall, 9.1.1902; NAR, SOP, 35: H. M. Bousfield - McHardy, SOP, Umbilo, 4.11.1902 (memorandum).

113. D. J. Malan, "Pietermaritzburg, Jacobs en Wentworth", *De Kerkbode* 19(22), 5.7.1902, p. 414.

114. *The Natal Mercury*, 18.10.1901, p. 7; Fischer, pp. 54, 95; Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, pp. 35, 38.

115. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 35.

to the fact that the vast majority came from close-knit, conservative farming communities. This protected them from worldly influences such as prostitution. The odd Merebank women involved in prostitution were not alone in Durban, where the influx of both Uitlander refugees and troops led to an increase in sex workers.[116]

6.6 People of colour[117] and race relations

Another group of people directly touched by the Anglo-Boer War, even if they had not always become involved voluntarily, were the several million people of colour who lived in the region in which the war unfolded itself. During the past few years this aspect has received increased attention by historians. A recognition of the participation of black people in the war also created an awareness of the extension of the concentration camp system to the black communities with all its accompanying issues.[118] One aspect which has, however, hardly been touched on, is the whole aspect of people of colour in the white concentration camps. Unfortunately very little descriptive material and few official documents exist on this subject.

From the creation of the Merebank Concentration Camp, people of colour had become an integral part of camp life, both as inhabitants, and as staff members. Staff members of colour employed by the military included Zulus, from various parts of present-day KwaZulu-Natal, coloureds such as Karkie Grobelaar, or Indians, from as far afield as India. Their tasks varied considerably and included help with the construction, maintenance and the everyday running of the camp. This meant that the majority of them did manual labour such as digging trenches to drain the very wet

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116. R. Posel, "Continental women and Durban's social evil, 1899-1905", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 12, 1989, pp. 1-8.

117. The term "people of colour" refers to black, Indian and coloured people as a collective group. (No negative connotation is implied by using these terms.) Where necessary reference will be made to individual groups.

118. For more details on black concentration camps see for example S. V. Kessler, "The black concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902: shifting the paradigm from *sole martyrdom* to *mutual suffering*", *Historia* 44(1), May 1999, pp. 110-147; B. E. Mongalo and K. du Pisani, "Victims of a white man's war: blacks in concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)", *Historia* 44(1), May 1999, pp. 148-182.

camp site, and carting around the building material. Others were used in the sanitary department to remove and disinfect pails and dustbins on a daily basis, to clean the hospital, school and staff quarters, or they were employed as cooks and scullery boys, to work in the ration-houses, to chop wood and, in some instances, even to carry the wood to the Boer living quarters.[119]

Yet others were used for police work and the guarding of the camp, as noted by Mrs A.M. van den Berg when she wrote: "We passed on to Durban, arriving at Merebank at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. From all directions the women came to greet us, but were not allowed to speak to us; the Kaffir Police drove them away", and later: "The following morning [...the] trucks with our goods arrived and were all off-loaded in a heap on the camp, with a Kaffir constable to guard it."[120] This system was later adapted, and where possible this work was given to hendsoppers and joiners, probably because the camp authorities believed, together with the camp inhabitants that "het jammerste is, dat we onder kaffer politieagenten moeten staan"[121] (the worst was that we had to be placed under kaffir police), and that it would be better if Boer guarded Boer.

The lack of sources concerning the accommodation, rations, sanitary and medical facilities available to the black staff in the Merebank Camp has made it difficult to accurately reconstruct life in the camp as it existed for them, but the few available sources do make it clear that they were treated differently from the white camp staff and inhabitants. Black staff members resided in tents next to the road near the hospital, wood depot and entrance into the camp, in a very wet and marshy area.[122] The rudimentary accommodation was complemented by a salary and a ration which

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119. Mrs R. S. Lawrence Private Collection (Australia): The South African diary of Kate French, p. 2; *The Natal Mercury*, 22.11.1901, p. 7. Also see Chapter 3, sections 3.3-3.7, *supra* for work done by people of colour in the camp.

120. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 33.

121. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 65.

122. A. Wohlberg Private Collection (Durban): Merebank Burgher Camp, February 1902 (original photograph); P. J. van der Walt, *Vrouweverdriet: herinneringe uit die konsentrasiekampe van Petronella Johanna van der Walt (Olivier)*, p. 35.

was reduced from a soldier's scale to the so-called "native ration". This down-scaling during December 1901 happened without any resistence.[123]

The second group of people of colour residing in the camp, were those who were brought into the camp by the Boers. Although the records of the Merebank Camp Administration are incomplete on this, families such as Mrs A. F. Jordaan, Mr Piet Erasmus, Mrs Anna Scheepers, Mrs N. Greyling, Mrs van Rooyen and several others brought blacks along with them to the camp.[124] In one very unusual case, the ten-year-old Gertruida Erasmus arrived at the Merebank Camp in the company of a black boy and girl on 5 February 1902, the whereabouts of her parents unknown.[125]

By the end of September 1901, 22 black servants, playmates and other connections had arrived at Merebank with their Boer employers, at this point making up 1,4% of the population in the camp.[126] Although the total number of blacks at Merebank had increased to 73 by the end of December 1901, this figure still remained small in comparison to the total population, still only representing 1,4%.[127] By January 1902, the numbers had decreased to 70, now representing a mere 1,1% of the total population.[128] Unfortunately the exact number of black people who entered the camp with their white employers could not be ascertained, because the records kept on black inhabitants were sketchy and incomplete. This, together with the fact that they were merely identified as native, kaffir or black boy/girl, showed that the camp authorities, to all intent and purposes, viewed the black inhabitants as non-existent. By order of the GSBC, the Merebank Camp authorities did not provide accommodation or rations for those blacks who had accompanied the Boers into the

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123. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

124. PAR, Archives of the Magistrate of Utrecht (1/UTR), 3/3/1: H. M. Bousfield - APM, Newcastle, 11.7.1902 (memorandum); NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1902 - December 1902, p. 1.

125. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A-L, p. 217.

126. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853), p. 29.

127. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

128. Cd. 936, p. 22.

Table 6.1

Identified people of colour in the Merebank Concentration Camp[129]

NAME OF PERSON	POSITION	WHERE FROM	ILLNESS
Abanthu	Sanitary Staff	Umzinto	N/A
Agnoo (Tamil Indian)	Merebank Staff	?	N/A
Amoo Rhee Beis (2 years)	Daughter of M. & K. Beis	?	Croup (died)
Bagoo (50 years)	Merebank Staff	?	Bronchitis
Baster (12 years)	?	Otterfontein, Rustenburg	Eczema
Charlie (16 years)	Educational Staff	?	Enteric fever
Dick (38 years)	Worked for W. Lilywhite	?	TB in foot
Dookanuc (Tamil Indian)	Merebank Staff	?	N/A
Embanco (19 years)	Merebank Staff	Zululand	Pneumonia
Flip (38 years)	Merebank Staff	Mooi River	Dysentery
Kakejan (14 years)	Servant of Mrs N. Greyling	?	Enteric fever (died)
Karkie Grobelaar (35 yrs)	Merebank Staff	?	Ulcer of leg
Klaas (19 years)	Servant of O. Britz	Utrecht	Pneumonia (died)
Kleinbooi (12 years)	Servant of Piet Erasmus	Witbank, Wakkerstroom	Enteric fever (died)
Kunjan ka Umkiohle	Sanitary Staff	Umzinto	N/A
Kurphi Beis	Hospital Staff	?	N/A
Magamothoo (40 years)	Sanitary Staff	India	Pneumonia
Marie Stell (4 years)	Servant of Mrs v. Rooyen	?	Bronchitis (died)
Minnie (21 years)	Staff Boy	Zululand	Pneumonia
Mnxenena	Sanitary Staff	Umzinto	N/A
Momosaid Beis	Hospital Staff	?	N/A
Nip (12 years)	Servant of A. Scheepers	?	Died - cause unknown
Pienaar (14 years)	Servant of Mrs Jordaan	Johannesburg	Enteric fever
Philip (35 years)	Merebank Staff	Zululand	Influenza
Ramge (29 years)	Cook	?	N/A
Rdous (12 years)	?	Potchefstroom	Contured back
Remadiek (12 years)	Servant of Mrs Potgieter	?	N/A
Sidar	Sanitary Staff	?	N/A
Tom (17 years)	Merebank Staff	?	Bubo
Umxinga Ka Ushesha	Sanitary Staff	Umzinto	N/A
Valasa (14 years)	Merebank Staff	Merebank	Pneumonia & enteric fever
Zamel (40 years)	Worked for W. Lilywhite	?	Adenitis

129. NAR, DBC 131: Merebank Camp Hospital Register, *passim*; NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901-December 1902, p.1.

camp.[130] As a result of this measure, which was intended to discourage Boers from bringing blacks into the camps, the blacks became part of the Boer family, sharing their accommodation and rations.

The attitude which had existed towards the people of colour at the beginning of the century greatly influenced race relations in the camp. These were largely amicable, even if somewhat patriarchal and patronising, as illustrated in the following account. A number of years before the outbreak of the war, a certain Mrs Potgieter had been entrusted with the responsibility of raising a five-year-old black boy, Remadiek. When the Potgieter family was captured and taken to the Krugersdorp Concentration Camp, Mrs Potgieter was not about to give up her responsibility towards the now twelve-year-old Remadiek, whose parents were about 112 km away at the time of capture. Potgieter thus took him with her. When they were later sent to Merebank, she once again took him with her, despite strong opposition from the British, who refused to allow Remadiek to board the train. Potgieter, determined to support Remadiek, devised a plan whereby she smuggled Remadiek on board the train and hid him under the tarpaulin. Manie, one of the Potgieter boys, was then instructed to take Remadiek food when the train stopped for long enough. At Merebank, Remadiek moved into Room 37, Block 7 with the Potgieter family of eight.[131]

Amicable relations between some Boers and the black labourers transcended time, distance and the war. One such incident is recorded by the Afrikaner historian Gustav Preller. Preller's mother was in the Merebank Concentration Camp and, like many other women in the camp, she had little or no contact with her husband and son who were still on commando. The news that both her husband and son had been captured reached her via Jan Inkosi (Nkosi), a Zulu, who had worked for the Preller family on their farm near Paardekop in the present-day Mpumalanga, before the war. When the Preller family moved away from Paardekop, Jan Inkosi returned to his family. Fifteen years later he arrived at Mrs Preller's quarters in the concentration camp with the

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130. NAR, A 2030, 36: W. K. Tucker - Camp Superintendents, 21.2.1902 (circular 118); Van Schoor and Coetzee, p. 34.

131. Van Schoor and Coetzee, p. 34.

news that both her husband and son had been captured, and that the latter, Gustav, was about to be deported. After sharing some of her rations and coffee with him, Jan left. This act of friendship and dedication by Jan Inkosi allowed Mrs Preller to send Gustav a Bible while he was on board the SS *Manila,* in the port of Durban, waiting to be deported.[132]

The relationship between the black concentration camp staff and the Boer inhabitants generally seemed amicable, but clearly defined, with the Boers taking a superior position despite their captured state. This state of affairs is, to a certain extent, voiced by Miem Fischer, when she wrote: "Ons het tot ons verbasing opgelet dat die naturelle ons byna sonder uitsondering orals met verbaasde of deelnemende gesigte aankyk en ons, waar ons dit gevra het, klein diensies bewys het."[133] (To our surprise we noticed that the blacks, almost without exception, looked at us with surprise and sympathy, and if we asked, did small favours for us.)

The perception did, however, exist among many of the Boer camp inhabitants that the black staff were treated with more respect than the Boer camp inhabitants for, as has already been pointed out, a black man who was punished received his lashings behind closed doors, while ten-year-old Stoffel van der Merwe received his lashings publicly despite pleas that this should not occur.[134]

The concept that they were being treated differently soon led to friction and tension where Boers had to deal with blacks, namely in the hospital. As in other hospitals in Natal at the beginning of the twentieth century, where the majority of the white nurses felt it beneath their dignity to tend to Zulus, this attitude came to the fore at Merebank, when a sick nineteen-year-old black man by the name of Klaas was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia on 6 April 1902, in spite of the efforts of two doctors to prevent this from occurring. The admission, although not the first instance

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132. G. S. Preller, *Ons parool: dae uit die dagboek van 'n krygsgevangene*, pp. 73-80.

133. Fischer, p. 44.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

of a black person being admitted to the hospital, caused all Boer nurses, with the exception of three, to resign, because they did not want to nurse him. Five or six days later the hospital and camp authorities were still struggling to replace the nurses.[135] A similar action had probably not occurred earlier as few Boer girls had been working at the hospital as probationers during December 1901 and January 1902, when the two other black patients, the fourteen-year-old Kakejan and twelve-year-old Kleinbooi, who had accompanied Boer inmates to the camp, were treated.[136]

In spite of struggling to replace the striking nurses, the authorities won the day regarding the issue of nursing people of colour. After this incident twenty people of colour were admitted to the hospital, the majority being staff members, for a variety of illnesses, including enteric fever, dysentery, pneumonia, bronchitis, influenza, and eczema. Of the 21 people of colour admitted into hospital only four died, namely Kleinbooi, Klaas, Marie Stell and Kakejan.[137] In total, seven people of colour died: one coloured, two Indians and four blacks. Six of the seven deaths amongst the people of colour are listed in Table 6.1 on p. 169, *supra*. The seventh death registered in the Merebank Death Register was the stillborn daughter of Agano and Dookanuc, who were members of the Merebank staff.[138]

Camp Superintendent Bousfield had obviously decided, unlike some other camp superintendents, to record the deaths of the people of colour, even though it was not necessary to do so. Their deaths were recorded in the death register, but on a separate page, and under an incorrect heading which read: "Natives employed by Camp Refugees."[139] Whereas the death register also lists and gives the grave number of each of the white camp inhabitants, it does not do the same for the people of

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135. S. Ramsay, "Eve noire: folk devil and guardian of virtue: a study of the emergence of African prostitution in Durban at the turn of the century", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 14, 1992, p. 102; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 94; NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 8, 9, 24.

136. NAR, DBC 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 8, 9.

137. *Ibid., passim.*

138. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, no page number.

139. *Ibid.*

colour. The lack of information leaves one to speculate on where they were buried. The only person of colour who seems to have been buried in the Merebank Cemetery is the four-year-old Marie Stell, who had come into the camp with Mrs van Rooyen of Dundee. She was admitted to the camp hospital with bronchitis on two occasions, only to die of the disease on 10 August 1902. She is buried in grave number 381 together with Thomas Hincliff.[140]

Camp authorities made use of punitive measures, such as caning the black staff members behind closed doors, to discipline them. The most bizarre incident which involved the punishment applied to a black person at Merebank occurred at 09h00 on the morning of 8 January 1902, when all men in the camp were summoned to the Camp Superintendent's office. Here they were instructed to take a good look at the black man in front of them. The man in question had a scar on his right arm and one on his head. Hereafter they were instructed that if this man were to be seen in the vicinity of the tents, he was to be caught and brought to the Superintendent, and should he resist, they had the right to shoot him.[141] What the man had done to deserve this sort of treatment could not be ascertained, but he had obviously done something which Bousfield felt deserved severe treatment.

Despite the difference in treatment of both the Merebank staff and camp inhabitants, based on colour, humane acts were also recorded. In one such instance Mr F.C. Webb, the Chief of the Sanitary Department, and a Mr W.H. Morkel, a surrendered Boer, were prepared to risk their lives to save a black labourer. On Sunday 30 November 1902, Mr F.C. Webb, his son Jack who lived with him at Merebank, and five black men had gone down to the beach at the end of the Bluff, Durban, to wash the four horses under his charge. When they got there, Mnxenena and Abantu were the first to mount the horses and to go into the water. Both were washed off, but Mnxenena was able to get back to shore, while Abantu was washed away and carried out by the current. On seeing this, Mr Webb entered the water with his clothes on in

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140. *Ibid.*, *passim*; NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 39, 41.

141. Fischer, pp. 72, 106.

an attempt to save him. Four or five Boer camp inhabitants, who had followed them to the beach, followed Webb into the water. The first attempt to bring Abantu to shore failed. Webb now called for a fishing line to be thrown to him, and with this he re-entered the water and succeeded in bringing Abantu to within 15 m of land and, finally, with the help of one of the Boers, Mr W.H. Morkel, they dragged Abantu ashore. Webb, with the assistance of two Boer men and some of the black men, started working on the body to get the water out of his lungs and stomach. After a time Abantu regained consciousness but vomited a great deal.[142]

Mr T.L. Adams, the man who brought this incident to the attention of the Civil Commissioner in Durban, felt that both Webb and Morkel had placed their own lives in danger to rescue Abantu. He therefore felt that these two men deserved a medal and were to be recommended to the Royal Humane Society.[143] This act of bravery by a Brit and Boer, who combined their efforts to save a black man, was fittingly rewarded. Both men received a bronze medal for their courage and the account was published in *The Natal Mercury*. Mr Webb, who was a Durban resident, received his medal at a meeting of the Durban Council, while that of Morkel was sent to the High Commissioner to present it to him in as public a manner as possible.[144]

Although only about 2% of the total of the Merebank Camp population consisted of people of colour, race relations were so diverse that they were not easy to define. On the one hand, there seems to have been the incredible goodness of people such as Webb, Morkel, Mrs Pretorius, the blacks who had accompanied Gertruida Erasmus to the camp, and those who were prepared to help and carry things for the camp inhabitants. Yet, on the other hand, there also seems to have been the opposite behaviour, where the blacks and Indians were not considered worthy enough to be treated in the hospital, or to be given a grave in the Merebank cemetery.

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142. PAR, CSO, 1718: Private Secretary of H. E. McCallum - Mayor, Durban, 22.4.1903 (letter); PAR, CSO, 1718: Statements by J. M. Webb, Umxinga ka Ushesha and Kunjan ka Umkiohle, 1.3.1903.

143. PAR, CSO, 1718: T. L. Adams - Civil Commissioner, Durban, 5.12.1902 (letter).

144. PAR, CSO, 1718: H. E. McCallum - A. Hime, 30.3.1903 (letter); PAR, CSO, 1718: Mayor, Durban - Private Secretary of the Governor, 11.5.1903 (letter); PAR, CSO, 1718: Obedient Servant - Secretary, Royal Humane Society, 12.5.1903 (letter).

CHAPTER 7

HEALTH IN THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP

The Anglo-Boer War concentration camps, for both the Boers and the blacks have always been associated with a great number of deaths. A documentation of the history of the concentration camps thus becomes a record that must take into account the medical care and services, as well as the diseases, and their causes and consequences. In considering these factors, the site, the quantity and quality of accommodation and rations, the role of the Camp Superintendent and his staff, especially the medical staff, and the culture and attitude of the inhabitants are important aspects.

7.1 The hospital

The centre of the health care at Merebank, as in any other concentration camp, was the hospital and its staff, which were under the direct control of the Camp Superintendent. As explained in Chapter 3, Camp Superintendent H.M. Bousfield was in charge of the organisation of the camp, and consequently in control of the prevention of the spread of diseases. Were it possible for him to address and correct problems at an early stage, and to maintain discipline and order among the medical staff and inhabitants alike, he would have been likely to be able to ensure that the number of deaths at Merebank would be limited to a minimum, and that the population of the camp would remain as healthy as possible under the circumstances.

At the time of the visit by the Fawcett Commission in early December 1901, the Merebank hospital, situated only a few metres from the railway line, consisted of two well-lit wood and iron buildings, holding 35 beds, but with no maternity ward. These buildings were 60 ft (19,7m) long and 20 ft (6,6m) wide with a room at the end for the nurse on duty. Adjoining the hospital was a dispensary, and an outpatient consulting room.[1] The Commission considered these two hospital buildings too small for a camp

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1. *Report on the concentration camps in South Africa by the Committee of Ladies appointed by the Secretary of State for War containing reports on the camps in Natal, the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal* (Cd. 893), p. 36; *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7.

the size of Merebank and, as a result, the hospital was enlarged to include four large wards which were able to accommodate 140 beds in total, a maternity ward with six beds, a lying-in room, nurses' quarters, hospital wash-houses and steam disinfectors. Each hospital bed was fitted with a temperature and diet chart to ensure better care.[2] To help with the establishment of the routine and more efficient running of the hospital, and to prevent camp inhabitants from entering at whatever time they wished, visiting hours were scheduled between 10h00 and 12h00, 15h00 and 16h00, and 17h00 and 18h00.[3]

Within a camp where thousands of inhabitants are forced to live in close proximity and to share ablution blocks, infectious diseases such as measles and enteric fever (today better known as typhoid) were likely to spread rapidly if no precautions were taken. At the time of the visit by Millicent Fawcett and her Ladies' Commission to Merebank, few preventative measures had been put in place to curtail the spread of diseases. There was no means of destroying enteric stools, which were removed twice a day and then buried in a special place. Furthermore, the infected linen was not boiled, but only soaked in a solution of one in 500 perchlorides of mercury, before being washed in a special wash-house by Boer women, who were employed for this purpose. This special wash-house had been erected to keep the hospital and private laundry separate.[4]

Once the recommendations of the Fawcett Commission were received, however, Superintendent Bousfield introduced various measures at the Merebank hospital to improve the health situation and to curb the spread of diseases. One of the first improvements to be introduced, was the requirement that bedding, linen and other utensils or equipment which had been used by patients who suffered from an infectious disease be disinfected. This included the use of Jeyes Fluid and Lysol for disinfecting, as well as the provision of superheating apparatus, and boilers.

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2. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 212: H.M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 25.3.1902 (memorandum); PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report); Cd. 893, p. 36.

3. P. J. van der Walt, *Vrouweverdriet: herinneringe uit die konsentrasiekampe van Johanna Petronella van der Walt (Olivier)*, p. 32.

4. Cd. 893, p. 36; PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

Destructors were supplied for enteric stools.[5] The Merebank Camp authorities even went so far as to borrow a portable Thresh Steam Disinfector from the Harbour Department. This would enable them to disinfect mattresses, pillows and clothing, by boiling them in the event of an outbreak of the plague, smallpox or any other infectious disease.[6] Another measure taken in January 1902 to prevent the spreading of infectious diseases, was the creation of an isolation and suspect camp to accommodate new arrivals and other problem cases until the Senior Medical Officer (SMO) had pronounced them free from infection or contagious diseases. In extreme cases, as with the outbreak of diphtheria in the camp in December 1901, when the two-year-old Catrina Harmse died of the disease (see Appendix 4, p. 248, *infra*), the whole camp was placed under quarantine for fifteen days.[7]

In addition to the measures taken to prevent the spread of diseases, much was also done to ensure that patients received the best possible care so that they recuperated as soon as possible. To assist in achieving these goals, medical comforts, some very luxurious, were distributed to all sick, both in and out of hospital. These comforts included fresh milk, condensed milk, brandy, port wine, Bovril, Brand's Essence, champagne, arrowroot, barley, chicken broth, cornflour, soda water, lime juice, oatmeal, eggs, butter and tea, as well as paraffin, methylated spirits and candles. In their endeavour to promote a healthy camp, the authorities, in the person of the General Superintendent of Burgher Camps (GSBC) in Natal, T.K. Murray, arranged for two railway compartments to convey convalescent children from Merebank to the Amanzimtoti Beach and back, on a daily basis.[8]

Murray believed that the measures adopted at Merebank were up to date and sufficient and he even went as far as to say that the Merebank Camp hospital was the "best hospital in Africa - of course not equal to larger hospitals - but far better than

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5. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - J. Chamberlain, 21.2.1902 (despatch); PAR, GH, 1611: T. Hime - T. K. Murray, 10.3.1902 (letter).

6. PAR, Archives of the Director of Public Health (DPH), 6: Health Officer - T. K. Murray, 13.1.1902 (despatch); PAR, DPH, 6: H. M. Bousfield - Engineer, Harbour Department, 24.12.1901 (despatch).

7. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report); M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, p. 66.

8. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 9.1.1902 (monthly report).

anything else we have had". According to him, the doctors, nurses and staff were better housed, fairly well paid, and the camp inhabitants were much better nursed in the hospital than at their homes.[9] Murray may have been a little arrogant, especially with his latter comment, but the fact remains that everything possible was done by Bousfield and his medical staff under the circumstances, to improve the conditions after the criticism against the hospital by Millicent Fawcett and her committee.

During its existence, the Merebank Camp Hospital admitted 759 patients, 91 of whom died. This represented a mere 20% of all the deaths which occurred in the camp. Some of the hospital deaths were because the camp inhabitants only brought the patients in as a last resort, making it virtually impossible for the doctor to save them. The first patients admitted to the hospital were received by Dr Ruddock on 18 October 1901 with pneumonia, measles, tuberculosis, debility, bronchitis and nephritis. Of the seven patients admitted on this day, three died. The last patients to be discharged from the hospital on the closure thereof, were discharged on the day the last camp inhabitants left the camp, i.e. on 10 December 1902. They were the 71-year-old Abram Bothma of Amsterdam (Transvaal) who had suffered from Bright's disease, and the 29-year-old teacher, Miss McCloud, who had been admitted with enteric fever on 19 October 1902.[10]

Despite the good hospital and medical care, the Merebank Concentration Camp was viewed as a threat to the health of the surrounding area and, as a result, Bousfield was obliged to send weekly returns to the GSBC, noting the number of ill and deceased. In the case of deaths the ages, gender, address and cause of death had to be supplied. Murray was in turn obliged to send this information and the cases of infectious diseases such as bubonic plague, smallpox, cholera, diphtheria, membranous croup, scarlet fever, erysipelas, typhus, typhoid and puerperal, to the Health Officer of Natal, Ernest Hill, after Dr Hime ceased to act as PMO, Burgher Camps.[11] Records of contagious diseases were regarded as a necessity, to enable the

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9. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 3.2.1902 (letter).

10. National Archive Repository (NAR), Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

11. PAR, DPH, 7: Ernest Hill - Colonial Secretary, 3.4.1902 (letter).

medical authorities to act in time to prevent the spread of these diseases, and thus forestall a possible epidemic in the Durban area.

Even though the majority of these serious diseases never occurred in the Merebank Concentration Camp, and notwithstanding that the most frequent illnesses correlated with those in Durban (see Table 8.1, p. 208, *infra*), it seems as if the authorities continued to view the Merebank Camp as a threat to the health of those in the vicinity of the camp, for W.R. Saunders, the Umlazi Magistrate, wrote the following in his annual report: "The general health of both white and black has been fairly good, excepting in the neighbourhood of Merebank Refugee Camp, where all suffer more or less from Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Fever and various other diseases, presumably caused by bad sanitation."[12] To say that all in the Merebank Camp and its surroundings suffered from the listed diseases, was an exaggeration, even if they were the most common illnesses in the camp.[13] What does become clear, is that the camp could not exist in isolation, and that it had an impact on the environment, both in the immediate vicinity and more far away. It was therefore important for the hospital to function as part of the primary health care system, to keep both the camp inhabitants and the locals healthy.

The Fawcett Commission, which exerted no influence in convincing the authorities to move the Merebank Camp to another site, nonetheless made a meaningful contribution to health matters. Their recommendations resulted in the enlargement of the hospital, which was therefore able to accommodate more beds and, consequently, able to offer professional nursing to more sick inhabitants. On the recommendation of the Fawcett Ladies' Commission, Bousfield introduced measures to help prevent the outbreak and spread of infectious disease epidemics. All this was necessary if the authorities wished to minimise the deaths, as far as possible, in a camp which the Commission had condemned, owing to its unhealthy site. Those in charge needed to prove that if the camp was efficiently run, they could curb the death rate, in spite of its site and size, thus responding to the challenge that smaller camps would reduce the

12. PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1944: Annual report by the Magistrate Umlazi for the year ended 31 December 1901.

13. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

death rate.

7.2 The Merebank Camp inhabitants and health matters

Despite the efforts of the medical staff and the pride they took in their work, as well as their concern regarding general primary health care, they did not always succeed in convincing the Merebank Camp inhabitants of their commitment. Instead, some camp inhabitants believed that the nurses were not doing their work properly. This belief was encouraged by stories, such as the one told by a certain Mrs Kesselaar, who maintained that the floors of the hospital were covered with four fingers of sand and that she had poured out the medicine the nurses gave her rather than drink it.[14]

Many of the camp inhabitants were suspicious and fearful of the camp hospital, and the doctors and nurses, believing rumours that almost everyone who entered the hospital died there, and that patients starved to death. Incidents referred to in the diaries of Miem Fischer and Petronella Johanna van der Walt , serve to explain why many were so fearful and suspicious.

In one of these incidents, the four-year-old Anna (Judith) Piek was admitted to hospital to have a malignant ulcer removed from her cheek, by Dr Ruddock, the Medical Officer (MO) who was filling in until other MOs were appointed to the camp. She was discharged and allowed to go home after the operation. The child died the following day, 10 October 1901, and was buried in grave number 16 at the Clairmont (Jacobs) Cemetery.[15] Six days later, a man and a number of black hospital workers came to collect the pillows, blanket and mattress the young girl had slept on, in order to burn them as a further precaution in case the ailment was contagious.[16] This incident not only made camp inhabitants question the ability of the medical staff for, by this time, had the disease in fact been contagious, then it would have been too late as all the

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14. War Museum of the Boer Republics (WM), Dr N. Coetzee Collection (Accession 5890/91): Merebank-konsentrasiekamp ongepubliseerde herinneringe, 2, vir die boek Kampkinders.

15. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901-December 1902, p. 2; Fischer, p. 53. The Clairmont Cemetery referred to in the death register is today known as the Jacobs Concentration Camp Cemetery.

16. Fischer, p. 55.

others who resided in the same tent as Judith Piek would have caught the illness, but it also proved that the Fawcett Ladies' Commission was correct in their criticism that not enough was being done to counteract the spread of contagious diseases.

The alleged treatment given to those patients that medical doctors were able to convince to go to hospital, was also enough to discourage many Boers from accepting hospitalisation. Patients were generally collected at their quarters and carried to the hospital on a stretcher. Once admitted, they were washed down with cold water, much to the distress of many a Boer woman, and they also had their nails cut. To reduce the fever, bags of ice were placed on the patient's chest. Moreover, the nurses opened the doors and windows, allowing fresh air into the ward.[17] This was alien to the Boers, who believed that the room housing the sick was to be as dark as possible, with minimum ventilation. They considered fresh air, as well as bathing and washing the patient, to be harmful and dangerous.[18] To add to a mother's worry and dilemma, she was not permitted to stay in the hospital with an ill child to assist with the nursing, except in serious cases, such as those of the sixteen-year-old Annie van der Walt and the two-and-a-half-year-old daughter of Mrs Susannah Venter of Wakkerstroom. In the latter case the mother was even admitted to the hospital by Dr Pou as patient number 652, to enable her to take care of her daughter who was suffering from diarrhoea, and who had been admitted to the hospital by the same medical doctor.[19]

It was not unusual for conflict to arise between the mothers and the nursing staff over the nursing care and/or medicine administered to patients. Mothers did not always understand why things were done, as was the case with Mrs van der Walt. She was distressed that the nursing staff were only giving her daughter Annie diluted condensed milk to drink, but no solid food, and believed that the child was going to die of starvation without more substantial nutrients.[20] Her worst fears were "confirmed" when the child died of enteric fever on 9 February 1902.[21] Incidents such as these led

17. Van der Walt, pp. 29-35.
18. Cd. 893, p. 16; *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7.
19. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 42.
20. Van der Walt, pp. 31-33.
21. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 12.

to rumours that people starved to death in the hospital. This was not the case, for enteric fever patients require special care precautions with regard to their diet. Milk is an important ingredient in the diet, and needs to be carefully administered, with timing and the digestive powers of the patient taken into account. When given too frequently and in quantities that are too great, milk may cause irritation to the bowels. In such cases, milk may be substituted with barley water or simple soups, and only once the patient is in the convalescent stage, may soft foods be added. Solid foods, with the exception of fish, need to be avoided at all costs. Even today, though in modern time the diet is supplemented with antibiotics to reduce the fever, patients are still given cold baths and they are sponged down frequently or else cold packs are administered.[22] It is thus clear that the nursing staff followed the correct nursing procedures regarding both the feeding of the enteric fever patient, and the treatment of the fever. It seems as if the mothers' fear that their children would starve was thus invalid.

Another incident which discouraged camp inhabitants from going to hospital was the treatment received by an unnamed, terminally ill woman in the Merebank hospital. The terminally ill were separated from the others in the ward by a screen, and apparently left to lie naked, waiting for their death. Miem Fischer wrote that one day early in March 1902, she saw children and blacks jostling in front of one of the hospital windows staring inquisitively. When she looked, she saw a dying woman, screened off, but lying before the window completely naked. When she asked one of the nurses, an Afrikaner girl, whether there were no nightshirts, the girl replied that they were too scarce.[23] Although nightclothes may seem unnecessary for a delirious, fevered patient in the humid, sweltering March weather in Durban, it was humiliating and degrading to allow inquisitive people to stare at a dying person, and only served to confirm the negative views regarding to the health care system.

In yet another incident referred to in Miem Fischer's diary, Dr Ruddock refused to enter the tent to attend the sick. Instead he expected the sick to stand at the opening

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22. W. A. R. Thomson, *Black's medical dictionary*, pp. 319-320.

23. Fischer, p. 93.

of the tent, or otherwise he left without examining them. When he was called again to the same tent, that of Mrs Bezuidenhout, he entered the tent, but when Mrs Bezuidenhout was unable to tell him what was wrong with her ill daughter he left, telling them to call him again the next morning when he did his rounds.[24] Although Dr Ruddock was replaced by permanent doctors after 31 October 1901, incidents like these were remembered, and gave all English doctors, no matter how good they were, a bad reputation.

These incidents, together with rumours, previous experiences in other concentration camps in the hands of the British, and the social background and traditional views of the Boers regarding nursing and medical care, made Merebank Camp inhabitants unwilling to seek professional assistance. Instead, they preferred to be treated by relatives in their own tents, especially as the authorities did not make it compulsory for them to go to hospital when ill.[25] The Boers, most of them people from a farming background, were unaccustomed to taking their sick to hospital and seldom sought medical attention. Instead, they depended on their folk-nursing, Lennon's *Huis Apotheek* (home pharmacy), *Boererate* (home remedies) and homeopathic remedies. To expect them to shed their faith in their own remedies and methods of sick-care, and to entrust the lives of their loved ones to members of the enemy, with their unknown remedies, whilst in a strange environment, was asking too much. Taking their children, or any other family member to hospital, meant they had to leave them in the care of the enemy, most of whom were unable to communicate with their patients. It is thus not surprising that youngsters were too terrified to go to hospital, and that mothers often insisted on nursing their own children.[26] Unfortunately, as a result of these beliefs and fears, the sick were often only brought to the doctor as a last resort and, in many instances, this was too late. When the patient died in hospital, the hospital and staff were blamed.

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24. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

25. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, Cape Colony and Natal* (Cd. 853), p. 30; PAR, Ds. H. F. Schoon Collection (Accession A 72): Dagboek van ds. H. F. Schoon, p. 750.

26. C. Searle, *The history of the development of nursing in South Africa, 1652-1960*, pp. 219-220.

7.3 Births

Life in the Merebank Concentration Camp reflected all aspects of living, including birth. According to the birth register, there were 51 infants born in the camp, but as only births between 14 October 1901 and 31 March 1902 are noted, the figures are probably inaccurate.[27] This is substantiated by the fact that no mention is made of the births of the stillborn daughter of Mr and Mrs Harmse on 6 April 1902, the stillborn Tamil child born on 28 May 1902, the stillborn Thomas Hincliff born on 10 August 1902, the son born to Johanna Magrita van der Merwe on 1 October 1901, and Barend Petrus Havenga born to Anna Magrita Havenga on 1 April 1902. Other children likely to have been born in the camp, but who are not listed in the register, were the son of Mrs S.E. Kritzinger, who died at three weeks of age during June 1902, the fifteen-day-old child of Mr and Mrs T.J. van Rooyen, who died on 13 August 1902, the 23-day-old Hermanus de Beer, who died on 27 September 1902, and Thomas Thompson, the illegitimate son of E. Strydom, who died at the age of three months on 14 October 1902.[28] (See also Appendix 4,*infra*.)

Further inaccuracies in the birth register are evident in respect of the twins born to Hester Paulina Swartz on 7 January 1902.[29] The name of only one is entered in the birth register, while the deaths of both babies, Hester Paulina on 31 January 1902 of bronchitis, and Johanna Magrita who died four days later of gastro-enteritis, are recorded in the death register. Another discrepancy between the birth and death register occurs in the reference to Elizabeth S. Groblaar, the mother of Maria Elizabeth Groblaar born on 17 February 1902. The birth register lists Maria as an illegitimate child, while in the death register her mother is referred to as a widow.[30]

This inaccurate record-keeping is partly due to the sloppiness of the camp authorities,

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27. NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in the Merebank Burgher Camp, *passim.*

28. NAR, DBC, 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A - L, *passim*; NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, pp. 27, 33 and last unnumbered page.

29. NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in the Merebank Burgher Camp, *passim.*

30. *Ibid.*, p.3; NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, pp. 20, 21, 24.

and partly due to the entire camp set-up and traditions of the Boers. Although a maternity ward had been erected in the camp hospital, the Boer women, who were used to giving birth at home with the help of a midwife, did not seem to make use of the hospital maternity ward, as the Merebank Hospital Register makes no mention of any child being born in the hospital. The only references to midwifery issues, are to an abortion by the 21-year-old E.P.J. Coetzee, an incomplete abortion by 24-year-old Mrs Susarrah van de Berg, and a threatened miscarriage by the 37-year-old Mrs Maria Johanna Visagie.[31] It was thus quite possible for births to take place without the medical staff knowing about it. On the other hand, the camp matron and her staff should have been able to ascertain on their daily rounds when, where and how many children had been born.

The first entry in the birth register was the birth of the daughter of Jan and Catrina Krieg of Bethal. She was born on 14 October 1901. The last entry in the register was made on 31 March 1902, recording the birth of the son of Hendrik and Elsie Schutte of Heidelberg.[32] Unfortunately, not all of the children registered in the birth register were able to leave the camp at the end of the war. Fifteen of the children listed in the Merebank birth register also died in the camp, mostly due to illnesses such as diarrhoea or gastro-enteritis.(See also Appendix 4, *infra*.)

7.4 Diseases and injuries

For the sake of convenience and in an attempt to keep the discussion from becoming too complex, certain diseases and illnesses, as identified in Table 7.1 on p. 189, *infra*, have been grouped together. The diseases grouped for the sake of the table were the respiratory diseases (pneumonia, bronchitis, croup, asthma and laryngitis), diarrhoea and dysentery, meningitis and convulsions, as well as a number of different diseases under the term "other".

One of the most prevalent illnesses in the Merebank Concentration Camp, especially

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31. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 28, 47, 49.
32. NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in the Merebank Burgher Camp, pp. 1, 4.

during the early months of the camp's existence, was enteric fever, and the number of patients admitted to the hospital with this disease, especially up to the end of January 1902, was high, totalling 65 out of the 186 patients, or 34,9%, of the patients who had been admitted to hospital by this date.[33] Enteric fever is a water-borne disease linked to insanitary conditions and poor drainage, as these circumstances furnish ideal breeding grounds for contagion and the spread of the disease. The prevalence of enteric fever in the camp thus seems to bear testimony to inadequate drainage and sewage systems. This might, however, be a harsh judgement, for although it is true that badly laid drains where the contents stagnate, or where drinking water is contaminated by exposure to sewage pollution, help spread the disease, many of the camp inhabitants could have been infected with the disease before they were sent to Merebank. Enteric fever has an incubation period of up to six weeks, and many new arrivals in the camp could have been contaminated in one of the other concentration camps where the disease was rife.[34] Being aware that poor drainage and insanitary conditions contributed to the spread of the disease, the Fawcett Ladies' Commission criticised the proximity of the living quarters to the latrines and depositing site. They thus recommended that a new, drier depositing ground had to be found further away. Bousfield, keen to do everything possible to improve the situation and keep his camp healthy, moved the depositing site.[35]

The improvement in the cleanliness and sanitary conditions in the camp obviously had the desired effect for, in an analysis of the camp hospital and death registers, it becomes clear that the overall number of patients admitted to hospital, and those who died of enteric, decreased. According to the hospital register 40%, or 19 out of the 47 patients who entered the hospital by the end of November 1901, had been admitted with enteric fever, two of whom died. By the end of the following month, the number of patients with enteric fever had risen to 39, but, in relation to the total number of patients, the figure had dropped to 34,8%. Thereafter the average number of patients sent to the hospital with enteric fever dropped on a monthly basis and, by the time the camp hospital closed, the average number of patients arriving at the hospital with

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33. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 3-14.

34. Thomson, pp. 316-317; interview with Dr E. N. Campher, Ladysmith, 1.5.2000.

35. Cd. 893, pp. 34, 38; PAR, GH, 212: H. M. Bousfield - T. K. Murray, 18.3.1902 (memorandum).

enteric fever between 18 October 1901 and 6 December 1902, had dropped to 19,7%.[36]

In addition to enteric fever, dysentery, gastro-enteritis and diarrhoea were other serious digestive system related diseases which claimed a great many lives at Merebank, mainly during the summer months. During December 1901, the month in which the greatest mortality figure was registered, these diseases were the cause of 45 or 43,2% of the deaths. Yet, during this time, only fifteen patients were admitted to hospital with these diseases. Of these fifteen, one died in hospital during December 1901, and two more in January 1902.[37]

Another prevalent illness during the first three months of the camp's existence was measles. This affliction, common in children but rare in adults, is one of the most infectious of all diseases, and its rapid spread in epidemics is due to the fact that the infection is most potent in the early stages, before the real nature of the problem has been identified by the appearance of a rash.[38] This made it difficult to isolate persons who were already infected, as families were not even aware that a child was sick, which explains why so many children were transferred to Merebank with measles.[39] Furthermore the disease is readily spread through coughing, sneezing and even clothing. All these factors resulted in an epidemic during October 1901.

At this point it is necessary to remember that the Boers were pastoral people who had lived on their farms, to a large extent isolated from one another. This barrier of distance controlled the spread of illnesses among the farming communities, and therefore there was little immunity to infectious diseases amongst the Boer women and children.[40] Consequently, when a disease as infectious as measles, occurred in an area with such a large community as those living in the Merebank Camp, who had no

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36. NAR. DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-9; NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, pp. 9-15.
38. Thomson, p. 562.
39. PAR, GH, 553: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 4.2.1902 (letter).
40. Searle, p. 215.

immunity, it spread rapidly. As if this was not enough, measles carried with it the risk of certain complications, especially inflammatory infections in the respiratory organs, leading to bronchitis, pneumonia and broncho-pneumonia and, in some cases, even diarrhoea. These complications were most likely to occur in the very young and delicate children, and often led to mortality.[41]

The large batches of new arrivals who brought measles with them, caused the camp authorities many problems. Merebank Concentration Camp officials should have learnt from the experiences at other Natal concentration camps such as Howick and Pietermaritzburg, and placed all arrivals in quarantine before allowing them into the camp. As this did not happen, the disease spread through the camp and, because the hospital was so small, the mortality figure during the first few months of the camp's existence was unduly high. During the month of October 1901, 32 deaths, representing 65% of the 49 deaths occurring in the camp, were as a result of either measles or its complications. All of these victims were children under the age of seven, except one, Petrus Harmse, who was twelve years of age. (See Appendix 4, pp. 242-244 and Table 7.1, p. 189, *infra.*) Only three of these cases were admitted to hospital, all of whom survived. This was probably partially due to the fact that the hospital was only able to receive its first six patients on 18 October 1901, two of whom had measles.[42] The other reasons why children were not taken to the hospital, were the rumours and traditional views regarding the hospital.

Gradually the measles epidemic subsided, and after the end of 1901, there were only sporadic outbursts of the disease. By now a "herd immunity" had probably developed amongst the camp population, making the majority of the camp inhabitants resistant to the disease. The isolated cases of measles occurring hereafter, were probably new arrivals, who had not yet been exposed to the disease prior to their arrival in the camp.[43]

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41. Thomson, pp. 563-564.
42. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 3.
43. Interview with Dr E. N. Campher, Ladysmith, 1.5. 2000.

Table 7.1 [44]

Analysis of deaths at Merebank, September 1901 - December 1902

MONTH	Measles	Respiratory	Diarrhoea	Dysentery	Enteric	Marasmus	TB	Meningitis	Convulsions	Malaria	Other	TOTAL
Sept. 1901	4					1					1	**6**
Oct. 1901	32	4	5				3	1			3	**49**
Nov. 1901	7	15	12	3	1		3				1	**42**
Dec. 1901	6	30	45	16		1	1				5	**104**
Jan. 1902	2	23	23	16			4				2	**70**
Feb. 1902	2	11	10	7			3	2			2	**37**
Mar. 1902	2	15	12	4	1		5	4			1	**44**
Apr. 1902		6	5	2	2		4				5	**24**
May 1902		7	4	3	2			1			2	**19**
Jun. 1902		4	6		1		1				3	**15**
Jul. 1902	1	3	3	1			1				4	**13**
Aug. 1902		5	1								6	**12**
Sept. 1902	2	4	1		2						1	**10**
Oct. 1902	1		1								2	**4**
Nov. 1902					1						1	**2**
Dec. 1902		1									1	**2**
TOTAL	**59**	**128**	**128**	**52**	**10**	**3**	**25**	**8**	**40**	**453**		

Other illnesses which were frequent at Merebank were respiratory sicknesses such as bronchitis, pneumonia, broncho-pneumonia, laryngitis, asthma, whooping-cough and croup. Bronchitis, like other inflammatory conditions of the chest, often develops following exposure to cold, particularly if accompanied with damp or sudden change from a heated to a cool atmosphere or, as in the case of Merebank, when moving from a dry to a damp and humid environment. Pneumonia, a lung infection which is

44. NAR, DBC, 132: Death Register Merebank Refugee Camp September 1901 - December 1902, *passim*; NAR, DBC, 133: Merebank Death Register, *passim*.

common in people who have already been weakened by other diseases, has a distinct tendency to be more prevalent during the late winter and early summer months, while broncho-pneumonia generally occurs as an accompaniment or sequel to bronchitis, whooping-cough or measles.[45]

Unlike the other concentration camps where these respiratory-related illnesses occurred mainly in winter, they were prevalent during the summer months at Merebank. Considering that it was unduly wet during the summer of 1901-1902, and that the floors of the living quarters were so wet that the camp inhabitants could wring out their bed linen in the mornings, especially in the early months of the camp's existence, it is not surprising that so many people fell ill and eventually died of these diseases. However, as the accommodation facilities improved with the introduction of wool packs and other floor cloths to reduce the moisture, the number of deaths as a result of respiratory complaints decreased, and the number of hospital admissions due to pulmonary infections remained low until April 1902. Nevertheless, with the onset of winter, there was once again an increase in respiratory diseases and the number of people admitted to hospital for these ailments.[46] Fortunately the number of deaths, as shown in Table 7.1 on p. 189, *supra*, remained low.

Malaria and dengue were some of the tropical diseases doctors in the Merebank Concentration Camp had to contend with. Although malaria did not rate high on the death list, with only eight deaths recorded, 60 patients were admitted to the Merebank Camp Hospital with this illness between November 1901 and November 1902, placing it after gastro-intestinal diseases (i.e. diarrhoea, dysentery, enteritis, gastro-enteritis and enteric), and respiratory diseases, as the most common illness in the camp. The majority of the malaria cases were recorded during the summer months of January (10), February (12) and March (19), while six of the eight dengue cases were also recorded during February and March.[47] Both malaria and dengue are diseases which are carried by mosquitoes, albeit different species, and they enter the human

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45. Thomson, pp. 149, 706-711; interview with Dr G. J. van Zyl and Dr C. J. Maree, Amersfoort, 13.6.2000.

46. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

47. *Ibid.*

bloodstream as a result of a mosquito bite. Although it is possible that some of the inhabitants may have brought the malaria with them when they were sent to Merebank from one of the Eastern or Northern Transvaal concentration camps such as Barberton or Pietersburg, or from their district of origin such as Vryheid, Piet Retief or Rustenburg, it is just as feasible that they may have been bitten by a malaria mosquito at Merebank, especially as the summer of 1901-1902 was extremely wet. Dengue on the other hand is a disease which is most unlikely to have been brought to Merebank, for not only does the mosquito carrying this disease proliferate during periods of much rain and humidity, but it also has a short incubation period of five to eight days.[48] The high incidence of diseases contracted from mosquitoes quite clearly contradicted the findings of the Medical Board appointed to investigate the conditions at Merebank after the site had been condemned by the Fawcett Commission.[49]

The doctors at Merebank also had to attend to a number of injuries. These injuries fell into two main categories, namely, burns and wounds. An analysis of the hospital register reveals an interesting phenomenon. Only one of the patients hospitalized for wounds, sprains, bruises and fractures, was a girl, namely the four-year-old Cornelia Erasmus. Similarly, only one of the patients hospitalized for burns was a boy, namely the twelve-year-old H. van Rensburg. Two of the burn patients, namely the six-year-old Jacoba Louisa Breedt of Vlakfontein, Rustenburg, and the two-year-old Wilemena Labuschagne of Grootvlei, Wakkerstroom, probably both fell into the fire as their injuries were extensive. They died of their burns on 24 June 1902 and 4 December 1902 respectively. Although an enquiry was held after the death of Jacoba Breedt, no information is available relating to the outcome of this investigation.[50] The injuries mentioned above seem to support the accepted gender perception that boys are generally more lively than girls and thus more prone to injuries, while young girls, especially in the concentration camp, often tended to help their mothers with the household chores.

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48. Thomson, pp. 238-239, 552-555; interview with Dr G. J. van Zyl and Dr C. J. Maree, Amersfoort, 13.6.2000.

49. *Further papers relating to the working of the refugee camps in South Africa* (Cd. 934), pp. 61-65. Also see Chapter 2, section 2.2, *supra* for more details on the site.

50. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

One other injury which requires special mention, is the wound sustained by the eight-year-old Lucas Stadler of Toverton, Utrecht. He was admitted to hospital on Christmas Day 1901, with damage to his lips and tongue, caused by an exploding cracker. What had probably started out as an exciting day, had turned into a nightmare. Not only had the youngster injured himself, but he became one of only two patients to be admitted to hospital on 25 December 1901. While young Stadler was fortunate to be discharged from hospital ten days later, the other patient admitted to hospital on Christmas Day, the thirteen-year-old Anna van Rooyen, died on 20 January 1902 of enteric fever.[51]

Other than these fairly common complaints, the Merebank medical staff also had to deal with a variety of less frequent diseases and operations. These included circumcisions on three lads aged twelve, thirteen and fourteen, an operation to cure the harelip of the 36-year-old Antonis Prinsloo, anaemia, eczema and haemorrhoids. In addition to this, but probably not surprising considering the conditions and circumstances the camp inhabitants were experiencing, doctors also had to treat several cases of hysteria. The majority of these patients seemed to have been young women in their late teens.[52] It also appears that the doctors at Merebank treated one patient they described as a lunatic, whom they wanted to send to an asylum as quickly as possible, for as they put it, the "party is in a pitiable condition".[53]

Everybody residing in the camp was a candidate for disease and injury. This is borne out by the hospital register, which shows that staff members were admitted to hospital for almost the same reasons as the camp inhabitants. Even the medical officers, such as Dr Hardy and Dr Pou, did not escape, and were admitted for acute gastro-enteritis and enteric fever respectively. The dispenser, the 56-year-old Fred Morris, was admitted to hospital three times - once for nervous debility and twice for insomnia, probably indicating what stress he was under, in having the responsibility of running the dispensary for a camp the size of Merebank.[54]

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51. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 10.
52. *Ibid., passim.*
53. NAR, Archive of the Colonial Secretary (CS), 151: Buchan - Transec, 7.10.1902 (telegram).
54. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

The group amongst the staff who seemed to have been the most prone to illness, were the young female teachers who had come from England and other parts of the Empire to teach in the camp. This was because they experienced great difficulty in adjusting to the different climate and water, and because they were constantly in close contact with children, who were possibly infected with a contagious disease. Between 1 April 1902 and 31 October 1902, nine young ladies on the educational staff were admitted to hospital - four with diarrhoea, two with enteric fever, one for general debility, another for nervous debility and the ninth for lumbago.[55]

It seems as if only two Merebank staff members were injured, possibly while on duty. They were the 31-year-old Henry John Laing, who was admitted to hospital for an overnight stay after sustaining a wound over the left region of his skull, and the 35-year-old Neal O'Donel, who suffered a fracture of the clavicle.[56]

7.5 Mortality

The death rate in the concentration camps in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony (ORC) was notoriously high, with the rate for all ages increasing from an average of 133,6 per thousand in May 1901 to 363 per thousand in October 1901. By October 1901 the mortality rate for children averaged 617 per thousand.[57] Furthermore, in the thirteen months from 1 April 1901 to 30 April 1902 some camps experienced more than a thousand deaths each. These included Bloemfontein (1411), Middelburg (1365), Bethulie (1307), Kroonstad (1268), Klerksdorp (1096), Brandfort (1031) and Mafikeng (1002).[58]

In comparison with these, the death rates in the Merebank Concentration Camp are, comparatively speaking, rather low for such a large camp. Yet there are similarities with the other camps with regard to the mortality patterns. Similar to the Transvaal and

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55. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-48.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 46.

57. J. C. Otto, *Die konsentrasiekampe*, p. 140; NAR, J. Ploeger Collection (Accession A2030): Chief Archivist - Dr R. T. Hamson, 29.6.1951 (letter).

58. Otto, p. 172. Figures in the table were added to reach the totals in brackets.

ORC concentration camps, Merebank experienced its highest death rates during the earlier months of its existence.[59] During the first four months, Merebank's mortality rate increased from roughly 4 per thousand in September 1901, to 14 per thousand in October, largely as a result of the measles epidemic in the camp. By December 1901, the death rate reached its highest point of almost 20 deaths per thousand. As the camp population became more settled, the death rate declined on a steady basis, reaching its lowest point in June 1902, with an average of almost 2 deaths per thousand.[60] Hereafter, despite the actual number of deaths dropping, the death rate increased slightly, due to the fluctuation in the population numbers, as men and others came in to the camp to join or collect their families.

Another similarity between Merebank and other concentration camps, is the fact that the highest mortality rate was amongst children below the age of five. In Merebank 303 of the 453 deaths, i.e. 66,9%, occurred in children of less than five years old. Of these children, 37% died as a result of gastro-intestinal diseases, and a further 34% from respiratory complaints.[61] These figures can be linked to the subtropical climate which was ideal for the proliferation of the bacteria responsible for gastro-intestinal and respiratory diseases, and affected children particularly, because they dehydrate more easily than adults. Should lost moisture not be replaced, the patient dies. In addition to this, mothers who usually breastfed their children until the breast milk dried up, found that the milk either dried up sooner than was customary or that it was not as nutritious as usual. The mother would then be forced to replace or supplement the breast milk with condensed milk diluted with water. This would not be as nutritious as mother's milk, and children became more susceptible to illnesses, especially those diseases transported by water, which attacked the intestines.[62] To make matters worse, the lack of vegetables and fruit led to avitaminosis, which further lowered

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59. Otto, p. 172. Also see Table 7.2, p. 195, *infra*.

60. The death rate is an estimate of the proportion of the population that dies during a specific period. The numerator is the number of persons dying during the period, the denominator is the average size of the population. The death rate is calculated by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of deaths}}{\text{Total population for month}} \times \frac{1000}{1}$$

Refer to Table 7.2, p. 195, *infra* to obtain figures.

61. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim*.

62. Interview with Dr G. J. van Zyl and Dr C. J. Maree, Amersfoort, 13.6.2000.

resistance to infection and diseases or, as the Fawcett Commission so aptly put it: "Wherever a community of little children is found who have to be fed without fresh milk, fresh vegetables, or eggs, and sometimes without fresh meat, then a high death rate will follow as certainly as night will follow day."[63]

Table 7.2 [64]

Analysis of the deaths of all Merebank Camp inhabitants

Month	Total Pop.	Men	Women	Children 5-12 years	Children 1 - 4 years	Children under 1	No. of deaths	Deaths per 1000
Sept. 1901	1560	-	2	-	1	3	6	3,846
Oct. 1901	3570	1	4	7	27	10	49	13,725
Nov. 1901	4437	-	4	4	21	13	42	9,465
Dec. 1901	5327	2	19	12	42	29	104	19,523
Jan. 1902	6364	5	14	7	26	18	70	10,999
Feb. 1902	8342	1	13	4	12	7	37	4,435
Mar. 1902	8303	3	7	4	17	13	44	5,299
Apr. 1902	8259	2	5	-	8	9	24	2,905
May 1902	8253	2	5	4	6	2	19	2,302
Jun. 1902	8886	2	1	-	6	6	15	1,688
Jul. 1902	7251	1	2	3	5	2	13	1,792
Aug. 1902	4620	-	4	-	5	3	12	2,597
Sept. 1902	3501	1	1	1	1	6	10	2,856
Oct. 1902	2245	-	2	-	-	2	4	1,781
Nov. 1902	802	-	1	-	-	1	2	2,493
Dec. 1902	?	-	-	-	2	-	2	-
TOTAL	-	**20**	**84**	**46**	**179**	**124**	**453**	-

The majority of adults who died in the Merebank Concentration Camp, passed away during the summer of 1901-1902, mainly as a result of gastro-intestinal diseases. The

63. Cd. 893, p. 15.

64. *Ibid.*; NAR, DBC, 9: Weekly reports of deaths at Merebank Burgher Camp; PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum (monthly reports October 1901 - December 1902). The table was compiled from the listed sources and includes the deaths of the people of colour in the camp. Children over twelve years of age are regarded as either men or women and no longer children for the sake of the table.

other causes of death included bronchitis, pneumonia, influenza, malaria, tuberculosis, apoplexy, heart failure and marasmus.[65]

Death spared no-one, and at times struck the same family more than once. One of the first families to experience multiple deaths in the Merebank Concentration Camp, was the Wolmarans family of Driefontein, Standerton. On 2 October 1901, Mr N.S. Wolmarans's wife, Susanna (26), died of pneumonia. Two days later their four-year-old daughter, Catrina Jacoba, succumbed to measles and, on 8 October, the other daughter, Catrina Maria, died of convulsions. In another instance, Mr D.C. and Mrs C.A Hattingh of Roodekranz, Bethal, lost three daughters, Aletta Frederika (4), Catrina Johanna (2), and Clara Isabella (6) to measles, on 2, 9 and 21 October 1901 respectively. Another couple to lose three children in two weeks were F.J. and A.J. van Dyk of Papkuilsfontein, Standerton, whose eleven-month-old twin sons, Theunis and Joseph, died on 26 September 1901 and 9 October 1901. Theunis died of tubercle of the peritoneum, while Joseph died of measles. Between the dates of the deaths of the two boys, their daughter, Anna, also died of measles on 6 October 1901. The Du Plooy's of Kooperfontein, Rustenburg, parents of Oelof Abram (13 months), Johanna (2) and Anna (4), also had to face the reality of death when all three children died in the space of five days. Oelof died of diarrhoea on 12 December 1901, while the two girls succumbed to measles on 14 and 16 December 1901.[66]

Another family to be particularly hard hit, were the Harmses of Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg, who lost nine family members in their extended family between 28 October 1901 and 8 March 1902. R.C. and J.A. Harmse lost two children, Petrus (12) and Maria (6), while D.G. and G.J. Harmse lost three children, Daniel (7), Gertruida (5) and David (2). Hendrina Harmse (30), the wife of Mr P.F. Harmse, died of marasmus, and her daughter Jacoba (1) of dysentery. The wife of Mr G.C. Harmse, Magdalena, and the daughter of B. and H.L.C. Harmse, Hester, also died.[67]

Cases where the mother and her young child died within short succession also

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65. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*

existed. This generally occurred because mothers continued to breast feed their babies despite undernourishment and the stress they were experiencing. Together this made them weak and vulnerable to illnesses.[68] The first recorded example at Merebank of a mother and child dying within days of one another, was that of Ellie du Preez (24) of Grootpan, Bethal and her one-month-old unchristened daughter. They died on 24 and 21 October 1901 respectively. Other such cases include Johanna Cloete (24) and her eight-month-old son Johannes, who died on 9 and 11 December 1901, Sarah Jooste (28) and her 23-day-old daughter, who died on 16 and 3 December 1901, and Elsie Schmahl (44) and her thirteen-day-old son, who died on 23 and 27 December 1901.[69]

Whether one family member was lost, as in the case of Mrs Scheepers, the mother of Commandant Gideon Scheepers, whose six-year-old daughter, Hester Maria, died on 29 December 1901 of meningitis, or more, as in the case of the families listed above, it did not make the pain and heartache any easier to bear. [70] All suffered as a result of the deaths of their loved ones. This is illustrated by the fourteen-year-old Petrus Jacobus Malan, whose diary forms an important source in this thesis, who was so shattered by his mother's death on 14 August 1902, that he did not write in his diary again until 24 January 1909, when he wrote: "Dat was het, dat my zoo verpletter dat ik my niet weer zover krygen kon om met my dagboek aantekeningen voort te gaan"[71] (This incident shattered me so much that I was unable to write in my diary again). Zachria Maria Magrita Malan had died at the age of 42 from peritonitis and heart failure and was buried in the Merebank Cemetery in grave number 385.[72]

The youngest camp inhabitants to die at Merebank, were the one-day-old unbaptized daughter of F.C. and A.C. Meane of Uitkomst, Middelburg, who died on 21 November 1901, and the three-day-old Stephanus Richter, son of M.C. and A.C. Richter of Middelburg, who died on 30 December 1901. Baby Meane died of icterus neonatorum

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68. Interview with Dr G. J. van Zyl and Dr C. J. Maree, Amersfoort, 13.6.2000.
69. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim.*
70. *Ibid.*; NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, p. 8.
71. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 105.
72. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, p. 33.

and debility, while the Richter baby died owing to being born prematurely. Both babies were buried in the Merebank Cemetery in graves number 43 and 157 respectively. Three stillborn births were also registered. They were the stillborn daughter of C.J. and E.R Harmse of Groenfontein, Rustenburg; Thomas Hincliff, the stillborn son of S. and C.M. Hincliff of Pongola Bosch, Utrecht, and the stillborn Tamil Indian child of Agano and Dookanuc. The first two were buried in graves number 314 and 381 respectively, while the grave of the Tamil baby is unknown.[73]

At the other end of the age scale, the oldest Merebank Camp inhabitant to die was the 87-year-old Mrs Gesina van Tonder of Vaalbank, Vryheid, who died on 10 October 1901 of debility and old age. She was buried in the Clairmont (Jacobs) Cemetery in grave number 15. The oldest male camp inhabitant to die was the 78-year-old Jan Adriaan Louw of Uitzegt, Utrecht. According to the death register, he died of measles, broncho-pneumonia and a rodent face ulcer, on 17 December 1901, and was buried at Merebank in grave 116.[74]

The camp inhabitants who died in the Merebank Concentration Camp were buried in one of three cemeteries. Between 22 and 30 September 1901 and again between 15 and 24 October 1901, 22 people in total were buried in the Anglican Church Cemetery at Isipingo, near the grave of Richard (Dick) King who was made famous by his ride to Grahamstown. Although a monument exists, bearing the names of the 22 people buried in the Isipingo Cemetery, they are not listed in the Isipingo Anglican Church burial register.[75] From 2 to 13 October 1901, nineteen people were buried at the Clairmont (Jacobs) Cemetery and the names of these people are also engraved on the obelisk memorial erected at the cemetery. After 24 October 1901, all the dead from the Merebank Camp were buried in the newly established Merebank Cemetery.

Although both the Isipingo and Clairmont cemeteries could be reached by rail, the authorities felt a cemetery closer to the Merebank Concentration Camp would be more

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73. *Ibid., passim.*

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 12.

75. The Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCM), 55075: Plan of Isipingo Church Cemetery compiled 1982.

convenient and appropriate. Trains were not always available to convey corpses to the respective cemeteries, and thus corpses needed to be stored, but without the refrigeration facilities of today, and with high summer approaching, this was bound to create a health risk. Authorities could also have felt that it would be more personal to have a cemetery closer to the camp, especially as a camp with 10 000 inhabitants was being planned at this stage. After negotiations with the representatives of the Merebank Company, Limited, T.K. Murray purchased Sub-Division 101, of Lot 1, of the farm Wentworth, on behalf of the Imperial Government, for a sum of £50.[76]

The first camp inhabitant to be buried at Isipingo, was the 67-year-old Martha Kaarlsen of Ermelo, who died of debility and old age on 22 September 1901, while the last person to be buried there, in grave number 22, was the seven-year-old Sophia M.L. Kruger of Hekpoort, Krugersdorp, who died of measles and nephritis on 24 October 1901. The first person to be buried at Clairmont, was the 26-year-old Susanna Wolmarans of Driefontein, Standerton, who had died of pneumonia on 2 October 1901. Willem Hendrik Piek, the two-year-old from Palmietfontein, Bethal, was the last person from Merebank to be buried there. He had died of diarrhoea on 13 October 1901. Twenty-four-year-old Ellie du Preez of Grootpan, in the Bethal district, became the first Merebank Camp inhabitant to be buried in the Merebank Cemetery. She had died of a tubercle of the lung on 24 October 1901. The last of the Merebank Camp inhabitants to be buried in the Merebank Cemetery, was the two-year-old Gertruida Johanna Engelbrecht, who had succumbed to gastro-intestinal atrophy and exhaustion on 8 December 1902, and was buried in grave number 405.[77]

Only one of the 405 people buried at the Merebank Cemetery, Mr Nicholas Jacobus Theunissen of Lapfontein, Klerksdorp, who died on 14 June 1902 at the age of 61 of carcinoma of the liver and was buried in grave number 355, was exhumed and re-buried. This was done in 1905 at the request of his daughter.[78]

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76. NAR, Archives of the Office of the Governor-General (GG), 937: W. Champion - C. H. Rodwell, 5.3.1915 (letter).

77. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim.*

78. PAR, CSO, 1785: Colonial Secretary, Pretoria - Colonial Secretary, Pietermaritzburg, 20.3.1905 (letter); PAR, CSO, 1785: Colonial Secretary, Pietermaritzburg - Colonial Secretary, Pretoria, 27.3.1905 (letter).

The most devastating aspect of the Anglo-Boer War was the extremely high mortality rate in the concentration camps as a whole. Notwithstanding the 453 deaths recorded at Merebank, the mortality rate in the camp, despite its size and location, was lower than that of most other concentration camps in the Transvaal and ORC. This can be attributed to the hard work put into health care by both Murray and Bousfield in their leadership positions, but also to the conscientious doctors, camp and hospital matrons, and their helpers of trained nurses and probationers, and to the Boers adjusting to the living conditions in the camp after having been there for an extended period.

CHAPTER 8

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP AND THE CITY OF DURBAN

8.1 The attitude of the people of Durban towards the Merebank Concentration Camp

By virtue of its geographical proximity to the Merebank Concentration Camp, the city of Durban, with its estimated population of 55 731 (all races) in March 1900, stood to be affected by, and in turn to exercise an influence on the camp. When the Anglo-Boer War broke out in October 1899, the majority of the white population in Durban, which was mainly of English origin, supported the British war effort, and this did not change after the erection of the Merebank Concentration Camp. In addition, the majority of Durbanites believed that the British soldier had conducted himself nobly, faithfully and with heroic fortitude. He was also perceived as someone who treated the Boer prisoners, women and children humanely and with respect, doing everything in his power to make the Boers as comfortable as circumstances permitted.[1] This is what locals were led to believe by propaganda, newspapers, and views of the time. As they wished to see the British in a favourable light, they made no effort to question the possible truth behind rumours about the real situation in the camps.

The Merebank Concentration Camp evoked many different responses and emotions amongst the Durbanites. There were those who saw the nearby camp as a novelty, a source of amusement, pandering to their curiosity about the Boers, with whom they had previously had little contact. These individuals would go out to the Merebank Concentration Camp on a pleasure trip, either on a Sunday afternoon, or on a holiday such as the King's birthday, to see what they considered to be the "wild Boers".[2] This was not always without its problems, as some of those who went out to the camp were considered to be undesirables, who had come to cause trouble. The more devious in

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1. Durban Archives Repository (DAR), Archives of the Durban Corporation (3/DBN), 2/1/1/166: Chairman of the Sincere Friends of all our Brave Soldiers and Volunteers - Chairman, special meeting to protest against standing British troops, 17.2.1902 (letter).

2. E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 36.

this category even tried to outwit the camp authorities in order to obtain a pass to be able to visit the camp. Camp Superintendent H.M. Bousfield, however, was not prepared to let his camp become a side-show for the inhabitants from Durban and he did everything in his power to prevent those he considered to be troublesome from entering his camp.[3]

Other sections of the Durban population were more favourably disposed towards the Merebank Camp inhabitants and they wished to heal the hatred and bitterness that had evolved between the Boers and the British as a result of the war. For example, some folk made an appeal in *The Natal Mercury* for clothes and shoes for the Merebank Camp inhabitants, asking that they be sent to the camp's Relief Committee. One such appeal was signed "Colonist of 50 Years".[4]

Not all Merebank Camp inhabitants appreciated charitable gestures such as that of the above-mentioned colonist. Women such as Miem Fischer were extremely bitter about it. To her the fact that he had not signed his name made her comment: "Miskien is hy nog wel 'n ou kennis wat sy besit van wearing apparel aan die republieke te danke het. Miskien was dit nog moontlik om hom met heel veel dank ook daarop te wys dat refugees, onses insiens, geen reg op hatred of malice het nie. Om thankful te wees, sou meer pas by soveel good work." [5] (Maybe he is an old acquaintance who has the republics to thank for his wearing apparel. Maybe it would also have been possible to point out, with due appreciation that, in our opinion, refugees had no right to feel hatred or malice. To be grateful would be more appropriate to such good work.) This sarcastic remark by Fischer could in part be explained by the fact that the republics had not yet lost the war when the colonist made the appeal to the Durbanites, and it could also be because the appeal had been made in *The Natal Mercury,* a newspaper which had, in general, taken a very negative view of the Boer population as a whole. Furthermore no-one wants to receive hand-outs from their enemy unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

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3. *The Natal Mercury*, 17.3.1902, p. 7.
4. *The Natal Mercury*, 20.2.1902, p. 7.
5. M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1901 - Augustus 1902*, pp. 90-91.

Others, both Brit and Boer, opened their hearts and homes to some of the Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants. There were various Durban families who took in Merebank Camp inhabitants, and these included, amongst others, the Woods, Bothas, Roets's and Wilsons.[6] Another group, especially the Afrikaner families in Durban, such as the Sluiters and Van der Merwes, took it upon themselves to accommodate and entertain the Merebank Camp inhabitants during their visits to Durban. [7]

The Uitlanders, or refugees, who had left the Transvaal for Natal as the pre-war tensions mounted, made up another part of the white population in Durban. As their numbers increased, so did the demand for employment, accommodation and food. With the increase in the Uitlander population, many of whom were destitute, the Mayor of Durban, John Nicol, appointed a committee of councillors and private citizens, under the chairmanship of Mr J. Ellis-Brown, to see to the sheltering and feeding of those refugees who were more or less destitute.[8] Some members of this Relief Committee, namely Mesdames Hulston, Wynne, Hamilton and Alexander, as well as Messrs J. Ellis-Brown, J.B Cotton, J. Hulston and W.O. Cook, visited the Merebank Concentration Camp during November 1901. The attitude assumed after their visit to the camp, was predictably jingoistic and patronising towards the Boers. The committee was convinced that the Boers were receiving a better deal than the Uitlander refugees in respect of food and accommodation. As far as they were concerned, it was hoped that the Boers would acknowledge the generosity of the English nation.[9] They were obviously unable to see matters from a Boer perspective.

Another benevolent society to be active in Durban during the war, was the Guild of Loyal Women. It had been founded in Cape Town at the beginning of the war, and introduced to Natal in 1900 by Mrs J. Liege Hulett, the wife of the Speaker of the Natal

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6. National Archive Repository (NAR), Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, pp. 6, 7, 10.
7. Fischer, p. 84; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 75-67.
8. W. P. M. Henderson, *Durban: fifty years' municipal history*, pp. 182-183.
9. *The Natal Mercury*, 22.11.1901, p. 1.

House of Assembly.[10] This organisation felt it to be its duty to deny the charges of inhumanity directed at the concentration camps, and thus sent a letter to *The Times* (London), denying the allegations which were being made by the various European newspapers.[11] Mrs Hulett, especially, who had visited the camp, felt strongly about this issue, and she, like the Relief Committee, maintained that the Boers were better cared for than their own Uitlanders. For this reason she felt that any pleas for charity for the Boer women were misplaced.[12]

A third organisation to take a special interest in the well-being of the Uitlander refugee population, was the Durban Uitlander Committee, under the chairmanship of Mrs Mackie Niven and other members, including Messrs Cohen, Scott-Alexander, Ogilvie, Fraser, Heilhut, Parkes, Tucker, Airey, Vining, Forbes, Barrett, Hands, Innes, Murray and Newby-Fraser.[13] One of their key tasks was to try to find employment for the refugees, and they succeeded in doing this by supplying the various concentration camps with nurses, probationers, dispensers and matrons, most of them untrained for the position they were appointed to.[14]

In their endeavour to find employment for the refugees, the Durban Uitlander Committee also approached T. K. Murray, the General Superintendent for Burgher Camps (GSBC) in Natal, with a list of men seeking employment in the Merebank Concentration Camp. Although no employment was available for the men during October 1901, Murray requested the Committee to recommend assistant nurses for the camp.[15]

Yet another group of Durbanites felt that the Merebank Concentration Camp was too

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10. B. Kearney (ed.), *The Anglo-Boer War: Durban - the gateway* (pamphlet), p. 27.
11. *The Natal Mercury*, 21.9.1901, p. 7.
12. *The Natal Mercury*, 7.10.1901, p. 7.
13. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Durban Uitlander Committee Collection (Accession A 1538): Minutes of meetings of Durban Uitlander Committee, 14.10.1901 and 21.10.1901.
14. PAR, A 1538, 5: Letters, *s.a.*.
15. PAR, A 1538: Minutes of meetings of Durban Uitlander Committee, 14.10.1901 and 18.11.1901; PAR, A 1538,4: T. K. Murray - Uitlander Committee, 20.11.1901 (letter); PAR, A 1538, 4: A. Barnett - B. W. Brayshaw, 21.10.1901 (letter).

close to the town.[16] Their ignorance of the Boer people, fuelled by newspaper reports on Boer atrocities, and the fear that disease might spread from the camp to the town, may have led to the anxiety they experienced regarding the camp. Their fear was unnecessary, for the Boers were neither a threat to the community, nor to the health of the town.

8.2 A comparison between the health situation in Durban and that in the Merebank Concentration Camp

If some Durbanites saw the health situation in Merebank as a threat, how robust was their town in comparison to the concentration camp? Durban seemed to have been a reasonably healthy town and largely free from epidemics. During 1901, there had been 882 births and 502 deaths amongst the white population, which was estimated at 28 000. This effectively meant an average birth rate of 31,5 and a death rate of 17,57 per thousand in 1901. Of the 502 deaths, 326 had occurred amongst the male population and 176 amongst the female population.[17] When comparing these births and deaths with those in the Merebank Concentration Camp, significant differences may be noted. At Merebank the total number of deaths amounted to 453 over a period of fifteen months. (See Table 7.1, p. 189, *supra.*) Over the first twelve months this effectively meant an average death rate of 69,9 per thousand, which was much higher than that in Durban.[18]

As has already been mentioned, of the 502 deaths in Durban, 64,9% or 326 had occurred among the male population. The comparative figures in Merebank were much less, with only 4,6% or 21 deaths recorded in males older than twelve years of age. This apparent discrepancy was due to the fact that an estimated 57,6% of the white population in Durban were male, while the number of males in the Merebank Concentration Camp remained below 20%, even after the cessation of hostilities on

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16. *The Natal Mercury*, 17.3.1902, p. 7.

17. *The Natal Mercury*, 1.1.1902, p. 14.

18. This figure was worked out by dividing the total number of deaths during the first twelve months of the camp's existence, i.e. 438, by the average population for these months, i.e. $\frac{438}{6264} \times \frac{1000}{1}$.

31 May 1902.[19]

As far as the number of births were concerned, they outnumbered the deaths, thus indicating a growth. This was not the case in Merebank, where 51 births were registered in comparison to the 453 deaths.[20] Even though the birth register is not very accurate, it does give a clear indication that the number of deaths outnumbered the number of births, thus indicating a decrease in the natural growth of the Boer people in the Merebank Camp, an obvious tendency in the light of the fact that the camp inhabitants did not live under normal circumstances. This tendency would have far-reaching effects, in general terms, on the Afrikaner population growth, density and distribution figures in the first few years following the war.

In conjunction with the above, it is to be noted that the death rate for the white population in Durban decreased from 16,5 per thousand in 1901 to 15,6 per thousand in 1902.[21] This could have been because many of the Uitlanders who had lived in similar crowded conditions as the Boers in the concentration camps, or in the accommodation supplied in the town by the relief organisations, had left.The possibility also exists that the medical help and conditions had improved in the town, as regular donations to the Epidemic Hospital from the Finance Committee of Durban and other institutions, enabled medical authorities to take pro-active steps to prevent the spreading of diseases such as scarlet fever and smallpox.[22] In general, it seems as if the Merebank Concentration Camp, which was unusually healthy for a concentration camp, and whose inhabitants did not, in any case, have much contact with Durban due to their restricted travel, had little influence on the health situation in Durban, despite the fears by some of its inhabitants that this might be the case.

Although small differences did occur, the diseases prevalent in the Merebank Concentration Camp were very similar to those in Durban. In both, enteric fever,

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19. PAR, Archive of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report); *The Natal Mercury*, 1.1.1902, p. 14.

20. NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in Burgher Camp Merebank, *passim.*

21. PAR, CSO, 1944: E. J. Bray, Acting District Surgeon, Durban - Chief Magistrate, Durban, 1.1.1903 (letter).

22. DAR, 3/DBN, 5/2/6/1/16: Durban Corporation report book 19, *passim.*

dysentery, gastro-enteritis/diarrhoea, pneumonia and influenza were among the most common diseases. The most notable distinction was the measles epidemic, which was responsible for 13% of the deaths in the camp during October 1901, while this disease seems to have been virtually absent in Durban at that time. Another difference, although both were mosquito-infected diseases, was that dengue fever rated much higher as a disease prevalent in Durban, than at Merebank, while malaria rated much higher at Merebank where the swampy area lent itself to the breeding of mosquitoes.[23]

The diseases which caused the deaths in the Merebank Concentration Camp and in the town of Durban, also correlated greatly. In both areas, the gastric diseases of dysentery, diarrhoea, and gastro-enteritis claimed the most lives, followed by respiratory diseases. If enteric fever, which can also be considered to be a gastro-intestinal disease is included in these figures, abdominally related diseases were responsible for 32,1% of the deaths in Durban compared to the 39,7% at Merebank. (See Table 8.1, p. 208, *infra.*) Between 27 December 1901 and 21 January 1902, 64 cases of enteric fever and 24 cases of dysentery were reported in the Borough of Durban.[24] Over the same period, 24 cases of enteric fever and two cases of dysentery were admitted to the Merebank Camp hospital.[25] Unfortunately it was not possible to ascertain how many such cases were not reported to the camp authorities, but, December and January were also the months in which the most patients with enteric fever were admitted to the camp hospital. These similarities show that the above infectious diseases, often spread by contaminated water from the same source, knew no boundaries and affected both the town and the camp. In addition to this, the lack of drainage and the possible accumulation of rubbish and refuse, especially in the Merebank Concentration Camp, would aggravate circumstances.

Respiratory diseases were ranked second in both Durban and the Merebank Concentration Camp as causes of death. In this instance, other than with diarrhoeal

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23. PAR, CSO, 1944: E. J. Bray, Acting Surgeon, Durban - Chief Magistrate, Durban, 1.1.1903 (letter); NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, *passim.*

24. DAR, 3/DBN, 1/1/3/23: Durban Corporation rough minutes, p. 90; DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/160: Inspector of Nuisances - Town Clerk, 27.1.1902 (letter).

25. NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 8-14.

diseases, the percentage of those who died of respiratory complaints in the concentration camp, was much higher than that in Durban. This was probably due to a combination of reasons. The Merebank Camp inhabitants may have found it difficult to acclimatise to the very wet summer of 1901-1902 after coming from the dry interior, often in a weak state, while the Durbanites were used to their climate. Furthermore, the camp inhabitants were housed in such a swampy area that, during the first months of their stay in the camp, they were able to wring out their bedding in the mornings, while the majority of Durban residents had dry environments to live in.[26]

Table 8.1[27]

Prevalent death causing diseases in Durban and the Merebank Concentration Camp, 1900 - 1902

Rank Order	Prevalent diseases in Durban	Prevalent diseases at Merebank
1	Diarrhoeal diseases (24,5%)	Diarrhoeal diseases (28,2%)
2	Respiratory diseases (8,1%)	Respiratory diseases (26%)
3	Enteric fever (7,6%)	Measles (13%)
4	TB & phthisis (7,1%)	Enteric fever (11,5%)
5	Bright's disease (5,6%)	Meningitis & convulsions (5,5%)
6	Heart disease (5,3%)	Whooping-cough (2,2%)
7	Meningitis & convulsions (4%)	Marasmus (2,2%)

Infantile mortality was much higher in both areas than were the deaths in any other age group. In Durban, 139 children under the age of one died, constituting 27,7% of the total number of deaths. The comparative figures at Merebank were very similar, reading 127 or 28%. In both cases, infantile diarrhoea was the disease which singularly claimed the most lives, namely 48,9% in Durban, and 36,2% at Merebank.[28] Children are very sensitive to dirty water and also dehydrate much quicker than adults, and if the liquid which is lost is not replaced, death virtually becomes a certainty. Even today, infantile diarrhoea remains the greatest cause of death

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26. Interview with Dr G. J. van Zyl and Dr C.J. Maree, Amersfoort, 13.6.2000. Also see Chapter 2, section 2.3 for conditions regarding the site.

27. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim*; *The Natal Mercury*, 7.1.1902, p. 14.

28. NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902, *passim*; *The Natal Mercury*, 7.1.1902, p. 14.

amongst children.[29]

It was not only possible for Merebank to influence the health conditions in Durban, but also for Durban to influence the health of inmates at Merebank, especially as people with serious infectious diseases, such as smallpox, entered the colony through the port of Durban from time to time.[30] Such diseases could then be spread to the camp by visitors to the camp, or by the camp inhabitants coming into contact with the disease on one of their trips into the town or to the harbour. To prevent the spread of very infectious diseases such as smallpox and scarlet fever, special precautions were taken by the authorities in Durban. In May 1902, for example, patients with scarlet fever were isolated and sent to a house at Maris Stella School, which had been identified as a hospital for these patients.[31] The town authorities were generally successful in preventing the spread of such diseases to Merebank.

Overall, the statistics seem to indicate that Durban was healthier than the Merebank Concentration Camp, even though they were in such close geographical proximity. In the Merebank Camp, where inhabitants were confined to a limited living space, with shared ablutions and accommodation, the chances of infectious diseases spreading were much greater than in Durban, where people had more living space and better accommodation. Yet diseases with a common denominator such as water, knew no boundaries, and attacked its victims both inside and outside the Merebank Concentration Camp.

8.3 The Durban press and the Merebank Concentration Camp

Newspapers and magazines in Natal were jingoistic, anti-Boer and pro-Imperialist. They advocated the belief that Britain and British influence should be paramount in South Africa. This in turn implied the destruction of the two Boer republics. To ensure that newspapers adhered to the conditions stipulated under martial law, press censors were employed in Durban. Any newspaper or magazine which did not adhere to the

29. Interview with Dr G. J. van Zyl and Dr C. J. Maree, Amersfoort, 13.6.2000.

30. DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/160: Inspector of Nuisances - Town Clerk, 27.9.1901 (letter).

31. DAR, 3/DBN, 5/2/6/1/17: Durban Corporation report book 20, p. 123.

philosophy of British supremacy, was considered improper and consequently banned. Commander Percy Scott, who was in charge of the defence of Durban, considered one such Durban journal, the *Review and Critic*, to be improper, and thus he "had the copies seized, the Office of the Paper locked up and Shut was written on the door".[32] To prevent similar actions being taken against them, the newspapers generally toed the line.

In the light of the above, a brief comment on the *Natal Afrikaner*, although not a Durban-based newspaper, is required, owing to its loyal attitude towards the British throughout the war. Prior to the war, the *Natal Afrikaner*, which was published in Pietermaritzburg, had continued to advocate conciliation even as it envisaged the probability of war.[33] In spite of these calls for conciliation, once war broke out, the *Natal Afrikaner*'s attitude remained loyal towards the British and their cause, and it was the only newspaper published in Dutch in South Africa which raised its voice against the slanders of the European press.[34]

Local newspapers, particularly *The Natal Mercury*, from time to time carried articles and reports on the concentration camps in the Durban area, including the Merebank Concentration Camp. When reports were published, they were generally biased, giving their unswerving support to the camp authorities, and therefore also to the war effort and the military strategies that created concentration camps. This is evident from the use of flattering, emotional language and sensational headings and/or stories. Praises were showered on those involved in the running, administration and organisation of the camps. When reporting on an incident where an undesirable tried to gain access into the camp in order to visit a young Boer girl, Hugh Bousfield, the Merebank Camp Superintendent, was described as "universally beloved" by the camp inhabitants and he was seen as someone who greatly cared about those under his care. According to the newspaper "his vigilance is their [the camp inhabitants'] great

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32. B. Kearney (ed.), p. 24.

33. R. Ovendale, "The politics of dependence, 1893-9" in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds), *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910: a new history*, p. 333.

34. PAR, CSO, 1699: Most Obedient Servant - A. Milner, 11.3.1902 (letter).

protection".[35]

The local press was also of the opinion that the British and camp authorities were fair in their attitude and conduct towards the Boers. With comments such as "the British desired to offer them [the Boer inhabitants] protection if they would avail themselves to it and co-operate in the measures taken in their own interest"[36] and to see "how beneficently the government took care of the Boer women", they were able to sway readers who may have harboured doubts about the concentration camp system.[37]

To further encourage the view that the authorities had done everything in their power to make life as comfortable as possible for the Merebank Camp inhabitants, the camp was described thus: "Merebank has risen to the dignity of a town - a town of tin and canvas, it is true, but still a town."[38] Merebank may have resembled a town, but in fact it remained a concentration camp. What this article did, was to idealise and romanticize the Merebank Concentration Camp for its readers, portraying it as a great humanitarian gesture bestowed on the Boer women and children by the British.

Reporters of *The Natal Mercury* also made use of sensational headings to capture the attention of their readers. One such heading read: "Merebank Camp Romance." In this article there was never any reference to romance. Instead the article ran the story of Christoffel Lombard, a man who had fought in the Battle of Congella in 1842. In the article Lombard was portrayed as a "fine specimen of the better class Boer", who wished to visit the old laager at Congella where he had planted roses from slips he had brought with him.[39] The reporter may have shown some sympathy towards the old man in bringing him some rose blossoms from Congella, but the article as a whole was patronizing and it attempted to paint a rosy picture of a caring newspaper.

The newspaper promoted the belief that the Boers were devious, barbarous,

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35. *The Natal Mercury*, 17.3.1902, p. 7. Also see Chapter 3, pp. 67-68, *supra* for details on the incident.
36. *The Natal Mercury*, 17.3.1902, p. 7.
37. *The Natal Mercury*, 22.11.1901, p. 7.
38. *The Natal Mercury*, 16.1.1902, p. 7.
39. *The Natal Mercury*, 20.11.1901, p. 7. Also see pp. 97-98, *supra.*

backwards, lazy and ignorant. They continued to contribute to this image of the Boer women with comments such as "even then the women could not desist from their favourite pastime of stretching the truth", "the woman struck one as very helpless as a whole", and "good washhouses they are, fitted with plentiful supply of water and everything done to ensure they're clean. Even then the women we saw were too lazy to keep their washing trough free of refuse". [40]

To further encourage the belief that the Boer was ignorant and backward, reports suggesting that the Boers needed to be educated were published. When reporting on the introduction of the lantern lectures at Merebank, *The Natal Mercury* wrote: "It is an excellent notion to give the Boer adult some perception of the vastness of that Empire of which his country now forms a part."[41] Most Boer women in the Merebank Concentration Camp may have lacked formal education, but they were certainly literate. They regularly read copies of *The Natal Mercury* and were aware that the press constantly referred to them in derogatory terms.[42] This hurt and angered the Boer women, and it is thus not difficult to grasp the hatred and distrust they felt towards the British, whom the newspaper, in contrast to the Boers, regarded as a superior or master race.

As the war neared the end, and after peace had been concluded, *The Natal Mercury* was prepared to change its attitude towards and portrayal of the Boer. The editors were prepared to admit that although the Boers might be lacking in school training and book learning, they were intelligent and receptive.[43] If the two nations who had been to war were to live side by side in an amicable fashion, an exercise in nation building had to be started, and there was no better place to begin than in the media. Newspapers needed to change the minds of those who had previously been led to believe that the war was a necessity, and that the Boers were ignorant and uncivilized.

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40. *The Natal Mercury*, 22.11.1901, p. 7.

41. *The Natal Mercury*, 19.5.1902, p. 7.

42. Fisher, pp. 90-91; Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 82, 83, 97, 101.

43. *The Natal Mercury*, 4.6.1902, p. 7.

After the visit of Schalk Burger, formerly Vice-President of the now defunct Transvaal Republic, to the Merebank Concentration Camp, the Durban press, for the first time, published a long report on the camp. In it they not only captured the emotion and tension in the Merebank Camp, but for once left the anti-Boer propaganda aside, making every effort to evoke sympathy for those who had been forced to live in the camp. The article did this by using emotive language and describing events as follows: "Scenes during the delivery of the address were indescribably pathetic. Old men, dull of hearing, held one hand open at the back of their ears to hear it all, while in the other they grasped strong sticks to support their bent feeble frames. From below broad, slouched, crepe band hats gazed eyes that slowly filled with tears that were allowed to fall unchecked to the ground for neither hand could be spared to wipe them away. Among the thousands of women there was scarcely one dry eye. Bravely did they try to force down sobs."[44]

Throughout the existence of the Merebank Concentration Camp, *The Natal Mercury* was guilty of selective reporting. The newspaper focussed on what was good in the camp, even placing an advertisement for a bazaar to be held at Merebank on 15 January 1902.[45] Although mention was made of the visits to the camp and subsequent praise of the camp by Alfred Milner, H.E. McCallum, and the Relief Committee, journalists failed to communicate, in any detail, on the visit and consequent report by Millicent Fawcett and her Ladies' Commission.[46] This omission was no doubt because of the inherent criticisms of the Fawcett Commission as they were amongst the few who openly found fault with the site on which the camp had been erected.

The Natal Mercury was the mouthpiece of British imperialism in Natal. Their pro-British view on the camp and treatment of the Boers interred there, not only prevented the newspaper from being closed down under martial law, but also convinced many of its readers that the Boers were well-treated and had much to be thankful for. What

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44. *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7. For more details re Schalk Burger's visit, see Chapter 9, section 9.2, *infra.*

45. PAR, Archives of Government House (GH), 1452: Advertisement in *The Natal Mercury.*

46. *The Natal Mercury*, 10.10.1901, *passim*; 30.10.1901, *passim*; 22.11.1901, *passim,* and 24.2.1902, p. 7.

the newspaper had not taken into account in its pro-British view, was the anger, hatred and distrust it had fuelled amongst Boer women such as Miem Fischer. These intense feelings of animosity and suspicion would in future help to foster and awaken a strong feeling of nationalism in Afrikaner ranks.

8.4 The influence of the Merebank Concentration Camp on the economy of Durban

The town of Durban and its economy were greatly influenced by the war and, to a certain extent, by the four concentration camps just outside its municipal boundaries. Of these the Merebank Concentration Camp, owing to its size and the fact that it had been the first one to be built, had the greatest influence. To construct, administer and efficiently run a camp the size of Merebank with the necessary accommodation, hospital facilities, water supply, drainage, school and administrative buildings, called for much manpower, labour and material. The knowledge that job opportunities were thus available, attracted an increased number of black and white work-seekers to Durban.

Because of the urgency of erecting this camp with all its amenities, the laying of water pipes, drainage pipes and other facilities, the Public Works Department (PWD) was forced to hand over some of the work to private contractors, such as Mr P. Logan. This implied that the financial benefits which were to be gained from the erection and ongoing maintenance of the camp were more widely spread, providing remuneration for others besides the PWD and its employees.

The economic benefits of the Merebank Camp did, however, have a greater ripple effect than the above-mentioned, as the Merebank siding required extension, and roads needed to be constructed in order to transport people and materials to the camp. In addition to this, administrative staff needed to be employed to do the ordering and buying of the necessary building materials, to work out salaries and to keep records of expenses.[47]

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47. See Chapter 2, section 2.4, *supra* for more details on the construction of the camp.

Further jobs were created as a result of an increase in the goods that were being imported into the country for the war effort, and to feed the concentration camp inhabitants. Many extra hands were employed at the harbour and by the Natal Government Railways (NGR) to handle these goods. [48]

One of the most important amenities required by the Merebank Concentration Camp was clean water. This was obtained through pipes linked to the Durban mains. The Durban Corporation obviously saw this as a means of making some extra money, for they charged the Burgher Camps Department 3/- per 1000 gallons (4546 litres), while the NGR were only charged 1/- per 1000 gallons. Murray felt this was unfair and protested.[49] Although the Durban Corporation was prepared to reduce the rates charged for water, they were only prepared to drop the rate to 1/6 per 1000 gallons.[50] This meant a reduction in income, but as they still charged the Imperial Government more than the NGR, they were still making a profit on their water.

The camp also provided opportunities for those with a keen business sense to earn an additional income, with their demand for produce, goods and services. Tenders to supply the camp with its essentials were called for in *The Natal Mercury* on or about the 15th of every month.[51] The fact that most of the goods required in the concentration camp were bought locally in small amounts from different businessmen, with no large contracts being signed, meant economic growth for local businesses.[52] Their increased earnings would in turn enable them to have more buying power, which further stimulated the Durban economy.

Fierce competition resulted between various companies in order to get the tenders to supply Merebank and the other concentration camps in the Durban area. Some of the fiercest competition took place between the suppliers of meat, Sparks and Young Limited on the one hand, and the Transvaal Cold Storage Company on the other.

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48. PAR, GH, 535: H. Livingston - General Manager, NGR, 20.1.1902 (letter).
49. DAR, 3/DBN, 1/1/3/22: Durban Corporation rough minutes, p. 639; DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/166: T. K. Murray - Durban Town Clerk, 26.2.1902 (letter).
50. DAR, 3/DBN, 1/1/3/23: Durban Corporation rough minutes, p. 227.
51. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, 30.6.1903 (final report).
52. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 14.10.1902 (annual report).

When the meat tender was taken away from Sparks and Young Limited, who had supplied Merebank with beef and mutton until December 1901, they did not accept this without resistance. Instead, they wrote a letter of complaint to Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in South Africa, but to no avail.[53] Any company, retailer or small businessman who lost the tender was deprived of an opportunity for making money. In this instance, a contract worth a great deal of money was forfeited. Much money was to be made from supplying Merebank with meat, especially considering the fact that 11000 pounds (5000 kg) of meat had been ordered by the camp during November 1901 alone, when the total number of inhabitants had been a mere 4437.[54] As these numbers increased, so did the order for meat, and thus the chance to make a profit.

The Merebank Concentration Camp also motivated people from outside the Durban municipal area to attempt to take economic advantage. In one such example, the Scheepers brothers of Pietermaritzburg applied to the Colonial Secretary for permission to erect a general store on their property, Stand Number 49, outside the Merebank Camp.[55] Even though Murray would have preferred not to have the store in the vicinity of the camp, the Government had no objection to the application made by the Scheepers's.[56] Unfortunately no information was available as to whether the brothers did in fact erect their shop.

There were even those further afield who saw a business opportunity when they heard that there was a large camp in Durban. Colonel Evans of Dundee, more than 300 km away, wrote to the Prime Minister of Natal, Sir Albert Hime, asking him whether the supplies for the Merebank Concentration Camp could be bought through his office, for the sole reason that he was supplying the Transvaal burgher camps.[57] This

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53. PAR, GH, 503: Sparks and Young Limited - Lord Kitchener, 7.3.1902 (letter).

54. PAR, GH, 793: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum 5.11.1901 (letter). See also pp. 83-84, *supra.*

55. PAR, Archives of the Minister of Justice and Public Works (MJPW), 90: Scheepers Bros - Colonial Secretary, 23.12.1901.

56. PAR, MJPW, 90: T. K. Murray - Minister of Lands and Works, 3.1.1902 (despatch); PAR, MJPW, 90: Secretary, Lands and Works - Scheepers Bros, 11.1.1902 (letter).

57. PAR, Archives of the Prime Minister (PM), 24: Colonel Robert Evans - Albert Hime, 16.11.1901 (letter).

request was rejected, as the GSBC felt it was more economically viable to purchase supplies for the camp through their own officer, or by tender.

Photographers were another group of entrepreneurs who were able to make an extra income from the Merebank Concentration Camp. Newspapers and magazines published articles on the war, and often wished to add a photograph, including pictures of concentration camps and the life within the camp. Many camp inhabitants also wanted photographs for various reasons. Davey Benowitz of Merebank was one of the local photographers who used the opportunity to take snapshots of camp inhabitants. An example of his work is the photograph he took of Kosie, Sophie and Boshoff Schabort near the end of the war.[58] Many more photographs were taken of camp inhabitants and the camp itself.

Advertising agents and merchants also saw the concentration camps within their municipal boundary as a great economic opportunity. The advertising agents, Hulbert & Slaney of Plowright Lane, Durban, regularly printed and distributed tradesmen's circulars to the inhabitants of the Merebank Concentration Camp. These circulars were eagerly awaited and read by the camp inhabitants, so much so, that by March 1902 the advertising agents applied for permission to distribute, free of charge, a small weekly news-sheet printed in English and Dutch to all the concentration camps in Natal. Although they may have maintained that this news-sheet was to be a humanitarian gesture that would simultaneously exert a good influence and assume the functions of "a little schoolmaster", with its proposed official reports on the course of the guerrilla war, a short summary of the week's news, letters and counsels of prominent Afrikaners in the interest of the people, and an occasional paragraph designed to encourage conciliation, this did not turn out to be the case. Instead it was an economic venture which was totally dependent on the support received from the advertisers.[59]

Obviously the advertisers had seen the opportunity of a market far greater than only

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58. South African Library (SAL), A. S. Schabort Collection (Accession MSB 437): Unpublished family history, p. 209.

59. PAR, GH, 737: Hulbert & Slaney - A. Milner, 7.3.1902 (letter).

the 8000 internees at Merebank. They were aiming at the more than 14000 inhabitants of the three concentration camps to the south of Durban, as well as those in Pinetown and in the interior. Believing that these people must have had some money, and that their previous advertising in the circulars was a success, they were willing to invest money into such a news-sheet for the sole reason that their returns would be greater than the costs. Unfortunately for the businessmen, Lord Milner was not concerned about the economic prosperity of the Agency, but rather with the political well-being of the country and, for this reason, he turned down their application with an "it can do no good and may do a considerable amount of harm".[60] In a camp like Merebank with its ardent republican supporters, he wanted to avoid the introduction of Dutch literature at all costs.

Even for a short period after the war, the Merebank Concentration Camp continued to serve as an opportunity to earn an extra income. With the closing of the camp, some of the equipment and buildings needed to be sold, and this was done by the auctioneers Messrs Beningfield & Son.[61]

Durban, its traders, contractors and local manufacturers such as the Merebank Brick and Tile Factory, had enjoyed a temporary boost during the Anglo-Boer War. In the Umlazi Division in which the Merebank Brick Factory was situated, returns to the value of £785 000 were produced during the 1902 book year.[62] The Boer men and boys who worked in the Merebank Brick Factory, largely as cheap labour, contributed to the financial benefit enjoyed by the Umlazi Division and the owners of the factory.

In spite of the Anglo-Boer War, life in Durban proceeded as normal. Throughout the war, the Durban City Council continued with its meetings, hardly ever mentioning or discussing the Merebank Concentration Camp, unless it referred to the water issue and the PWD. Instead the Corporation went on with its normal activities, and even embarked on several major works, including electric tramlines and the completion of the Victoria Embankment on the city side of the bay. General mundane issues

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60. PAR, GH, 737: Assistant Secretary to Lord Milner - Hulbert & Slaney, 24.3.1902 (despatch).

61. *The Natal Mercury*, 19.6.1902, p. 10.

62. PAR, CSO, 1944: Annual report by W. R. Saunders, Magistrate Umlazi Division, 18.3.1903.

occupied the day's agenda. These included discussing the repairs to the organ in the city hall, applications for the approval of new buildings, removal of refuse, health issues, application for permission to use the Park Oval to play a cricket match against Port Elizabeth, amended vehicles' licence bylaws, valuation of properties, the establishment of a school for coloured children in Durban, and many other items.[63]

Immediately the war was over in Natal, it became distant and far removed for most Durbanites. Life returned to normal and the only relics of the war were the concentration camps outside the city. The impact which the Merebank Concentration Camp had on Durban, may not have been great enough to warrant regular reference in either the local newspaper, *The Natal Mercury*, or the Durban Corporation's weekly meetings, but it had helped local businesses to benefit from the increase in demand for goods such as meat and fresh produce. It had also contributed to the availability of employment for both whites and blacks in construction, sanitation, nursing and administrative posts. This had provided them with an opportunity to earn a salary which, in turn, enabled employees to buy their daily requirements. In this small way the camp contributed to the economic boom experienced in Durban during the Anglo-Boer War.

63. DAR, 3/DBN, 5/2/6/1/16 : Durban Corporation report book, *passim*; DAR, 3/DBN, 2/1/1/163: Letters received, letters numbers 32801-33100, *passim.*

CHAPTER 9
PEACE AND THE BREAKING-UP OF THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP

9.1 How and why peace came about

Peace came with the Boers signing the terms of surrender on 31 May 1902. The majority of the Boer leaders had reached the decision that they had no choice but to end the war. Their main concern was that a continuation of the war would cause further misery for the women and children in the concentration camps. In addition to this, the increasing danger posed by armed blacks to both the burghers on commando, and the more than 7000 Boer women and children still roaming the veld, and the devastation of land with the resultant food shortage, were also threats that were feared could eventually lead to the extermination of the Boer people.[1]

Rumours about peace were rife in the Merebank Concentration Camp. Camp Superintendent H.M. Bousfield was probably aware that lack of clarity regarding this issue, together with the uncertainty about how long they would still have to remain at Merebank, unsettled the camp inhabitants, and led to much unnecessary tension. When Bousfield therefore heard of the peace rumours in May 1902, he ordered the head of each household in the camp to assemble at his office. Bousfield used this meeting to inform the camp residents in a friendly manner, that they would not be kept in suspense about a peace settlement any longer than was necessary.[2] True to his word, Bousfield informed the Merebank Camp inhabitants as soon as he knew that the war was over. On Sunday 1 June 1902, after the afternoon church service in which Ds. van Belkum confirmed 84 new members, Bousfield arrived at the school building, which was used on a Sunday for the church services, surrounded by skipping youngsters and inquisitive camp inhabitants who had joined the procession. Once the crowd had quietened down, Bousfield, without the aid of an interpreter, informed the gathering in his broken Dutch, that he had been notified by the Governor

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1. F. Pretorius, *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, p. 35.
2. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, p. 96.

of Natal, H.E. McCallum, that peace had been signed. He went on to say that this, however, did not mean that the people could go home immediately, or do as they wished. Instead the camp rules still applied. The shocked crowd dispersed mumbling, many not believing what they had heard.[3] At this point there was no group hysteria and little emotion; it seemed as if the crowd was still refusing to accept what they had just heard. The anger, fear and despair that the war had been lost, and in some cases even joy that their imprisonment was almost over, would only follow once the news had been registered.

The following morning Bousfield gave orders that the camp inhabitants were to assemble at his office at 16h00. During this hastily convened meeting, he repeated the news that the war had ended, and encouraged the inhabitants to allow their old enemy to reach out a hand in friendship. As a gesture, he shook hands with the two dominees and a couple of men, as representatives of those gathered there. The vast majority of women shook their heads in denial as the reality dawned on them. They dispersed and returned to their rooms even more angry, disappointed and confused than the day before.[4] This symbolic handshake testified to the patriarchal society of the day. Despite the fact that the majority of camp inhabitants were women, Bousfield had not shaken hands with one of them. Instead, he had shaken hands with some of the men, who, in all probability, were either hendsoppers or joiners. To add injury to insult, he had called upon the camp inhabitants to extend a hand of friendship. It was naive to think that one could wipe out the past as easily as that. Hostility, despair and dissatisfaction were more likely to feature than the desire to forgive.

As the realisation began to dawn that their stay in the Merebank Concentration Camp was soon to end, it also became clear that the sentiments of the camp inhabitants were not unanimous regarding the return of peace. On the one hand, there were those who were in favour of ending the war and submitting to Britain, so that they could return home and restart their lives, despite the uncertainty the future held. On the other hand, there were those who were bitter and generally disgusted with the terms

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3. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99; E. Hobhouse, *War without glamour*, p. 39.

4. Mrs A. den Hartog Private Collection (Kroonstad): Dagboek van Petrus Jacobus Malan, pp. 99-101; Hobhouse, p. 39.

of surrender, believing that the Boer commandos should have continued the fight to the bitter end. In addition to this, many experienced it as the Day of Judgement. They had believed God would relieve them from the British yoke, but instead He had decided differently. To one group it was God's will, but to the other, God had abandoned them.[5] All this added further stress to the trauma of having to accept that they had lost their independence. They also had many unanswered questions and hoped to get clarification on unresolved matters from one of their own leaders. This would come in the voice of Schalk Burger.

9.2 The visit of General Schalk Burger to the Merebank Concentration Camp

The task of informing the inhabitants in the Natal concentration camps and the Umbilo POW Camp officially, of the contents of the terms of surrender, fell on the shoulders of the former Vice-President of the former South African Republic (i.e. Transvaal), General Schalk Willem Burger. Burger visited all the Natal concentration camps on an official information tour, and on Saturday morning 7 June 1902, it was the turn of Merebank. Schalk Burger addressed the large crowd, who had come to hear him, from the platform of the stoep in front of the Superintendent's office. On his right sat the English and Boer hospital nurses, while the oldest burghers in the camp sat in a row on his left. In the centre were Bousfield and his staff, T. K. Murray, Ds. Enslin and a few others. Just as Burger was about to speak, a little flag went up bearing the words *Welkom Vrede* (Welcome Peace). The only other flag in the camp was the Union Jack which was hoisted from the camp headquarters.[6]

Burger used the same prepared speech, which had been approved by the Natal Colonial authorities, at all the concentration camps. He told his audience that peace had been declared, that the Boer leaders had tried every means to win the settlement they all desired, i.e. independence, but that circumstances had compelled them to surrender to British terms. They should now be content that peace had been restored.

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5. J. P. Brits (ed.), *Diary of a National Scout: P. J. du Toit 1900 -1902*, p. 100; M. M. Postma, *Stemme uit die verlede: 'n versameling van beëdigde verklarings van vroue wat tydens die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in die konsentrasiekampe verkeer het*, p. 15.

6. *Further correspondence relating to affairs in South Africa* (Cd. 1163), p. 163; *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7.

He then read the terms of surrender, and a long document drawn up by the burghers, giving reasons for the decision to lay down arms. Schalk Burger urged his people to learn to forgive and forget, and to try to form one brotherhood. By working hard for South Africa, he hoped that the wounds which the Anglo-Boer War had opened would be healed. After he had concluded his speech, Ds. Enslin expressed gratitude for the return of peace and paid tribute to Bousfield, thanking him in the name of the women, for what he had done for them. The meeting was closed with the singing of Hymn 21, "Beskikking van God" [7] (Dispensation of God).

After the gathering, the camp inhabitants had so many questions, that Burger promised to pay another visit. He did so on Monday 9 June 1902 and Tuesday 10 June 1902. After his Monday meeting, Burger returned to South Coast Junction where he was joined by his wife and daughter, who had been Merebank residents, and proceeded to Durban, where he had courtesy meetings with prominent local war-time leaders such as Commandant Simpson, the Mayor of Durban (Mr Acutt), the Magistrate of Durban (Mr Koab) and the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce (Mr Behr).[8]

After his visits to the Merebank Concentration Camp, Schalk Burger commented that he had never before seen so many sad and unhappy faces as those women he had addressed at the camp. Even *The Natal Mercury* commented on the emotional scenes which had greeted Burger when he had addressed the camp inhabitants. According to the newspaper, there had scarcely been a dry eye among the thousands of women in the camp. The same article also recorded that, when Burger appealed to them that they should bury the past with all its strife and bloodshed, and that they should "live together in unity and harmony with the nation that were now their friends, hundreds of women gave way to unrestrained weeping. Hundreds of mothers choked in endeavouring to stop the flood of feeling that was surging within their hearts and

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7. Cd. 1163, p. 163; *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7; Hobhouse, p. 39.

8. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 1453: Mr Povall - T. K. Murray, 10.6.1902 (letter).

bosoms".[9] Their agonised question: "Is this what I sacrificed my husband, my son, my child for?" made this, his last official duty, the most painful of his life. In his heart he was convinced that it was only their faith in God, that enabled the Boer women and children to bear the burden which they had to carry, and he expressed the hope that their patience, courage and faith would be passed onto their children.[10]

The visit by Burger was followed up by one from General Louis Botha on 13 July 1902. On this occasion Botha also addressed the Merebank Camp inhabitants, stressing the fact that although the peace negotiations may not have been what they had hoped for, they, as leaders, were proud of their women and children who had suffered so much. After this appearance he wrote to Alfred Milner, complaining that the women in the camp had to carry the large logs of firewood from the station to their quarters and hoped that something would be done about the matter.[11] This gesture by Botha was, however, to be in vain.

After Burger's departure, the Merebank Camp inhabitants wanted to go home immediately. Matters were, however, not that simple, and they soon realised that although the peace treaty may have meant the end of the war and of the two Boer republics, it did not yet herald an end to their misery in the concentration camp. For months after listening to Schalk Burger, they would still be going through the process of being repatriated to their homes or, what in most cases, had become the rubble representing their homes.

9.3 The process of repatriation

Before the Merebank Camp inhabitants could return to their homes, all administrative structures, such as the repatriation boards in the districts to which the camp inhabitants would be returning, had to be put in place. Furthermore Camp

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9. *The Natal Mercury*, 9.6.1902, p. 7. Also see Chapter 8, section 8.3, *supra* for further comments in the newspaper.

10. National Archives Repository (NAR), J. Ploeger Collection (Accession A 2030), 91: De Vredes-onderhandelinge, p. XI.

11. NAR, A 2030, 91: General L. Botha - High Commissioner, 29.7.1902 (letter); Hobhouse, p. 39.

Superintendent Bousfield, like all the other camp superintendents, had to follow prescribed instructions regarding the logistics and many administrative arrangements for the repatriation process. These included matters such as those pertaining to the Oath of Allegiance, the processing of applications by the camp inhabitants to return home, liaising with the newly formed repatriation committees, organizing transport, and determining which people could take care of themselves.[12]

Repatriation Committees, which included Boer members who would play a vital role in ensuring a smooth transformation period, were formed to help in processing applications by the Boers to return to their homes.[13] Mr M. Bierman, a Merebank Camp inhabitant, was one of those appointed to the Repatriation Board at Pietersburg. To enable Mr Bierman to do his work on the committee, arrangements were made for him to return to Pietersburg as early as possible.[14]

Before most of the Merebank Camp inhabitants could go home large numbers of surrendered burghers and bittereinders needed to come into the camp to collect their families. Such examples included the twenty Transvaalers who surrendered at Dundee, before eighteen of them proceeded to the Durban concentration camps.[15] This initial influx of men such as Mr P.I.L. de Wet and Mr de Clerq on 20 June 1902, Mr O.J.H. du Randt on 25 June 1902, Mr A.J. Diedericks and Mr de Waal on 27 June 1902, and many others who came to collect their wives, resulted in the highest daily total in the camp being recorded on 8 July 1902, when there were 8924 inhabitants present.[16] The camp thus became a congregational point, placing further administrative burdens on Bousfield and his staff, especially as some of the men arriving declined to do their share of camp duty. They were, however, quickly informed

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12. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.8.1902 (monthly report).

13. *Ibid.*

14. PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary (CS), 117: Magistrate, Pietersburg - Colonial Secretary, 2.8.1902 (telegram).

15. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.7.1902 (monthly report); *The Dundee and District Advertiser*, 18.6.1902, p. 3.

16. NAR, Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 126: Merebank Burgher Camp Register of Residents A-L, p. 158; PAR, Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (CSO), 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

that if they wished to remain, they needed to comply with the rules.[17]

The bittereinders were followed by ex-prisoners of war (POWs). Some POWs came to the Merebank Concentration Camp to collect their families, others came because they saw the camp as a halfway station as they returned from one of the overseas POW camps, while still others came because they were sent there. Examples of the latter group, were the eighteen POWs sent to Merebank from the Umbilo POW Camp on 26 August 1902. A further seven POWs, including M. Cronjé of Heidelberg, who joined his parents, and J. Breedt of Piet Retief, were sent to Merebank on 4 and 5 December 1902, to join family members, before being sent on to Volksrust with the last batch of inhabitants to leave on 10 December 1902.[18]

All male burghers over the age of 21 who had been in the Merebank and other concentration camps before the general and final surrender, had to take the Oath of Allegiance before they could leave for home.[19] To enable Bousfield and the other camp superintendents to fulfil their duties adequately, they were appointed officers for the administration of the Oath of Allegiance. The Natal camp superintendents retained this position until it was nullified by a notification in the *Gazette* on 24 February 1903.[20] Bousfield signed his Oath of Allegiance on 18 July 1902.[21] The labourious task of administrating the Oath of Allegiance was done conscientiously by Bousfield who, on 12 December 1902, after the last camp inhabitants had left Merebank, still forwarded to the Colonial Secretary the counter-foils of the Oaths of Allegiance taken by Johannes Phillipus Kemp of the Dundee district, as well as those of Petrus Johannes Swart, Josua Joubert and Abraham Johannes Swammers of the Newcastle district. The oath forms of all four men were then passed to the Magistrate of Newcastle who, in turn, passed the form of Kemp on to the Magistrate of Dundee.[22]

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17. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.7.1902 (monthly report).
18. PAR, GH, 563: SOP, Umbilo - H. E. McCallum, 25.8.1902 , 4.12.1902 and 6.12.1902 (telegrams).
19. PAR, GH, 1453: Assistant GSBC - Burgher Camp Superintendent, 30.6.1902 (letter).
20. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 7.7.1902 (monthly report); PAR, CSO, 1705: H. A. Hime - T. K. Murray, 24.2.1903 (letter).
21. PAR, CSO, 1705: Oath of Allegiance signed by H. M. Bousfield, 18.7.1902.
22. PAR, CSO, 1719: H. M. Bousfield - Colonial Secretary, 12.12.1902 (letter and counter-foil); PAR, CSO, 1719: H. A. Hime - Magistrate Newcastle, 13.12.1902 (note); PAR, CSO, 1719: Magistrate Newcastle - Magistrate Dundee, 16.12.1902 (note).

Another aspect of the laborious administrative tasks required to clear Merebank, was the submission of compensation claims for damage and losses suffered at the hands of the British until 10 October 1902. Like other Boers, the Merebank Camp inhabitants could claim for a number of things, but all claims had to be accompanied and supported by receipts from officers, or others, who had possibly removed stock, for example fowls, pigs and ducks.[23] The cover did not include the burning down of farmhouses and, in any case, most Merebank Camp inhabitants had no documents to prove that they had been looted by the British, so most of them received no compensation.

Once the administrative structures were in place, both in the camp and in the home districts, the repatriation process could begin. In order to initiate the proceedings, the head of the family was required to go to the office set aside for the purpose and make a written application to return home with the distinct undertaking that he was in a position to support himself and his family on arrival.[24] The applications were then submitted to the Resident Magistrate (RM) and Board of the district to which inhabitants wished to return and, only once their applications were approved and sanctioned by the RM, could the process begin.[25]

A register of departing Boers was kept by Bousfield and his assistant, giving the name, address, number and details of family members and other dependants, and supplying information about valuables, as well as numbers of cattle, horses, wagons and other items. To make certain that permission would be given to leave the camp, mothers had to ensure that children between the ages of six and fourteen had obtained their school certificates, and that they had been examined by the hospital doctor.[26] This was a time-consuming process which required great care and supervision, owing to the false declarations made by many of the burghers in order

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23. NAR, Archives of the Law Department (LD), 156: H. M. Bousfield - Secretary Repatriation Board, 9.9.1902 (memorandum); NAR, LD, 156: Secretary Law Department - H. M. Bousfield, 29.9.1902 (letter).

24. PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

25. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1902 (final report); NAR, Archive of the Staff Officer Prisoners of War in Natal (SOP), 34: E. Noble - D.A.A.G. , Umbilo, 14.8.1902 (letter).

26. NAR, DBC, 11: General report for month of June 1902, Circular 170, 4.6.1902; M. A. Fischer, *Tant Miem Fischer se kampdagboek Mei 1902 - Augustus 1902*, p. 130.

to get out of the camp as soon as possible.

In one such example, Johannes Louw asked Bousfield for a pass to Durban and back. When he arrived in Durban he applied for, and received, a permit to go to Standerton as a Durban resident.[27] In other instances, camp inhabitants failed to inform the authorities that they had no means of supporting themselves once they got to their homes, as was the case with Thomas Richard van Rooyen. He left the Merebank Concentration Camp on 11 July 1902 with only ten days' rations and no means of supporting himself when he arrived at Utrecht on 17 July 1902. The Magistrate of Utrecht was dissatisfied with such occurrences, stating that it was "unfair to the people and to me to have them thrown on my hands in this way".[28]

The Boer families who left the Merebank Concentration Camp after 28 July 1902, were supplied with the bare necessities in the form of tents, bedding and utensils, and rations of essentials such as 7 lbs (3,15 kg) flour or boer meal, 12 oz (340 g) sugar, one tin milk, 7 oz (200 g) coffee, 4 oz (115 g) butter, 4 oz (115 g) salt, 4 lb (1,8 kg) tinned meat and 8 oz (230 g) soap per adult per week for one month. These supplies were not charged against their accounts, but were written off from the camp stock, costing the Imperial Government £25251.2.11. The reason for this seemingly high cost was principally because corned beef and biscuits took the place of fresh meat and bread, which was cheaper.[29] Burghers in the camp who desired to leave the camp with their families in order to live in their town of origin, were rationed for one month, and treated as if going to a farm, but were not provided with a tent. No further assistance in rations was given. [30]

On departure, the head of each family was given a document signed by Bousfield, containing his name, the names of his family, as well as white dependants and the date to which they were to be given rations. All families leaving in this way were

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27. Fischer, p. 129.

28. PAR, Archives of the Prime Minister (PM), 30: Magistrate, Utrecht - Prime Minister, *s.a.* (telegram).

29. PAR, GH, 1453: F. R. Moore - Local Commissions, 30.7.1902 (instructions); NAR. DBC, 11: Circular 172; PAR, CSO, 1732: E. Noble - Director of Burgher Camps, Transvaal, 30.6.1903 (final report).

30. PAR, GH, 632: Draft instructions to Superintendent of Burgher Camps, p. 2.

informed that they had to present this document to the Commissioner of the Repatriation Board in their district within a month, thus entitling them to draw, on the order of the Commission, from the Local Depot, all, or part of the articles specified.[31]

Once the administrative tasks were completed and the Repatriation Boards in the destined district were ready to receive them, the Merebank Camp inhabitants were transported to their destinations, or as close as possible, by the Natal Government Railways (NGR), mostly in carriages, while their belongings were sent with them in open trucks.[32] As British subjects, these camp inhabitants were receiving much better treatment than they had received when coming down to Merebank. In their eagerness to get home, to be free, and not to miss the train, most camp inhabitants went to the Merebank Station very early on the day of their departure, even if this meant that they had to stand in a queue waiting to board the train, sometimes for up to twelve hours.[33]

The first person to leave the Merebank Concentration Camp after the surrender, was the 30-year-old Mrs Wilhelmina Hertzog, the wife of General J.B.M. Hertzog, on 4 June 1902. This had been as a result of orders received from the National Government, which were in line with the agreement reached during the peace negotiations that the family members of some of those involved in the negotiations were to receive preferential treatment.[34] She was followed by eighteen-year-old Cornelia Magdalena Badenhorst, who left the camp for Standerton on 5 June 1902.[35]

Special arrangements were also made for the repatriation of those Merebank Camp and other Natal concentration camp inhabitants coming from the Utrecht and Vryheid districts. Repatriation for the residents of these new Natal districts came quicker than for most. This preferential treatment was largely owing to the political notion that the new Natalians should be appeased, and to the influence of General Louis Botha, who not only came from the Vryheid district, but had also represented this constituency in

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31. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

32. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.8.1902 (monthly report).

33. E. Neethling, *Mag ons vergeet?*, p. 136.

34. PAR, Archives of the Provost Marshal's Office (PMO), 58: Burghers - P. M., 5.6.1902 (telegram); NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, p. 11.

35. NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, p. 11.

the old Transvaal government.[36] General Louis Botha had appointed his brother, General Chris Botha, to identify those burghers who were in a position to maintain themselves on arrival at their homes, and to furnish the General Manager of the NGR with a list of those who were to be transported to Vryheid.[37] The NGR provided special trains and facilities once a week for these Vryheid and Utrecht burghers, repatriating them by train, via the transit camp at Nqutu Road Station, where a depot of 50 tents had been erected. This in itself was a mammoth task, in which the camp authorities were assisted by the Vryheid and Utrecht repatriation committees.[38]

On 11 July 1902, in the middle of winter, thirteen families totalling 55 persons (31 white adults, 23 white children and one black servant), left the Merebank Concentration Camp for Newcastle, from where they proceeded to Utrecht. Seven of these family groups were headed by men, who had probably come into the camp after the signing of peace, either as bittereinders or as POWs, to collect their families. The largest group in this party was, as can be seen in Table 9.1 on p. 231, *infra*, the family of Magdalena S. Potgieter, which consisted of six adults and three children. Aletta Frederika Jordaan's party of five included two adults, two children and one servant. It may be presumed that the Mr P.W. Jordaan who had, on 7 July 1902, applied for his wife and family to join him, promising to support them and to collect them from the Newcastle Station, was her husband.[39]

From Newcastle this group needed to proceed to Utrecht. To assist in this process, two ox-wagons were supplied to convey the families of M.S. Potgieter, T.J. Potgieter and J.F. Kemp to their destination. On completion of the journey, these ox-wagons were returned to the Senior Transport Officer, Newcastle. Although tents were issued to M.S. Potgieter, C.J. Human, F.A.J. Dekker, A.F. Jordaan, G.C. Viljoen, T.R. van Rooyen, T.J. Potgieter and J.F. Kemp, the RM was reminded that if he knew that any of the above-mentioned families did not fall into the category which entitled them to

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36. J. M. Wassermann, "The Natal Afrikaner and the Anglo-Boer War", paper delivered at the Voortrekker Museum, Pietermaritzburg, 19.11.1999, p. 3.

37. PAR, PM, 30: Acting Prime Minister - General Manager, NGR, 4.7.1902 (telegram).

38. PAR, PM, 30: Acting General Manager, NGR - Acting Prime Minister, *s.a.* (letter); PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 8.6.1902 (monthly report).

39. PAR, Archives of the Magistrate of Utrecht (1/UTR), 3/3/1: P. W. Jordaan - ?, 7.7.1902 (letter).

receive tents, he was to withdraw the tents and return them to the Ordnance Officer, Newcastle.[40] During August 1902, a further 400 Merebank Camp inhabitants were despatched to Vryheid and Utrecht from the Merebank Station. The first of these left on Tuesday 5 August 1902, and the rest two days later.[41]

Table 9.1 [42]

Families proceeding to Newcastle from Merebank, 11 July 1902

Surname	Christian Names	Adults	Children	Servants	Total
De Jager	Lodewyk Petrus	2	3		5
Dekker	Frans Abram J.	2	2		4
Human	Cornelius Jansen	2			2
Human	Helena Clasina	1	1		2
Jordaan	Aletta Frederika	2	2	1	5
Kemp	Jacobus F.	1			1
Kemp	Maria Magdalena	6	2		8
Potgieter	Magdalena S.	6	3		9
Potgieter	Susanna Jacoba	1			1
Potgieter	Theodorus Johannes	2	4		6
Van Rooyen	Thomas Ricard	3	2		5
Viljoen	Gerhardus Coenradus	2	4		6
Zietsman	Elsie Catherina	1			1
Total		**31**	**23**	**1**	**55**

Many of these former camp inhabitants, who had by large returned to burnt homes and farms, had neither the cash, nor the means to supply themselves with food. Instead they were dependent on assistance and rations from the Repatriation Commission, well aware that supplies were charged against them. In addition to this, the already traumatised farmer and his family had to face the consequences and disasters of a prolonged drought, which caused plants to fail to germinate. As a result,

40. PAR, 1/UTR, 3/3/1: J. H. Hall, for S.O. - R. M., Utrecht, 13.7.1902 (memorandum).
41. PAR, 1/UTR, 3/3/1: E. Noble - Magistrate, Utrecht, 4.8.1902 (memorandum).
42. PAR, 1/UTR, 3/3/1: H. M. Bousfield - A.P.M., Newcastle, 11.7.1902 (memorandum).

the Commission had to supply fresh seeds, indebting the farmer even more.[43] The problems and hardships experienced by those who had returned to the Utrecht district, would have been very similar to those of the other Merebank Camp inhabitants.

After an initial slow start to the repatriation process, which involved massive administration and the relocation of thousands of people, matters gradually started to improve. Once both the burghers and the administrative staff began to be familiar with and understand the rules and regulations fully, they were able to adapt, improve and streamline the procedure to such an extent that everything ran smoothly. Once this point had been reached, the numbers declined on a steady basis (see Table 7.2, p. 195, *supra*) and, by the end of November 1902, Merebank with its 802 inhabitants was no longer the largest concentration camp in Natal. At this point the Pietermaritzburg Concentration Camp still housed 1191 inhabitants, making it the largest in Natal.[44] The last group of 96 camp inhabitants left Merebank on 10 December 1902, bound for various destinations including other concentration camps, and headed towards Heidelberg, Heilbron, Kroonstad, Krugersdorp, Nylstroom, Pietersburg, Pretoria, Standerton and Volksrust.[45]

Officials who remained in the Merebank Concentration Camp until it finally closed, or until their services were no longer required as the camp became progressively smaller, with the closure of large sections of the camp to reduce expenditure and to render the buildings available for other purposes, were given a bonus equivalent to a month's salary. Those officers who relinquished their duties at their own request, such as Dr W.O. Pou, who had resigned from his position at the Merebank Camp Hospital when he was appointed to a position in England, did not receive this bonus.[46]

Most of the buildings at Merebank, as were those in the camps at Jacobs, Wentworth

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43. PAR, PM, 35: President of Reparation Board, Utrecht - Prime Minister, 10.12 1902 (letter).
44. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.12.1902 (monthly report).
45. NAR, DBC, 130: Nominal Departure Roll Merebank, pp. 269-272.
46. NAR, Archives of the Governor's Office (GOV), 141: A. Lawley - J. Chamberlain, 17.9.1903 (letter); PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 1.9.1902 (monthly report).

and Pinetown, were taken down and auctioned, or relocated for use elsewhere. The buildings which were identified not to be sold, were forwarded to the Repatriation Department in Pretoria, while the furniture was forwarded to the Transvaal Education Department; stores were sent to the Transvaal Burgher Camps Department and equipment went to the Ordnance Department.[47] This material, amongst being utilised for other purposes, was used to build the Laerskool Hartebeestfontein (Hartebeestfontein Primary School) in the Western Transvaal. This was the first school to be built after the Anglo-Boer War and it was constructed entirely from material that came from the Merebank Concentration Camp.[48]

The repatriation of the approximately 9000 Merebank Concentration Camp inhabitants, which had started during July 1902, was completed by 10 December 1902, well before the transfer of the Natal Burgher Camps Department to the Transvaal Burgher Camps Department on 31 December 1902.[49] The two enteric patients in the Merebank Hospital, Anna Bezuidenhout and H.S. Landsberg, who were unable to leave for home owing to their illness, and their families were transferred to the Jacobs Concentration Camp, thus being partly responsible for this camp only finally closing in January 1903.[50] Considering the logistical and administrative scale of the repatriation of the 9000 Merebank Camp inhabitants to all corners of the old Boer republics, the Cape Colony and Northern Natal which took place without any serious problems, credit is due to Camp Superintendent Bousfield, his staff, the NGR, the Public Works Department (PWD), and the various repatriation committees in the home districts for their tremendous effort and, last, but not least, the Merebank Camp inhabitants who, in most instances, co-operated with the camp authorities, thus helping to make the massive undertaking a success.

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47. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 30.3.1903 (final report); PAR, Archive of the Natal Colonial Publications (NCP), 8/2/2: Departmental Reports 1902, p. 16.

48. NAR, Photo Collection, 33212: Photograph taken of the school, 1902.

49. PAR, GH, 554: T. K. Murray - H. E. McCallum, 6.1.1903 (monthly report).

50. *Ibid.*; NAR, DBC, 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register, pp. 48-49.

9.4 Conclusion

With the repatriation completed, the site of the Merebank Concentration Camp soon began to return to its previous state. The buildings were cleared and sold off at public auctions, and all that remained to remind people that the largest concentration camp of the Anglo-Boer War had once stood there, was the cemetery with its 405 graves.

After the war, the cemetery was from time to time placed under the charge of various bodies and churches. Initially the Provincial Administration and the PWD Coast were placed in charge and instructed to attend to the cemetery.[51] This arrangement, however, did not work very well, and during the 1920s the Durban congregation of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde (N.G.) Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church), later to become the *Moedergemeente* (mother congregation), offered to take over the care of the cemetery. This offer was rejected by the Natal branch of the South African National Society which was in charge of the war graves. Instead it was decided that the Provincial Administration was to increase its subsidy for the upkeep of the cemeteries to £3 per month. [52]

By 1934 the Merebank Concentration Camp area fell under the jurisdiction of the Durban Corporation, and its members subsequently considered it desirable that arrangements should be made for the Corporation to be responsible for the improvement and upkeep of the cemetery. The Natal Provincial Administration agreed with this proposal, and promised to give an annual grant to the Corporation for the maintenance they had committed themselves to. To obtain rights to the cemetery, the land had to be transferred from the Government to the Corporation. This meant that the Durban Corporation had to negotiate with the Union Defence Forces (UDF) who had received permission to use the land in terms of Act No. 33 of 1922. As the transfer of this land was not free, the Durban Corporation offered to pay the required £2 for the transfer costs. On 9 September 1935, the UDF agreed that the Corporation

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51. PAR, Archives of the Public Works Department (PWD), 2/196: District Engineer, P.W.D. Coast - Chief Engineer, P.W.D., 5.9.1910 (letter).

52. Archives of the NG Kerk Natal (NGK): Kerkraadsnotules, Durban, 1918-1921, pp. 195-251; NGK: Kerkraadsnotules, Durban, 1922-1928, pp.1-227.

of the Borough of Durban be allowed to purchase the Crown Grant, i.e. the cemetery, at a price of one shilling, to be paid to the UDF. The Durban Corporation was eventually able to take over ownership of the cemetery on 7 May 1936.[53]

The Corporation continued to take care of the grounds until the 1960s, when the *Moedergemeente* took over the responsibility of the cemetery. As the Merebank Cemetery now fell in an area which had been re-zoned and demarcated as an Indian residential area by the apartheid government of the day, the N.G. Kerk and the *Burgergraftekomitee* (Burgher Graves Committee), embarked on a mission to have the site re-proclaimed a white area. Once this had been achieved, steps were taken to repair headstones which had been damaged by vandals, and to build a strong fence around the cemetery. This work was costly and time-consuming, and the area quickly became overgrown with grass and weeds, despite the infrequent assistance of local groups of Voortrekkers who helped with the weeding and general maintenance.[54]

The local Afrikaner communities and organisations once again approached the *Suid-Afrikaanse Raad vir Oorlogsgrafte* (SARO), i.e. South African Council for War Graves, now asking them to place a secure fence around the property. The SARO, which at this time was involved in a process of changing all concentration camp cemeteries into gardens of remembrance, appointed Mr Japie Bosman to design the Garden of Remembrance for Merebank.[55]

The Merebank Garden of Remembrance incorporated the original freestone/marble obelisk built in the 1930s. This memorial, with the names of some, but not all the Boer men, women and children who had died in the Merebank Concentration Camp and who were buried in the cemetery, is situated straight ahead as one enters the garden

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53. NAR, LDE-N, 316: Natal representative, Department of Lands - Provincial Secretary, *s.a.* (letter no. ARL/NB 2981); NAR, LDE-N, 316: Provincial Secretary - Provincial Representative, Department of Lands, 6.6.1936 (letter).

54. G. Russell, *A-B war: concentration camps in Natal*, p. 68.

55. *Ibid.*

through the entrance gate.[56] On the immediate left of the gate is a wall containing a mosaic relief and, further along, on another wall, is a bas-relief depicting a mother and her child, both the works of Philina Ferreira. The mosaic relief contains a bell tent and three praying women as its central motif. It also shows children, children's graves and two symbolic Boer fighters, one of them on a horse. All these figures have been done in symmetrical lines, using triangles, circles and cubes, in only five colours, namely, blue, green, black, brown and white. In the front, towards the left of the gate, is a vault, above which stand three concrete tents which, according to the inauguration programme symbolises the three other concentration camp cemeteries at Jacobs, Mobeni and Isipingo.[57] The vault contains the human remains which were exhumed from the original cemetery, placed in caskets and re-buried here. On the other side, in the front towards the right, is an amphitheatre and a rostrum in the shape of a coffin.[58] The amphitheatre had been specially designed so that the garden could be used for cultural, political and religious ceremonies, which would further Afrikaner nationalism, but it soon turned into a white elephant. The location of the memorial next to the M4 Southern Freeway, on swampy land between the Merebank and Merewent sub-economic housing areas and the Durban International Airport, was of such a nature that it lent itself to vandalism rather than the purpose it had been designed for, and by July 1979, repairs to the cost of R6000 were considered. By 1986 vandals were scaling the high wall and defacing the mosaic. This necessitated the placing of a military-style barbed wire guard fence and securely locked gates, forcing visitors to the garden to obtain the keys from the Durban Parks Department before they could enter.[59]

The sites of the three other concentration camps which existed in the present Borough

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56. The names of those who were buried at Isipingo and Jacobs and those who died in the camp after 31 May 1902 have been omitted from the obelisk. This was discovered by the author when the names of those on the obelisk were compared to those in the death register.

57. It is a myth that there was a cemetery at Mobeni and that the bodies were exhumed and re-buried in the Stellawood cemetery. The camp inhabitants of the three Durban concentration camps were either buried at Isipingo, Merebank or Jacobs, the latter also referred to as Clairmont.

58. Visits to the Merebank Garden of Remembrance, 17.7.1999 and 16.9.1999; DCE: Wydingsplegtigheid Merebank-gedenktuin, 10.10.1970 (programme).

59. NAR, A 2030, 91: Suid-Afrikaanse Raad vir Oorlogsgrafte jaarverslag, 1April 1978 - 31 Maart 1979, p. 13; Russell, p. 68; Visits to the Merebank Garden of Remembrance, 17.7.1999 and 16.9.1999.

of Durban, are in a similar, or worse predicament, than the Merebank site. All that remains of the Jacobs Concentration Camp Cemetery is a small, unfenced, unkempt area, with a stone obelisk recalling the names of those who were buried there, including the names of nineteen Merebank Camp inhabitants. Lorry drivers stop and park their vehicles on the few remains of graves, which can be found by kicking and digging in the sand. A little further along the railway line, closer to central Durban, was the site of the Wentworth Concentration Camp. Today its graves are missing and no records exist of their location, as is the case with the graves of the Pinetown Concentration Camp. This probably led to the widely believed myth, even today, that there were no deaths in the Pinetown Concentration Camp. This is inaccurate, for research has revealed that twenty Boer camp inhabitants died in this camp.[60]

Similarly, the sites visited in both the former Boer republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, varied in degree of neglect. Even camps, such as Bethulie, Bloemfontein, Brandfort, Heilbron and Kroonstad, which used to evoke strong emotions because of their horrendous death rates, are disappearing as symbols from the historical horizon of most Afrikaners. The passionate response to the concentration camp horrors has lost its impact for the majority of urbanized Afrikaners, who are more concerned with economics and other aspects of their lives, and who, in some instances, are married to those previously considered to be the enemy.

However, from an academic historical point of view, it is important that, some hundred years after its establishment a sober, objective and analytical evaluation of the Merebank Concentration Camp, should be made. This, the largest Boer concentration camp of the Anglo-Boer War, was created by the British as part of a strategy to solve the problems they were experiencing in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony (ORC) concentration camps, but also as a military and economic tool to help them negotiate a quicker end to the war.[61]

The British military, to a certain degree, succeeded in solving the problems of

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60. J. M. Wassermann, *The Pinetown Concentration Camp during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)*, pp. 61-62.

61. See Chapter 2, section 2.2, *supra* for details on reasons for the establishment of the camp.

overcrowding in the Transvaal and ORC concentration camps by sending thousands of these camp inhabitants to Merebank. The removal of the women and children to the coast, most of whom were considered irreconcilable and troublemakers, may have contributed in bringing the death rate down, but the confinement in the Merebank Concentration Camp failed to bring about a change in attitude or to put out the strong republican flame burning in their hearts. Thus, this approach as a tool to negotiate a quicker end to the war, can be considered to have been a failure from the British point of view.

Yet, if it were possible to identify a model camp within the negative context of what concentration camps represent, Merebank would possibly come closest to this ideal. Despite the unhealthy and moist terrain, its size and the illnesses experienced during certain months of the year, the competent management by Bousfield and Murray made the Merebank Concentration Camp, as far as possible, fit for human habitation. It exemplified, perhaps together with its two sister camps of Wentworth and Jacobs, what dedication, experience, energy, discipline and expenditure could do. This, however, still does not justify the inhumane system whereby people were forcibly removed to a foreign place, nor does it mitigate the fact that a special type of campaign was waged on women and children, in an attempt to end the war. The impact which this action was to have on future Afrikaner generations and the political development of the Afrikaner in South Africa, was probably not envisaged by the British at this point, but to those generations who experienced or remembered the camps, it became a symbol of martyrdom and a unifier in a potent mix of Afrikaner nationalism.

Appendix 1[1]
Rates of pay obtained in the Merebank Concentration Camp

POSITION	SALARY PER DAY	BENEFITS
Superintendent	30/-	Accommodation & rations
Assistant Superintendent	12/6	Accommodation & rations
Senior Medical Officer	27/6	Accommodation & rations
Medical Officer	25/-	Accommodation & rations
Storeman	10/-	Accommodation & rations
Chief Ration Issuer	10/-	Accommodation & rations
Issuers of Stores	6/-	Accommodation & rations
Butcher	8/-	Accommodation & rations
Chief Clerk	10/-	Accommodation & rations
Other Clerks	8/-	Accommodation & rations
Dispenser (Chemist)	10/6	Accommodation & rations
Hospital Matron	10/- or £15 p.m.	Accommodation, rations & 16/8 per month for uniforms
Nursing Sisters	6/6 or £10 p.m.	Accommodation, rations & 16/8 per month for uniforms
Assistant Sisters (not certified)	5/- or £7.10.0 p.m.	Accommodation, rations & 16/8 per month for uniforms
Hospital Orderlies	6/-	Accommodation & rations
Camp Matron	6/6 or £10 p.m.	Accommodation, rations & 16/8 per month for uniforms
Burgher Corporals	2/6	Rations
Burgher Police	1/6	Rations
Burgher Assistant Issuers	2/6	Rations
Burgher Matrons	2/6	Rations
Burgher Inspectors (Matron's Assistants)	1/6	Rations
Burgher Probationers	2/6	Rations
Natives	1/3 or £2 p.m.	Accommodation & rations

1. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 631: H. F. Hamilton - High Commissioner, 29.4.1902 (Assistant Auditor-General's report).

Appendix 2 [1]
General Camp Regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps as published in Pietermaritzburg on 1 February 1902

1. All persons residing in these Camps must do what Camp Duties are required of them, and carry out the instructions of the Superintendents, who are responsible for the good order and cleanliness of the Camps.
2. Heads of families are responsible for their tents or houses and surroundings, others must select one in each tent or house who will be responsible.
3. All persons in these Camps should assist the authorities in every way to keep the Camps clean, for the comfort of all, and to prevent sickness.
4. Any persons fouling the Latrines must be made to clean same; anyone noticing this should at once report the matter.
5. Every care should be taken to keep the Bath Houses clean. They must not be used for any other purpose. Water must not be wasted.
6. Wash Houses are provided, and no washing in the Camp must be done elsewhere. No dishes or such things are to be washed in the Wash Houses.
7. Clothes must be dried on the places provided.
8. Anyone wilfully wasting water in turning on the taps to run to waste may be punished.
9. All lines must be cleared before 11 o'clock every morning. Tents rolled up and everything made tidy.
10. No refuse must be thrown about the Camp, but placed carefully in the receptacles provided for same.
11. Water must be emptied into the tanks provided, and must not be thrown about the Camp. The lids of these tanks must always be replaced.
12. Bathing, when possible, must only take place at such times as are decided by the Superintendent.
13. No one is allowed to go near any Military Camp, Rifle Range, Store, Railway line or station, without special permission.
14. No one must leave these Camps without permission, and on no account can visits to the other Camps be allowed without a pass from the Superintendent.
15. Everyone must be in the Camp by sunset, and no one must leave before 9 a.m., without special permission.
16. All lights must be out by 10 p.m., except in cases of illness.
17. Any persons found outside their own lines after 10 p.m., may be punished. Single men must keep to their own quarters.
18. A representative from each house or tent must attend at the time and place appointed to draw rations.
19. No spirits must be brought into any Camp except for sickness and with permission.
20. All letters must be properly stamped and posted unclosed at the camp Post Office.
21. Any cases of sickness or distress should be brought to the notice of the Camp Matron.
22. All persons in these camps are reminded that everything is being done for their own benefit, and they must render what assistance they can. The Superintendent must see that the Regulations are properly carried out. Punishments may be imposed, if necessary under Martial Law.

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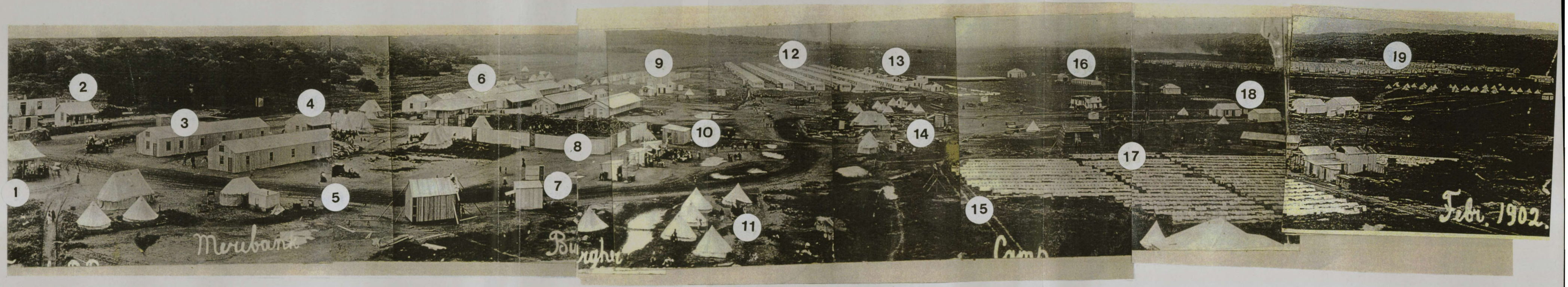
1. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (PAR), Archives of Government House (GH), 1452: General regulations for the Natal Burgher Camps, 1.2.1902.

APPENDIX 3

THE MEREBANK CONCENTRATION CAMP

FEBRUARY 1902



KEY

1. Camp Superintendent's Office
2. Merebank Station and railroad to Durban
3. Hospital
4. Commissariat
5. Road to Durban
6. School
7. Camp shops
8. Wood depot
9. Camp C
10. Mortuary
11. Black staff accommodation
12. Camp B
13. Wash-houses and bath-houses
14. Coffin factory
15. Railroad to brick and tile factory
16. Steam disinfector and special laundry
17. Merebank Brick & Tile Company
18. Offices of Merebank Brick & Tile Company
19. Camp A with its facilities

Appendix 4
Merebank Concentration Camp Death List

The deaths in the Merebank Concentration Camp are listed below in chronological order and were compiled from the following sources:

* National Archive Repository (NAR), Director of Burgher Camps (DBC), 9: Weekly reports of deaths at Merebank Burgher Camp;
* NAR, DBC, 117: Register of births in the Merebank Refugee Camp;
* NAR, DBC 131: Merebank Refugee Camp Hospital Register;
* NAR, DBC, 132: Merebank Refugee Camp Death Register September 1901 - December 1902;
* NAR, DBC, 133: Register of deaths.

The following abbreviations are used in the table:

M = male
F = female
m = months
d = days
I = Isipingo
C = Clairmont (Jacobs) Cemetery
M = Merebank Cemetery

The town and district of Middelburg referred to in the table is Middelburg in the former Boer republic Transvaal, or the present-day Mpumalanga.

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
1	Kaarlsen	Martha	F	67	Debility and old age	22.9.1901	I	1	(Widow)	Ermelo
2	Van Dyk	Theunis Louis	M	11 m	Tubercle of peritoneum	26.9.1901	I	2	F.J. & A. J. van Dyk	Papkuilsfontein, Standerton
3	Janse van Rensburg	Francina Carolina	F	13	Measles and pneumonia	26.9.1901	I	3	J.D.T. & F.C. Janse van Rensburg	Oshoek, Ermelo
4	Stein	Lukas Cornelius	M	6m	Measles and pneumonia	29.9.1901	I	4	H.J. & D.G. Stein	Elandslaagte, Standerton
5	Barnard	Ragel Magrita	F	4	Measles	30.9.1901	I	6	A.J. & A.C. Barnard	Blesbokspruit, Bethal
6	Beukes	(Unchristened)	F	1m	Measles	30.9.1901	I	5	P.C. & M.H. Beukes	Vryuitzicht, Vrede
7	Wolmarans	Susanna	F	26	Pneumonia	2.10.1901	C	1	N.S. Wolmarans (husband)	Driefontein, Standerton
8	Hattingh	Aletta Fredrika	F	4	Measles	2.10.1901	C	2	D.C. & C.A. Hattingh	Roodekranz, Bethal
9	Stols	Johanna Maria	F	10 m	Measles	3.10.1901	C	3	G.H. & S.M. Stols	Watervalshoek, Standerton
10	Esterhuizen	Willem Mark	M	3	Measles and pneumonia	4.10.1901	C	4	H. & M.P. Esterhuizen	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
11	Wolmarans	Catrina Jacoba	F	4	Measles	4.10.1901	C	5	N.S. Wolmarans (widower)	Driefontein, Standerton
12	Van Rensburg	Jacoba Johanna	F	2	Measles	5.10.1901	C	6	G.C. & J.J. van Rensburg	Parys, Vrede
13	Barnard	Hendrik	M	5	Measles	6.10.1901	C	7	A.J. & A.C. Barnard	Blesbokspruit, Bethal

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
14	Van Dyk	Anna M. E.	F	6	Measles	6.10.1901	C	8	F.J. & A.J. van Dyk	Papkuilsfontein, Standerton
15	Venter	Hendrina Maria Magdalena	F	2	Measles	7.10.1901	C	9	J.H.L. & J.S. Venter	Watervalshoek, Standerton
16	Van der Berg	Michael Daniel Bester	M	2	Measles	8.10.1901	C	10	E.H.C. & L.H.C. van den Berg	Bankhoek, Standerton
17	Wolmarans	Catrina Maria	F	6m	Convulsions	8.10.1901	C	11	N.S. Wolmarans (widower)	Driefontein, Standerton
18	Wilden	Hendrik Diedriks	M	1	Measles	8.10.1901	C	12	M.C. & C.M. Wilden	Bethal (town)
19	Van Dyk	Joseph Andries	M	11 m	Measles and dysentery	9.10.1901	C	13	F.J. & A.J. van Dyk	Papkuilsfontein, Standerton
20	Hattingh	Catrina Johanna	F	2	Measles	9.10.1901	C	14	D.C. & C.A. Hattingh	Roodekranz, Bethal
21	Van Tonder	Gesina	F	87	Debility and old age	10.10.1901	C	15	N/A	Vaalbank, Vryheid
22	Piek	Judith Dorothea	F	4	Noma	10.10.1901	C	16	A. Piek (mother deceased)	Palmietfontein, Bethal
23	Smit	Willem Cornelius	M	10	Pneumonia	11.10.1901	C	17	W.S. & E.S. Smit	Twyfelaar, Carolina
24	Cronjé	Jacomina Hendrina	F	2	Measles	12.10.1901	C	18	C.D. & M.J. Cronjé	Sofanjes Kraal, Rustenburg
25	Piek	Willem Hendrik	M	2	Diarrhoea and syphilis (sic)	13.10.1901	C	19	A. Piek (mother deceased)	Palmietfontein, Bethal
26	Kleinhans	Frederik	M	1½	Malarial fever and bronchitis	15.10.1901	I	7	C.W. & M.M. Kleinhans	Klipfontein, Rustenburg
27	Prinsloo	Magrita Johanna	F	3	Dysentery	17.10.1901	I	9	J.P. & M.J. Prinsloo	Hoedspruit, Middelburg
28	Van Wyk	Albert Johannes	M	2	Measles	17.10.1901	I	8	G.J. & E.P. van Wyk	Roodebult, Wolmaransstad
29	Wolmarans	Catrina Maria	F	2	Measles	17.10.1901	I	10	G.M. & C. Wolmarans	Driefontein, Standerton
30	Coetzer	Susanna	F	3m	Bronchitis	17.10.1901	I	11	P.S. & S.J. Coetzer	Grootvlei, Wakkerstroom
31	Du Plessis	Johanna Sophia	F	3	Measles (died on journey from Pietermaritzburg)	18.10.1901	I	12	J.H. & E.M. du Plessis	Vlakplaats, Roossenekal
32	Steyn	Petrus Jacobus	M	1	Measles	18.10.1901	I	13	C.L. & A.M. Steyn	Elandslaagte, Standerton
33	Naude	(Unchristened)	M	2m	Convulsions	19.10.1901	I	14	D. & J. Naude	Naudesfontein, Bethal
34	Bezuidenhout	Maria	F	2	Measles	19.10.1901	I	15	J. & J.C. Bezuidenhout	Zuiverfontein Rustenburg
35	Stein	Susannah	F	4	Measles	19.10.1901	I	16	H.J. & D.G. Stein	Elandslaagte, Standerton
36	Bezuidenhout	Andries Martinus	M	5	Measles	19.10.1901	I	17	P.J. & L.H. Bezuidenhout	Rietspruit, Standerton
37	Breedt	Joseph Erasmus	M	2	Measles and nephritis	20.10.1901	I	18	J.E. & S.M. Breedt	Zandfontein, Rustenburg
38	Hattingh	Clara Isabella	F	6	Measles	21.10.1901	I	19	D.C. & C.A. Hattingh	Roodekranz, Bethal
39	Harmse	Gertruida	F	5	Measles	21.10.1901	I	20	D.G. & G.J. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
40	Du Preez	(Unchristened)	F	1m	Debility	21.10.1901	I	21	P.J. & E. du Preez	Grootpan, Bethal
41	Kruger	Sophia M. L.	F	7	Measles and nephritis	24.10.1901	I	22	C.J.H. & J.L.J. Kruger	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
42	Du Preez	Ellie	F	24	Tubercle of lung	24.10.1901	M	1	P.J. du Preez (husband)	Grootpan, Bethal
43	Swartz	Louis	M	6m	Bronchitis	25.10.1901	M	2	B.H. & A.C. Swartz	Klippan, Klerksdorp
44	Roos	Sarel Jacobus	M	2	Measles	25.10.1901	M	3	S.L. & A.M. Roos	Lievenpoort, Pretoria
45	Botha	Hendrina Cucilia	F	2	Measles and nephritis	25.10.1901	M	4	(Parents deceased)	Springboklaagte, Middelburg
46	Nel	Maria Catrina	F	3	Diarrhoea	25.10.1901	M	5	J.P. & R.M. Nel	Rustfontein, Bethal
47	Harmse	Petrus	M	12	Measles and pneumonia	28.10.1901	M	6	R.C. & I.J.A. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
48	Oberholzer	Daniel Cornelius	M	10 m	Measles	28.10.1901	M	7	D.C. & C.S. Oberholzer	Roosendaal, Christiana
49	Otto	Magrita Maria	F	2	Measles	29.10.1901	M	8	T.I. & G.J. Otto	Verdrukking, Carolina
50	Meyer	Heyla Lefina	F	6m	Diarrhoea	29.10.1901	M	9	W.J. & E.A.J. Meyer	Rietspruit, Standerton
51	Meyer	Engela	F	3	Measles	29.10.1901	M	10	D. & C. Meyer	Doornfontein, Rustenburg
52	Naude	Petrus	M	2	Measles	29.10.1901	M	11	D. & J. Naude	Naudesfontein, Bethal
53	Pelzer	Maria Magdalena	F	2	Measles	30.10.1901	M	12	H.T. & W.C.A. Pelzer	Wagenpad Spruit, Rustenburg
54	Fleetwood	Catrina Maria	F	13	Meningitis	31.10.1901	M	13	J. & A.C. Fleetwood	Goedgevonden, Lichtenburg
55	Robertse	Edward Hendrik	M	1m	Convulsions	1.11.1901	M	14	J.C. & H.H. Robertse	Tweerivier, Rustenburg
56	Swanepoel	Martha Aletta	F	3	Dysentery	1..11.1901	M	15	H.J. & M.A. Swanepoel	Lichtenburg (town)
57	Bierman	(Unchristened)	F	2m	Dysentery	31.10.1901	M	16	J.I. Bierman (widower)	Vaalbank, Utrecht
58	Van den Berg	Anna Elizabeth	F	1	Diarrhoea	1.11.1901	M	18	A.J. & A.E. van den Berg	Witfontein, Krugersdorp
59	Swart	Martha Dorothea	F	5	Whooping-cough	2.11.1901	M	17	P.J. & M.D. Swart	Schoonoord, Middelburg
60	Jacobse	Johannes Lodewikus	M	1m	Convulsions	2.11.1901	M	19	H.C.H. & C.W. Jacobse	Witkopjes, Pretoria
61	Janse van Rensburg	Petronella	F	1	Measles	2.11.1901	M	20	M.J. & P.H. Janse van Rensburg	Kareebosch Kuil, Wolmaransstad
62	Viljoen	Karl Johannes	M	3m	Convulsions	3.11.1901	M	22	K.J. & A.J. Viljoen	Goedehoop, Ermelo
63	Moolman	Petrus Lafras	M	9m	Whooping-cough and convulsions	4.11.1901	M	21	H.J. & E.W. Moolman	Vlakplaats, Vrede
64	Roets	Jan Bastiaan	M	3	Measles and diarrhoea	5.11.1901	M	23	J.N. & H.C. Roets	Klipkraal, Ermelo
65	Roets	Maria	F	26	Lobular pneumonia	6.11.1901	M	24	L. Roets (husband)	Doornfontein, Rustenburg
66	Kok	Elizabeth Rebecca	F	2	Catarrhal enteritis and convulsions	7.11.1901	M	25	G.A. & J.H. Kok	Roodeval, Krugersdorp

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
67	Van der Merwe	Hans Jacobus	M	3	Measles, broncho pneumonia and convulsions	7.11.1901	M	26	D.J. & C.E. van der Merwe	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
68	Van Niekerk	Gerhardus Albertus	M	6	Measles and broncho-pneumonia	7.11.1901	M	27	P.J. & J.D. van Niekerk	Roodelaagte, Bloemhof
69	Van der Merwe	Catharine Johanna	F	14	Enteric fever	8.11.1901	M	30	P.F. & J.M. van der Merwe	Bloemfontein, Carolina
70	Van Loggerenberg	Aletta Susanna	F	1	Catarrhal enteritis and convulsions	8.11.1901	M	29	A. & J.J. van Loggerenberg	Carolina (town)
71	Buys	(Unchristened)	F	4m	Marasmus	9.11.1901	M	28	S.B. & S.M. Buys	Welgevonden, Vryheid
72	Kriek	Hester Catrina	F	9m	Enteritis	13.11.1901	M	31	H.J. & M.S. Kriek	Schietdam, Vrede
73	Matthyssen	Alida Cornelia	F	3	Measles and broncho-pneumonia	14.11.1901	M	32	J.M. & A.C. Matthyssen	Vaalboschbult,, Bloemhof
74	Nel	Maria Jacoba	F	1	Bronchitis	15.11.1901	M	33	H.J. & J. Nel	Bankdrift, Rustenburg
75	Wentzel	Johanna Henrietta	F	9m	Diarrhoea	16.11.1901	M	34	W.A. & J.A. Wentzel	Doornspruit, Krugerdsdorp
76	De Bruyn	Nicholas Joachim	M	2	Broncho-pneumonia and measles	16.11.1901	M	35	N.J. & M.M. de Bruyn	Vereeniging, Potchefstroom
77	Van Vuuren	Andries Johannes S.	M	4	Broncho-pneumonia	16.11.1901	M	36	D.S. & S.C. van Vuuren	Witbank, Heidelberg
78	Taute	Samuel Jacobus	M	4	Broncho-pneumonia	18.11.1901	M	37	J.J. & P.M.J. Taute	Schoonoord, Middelburg
79	Labuschagne	(Unchristened)	F	18d	Diarrhoea	19.11.1901	M	38	J. & H. Labuschagne	Koesterfontein, Krugersdorp
80	Potgieter	Willem Frederick	M	7	Broncho-pneumonia	19.11.1901	M	40	W.F. & G.M.E. Potgieter	Graspan, Christiana
81	Smith	Alberta Johanna	F	2	Measles	20.11.1901	M	39	J.M. & J.A. Smith	Doornpoort, Rustenburg
82	Le Roux	Martha Francina Christina	F	28	Enteric fever	20.11.1901	M	42	H.L.C. le Roux (mother)	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
83	Buys	Johanna Elizabeth Catrina	F	11	Bronchitis	20.11.1901	M	41	S.B. & S.M. Buys	Welgevonden, Vryheid
84	Meane	(Unchristened)	F	1d	Icterus neonatorum and debility	21.11.1901	M	43	F.C. & A.C. Meane	Uitkomst, Middelburg
85	Strydom	Barend Hendrik	M	2m	Diarrhoea	23.11.1901	M	44	B.H.J. & J.C.W. Strydom	Welgelegen, Middelburg
86	Kruger	Alida Maria	F	2	Whooping-cough	23.11.1901	M	45	J.J. & C.G. Kruger	Klipfontein, Middelburg
87	Esterhuizen	Johanna Wilhelmina	F	1	Broncho-pneumonia	25.11.1901	M	46	J. & M. M. Esterhuizen	Kooperfontein, Rustenburg
88	Van Wyk	Christina Maria	F	1	Whooping-cough	25.11.1901	M	47	O.J.J. & G.E. van Wyk	Nooitgedacht, Middelburg
89	Harmse	Maria Jacoba	F	6	Broncho-pneumonia	25.11.1901	M	48	R.C. & I.J.A. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg

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90	Beukes	Sarah Maria	F	3	Broncho-pneumonia	26.11.1901	M	49	P.C. & M.H. Beukes	Vryuitzicht, Vrede
91	Pieterse	Jan Johannes	M	10 m	Diarrhoea	27.11.1901	M	50	H. & A. Pieterse	Rietfontein, Rustenburg
92	Swartz	Christian Frederic	M	3	Broncho-pneumonia	28.11.1901	M	51	B.H. & A.C. Swartz	Klippan, Klerksdorp
93	Van den Berg	Johanna Christina	F	1	Broncho-pneumonia	29.11.1901	M	52	C.B. & J.L. van den Berg	Zandfontein, Rustenburg
94	Viljoen	Johannes Matthys	M	4	Diarrhoea	29.11.1901	M	53	K.J. & A.J. Viljoen	Goedehoop, Ermelo
95	Freyer	Christina Magdalena	F	40	Enteric fever	29.11.1901	M	54	H.C.W. Freyer (husband)	Normandia, Piet Retief
96	Van Zyl	Jacob	M	9m	Diarrhoea	30.11.1901	M	55	A. & W. C. van Zyl	Rietfontein, Rustenburg
97	Harmse	Jacoba Catrina	F	1	Dysentery	30.11.1901	M	57	P.F. & H.J. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
98	Coetzee	Maria Cornelia	F	2	Diarrhoea	1.12.1901	M	56	F.J. & H.L. Coetzee	Kaallaagte, Pretoria
99	Lombaard	Josiah Renier	M	2	Broncho-pneumonia	1.12.1901	M	58	J.R. & M.C. Lombaard	Palmietfontein, Bethal
100	Badenhorst	Hendrik	M	7	Broncho-pneumonia	2.12.1901	M	59	C.H. & J.P. Badenhorst	Elandshoek, Pretoria
101	Du Plooy	Johannes Gerhardus Josias	M	11	Enteric fever	2.12.1901	M	60	P.H.R. & R.M.S. du Plooy	Blesbokspruit, Bethal
102	Voster	Josias	M	9m	Measles	2.12.1901	M	61	C.J.G. & S.C. Voster	Kooperfontein, Rustenburg
103	Prak	Johanna Susanna	F	3	Broncho-pneumonia	2.12.1901	M	64	N. & J.S. Prak	Kopjeskraal, Potchefstroom
104	Snyman	Martha Catrina	F	23 m	Diarrhoea	2.12.1901	M	63	F.C. & J.W. Snyman	Rietvlei, Krugersdorp
105	Pretorius	Ellie Magdalena	F	11	Enteric fever	3.12.1901	M	66	J.L. & M.P.M. Pretorius	Roodeplaat, Pretoria
106	Heuser	Frederick Johannes	M	1	Measles	3.12.1901	M	65	H.W. & H.M. Heuser	Paddaschool, Newcastle
107	Jooste	(Unchristened)	F	23d	Gastro-intestinal catarrh	3.12.1901	M	62	C.J. & S.J. Jooste	Heidelberg (town)
108	Potgieter	Petrus Jacobus	M	18 m	Broncho-pneumonia	3.12.1901	M	67	J. & S.E. Potgieter	Kameeldrift, Pretoria
109	Brink	Gertruida Anna Susanna	F	9m	Bronchitis	3.12.1901	M	68	W.C. & G.A.S. Brink	Vlakfontein, Wolmaransstad
110	Kruger	Emerenza Jacoba	F	19 m	Dysentery	4.12.1901	M	69	F.J. & E.J. Kruger	Parys, Vrede
111	Helliks	Gertruida Maria Magdalena	F	2	Broncho-pneumonia	6.12.1901	M	70	T.W.J. & A.D. Helliks	Doornhoek, Lydenburg
112	Steyn	Martha Helena	F	18 m	Broncho-pneumonia	6.12.1901	M	71	W.J. & C.M.S. Steyn	Uitzicht, Middelburg
113	Lombaard	Maria Catrina	F	28	Chronic tubercular ulceration of bowel	6.12.1901	M	72	J.J. Lombaard (husband)	Palmietfontein, Bethal

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114	Bezuidenhout	Casper Nicholaas	M	23 m	Catarrhal enteritis	6.12.1901	M	73	A.P. & S.C. Bezuidenhout	Naauwkloof, Rustenburg
115	Vermaak	Salomon Cornelius Johannes	M	5	Enteric fever	6.12.1901	M	74	J.S.C.J. & A.M.E. Vermaak	Naauwpoort, Middelburg
116	Snyman	Willem Petrus	M	2	Broncho-pneumonia	6.12.1901	M	75	S.J. & C.M. Snyman	Cyferfontein, Rustenburg
117	Van der Merwe	Johanna Adriasina	F	11 m	Diarrhoea	6.12.1901	M	77	J.J. & J.A. van der Merwe	Alwynspoort, Heidelberg
118	Botha	Maria Catrina	F	47	Goitre hemoptysis and cardiac failure	7.12.1901	M	76	D.P. Botha (husband)	Elandsklip, Newcastle
119	Botha	Martha Elizabeth	F	4	Broncho-pneumonia	7.12.1901	M	78	J.P. & A.M.E. Botha	Diepspruit, Standerton
120	Labuschagne	Catrina Johanna	F	11	Dysentery	8.12.1901	M	79	J.J.C. & E.C. Labuschagne	Bosmanspoort, Middelburg
121	Meyer	Susarra Johanna	F	11 m	Diarrhoea	8.12.1901	M	80	B.J. & G.D. Meyer	Mybouw, Dundee
122	Cloete	Johanna Cristina	F	24	Pneumonia	9.12.1901	M	81	J.M. Cloete (husband)	Zoutpansberg, Schoemansdam
123	Broekman	Susanna Johanna	F	18 m	Enteritis	9.12.1901	M	84	J.J. & S.J. Broekman	Boschfontein, Lydenburg
124	Schoeman	Wilhelmina Lodewika	F	20 m	Broncho-pneumonia	10.12.1901	M	82	A.A. & M.M. Schoeman	Rheboksfontein, Klerksdorp
125	Wiechers	Sybrandt Gerhardus	M	18 m	Enteritis	10.12.1901	M	83	Adopted child of J.J. & S.J. van der Merwe	Alwynspoort, Heidelberg
126	Broderick	Catrina Elizabeth	F	8m	Enteritis	10.12.1901	M	85	D.R. & C.E. Broderick	Potchefstroom (town)
127	Van Aswegen	Gerhardus Petrus	M	3	Diarrhoea	10.12.1901	M	86	G.P. & J.C. van Aswegen	Standershoop, Bethal
128	Mare	Martha Jacoba	F	27	Influenza, acute gastro-enteritis and cardiac failure	10.12.1901	M	87	J.P. Mare (husband)	Waterval, Lydenburg
129	Combrink	Christoffel Jacobus	M	3	Broncho-pneumonia	10.12.1901	M	88	F.J. & M.M. Combrink	Twyfelaar, Carolina
130	Putter	Hermina Hendrika	F	2	Diarrhoea	11.12.1901	M	89	P.J. & I.H.J. Putter	Bestershoek, Rustenburg
131	Cloete	Johannes Christiaan	M	8m	Broncho-pneumonia	11.12.1901	M	90	J.M. Cloete (widower)	Zoutpansberg, Schoemansdam
132	Du Preez	Margrita Maria	F	11 m	Broncho-pneumonia	11.12.1901	M	91	C.J. & M.E. du Preez	Klipplaat, Middelburg
133	Van Niekerk	Eva Catrina	F	36	Tuberculosis	12.12.1901	M	92	Adopted child of D.P. Botha	Elandsklip, Newcasstle
134	Van Niekerk	(Unchristened)	F	8m	Enteritis	12.12.1901	M	94	H. & D.M. van Niekerk	Nooitgedacht, Utrecht
135	Du Plooy	Oelof Abram	M	13 m	Diarrhoea	12.12.1901	M	95	J.D. & A.E. du Plooy	Kooperfontein, Rustenburg
136	Mulder	Susanna Elizabeth	F	15d	Gastritis	13.12.1901	M	93	G.H. & A.S.P. Mulder	Twyfelhoek, Vryheid

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137	Schoeman	Elizabeth Catrina	F	2	Catarrhal enteritis	13.12.1901	M	96	J.L. & C.J.E. Schoeman	Vissershoek, Pretoria
138	Gouws	Petronella Katrina Aletta	F	20 m	Dysentery	13.12.1901	M	97	P.M. & P.K.A. Gouws	Sterkstroom, Middelburg
139	Grobler	Susarah Johanna Carolina	F	8m	Diarrhoea	13.12.1901	M	98	A.D.S. & G.M. Grobler	Tweefontein, Krugersdorp
140	Joubert	Petrus Jacobus	M	1	Broncho-pneumonia	13.12.1901	M	102	J.F. & A.S. Joubert	Roodewal, Ermelo
141	Kruger	Anna Jacoba	F	30	Enteric fever	13.12.1901	M	105	C.J. Kruger (husband)	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
142	Van Staden	Elizabeth Hermina	F	49d	Diarrhoea	14.12.1901	M	99	J.F. & A.D. van Staden	Onverwacht, Rustenburg
143	Sandilands	Frans Johannes	M	19 m	Broncho-pneumonia	14.12.1901	M	100	P.B. & M.M. Sandilands	Kooperfontein, Rustenburg
144	Putter	Paul Daniel	M	2m	Diarrhoea	14.12.1901	M	101	P.J. & I.H.J. Putter	Bestershoek, Rustenburg
145	Joubert	Elsabe Cornelia	F	6	Broncho-pneumonia, cardiac failure	14.12.1901	M	103	J.F. & A.S. Joubert	Roodewal, Ermelo
146	Joubert	Elsabe Cornelia	F	5	Broncho-pneumonia	14.12.1901	M	104	F.G. & S.M. Joubert	Roodewal, Ermelo
147	Wolmarans	Johanna Elizabeth	F	35	Influenza, broncho-pneumonia, cardiac failure	14.12.1901	M	106	J.M. Wolmarans (husband)	Paul Pietersdorp, (Paulpietersburg ?), Utrecht
148	Harmse	Catrina Maria	F	29 m	Diphtheria	14.12.1901	M	107	P.L. & T.C. Harmse	Vlakhoek, Rustenburg
149	Du Plooy	Johanna Magdalena	F	26 m	Measles and broncho-pneumonia	14.12.1901	M	108	J.D. & A.E. du Plooy	Kooperfontein, Rustenburg
150	Van Aswegen	Johanna Lodewika	F	3	Broncho-pneumonia	15.12.1901	M	109	J.J. & C.P. van Aswegen	Standershoop, Bethal
151	De Waal	Frans Nicholaas	M	3m	Broncho-pneumonia	15.12.1901	M	111	F.N. & M.S. de Waal	Rietkuil, Middelburg
152	Mare	Maria Jacoba	F	3m	Diarrhoea	16.12.1901	M	110	J.P. Mare (widower)	Waterval, Lydenburg
153	Van Niekerk	Jan Albert	M	2	Diarrhoea	16.12.1901	M	112	J.F. & M.J.E. van Niekerk	Warrenton (town)
154	Du Plooy	Anna Elizabeth	F	4½	Measles and broncho-pneumonia	16.12.1901	M	113	J.D. & A.E. du Plooy	Kooperfonetein, Rustenburg
155	Jooste	Sarah Johanna	F	28	Enteric fever	16.12.1901	M	114	C.J. Jooste (husband)	Heidelberg (town)
156	Louw	Jan Adriaan	M	78	Measles, broncho-pneumonia, rodent ulcer face	17.12.1901	M	116	N/A	Uitzigt, Utrecht
157	Voster	Gertruida Johanna	F	21 m	Diarrhoea	17.12.1901	M	121	J.A. & G.J. Voster	Kooperfontein, Rustenburg
158	Erasmus	Susarah Carolina	F	14	Pneumonia	18.12.1901	M	117	J.J. & M.M.M. Erasmus	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
159	Prinsloo	Elizabeth Maria Cecilia	F	12 m	Diarrhoea	18.12.1901	M	118	I.M. & M.A. Prinsloo	Rietvlei, Krugersdorp
160	Vorster	Barend Johannes	M	8m	Diarrhoea	18.12.1901	M	119	J.A. & J.W. Vorster	Elandsfontein, Rustenburg

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161	Bierman	Francina Elizabeth	F	16	Enteric fever	18.12.1901	M	120	I.J. Bierman (widower)	Vaalbank, Utrecht
162	De Jager	Cornelia Elizabeth	F	18	Enteric fever	18.12.1901	M	115	Adopted child of E.C.J. Spies	Hakdoorndraai, Middelburg
163	Van der Merwe	Schalk Willem Albertus	M	4	Diarrhoea	18.12.1901	M	122	G.P. & C.J. van der Merwe	Rooidraai, Wakkerstroom
164	Naude	Johannes Jurgens	M	5m	Broncho-pneumonia and diarrhoea	18.12.1901	M	123	J.D. & A.S.M. Naude	Naudesfontein, Bethal
165	Noortman	Johanna Wilhelmina	F	21 m	Diarrhoea	19.12.1901	M	125	H.S. & J.W.M. Noortman	Waterval, Krugersdorp
166	Louw	Margrita D (died in Durban and buried at Merebank)	F	9m	Pneumonia and whooping-cough	19.12.1901	M	124	J.H.H. & M.S. Louw	Krugersdorp (town)
167	Bezuidenhout	Anna	F	12	Measles followed by acute pneumonia	19.12.1901	M	126	H.J. Potgieter (stepfather) & E. A. Potgieter (mother)	Uitzicht, Utrecht
168	Harmse	Hester Louise C.	F	10	Enteric fever	21.12.1901	M	127	B. & H.L.C. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
169	Coetzee	Gertruida Magdalena	F	7	Gastro-enteritis	21.12.1901	M	128	M.P.A. Coetzee (widower)	Bergfontein, Lydenburg
170	Van Dam	Hendrik Andries	M	10 m	Diarrhoea	21.12.1901	M	129	J. &M.M. van Dam	Bokfontein, Pretoria
171	Spies	Willem Francois	M	4	Broncho-pneumonia	21.12.1901	M	130	B.J. & H.C.J. Spies	Hakdoorndraai, Middelburg
172	Booysen	Hester Dorothea Paulina	F	11	Enteric fever	21.12.1901	M	133	N.J. & J.E. Booysen	Brakfontein, Bethal
173	Labuschagne	Jan Hendrik	M	3	Diarrhoea	22.12.1901	M	131	J.J.C. & E.C. Labuschagne	Bosmanspoort, Middelburg
174	Trytsman	Elizabeth Johanna	F	17 m	Enteritis	22.12.1901	M	132	D.F. & C.P. Trytsman	Jagdpad, Vryheid
175	Alberts	Nicholaas Francois	M	15d	Enteritis	22.12.1901	M	135	N.F. & P.M. Alberts	Langzeekoegat, Heidelberg
176	Meyer	Johannes Petrus Stephanus	M	7m	Enteritis	23.12.1901	M	134	J.J.P.C. & M.W.A. Meyer	Bomtras, Ermelo
177	Schmahl	Elsie	F	44	Apoplexy	23.12.1901	M	136	C. Schmahl (husband)	Vlakfontein, Ermelo
178	Greef	Susanna Maria Elizabeth	F	18 m	Gastro-enteritis	23.12.1901	M	140	W.C. & W.S. Greef	Nooitgedacht, Heidelberg
179	Le Roux	Cornelia Johanna Katrina	F	24	Enteric fever	24.12.1901	M	137	J.A. le Roux (husband)	Rooikop Heidelberg
170	Van deVenter	Stephanus Lukas	M	13	Enteric fever	24.12.1901	M	138	G.G. & H.W. van de Venter	Pivane Waterval, Utrecht
181	Du Preez	Stephanus Francois	M	2	Dysentery and broncho-pneumonia	24.12.1901	M	139	H.S.J. & E.C. du Preez	Klipkraal, Ermelo
182	Jordaan	Martha Maria Catrina	F	18 m	Broncho-pneumonia	24.12.190	M	141	J.A. & A.E. Jordaan	Schurweberg, Pretoria
183	Le Roux	Catrina Jacoba	F	4m	Enteritis	24.12.1901	M	142	J.A. le Roux (widower)	Rooikop , Heidelberg

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
184	Wolmarans	Petrus Johannes	M	4m	Diarrhoea and convulsions	24.12.191	M	143	J.M. Wolmarans (widower)	Paul Pietersdorp (Paulpietersburg ?), Utrecht
185	Cronjé	Susanna Carolina	F	1	Broncho-pneumonia	25.12.1901	M	144	P.A. & A.S. Cronjé	Doornpoort, Potchefstroom
186	Botha	Petrus Christiaan	M	2	Broncho-pneumonia	26.12.101	M	145	J.H.F. & J.S. Botha	Blesboklaagte, Middelburg
187	Potgieter	Stephanus Petrus	M	18 m	Gastro-enteritis	26.12.1901	M	147	J.D. & M.E.C. Potgieter	Hartbeestfontein, Krugersdorp
188	Meyer	Cornelia Johanna Magrita	F	6m	Gastro- enteritis	26.12.901	M	148	J.H. & J.C..J. Meyer	Lilyburn, Ermelo
189	Janse van Rensburg	Jacobus Hendrik	M	4m	Diarrhoea	26.12.1901	M	149	G.C. & J.J. Janse van Rensburg	Parys, Vrede
190	De Waal	Daniel Pieter Jacobus	M	6	Enteric fever	27.12.1901	M	146	D.P.J. & M.J. de Waal	Tweespruit, Pretoria
191	Schmahl	(Unchristened)	M	13d	Enteric fever	27.12.1901	M	151	C. Schmahl (widower)	Vlakfontein, Ermelo
192	Van den Berg	Susarrah Petronella	F	8m	Enteric fever	27.12.1901	M	150	C. & M.J. van den Berg	Witfontein, Krugersdorp
193	Swarts	Gertruida Jacomina	F	36	Gastro-enteritis and heart failure	29.12.1901	M	152	J.N. Swarts (husband)	Buffelshoek, Potchefstroom
194	Scheepers	Hester Maria	F	6	Meningitis	29.12.1901	M	155	M.J. & S.C. Scheepers	Roodepoort, Middelburg
195	Swartz	Emerenza Adriana	F	23	Enteric fever	29.12.1901	M	153	N.J.J. Swartz (husband)	Pretoria (town)
196	Van Zyl	Anna Catharina	F	3	Broncho-pneumonia	29.12.1901	M	154	A. & W.C. van Zyl	Rietfontein, Rustenburg
197	Fick	Aletta Magrita	F	4m	Diarrhoea	29.12.1901	M	156	J.P. & A.S.M. Fick	Jaagkraal, Lichtenburg
198	Richter	Stephanus Paulus	M	3d	Premature birth	30.12.1901	M	157	M.C. & A.S. Richter	Middelburg (town)
199	Grobbelaar	Geziza Maria	F	28	Pneumonia and mitral disease	30.12.1901	M	158	A.A. Grobbelaar (husband)	Tweefontein, Krugersdorp
200	Van der Merwe	Georgina Francina	F	19	Enteric fever	30.12.1901	M	159	Adopted child of S.A. & S.S. Louw	Rietfontein, Krugersdorp
201	(Black servant)	Kakejan	F	14	Enteric fever	30.12.1901	?	-	Servant of Mrs N. Greyling	?
202	De Waal	Magdalena	F	6	Broncho-pneumonia	1.1.1902	M	160	F.N. & M.S. de Waal	Rietkuil, Middelburg
203	Van Aswegen	Pieter Jacobus	M	2	Broncho-pneumonia and pertussis	1.1.1902	M	161	J.J. & C.P. van Aswegen	Standershoop, Bethal
204	Coetzee	Martha Johanna Wilhelmina	F	9m	Diarrhoea	1.1.1902	M	164	D.A. & M.C. Coetzee	Pinstaan, Heidelberg
205	Schutte	Martinus Jacobus	M	9m	Diarrhoea	1.1.1902	M	163	G.C. & H.S. Schutte	Welgevonden, Middelburg
206	Steenkamp	Hester Catrina	F	22	Enteric fever	1.1.1902	M	165	J.J. Steenkamp (husband)	Diepkloof, Lydenburg
207	Lombaard	Judith Dorothea	F	4m	Broncho-pneumonia	2.1.1902	M	162	J.R. & M.C. Lombaard	Palmietfontein, Bethal

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208	Grobler	Maria Magel	F	4m	Whooping-cough	2.1.1902	M	171	M.S. & M.J. Grobler	Schoonuitzicht, Lydenburg
209	Beukman	Martinus Petrus	M	6m	Diarrhoea	2.1.1902	M	168	F.J. & M.J. Beukman	Potgietersrust, Waterberg
210	Scheepers	Hester Susanna	F	3	Bronchitis	3.1.1902	M	166	G.J. & H.S. Scheepers	Springs, Heidelberg
211	Fourie	Hester Catrina Louisa	F	3	Gastro-enteritis	3.1.1902	M	167	G.J. & H.C.L. Fourie	Elandsfontein, Rustenburg
212	Van der Sandt	Engela Carolina	F	1	Broncho-pneumonia	3.1.1902	M	170	S.W.W. & H.E.C. van der Sandt	Middelburg (town)
213	Potgieter	Hendrik Johannes Abram	M	8m	Diarrhoea	3.1.1902	M	169	H.J.A. & W. Potgieter	Deelspruit, Utrecht
214	Mulder	Magdalena Petronella	F	2	Broncho-pneumonia	3.1.1902	M	173	G.H. & A.S. Mulder	Twyfelhoek, Vryheid
215	Jordaan	Johanna Louisa	F	21	Enteric fever	4.1.1902	M	172	G. Jordaan (husband)	Kroonspruit, Kroonstadt
216	Steenkamp	Johannes Paulus	M	6m	Whooping-cough	6.1.1902	M	174	J.J. Steenkamp (widower)	Diepkloof, Lydenburg
217	Van der Merwe	Cornelius Johannes	M	20 m	Diarrhoea	6.1.1902	M	175	J.A. & H.H. van der Merwe	Naauwkloof, Rustenburg
218	Potgieter	Elizabeth Catrina Adriana	F	43	Dysentery	6.1.1902	M	176	H.J. Potgieter (husband)	Uitzicht, Utrecht
219	Grobler	Nicholaas Johannes	M	73	Dysentery	6.1.1902	M	177	M.C. Grobler (wife)	Schoonuitzicht, Vryheid
220	Pretorius	Jacoba Nicholina	F	28	Enteric fever	6.1.1902	M	178	E.F.J. Pretorius (husband)	Roodeplaat, Pretoria
221	Van Rooyen	Aletta H. S.	F	16	Enteric fever	8.1.1902	M	179	T.R. & M.C. van Rooyen	Spitzkop, Utrecht
222	Roos	Walter	M	13	Enteric fever	8.1.1902	M	180	Adopted child of M.N. & E.C. Roos	Zandspruit, Pretoria
223	Havenga	Elizabeth Magrita	F	4	Broncho-pneumonia	9.1.1902	M	181	H.P. & A.M. Havenga	Waterval, Rustenburg
224	Fourie	Johannes Michiel	M	4m	Gastro-enteritis	9.1.1902	M	182	G.J. & H.C.L. Fourie	Elandsfontein, Rustenburg
225	(Black servant)	Kleinbooi	M	12	Enteric fever	9.1.1902	?	-	Servant of Piet Erasmus	Vaalbank, Vryheid
226	Smith	Johanna Jacoba	F	2	Gastro-enteritis	9.1.1902	M	183	C.J. & J.J. Smith	Doompoort, Newcastle
227	Swart	Martha Dorothea	F	45	Heart failure	10.1.1902	M	184	P.J. Swart (husband)	Schoonoord, Middelburg
228	Kruger	Maria P.	F	12	Central inflammation	10.1.1902	M	185	Adopted child of Mrs M.M. Rheeder (widow)	Pretoria (town)
229	Van der Merwe	Maria Magdalena	F	3	Whooping-cough and bronchial pneumonia	10.1.1902	M	186	L.C. & A.M. van der Merwe	Waterval, Waterberg
230	Venter	Jacobus Daniel	M	5m	Meningitis	11.1.1902	M	187	J.H.L. & J.S. Venter	Watervalshoek, Standerton
231	Bodes	Petrus Stephanus	M	8m	Infantile convulsions and pneumonia	11.1.1902	M	188	W.L. & G.W. Bodes	Rietfontein, Heidelberg
232	Muller	Susanna Aletta	F	15	Enteric fever	12.1.1902	M	189	D.J. & J.C. Muller	Boesmanskraal, Middelburg

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233	Botes	Magdalena	F	2m	Pneumonia	13.1.1902	M	190	A.J.L. & W. Botes	Zwavelpoort, Pretoria
234	Schabbort	Isabella	F	1	Pneumonia	13.1.1902	M	191	P.J. & E.A. Schabbort	Glen Alphen, Vrede
235	Labuschagne	Heyla	F	17	Asthenia after enteric fever	13.1.1902	M	192	J..& H. Labuschagne	Koesterfontein, Krugersdorp
236	Van den Berg	Christian	M	9	Chronic dysentery	14.1.1902	M	193	C.B. & J.L. van den Berg	Zandfontein, Rustenburg
237	Van der Merwe	Petronella Catrina	F	7	Gastro-enteritis	15.1.1902	M	194	J.J. & S.C. van der Merwe	Brakfontein, Bethal
238	Viljoen	Martinus Johannes	M	13 m	Dysentery	15.1.1902	M	195	J.J. & S.J. Viljoen	Pretoria (town)
239	De Beer	Johanna Catrina	F	9m	Measles	15.1.1902	M	196	H.P.J. & M.M. de Beer	Middelfontein, Rustenburg
240	Van Staden	Martinus Johannes	M	4m	Whooping-cough and pneumonia	15.1.1902	M	197	J.J. & S.P. van Staden	Doornfontein, Waterberg
241	Geldenhuys	Jan Andries	M	11	Enteric fever	15.1.1902	M	198	J.N. & M.A. Geldenhuis	Rietfontein, Potchefstroom
242	Harmse	Hendrina Johanna	F	30	Marasmus after enteric fever	15.1.1902	M	199	P.F. Harmse (husband)	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
243	Fourie	Hendrina Cecilia	F	1	Gastro-enteritis	16.1.1902	M	200	W.J. & E.L. Fourie	Rondemiet, Vrede
244	De Beer	Renier Jacobus	M	6	Broncho-pneumonia	17.1.1902	M	201	H.P.J. & M.M. de Beer	Middelfontein, Rustenburg
245	Stander	Adriaan	M	9m	Convulsions	17.1.1902	M	202	R.P.J. & M.J. Stander	Schoongezicht, Lydenburg
246	Botha	Gerhardus Johannes	M	15	Enteric fever	18.1.1902	M	203	D.P. Botha (widower)	Elandsklip, Newcastle
247	Roux	Esther Magrita	F	20	Enteric fever	18.1.1902	M	204	P.D. & E.M. Roux	Blyvooruitzicht, Potchefstroom
248	Moolman	Anna Helena	F	2	Gastro-intestinal catarrh	18.1.1902	M	205	H.J. & M.M. Moolman	Langzeekoegat, Heidelberg
249	Starck	Magdalena Jozina	F	3m	Diarrhoea	18.1.1902	M	206	Mrs M.J. Starck (widow)	Blesboklaagte Middelburg
250	Schoeman	Stephanus Johannes	M	4	Diarrhoea	18.1.1902	M	207	S.J. & A.J. Schoeman	Vissershoek, Pretoria
251	Strydom	Gert Roelof	M	4	Broncho-pneumonia	18.1.1902	M	209	G.R. & E.J. Strydom	Rietfontein, Heidelberg
252	Nel	John Alfred	M	14 m	Broncho-pneumonia	19.1.1902	M	208	W. & M.M. Nel	Pretoria (town)
253	Van Rooyen	Anna Elizabeth	F	13	Enteric fever	20.1.1902	M	210	I.M. & J.E. van Rooyen	Kopjeskraal Potchefstroom
254	Kruger	Johanna Louisa	F	17	Enteric fever	20.1.1902	M	211	C.J.H. & J.L.J.. Kruger	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
255	Van Schoor	Willem Adriaan	M	21	Pneumonia	20.1.1902	M	212	Son of widow Van Schoor	Bakenlaagte, Bethal
256	Lombaard	Daniel Benjamin	M	7	Anquia pectoris (enteric fever)	20.1.1902	M	214	J.R. & M.C. Lombaard	Palmietfontein, Bethal
257	Snyman	Johanna Elizabeth	F	14 m	Whooping-cough and bronchitis	21.1.1902	M	213	P.E. & M.L. Snyman	Middelpunt, Lydenburg

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258	Emmenis	Pieter Stephanus	M	2	Broncho-pneumonia and diarrhoea	23.1.1902	M	215	S. & S.P. Emmenis	Rietfontein, Waterberg
259	Pretorius	Gertruida Magdalena	F	2	Diarrhoea	24.1.1902	M	216	J.H. & G.M. Pretorius	Lichtenberg (town)
260	Harmse	Daniel Cornelius	M	7	Enteric fever	24.1.1902	M	217	D.G. & G.J. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
261	Van Rooyen	Bernard Gerhardus	M	6m	Diarrhoea	25.6.1902	M	218	I.M. & J.E. van Rooyen	Kopjeskraal, Potchefstroom
262	Smith	Maria Johanna Susanna Magdalena	F	28 m	Bronchitis and pneumonia	27.1.1902	M	219	S. & C.G. Smith	Waterberg, Utrecht
263	Van der Merwe	Susilia Gertruida	F	72	Bronchitis and debility	28.1.1902	M	220	(Widow)	Bloemfontein, Carolina
264	Van Rensburg	Salina Francina Petronella	F	10 m	Diarrhoea	29.1.1902	M	221	S.P.F. & A.H. van Rensburg	Hartebeestfontein, Krugersdorp
265	Botha	Matthys David	M	1	Bronchitis pneumonia	29.1.1902	M	224	J.C.L. & M.M. Botha	Rietfontein, Zoutpansberg
266	De Beer	Johanna Hendrina Alida	F	14 m	Bronchitis pneumonia after measles	30.1.1902	M	222	M.C.J. & J.F. de Beer	Lindleyspoort, Rustenburg
267	Vermaak	Jacobus Phillipus	M	1	Meningitis	30.1.1902	M	223	R.J. & S.E. Vermaak	Kortbegrip, Melmoth
268	Harmse	David Gerhardus	M	2	Gastro-enteritis	31.1.1902	M	225	D.G. & G.J. Harmse	Zuiverfontein, Rustenburg
269	Swartz	Hester Paulina	F	24d	Bronchitis	31.1.1902	M	228	J.J.P. & H.P. Swartz	Bokfontein, Rustenburg
270	De Beer	Wilhelmina	F	3	Diarrhoea, bronchitis and pneumonia	31.1.1902	M	226	M. & S.J. de Beer	Tweefontein, Pretoria
271	Kruger	Elizabeth	F	1	Diarrhoea	31.1.1902	M	227	T.J. & E. Kruger	Wagenpadspruit, Rustenburg
272	Du Plessis	John Gabriel Stephanus	M	11	Enteric fever	1.2.1902	M	229	J.G.S. & S.P. du Plessis	Rooikrantz, Lydenburg
273	Smith	Anna Margrita Catrina	F	13	Broncho-pneumonia	2.2.1902	M	230	J. & E.E. Smith	Doompoort, Rustenburg
274	Vogel	Magdalena Jacoba	F	2	Diarrhoea	2.2.1902	M	231	P.A. & A.S. Vogel	Potchefstroom (town)
275	Swartz	Johanna Margrita	F	27d	Gastro-enteritis	4.2.1902	M	232	J.J.P. & H.P. Swartz	Bokfontein, Rustenburg
276	Janse van Rensburg	Catrina Susanna	F	4	Asthma	4.2.1902	M	233	Adopted child of J.S. & E.S. Janse van Rensburg	Grobbelaarsrecht, Carolina
277	Du Plessis	Catharina Magdalena	F	8m	Measles and convulsions	6.2.1902	M	234	L. & J.M.J. du Plessis	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenburg
278	Trytsman	Martha Elizabeth	F	79	Asthma bronchitis	6.2.1902	M	235	Widow of H.J. Trytsman	Jagdpad, Vryheid
279	Geldenhuys	Maria Elizabeth	F	17	Malaria	6.2.1902	M	237	J.N. & M.A. Geldenhuys	Rietfontein, Potchefsrtoom

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280	Coetzee	Johan Christian Lambrig	M	57	Dysentery	7.2.1902	M	236	G.J.E. Coetzee (wife)	Middelburg (town)
281	Spies	Helena Christina Jacoba	F	32	Enteric fever	7.2.1902	M	237	B.J. Spies (husband)	Hakdoorndraai, Middelburg
282	Kleinhans	Martha Magdalena	F	57	Pneumonia	7.2.1902	M	239	(Widow)	Klipfontein, Rustenburg
283	De Meyer	Jacobus William Johannes	M	1	Broncho-pneumonia	8.2.1902	M	240	R.A. & S.E. de Meyer	Karelsroe (Karlsruhe?), Pretoria
284	Brink	Daniel Johannes	M	8m	Meningitis	8.2.1902	M	241	J.H. & P.D. Brink	Naudesbank, Carolina
285	Kloppers	Anna Elizabeth	F	29	Enteric fever	9.2.1902	M	242	J.C. Kloppers (husband)	Rietfontein, Krugersdorp
286	Van der Walt	Anna Catrina	F	16	Enteric fever	9.2.1902	M	243	A.J.J.L. & P.J. van der Walt	Uitschat, Lichtenburg
287	Van Staden	Jacobus F.	M	2	Measles	10.2.1902	M	244	G.J. & E.M. van Staden	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenburg
288	Van Lelifelt	Malena	F	3	Asthma and broncho-pneumonia	12.2.1902	M	245	A.C. van Lelifelt (widow)	Verkeerde Pan, Carolina
289	Veltman	Benjamin	M	3	Croup	12.2.1902	M	247	F.J. & A.F. Veltman	Bronly, Ficksburg
290	Botha	Jacoba Catrina	F	3	Bronchitis	13.2.1902	M	246	N.G. & J.C. Botha	Waterval, Carolina
291	Van Tonder	Hendrina Haminna	F	14 m	Diarrhoea	13.2.1902	M	248	I.J.A. & J.M. van Tonder	Tweerivier, Rustenburg
292	Harmse	Theunica Christina	F	21	Malaria	14.2.1902	M	249	P.L. Harmse (husband)	Vlakhoek, Rustenburg
293	Spies	Johanna Jacoba	F	3m	Gastro-enteritis	16.2.1902	M	250	J.J. & J.S.M. Spies	Boomplaats, Utrecht
294	Volschenk	Gert Johannes	M	5m	Diarrhoea	17.2.1902	M	251	P.C. & A.G.C. Volschenk	Kromdraai, Krugersdorp
295	Opperman	Catrina Wilhelmina	F	6	Enteric and broncho-pneumonia	18.2.1902	M	252	R. van Jaarsveld & C.G. Opperman	Elandsfontein, Rustenburg
296	Kok	Martina Johanna Margritha	F	14 m	Diarrhoea	20.2.1902	M	253	G.J. & M.J.M. Kok	Vergelegen, Vryheid
297	Geldenhuis	Hester Martha Alletha	F	26	Pneumonia, pleurisy and heart failure	20.2.1902	M	254	P.A. Geldenhuis (husband)	Hartebeestkuil, Standerton
298	Veltsman	Cornelia Fredrikka	F	4	Asthma	21.2.1902	M	256	S.J. & H.M. Veltsman	Klipbank, Ermelo
299	Van Rooyen	Christina Lodovina	F	13	Enteric fever	22.2.1902	M	255	T.P. & C.L. van Rooyen	Vaalbank, Vryheid
300	Steenkamp	Diedrik Johannes	M	6	Meningitis	22.2.1902	M	258	J.C. & W.H. Steenkamp	Buffelfontein, Rustenburg
301	Van Staden	Renier Jacobus	M	9	Dysentery	23.2.1902	M	257	G.J. & E.M. van Staden	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenburg
302	Visagie	Alleta Susanna	F	3	Diarrhoea	24.2.1902	M	259	C.J. & M.M. Visagie	Tweefontein, Pietersburg
303	Erasmus	Margaretha Petronella	F	37	Intestinal obstruction	26.2.1902	M	260	P.R. Erasmus (husband)	Vaalbank, Vryheid
304	Van der Merwe	Gertruida Sophia	F	8m	Meningitis	27.2.1902	M	261	G. & E.M. van der Merwe	Schuilhoek, Vryheid

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305	Kloppers	Christina	F	6m	Broncho-pneumonia	28.2.1902	M	262	B.A. & H.J. Kloppers	Hartebeestfontein, Krugersdorp
306	Van den Berg	Christina Johanna Sophia	F	1	Diarrhoea	28.2.1902	M	263	T.F. & S.M. van den Berg	Paardefontein, Standerton
307	(Black servant)	Nip	F	12	?	28.2.1902	?	-	Servant of Mrs Anna Scheepers	?
308	Snyman	Catrina Helena	F	16	Enteric fever	28.2.1902	M	264	L.M. Snyman (widower)	Kloppan, Rustenburg
309	Volschenk	Catrina Magdalena Elizabeth Johanna	F	2	Broncho-pneumonia	1.3.1902	M	265	J.J. & M.J. Volschenk	Honingklip, Krugersdorp
310	Van Dyk	Frans Johannes	M	12	Dysentery	3.3.1902	M	266	J. & E.J. van Dyk	Elandsvlei, Krugersdorp
311	Van Dyk	Johannes Arnoldus	M	9	Dengue	3.3.1902	M	267	F.J. & A.J. van Dyk	Papkuilsfontein, Standerton
312	Rensburg	Gezina	F	2	Broncho-pneumonia	3.3.1902	M	269	N.P. & J.L. Rensburg	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenberg
313	Van Staden	Isabella Elizabeth	F	6	Measles	4.3.1902	M	268	G.J. & E.M. van Staden	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenberg
314	Marks	Anna Catrina	F	22	Malaria	5.3.1902	M	270	F.C. & M.P. Marks	Modderfontein, Potchefstroom
315	Bonthuisen	Anna Helena	F	24	Pneumonia	5.3.1902	M	271	(Widow)	Holfontein, Krugersdorp
316	Van Tonder	Roedolph Jacobus Petrus	M	2	Diarrhoea and broncho-pneumonia	7.3.1902	M	272	I.J.A. & J.M. van Tonder	Tweerivier, Rustenburg
317	Vermaak	Engela Maria	F	2	Broncho-pneumonia	7.3.1902	M	273	J.S. & E.M. Vermaak	Pivane, Utrecht
318	Botha	Willem Jacobus	M	6m	Infantile convulsions	8.3.1902	M	274	T. & A.S. Botha	Welgevonden, Pretoria
319	Harmse	Magdalena Judith	F	30	Malaria and heart failure	8.3.1902	M	276	G.C. Harmse (husband)	Zuiverfontein Rustenburg
320	Booysen	Marthinus Jacobus	M	11 m	Broncho-pneumonia	9.3.1902	M	275	N.J. & J.E. Booysen	Brakfontein, Bethal
321	Borman (Bredenham?)	Johannes Christian	M	13	Enteric fever	9.3.1902	M	277	J.C. & A.M. Borman (Bredenham?)	Port Ellen, Wolmaransstad
322	Groblaar	Martha Elizabeth	F	22d	Diarrhoea	9.3.1902	M	279	Mrs E.S. Groblaar	Schoonuitzicht, Lydenburg
323	Moolman	Catrina Elizabeth	F	11 m	Broncho-pneumonia	10.3.1902	M	278	C.J. & A.M. Moolman	Klipfontein, Vryheid
324	Bezuidenhout	Jacobus Daniel	M	17 m	Diarrhoea	10.3.1902	M	280	J.L. & J.E. Bezuidenhout	Kameeldrift, Pretoria
325	Combrink	Hendrik Josephus	M	3	Diarrhoea	10.3.1902	M	281	H.J. & S.J.D. Combrink	Pivane, Utrecht
326	Van Rensburg	Hester Margritha	F	22	Enteric fever and diarrhoea	10.3.1902	M	282	(Widow)	Klipkop, Rustenburg
327	Pieterse	David Jacobus	M	1	Broncho-pneumonia	10.3.1902	M	285	D.J. & M.S.C. Pieterse	Middelfontein, Rustenburg
328	Brits	Hester Magdalena	F	24	Enteric fever	11.3.1902	M	283	A.P. Brits (husband)	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
329	Fourie	Johan Lowies	M	16 m	Diarrhoea	11.3.1902	M	284	J. & M.J.M. Fourie	Klipfontein, Middelburg
330	Davids	Marthinus Steyn	M	1	Broncho-pneumonia	12.3.1902	M	286	P.J. & F.M. Davids	Elandsfontein, Potchefstroom
331	Janse van Rensburg	Francina Wilhelmina	F	10 m	Meningitis	13.3.1902	M	287	H.C.M. & F.W. Janse van Rensburg	Wonderplaats, Ermelo
332	Potgieter	Gert Johannes	M	5	Catarrhal enteritis	13.3.1902	M	288	F.J. & A.M.F. Potgieter	Hartebeestfontein, Krugersdorp
333	Bedford	Petronella Josephia	F	9	Pneumonia	14.3.1902	M	289	M.R. & H.P. Bedford	Elandsvlei, Rustenburg
334	Combrink	Susanna Elizabeth	F	7m	Broncho-pneumonia	14.3.1902	M	290	S.L. & M.M. Combrink	Uitzicht, Vryheid
335	Joubert	Dorothea Johanna	F	2m	Convulsions	15.3.1902	M	291	W.F. & A.E.J. Joubert	Onverwacht, Ermelo
336	Mostert	Susanna Josina	F	4m	Debility after measles and broncho-pneumonia	16.3.1902	M	294	J. & G.M.S. Mostert	Langberg, Rustenburg
337	Els	Nicholaas Jacobus	M	4	Malaria	17.3.1902	M	292	N.J. & P.M. Els	Rhenosterfontein, Rustenburg
338	Marks	Christina Johanna Maria	F	4	Diarrhoea	17.3.1902	M	293	P.J. Marks	Rietfontein, Potchefstroom
339	Pietersen	Susanna Johanna	F	16	Enteric fever	17.3.1902	M	295	M.S. Pietersen (widow)	Verkyk, Wakkerstroom
340	Henning	Willem Hendrik	M	12	Meningitis and enteric fever	18.3.1902	M	296	W.H. & S.C.P. Henning	Kosterfontein, Rustenburg
341	Potgieter	William Thomson	M	2	Marasmus	19.3.1902	M	297	H.J.A. & W. Potgieter	Deelspruit, Utrecht
342	Labuschagne	Cornelia	F	2m	Diarrhoea	20.3.1902	M	298	G.J. & G.J. Labuschagne	Vaalbank, Lichtenburg
343	Van Rooyen	Willem Jacobus	M	11 m	Broncho-pneumonia	24.3.1902	M	299	C.J. & H.S. van Rooyen	Doornspruit, Krugersdorp
344	Slaberts	Johanna Jacoba Wilhelmina	F	2	Diarrhoea	24.3.1902	M	300	J.J.S. & E.J. Slaberts	Geelhoutboom, Utrecht
345	Pretorius	Jan Adrian	M	5m	Convulsions	24.3..1902	M	301	J.A. & A.C. Pretorius	Zandfontein, Rustenburg
346	Combrink	Gerhardus Jacobus Hermanus	M	1	Broncho-pneumonia	26.3.1902	M	302	H.J. & S.J.D. Combrink	Pivane, Utrecht
347	Erasmus	Hendrik Jacob	M	11 m	Broncho-pneumonia	27.3.1902	M	303	J.J. & A.M. Erasmus	Lindleyspoort, Rustenburg
348	Van Rensburg	Johanna Sophia	F	23	Malaria	27.3.1902	M	307	G.P. van Rensburg (husband)	Driefontein, Wolmaransstad
349	Coetzee	Johannes Christian Lambrecht	M	1	Dysentery	28.3.1902	M	304	Adopted child of Mrs S.M. Coetzee	Middelburg (town)
350	Jooste	Abraham Johannes	M	1	Diarrhoea	28.3.1902	M	305	D.F. & D.S.C. Jooste	Springboklaagte, Middelburg
351	Hewitt	Berkeley Trevor (child of Sister Hewitt)	M	8m	Broncho-pneumonia	28.3.1902	M	306	W.G. & E.J. Hewitt	Pietermaritzburg (town)

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
352	Volschenk	Petrus	M	4	Broncho-pneumonia	30.3.1902	M	308	P.C. & A.G.C. Volschenk	Kromdraai, Krugersdorp
353	Kruger	Alletha Margritha	F	4m	Convulsions	1.4.1902	M	309	W.F. & J.M. Kruger	Wonderfontein, Potchefstroom
354	Roux	Carolina Petronella	F	2	Diarrhoea	2.4.1902	M	310	W.J.C. & C.P. Roux	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
355	Van der Merwe	Agata Gertruida	F	28	Enteric fever	2.4.1902	M	311	P.A. van der Merwe (husband)	Dwarsvlei, Krugersdorp
356	Kruger	Anna Catrina	F	2	Convulsions	6.4.1902	M	312	A.J. & J.D. Kruger	Kallerskop, Heidelberg
357	Stoop	Albertus Abraham	M	9m	Croup	6.4.1902	M	313	A.A. & H.C. Stoop	Tafelkop, Ermelo
358	Harmse	Stillborn	F	-	Stillborn	6.4.1902	M	314	C.J. & E.R. Harmse	Groenfontein, Rustenburg
359	Kruger	Pieter Frans	M	17 m	Diarrhoea	8.4.1902	M	315	C.J.H. & S.H. Kruger	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenburg
360	Erasmus	Catrina Gertruida	F	59	Cardiac and valvular disease	8.4.1902	M	316	D.J. Erasmus (husband)	Roodepoort, Rustenburg
361	Breedt	Anna Francina	F	3	Convulsions	9.4.1902	M	317	C.C.H.J. & L.J.W. Breedt	Hartebeestfontein, Rustenburg
362	(Black servant)	Klaas	M	17	Pneumonia	10.4.1902	?	-	Servant of O. Brits	?
363	Van Dyk	Jacobus Hendrik	M	8m	Bronchitis	12.4.1902	M	318	S.A.C. & J.C. van Dyk	Tweefontein, Wakkerstroom
364	Van den Berg	Daniel Johannes	M	2	Marasmus	13.4.1902	M	319	B.J. & M.S. van den Berg	Vaalbank, Lichtenburg
365	Havenga	Barend Petrus	M	15d	Diarrhoea	13.4.1902	M	320	B.P. & A.M.E. Havenga	Vlakhoek, Rustenburg
366	Van der Merwe	Adriana Augusta	F	29	Enteric fever	15.4.1902	M	321	G.J. van der Merwe (husband)	Mount Sophia, Vryheid
367	De Beer	Johanna Maria	F	3m	Bronchitis	17.4.1902	M	322	Illegitimate child of G.E. de Beer	Hekpoort, Krugersdorp
368	Smith	Ellie Maria	F	11 m	Convulsions	22.4.1902	M	323	S.J. & S.S. Smith	Brakpan, Vryheid
369	Botha	Hendrina Maria Magdalena	F	4	Diarrhoea	23.4.1902	M	324	J.R.L. & M.M. Botha	Damascus, Ermelo
370	Kriel	Magdalena Jacomina	F	35	Gastric ulcer and pernicious anaemia	23.4.1902	M	325	A.J. Kriel (husband)	Combies, Vryheid
371	Pretorius	Maria Petronella Margaretha	F	45	Acute peritonitis	23.4.1902	M	326	J.L. Pretorius (husband)	Roodeplaat, Pretoria
372	Erasmus	Johannes Isaak	M	3	Bronchitis	23.4.1902	M	327	C.J. & A.M. Erasmus	Streepfontein, Wakkerstroom
373	Wessels	(Unchristened)	M	4m	Marasmus	23.4.1902	M	328	C.J. & W.W. Wessels	Ventersdorp, Potchefstroom
374	Horn	Hendrik Andries Jacobus	M	58	Intestinal obstruction	26.4.1902	M	330	S.H. Horn (wife)	Boekenhoutkloof, Pretoria
375	Smit	(Unchristened)	F	2m	Congenital debility	27.4.1902	M	329	B.G. & M.H. Smit	Barberton (town)
376	Groenewald	Maria Elizabeth	F	2	Broncho-pneumonia	27.4.1902	M	331	P.J.U. & B.M. Groenewald	Vaalpoort, Wakkerstroom

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
377	Viljoen	Hendrina Wilhelmina Elizabeth	F	16	Pneumonia and enteric fever	1.5.1902	M	332	H.L. & H.M. Viljoen	Rietfontein, Rustenburg
378	Snyman	Johannes Jacobus	M	8	Broncho-pneumonia	4.5.1902	M	333	T. & M.E. Snyman	Rietvlei, Krugersdorp
379	Kock	Elzie Petronella	F	3	Croup	5.5.1902	M	334	M.S. & A.S.J. Kock	Roodekop, Utrecht
380	Viljoen	Willem Christian	M	3	Diarrhoea	5.5.1902	M	335	A.C. & E.R. Viljoen	Elandsdrift, Krugersdorp
381	Minnaar	Johanna Catrina	F	28	Diarrhoea	8.5.1902	M	336	I.J.C. & A.M. Minnaar	Beestkraal, Rustenburg
382	Van der Nest	Elizabeth Susanna	F	3	Croup	12.5.1902	M	337	S.P.M. & A.M.G. van der Nest	Middelburg (town)
383	Fourie	Johanna Elizabeth	F	59	Chronic Bright's disease	12.5.1902	M	338	J.L. Fourie (husband)	Klipfontein, Middelburg
384	Botha	Johannes Petrus	M	16	Marasmus and diarrhoea	13.5.1902	M	339	J.J. & M.E. Botha	Driefontein, Ermelo
385	Minnaar	Sophia Magdalena	F	24	Enteric fever and malaria	14.5.1902	M	340	I.C. Minnaar (husband)	Beestkraal, Rustenburg
386	Du Plessis	Catrina Magdalena	F	5	Asthma	16.5.1902	M	341	J.A. & S.M. du Plessis	Zoutpansdrift, Rustenburg
387	Paskin	Hendrina Johanna Catrina	F	17 m	Broncho-pneumonia	18.5.1902	M	342	C.E. & M.W. Paskin	Pretoria (town)
388	Eksteen	Frederick Benjamin Ardendolph	M	1	Marasmus	18.5.1902	M	343	H. D. & M.F. Eksteen	Schoon Uitzig, Carolina
389	Le Roux	Johan Adam Beukes	M	6	Enteric fever	20.5.1902	M	344	C.R. & B.M. le Roux	Palmietspruit, Wakkerstroom
390	De Lange	Johanna Margritha Elizabeth	F	22	Broncho-pneumonia	25.5.1902	M	345	G.M. de Lange (husband)	Kareepan, Bloemhof
391	Viljoen	Maria Hendrina	F	9	Acute lobar pneumonia	26.5.1902	M	346	H.L. & H.M. Viljoen	Rietfontein, Rustenburg
392	Van der Merwe	Daniel Jacobus	M	1	Diarrhoea	27.5.1902	M	347	P.A. van der Merwe (widower)	Dwarsvlei, Krugersdorp
393	Harmse	Willem Johannes	M	13	Enteric fever	28.5.1902	M	348	C.B.S. & C.P.J. Harmse	Leewpoort, Rustenburg
394	Van den Berg	(Unchristened)	F	5m	Diarrhoea	28.5.1902	M	349	L.J.C. & A.M. van den Berg	Onverwacht, Middelburg
395	-	Stillborn Tamil Indian	F	-	Stillborn	28.5.1902	?	-	Agano & Dookanuc	?
396	Smith	Christian Josephus Cornelius	M	2	Diarrhoea	8.6.1902	M	350	W.S. & A.M.H.G. Smith	Brakfontein, Vryheid
397	Steyn	Magdalena Elizabeth Susanna	F	2	Croup	10.6.1902	M	351	M. & C.C. Steyn	Rietkuil, Middelburg
398	Robertse	Jacobus Frederick	M	1	Diarrhoea and convulsions	10.6.1902	M	352	G.J.B. & H.M. Robertse	Tweerivier, Rustenburg
399	Delport	Maria	F	6m	Diarrhoea	13.6.1902	M	353	W.J.J. & S.M. Delport	Babanango, Vryheid

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
400	Kritzinger	(Unchristened)	M	1m	Marasmus	14.6.1902	M	354	S.E. Kritzinger (mother)	Ventershoek, Bethlehem
401	Theunissen	Nicholas Jacobus	M	61	Carcinoma of liver	14.6.1902	M	355	M.J.M. Theunissen (wife)	Lapfontein, Klerksdorp
402	Van der Westhuizen	Jasper Cornelius	M	1	Diarrhoea	18.6.1902	M	356	J.M. & S.G. van der Westhuizen	Modderbult, Heidelberg
403	Britz	Martha Magdalena	F	3m	Convulsions	20.6.1902	M	357	J.N. & J.M. Britz	Zandfontein, Rustenburg
404	Joubert	Anna Elizabeth Johanna	F	58	Cerebral haemorrhage	22.6.1902	M	358	(Widow)	Uitgedacht, Bethal
405	Coetzee	Dirk Jacobus	M	43	Pneumonia	24.6.1902	M	359	C.M. Coetzee (wife)	Roodepoort, Potchefstroom
406	Breedt	Louiza Jacoba Willemina Johanna	F	4	Burns and broncho pneumonia	24.6.1902	M	360	D.J. & M.S. Breedt	Vlakfontein, Rustenburg
407	Duyts	Christian Joel Andries	M	2	Acute laryngitis	24.6.1902	M	361	C.E. & C.E. Duyts	Carolina (town)
408	Cronjé	Maria Margritha	F	9m	Diarrhoea and marasmus	27.6.1902	M	362	D.J. & C.P. Cronjé	Driehoek, Wakkerstroom
409	Erasmus	Hermanus Antonis	M	5m	Gastro-enteritis	27.6.1902	M	363	P.R. Erasmus (widower)	Vaalbank, Vryheid
410	Potgieter	Johannes	M	10 m	Broncho-pneumonia	27.6.1902	M	364	H.P. & S.A. Potgieter	Hartebeestfontein, Krugersdorp
411	Crafford	Johanna Willemina	F	8m	Broncho-pneumonia	1.7.1902	M	366	G.G. & H. D. Crafford	Vlakpoort, Wakkerstroom
412	Gyser	Hendrik Josephus	M	2	Diphtheria	1.7.1902	M	367	L.C. & A.M. Gyser	Piet Potgieters Rust, Waterberg
413	Grobler	Elizabeth Hermina	F	3	Catarrhal enteritis	2.7.1902	M	365	P.L. & A.C. Grobler	Holkrantz, Utrecht
414	Pieterse	Jacobus Christoffel	M	12	Broncho-pneumonia	2.7.1902	M	368	P.J. & S.C.C. Pieterse	Basfontein, Rustenburg
415	Crafford	Johannes Marcus	M	6	Enteric fever	5.7.1902	M	369	G.G. & H.D. Crafford	Vlakpoort, Wakkerstroom
416	Pieterse	Willem Jacobus	M	8	Cardiac failure	5.7.1902	M	370	W. & J. Pieterse	Rietfontein, Rustenburg
417	De Beer	David Johannes	M	1	Acute gastro-enteritis	12.7.1902	M	371	P.J.P. & M.M. de Beer	Vlakfontein, Rustenburg
418	Van Rensburg	Abraham Andries	M	3m	Convulsions	14.7.1902	M	372	P.H. & E.J. van Rensburg	Wolmaransstad (town)
419	Horn	Sarel du Toit	M	31 m	Bronchitis	18.7.1902	M	373	S. d.T. & C.P. Horn	Standerton (town)
420	Robertse	Daniel Jacobus	M	10	Enteric fever, perforation of gut and peritonitis	19.7.1902	M	374	G.J.B. & H.M. Robertse	Tweerivier, Rustenburg
-	Pienaar	Abel Jacobus	M	45	Accident - died in Jacobs Camp Hospital - abdominal internal injuries	20.7.1902	J	-	?	Kroonstad (town)

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
421	Van der Merwe	Catrina Elizabeth	F	14 m	Measles and broncho-pneumonia	25.7.1902	M	375	G.P. & C.J. van der Merwe	Rooidraai, Wakkerstroom
422	De Jager	Maria Elizabeth Hendrina	F	50	Apoplexy	26.7.1902	M	376	J.W. de Jager (husband)	Brakfontein, Utrecht
423	Smith	Engela Elizabeth	F	42	Cerebral congestion	30.7.1902	M	377	J. Smith (husband)	Doornpoort, Rustenburg
424	Erasmus	Maria Magrita	F	59	Acute heart failure	7.8.1902	M	378	C.L. Erasmus (husband)	Klipspoort, Pretoria
425	Dirks	Phillipina Christina	F	13 m	Broncho-pneumonia	7.8.1902	M	379	J.C. & P.C. Dirks	Pretoria (town)
426	Potgieter	Geresina Magrita	F	4	Pneumonia	9.8.1902	M	380	W.F. & G.M.E. Potgieter	Graspan, Bloemhof
427	Hincliff	Thomas	M	-	Stillborn	10.8.1902	M	381	S. & C.M. Hincliff	Pongola Bosch, Utrecht
428	Stell	Marie	F	4	Bronchitis	10.8.1902	M	381	Servant of Mrs van Rooyen	Dundee (town)
429	Schoeman	Christiana	F	66	Dysentery	11.8.1902	M	382	N/A	Doornpoort, Potchefstroom
430	Van Rooyen	(Unchristened)	?	15d	Heart failure	13.8.1902	M	383	T.J. & E.C. van Rooyen	Rondspring, Vryheid
431	Beis	Amoo Rhee	F	2	Spasmodic croup	13.8.1902	?	-	Momosaid & Kurphi	?
432	Malan	Zachria Maria Magrita	F	41	Peritonitis and cardiac failure	14.8.1902	M	384	P.J. Malan (husband)	Avonddal, Ermelo
433	Brits	Maria Salmina	F	33	Peritonitis	15.8.1902	M	385	G.A.P Brits (husband)	Welgevonden, Lydenburg
434	Badenhorst	Martha Jacoba	F	11 m	Broncho-pneumonia	16.8.1902	M	386	C.P.S. & A.M. Badenhorst	Elandsfontein, Pretoria
435	Van Rooyen	Susanna Catrina	F	3	Peritonitis	27.8.1902	M	387	P.H. & S.C. van Rooyen	Wonderfontein, Potchefstroom
436	Bezuidenhout	Pieter Lodewikus	M	39	Chronic dysentery	2.9.1902	M	388	J.C. Bezuidenhout (wife)	Pouwpoort, Potchefstroom
437	Van Wyk	Engela Susanna	F	8	Croup	7.9.1902	M	389	M.C. & E.S. van Wyk	Hoedspruit, Middelburg
438	Bijl	Johanna Elizabeth	F	4m	Marasmus	9.9.1902	M	390	W. & J.E. Bijl	Sluitklip, Krugersdorp
439	Viljoen	Elizabeth Freda	F	2m	Broncho-pneumonia	9.9.1902	M	391	D.J. & M.G. Viljoen	Potchefstroom (town)
440	Hattingh	Catrina Susanna	F	9m	Measles and broncho-pneumonia	14.9.1902	M	392	C.J. & C.W. Hattingh	Ruimhoogte, Pretoria
441	Moolman	Jacob Jacobus	M	9m	Bronchitis	16.9.1902	M	393	P.S.J. & J.H. Moolman	Kaffer Kraal, Standerton
442	Croeser	Eleanor Georgina Frances Josephine	F	19 m	Measles and laryngitis	19.9.1902	M	394	J.H. & M.C. Croeser	Middelburg (town)
443	Trytsman	Hendrik Johannes	M	5m	Broncho-pneumonia	21.9.1902	M	395	D.F. & C.P. Trytsman	Jagtpad, Vryheid
444	Cronjé	Catrina	F	38	Ulcerating colitis	27.9.1902	M	396	D.J. Cronjé (husband)	Driefontein, Wakkerstroom
445	De Beer	Hermanus	M	23d	Marasmus	27.9.1902	M	397	S. & S.S. de Beer	Wolwehoek, Piet Retief

NO	SURNAME	NAMES	GENDER	AGE	CAUSE	DATE	CEMETERY	GRAVE NO	NAME OF PARENTS	RESIDENCE
446	Labuschagne	Anna Elizabeth Magdalena	F	59	Cerebral haemorrhage	3.10.1902	M	398	J.H. Labuschagne (husband)	Grootvlei, Wakkerstroom
447	Thompson	Thomas	M	3m	Gastro-intestinal atrophy	14.10.1902	M	399	Illegitimate child of E. Strydom	Hekpoort, Pretoria
448	Du Preez	Maria Catrina	F	39	Chronic enteritis	18.10.1902	M	400	K.H. & H.J. du Preez	Elandshoek, Pretoria
449	Coetzer	Susara Susanna	F	11 m	Measles	26.10.1902	M	401	J.C. & S.S. Coetzer	Grootvlei, Wakkerstroom
450	Slabbert	Jacob Johannes	M	6m	Marasmus	2.11.1902	M	402	J.J.& A.H. Slabbert	Kaalbaaschfontein, Potchefstroom
451	Robinson	Cecelia Johanna	F	18	Perinephritic abscess	21.11.1902	M	403	H.F. & P.M.S. Robinson	Middelburg (town)
452	Labuschagne	Wilhelmina Cecilia	F	19 m	Burn of arm and head and acute broncho-pneumonia	4.12.1902	M	404	J.H. & W.C. Labuschagne	Grootvlei, Wakkerstroom
453	Engelbrecht	Gertruida Johanna	F	2	Gastro-internal atrophy and exhaustion	8.12.1902	M	405	J.P. & A.J. Engelbrecht	Mooiplaats, Piet Retief
-	Koen	Ignaas Michael (Died en route from Standerton, between Colenso and Estcourt. Was taken from the train at Mooi River by doctor.)	M	4	?	14.9.1901	-	-	L.P. & H. Koen	Vrede (town)

SOURCE LIST

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

1 UNPUBLISHED ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

1.1 Cape Archive Repository, Cape Town (CAR)

Accessions

AG Collection (AG2440): Photo

1.2 Cultural History Museum, Pretoria (CHM)

Photograph Collection

1.3 Durban Archive Repository (DAR)

Archives of the Durban Corporation (3/DBN)

1/1/3/22 - 1/1/3/23: Durban Corporation rough minutes

2/1/1/160 - 2/1/1/169: Letters received

3/1/1/81: Letters despatched

5/2/6/1/16 - 5/2/6/1/17: Durban Corporation report books, 11.4.1901 - 31.3.1904

1.4 Durban College of Education Archives (DCE)

Letters by C.C. Joubert

Wydingsplegtigheidprogram (Inauguration programme), 10 October 1970

1.5 Free State Archive Repository, Bloemfontein (FSAR)

Accessions

R. Zerwick Collection (A 119.767)

1.6 The Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban (KCM)

Accessions

KCM 4260: Bluff Annals

KCM 55075: Plan of Isipingo Church Cemetery

1.7 Local History Museum, Durban (LHM)

Accessions

3582/3 - 3582/9: Passes and train tickets

4994/1: Herinneringe van Salla Grobler van haar verblyf in die Irene, Krugersdorp en Merebank-konsentrasiekampe

1.8 National Archive Repository, Pretoria (NAR)

Accessions

Photograph and Negatives Collection

Ploeger Collection (A 2030)

Memoirs of H.P. Potgieter (A1221)

P.H.S. van Zyl Collection (W19/4A)

Rev. and Mrs P.F. van Straten Collection (W173)

Archives of the Colonial Secretary (CS)

117: Correspondence

151: Correspondence

Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps (DBC)

9: Papers received, Natal

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30: Camp equipment register

33: Consignment notes, goods received, Jun. 1901- Feb. 1902

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117: Register of births and deaths

126 - 127: Register of residents, Merebank

128: Nominal Roll Transvaal residents

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SUMMARY

With the onset of the guerrilla phase of the Anglo-Boer War, the British intensified their land-clearance and scorched-earth policy. This policy involved removing the civilians, i.e. the Boer women and children and the black population, from farms in the former Boer republics, and concentrating them at points in major towns, with easy access to railroads. The aim of this policy was to prevent the Boer families and labourers from supplying the burghers on commando with food, shelter and information.

The hastily erected concentration camps were overcrowded, with inadequate accommodation, meagre rations and poor sanitary conditions. These factors resulted in a high death rate. To relieve the pressure placed on the overcrowded concentration camps in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, it was decided to move some of the following groups of Boer women and children to newly erected concentration camps near Durban: those whose husbands were still on commando; those who were considered to be undesirables in up-country camps because of their pro-republican attitude, and those who were prepared to go voluntarily.

The first concentration camp to be erected in Durban was the Merebank Concentration Camp, about 12,8 km south of the city, on the south coast railway line. This, the largest concentration camp of the Anglo-Boer War, with its more than 8000 inhabitants, was developed on wet and marshy land which was condemned by the Fawcett Commission . Despite their recommendation that the site be moved to another location, it was allowed to remain.

The Merebank Camp, which received its first inhabitants on 13 September 1901, was divided into three sections known as Grasmere, Windermere and Hazelmere. Inhabitants were provided with accommodation either in tents or in wood and corrugated iron huts. Bath-houses and wash-houses were also erected in each of these sections, and the water for the camp was supplied by the Durban

Corporation. A hospital and a school building were also provided.

The camp was administered by the Camp Superintendent, H.M. Bousfield, under the auspices of the Natal Burgher Camps Department. He was assisted by a team of administrators including doctors, a hospital matron and staff, a camp matron and staff, storemen, sanitary staff, clerks, camp police, teachers and many other officials.

Rations such as meat, bread, potatoes, sugar, salt and coffee were received by queuing at one of the commissariat stores on a daily basis. Inhabitants could supplement these rations from one of the six stores which opened in the camp, or from one of the Indian traders who came into the camp with fresh fruit and vegetables. Firewood was also rationed and collected from the fuel depot. Children attended one of the schools which operated in the camp, under the supervision of Mr Hambly, the principal. Religious services and prayer meetings became an important part of camp life and were held regularly, mainly by one of the two resident dominees. Trips into Durban to shop, to visit the beach or to visit family or friends in the prisoner of war camp at Umbilo, or on the prison ships, offered occasional relief from camp life. These outings could, however, only be undertaken once passes had been obtained.

During the camp's existence, 453 of its inhabitants died, mainly owing to measles, respiratory diseases and stomach-related illnesses such as diarrhoea, enteric fever and dysentery. These people were buried at three different cemeteries, namely Isipingo, Clairmont (Jacobs) and Merebank. The total number of deaths recorded at Merebank includes the seven people of colour who died in the camp. The camp closed on 10 December 1902 when the last 96 inhabitants left the camp.

OPSOMMING

Met die aanvang van die guerrillafase van die Anglo-Boereoorlog, het die Britte hul ontruimings- en verskroeide aarde-beleid verskerp. Hierdie beleid het die verwydering van burgerlikes, dit wil sê die Boerevrouens en -kinders sowel as die swart bevolking van die plase in die voormalige Boererepublieke behels. Hierdie mense is dan in sekere hoofsentra met maklike spoortoegang gekonsentreer. Die doel hiervan was om te verhoed dat enige kos, skuiling of inligting deur familie of werkers aan die Boere verskaf is.

Die vinnig opgerigte konsentrasiekampe was oorvol, met ontoereikende behuising, karige rantsoene, swak sanitêre toestande en 'n tekort aan ruimte. Dit het 'n hoë sterftesyfer tot gevolg gehad. Om die druk wat daar op die Transvaalse en Oranjerivier Kolonie konsentrasiekampe geplaas is te verlig, is daar besluit om van die volgende groepe Boerevrouens en -kinders na die nuut gestigte konsentrasiekampe in die Durban-omgewing te verplaas: diegene wie se mans nog op kommando was; diegene wat as onwenslik beskou is as gevolg van, byvoorbeeld, hul pro-republikeinse houding; en die wat vrywillig oorgeplaas wou word.

Die eerste konsentrasiekamp wat in Durban opgerig is, was die Merebank-konsentrasiekamp, sowat 12,8 km suid van die stad op die suidkusspoorlyn. Hierdie kamp, wat met meer as 8000 inwoners die grootste konsentrasiekamp tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog geword het, is op nat en moerasagtige grond opgerig. Hoewel die terrein deur die Fawcett-kommissie afgekeur is en hulle voorgestel het dat die kamp verskuif moes word, het dit nie gebeur nie.

Merebank, wie se eerste inwoners op 13 September 1901 aangekom het, is in drie dele, bekend as Grasmere, Windermere en Hazelmere, verdeel. Die kamp-inwoners is van tente of van huise van hout en sink voorsien. Badhuise en washuise is ook in elk van die drie dele opgerig. Die water in die kamp is deur die

Durbanse Korporasie voorsien. 'n Hospitaal en skool is ook opgerig.

Die kamp is deur die kampsuperintendent, H. M. Bousfield, onder die beskerming van die Natalse Burgerkamp Departement geadministreer. Hy is bygestaan deur 'n span administrateurs, insluitende dokters, 'n hospitaalmatrone en haar personeel, 'n kampmatrone en haar personeel, stoormanne, sanitêre personeel, klerke, kamppolisie, onderwysers en talle ander amptenare.

Rantsoene, soos vleis, brood, aartappels, suiker, sout en koffie, is op 'n daaglikse basis by een van die kommissariaatstore afgehaal. Die ses kampwinkels het aan die kampinwoners die geleentheid gebied om hul rantsoene aan te vul, terwyl vrugte en groente by een van die Indiërhandelaars wat die kamp besoek het, gekoop kon word. Vuurmaakhout is ook gerantsoeneer en moes by die houtdepot afgehaal word. Kinders het een van die kampskole onder toesig van mnr. Hambly bygewoon. Kerkdienste en bidure het 'n belangrike deel van kamplewe behels, en is op gereelde basis, hoofsaaklik deur die twee kamppredikante gehou. Besoeke aan Durban om inkopies te doen of om na die strand toe te gaan of om vir vriende en famile in óf die Umbilo-krygsgevangenekamp óf op een van die krygsgevangeneskepe te gaan kuier, het die eentonigheid van kamplewe verlig. Hierdie besoeke kon slegs onderneem word nadat 'n permit verkry is.

Gedurende die kamp se bestaan is 453 inwoners dood, hoofsaaklik weens siektes soos masels, respiratoriese siektes en maagsiektes soos diarree, ingewandskoors en disenterie. Die gestorwenes is in drie verskillende begraafplase begrawe, naamlik te Isipingo, Clairmont (Jacobs) en Merebank. Die getal oorledenes sluit die sewe gekleurde mense in wat in die kamp gesterf het. Die kamp is op 10 December 1902 gesluit nadat die laaste 96 kamp-inwoners die kamp verlaat het.