The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 was ostensibly a white man’s war and a gentleman’s war; but in practice it was neither one nor the other, and the consequences of this traumatic conflict cast a long shadow over the history of twentieth-century South Africa, and perhaps even beyond.

In this publication, André Wessels (Professor of History at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa) firstly supplies the reader with a concise review of the main events that took place in the course of the war, including all the most important military clashes of the four main phases. In the second part of the book, the role played by black people, brown (so-called “coloured”) people and people of Asian origin during the war – both in a combatant and non-combatant capacity – is discussed. Finally, in the third and last section of the book, the collateral damage caused by the Anglo-Boer War (and its traumatic legacy) is analysed, with special reference to the creation of the internment camps for white and black civilians (up to now usually referred to as concentration camps), and the consequences thereof for all the inhabitants of South Africa.

Based on many years of research with regard to the Anglo-Boer War (in this regard, see the comprehensive source list), this book is essential reading for anyone who would like to know more about the most devastating conflict that has thus far been waged between white people in Southern Africa, but a war that in due course also involved more and more black and brown – and to some extent Asian – people.

Specialists would surely benefit from this book and wish to have this work on their shelves. The clarity of detail in all sections will make it a most useful work to serious students, but the author’s main purpose is to reach a wider audience, to increase their knowledge and understanding without simplifying or avoiding the complexity of the historical questions.

- Dr Rodney Atwood (United Kingdom)

The value of this book, in my opinion, lies in the fact that the author has captured in a succinct but excellent manner, the involvement of all South Africans, directly or indirectly, in the Anglo-Boer War. Truth to tell, I have never read a better analysis than this of the traumatic consequences of the war for the whole South African population.

- Prof. O.J.O. Ferreira (South Africa)
THE ANGLO-BOER WAR 1899-1902

*White man’s war, black man’s war,
traumatic war*

ANDRÉ WESSELS
In memory of
Frik Jacobs (1942-2011)
Director of the Anglo-Boer War museum
in Bloemfontein (1992-2009)
Other books by André Wessels include the following:

- *Anglo-Boer War diary of Herbert Gwynne Howell* (editor; Pretoria, 1986)
- *Die oorlogsherinneringe van kommandant Jacob Petrus Nese* (editor; *Christiaan de Wet-annale* 7, 1987)
- *Egodokumente: persoonlike ervaringe uit die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902* (editor-in-chief; Bloemfontein, 1993)
- *Britse fortifikasies in die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902)* (co-author, with J. Hattingh; Bloemfontein, 1997)
- *Lord Roberts and the war in South Africa 1899-1902* (editor; Stroud, England, 2000)
- *South Africa’s frigates and destroyers 1944-1985* (*Naval Digest* 11, 2005)
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Preface

More than a century and a decade after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 raged in what is today the Republic of South Africa, this clash between the mighty British Empire and two small Boer republics still fascinates people and elicits controversy. It is not the purpose of this study to analyse the war of 1899 to 1902 in depth, but rather to provide a broad introduction to the conflict, with many endnote references to sources where more information can be obtained, as well as a fairly comprehensive source list for those who would like to consult some of the many other sources on the history of the war. The traumatic consequences of the war will, however, be discussed and analysed in some detail. Hopefully, both the serious scholar of the war, as well as general members of the public who are interested in the events of 1899 to 1902, will find something of value in the publication. The concise information supplied about all the major clashes that took place should also assist the reader who is travelling around in South Africa and visiting battlefields to acquire a better understanding of the events that took place at a particular site.

When a military conflict is studied, it is important that there should be clarity regarding the main military events of that particular war. Consequently, in Part 1 of this study, a concise review is provided of all the main battles and sieges of the war, as well as of the main guerrilla and counter-guerrilla operations. This portion of the book is based on an earlier Afrikaans publication by the author, namely Die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902: ’n oorsig van die militêre verloop van die stryd (Bloemfontein, 1991); but for the purposes of this new publication, it has been somewhat expanded. Obviously, the events described in Part 1 were initiated by the white military commanders on both sides of the conflict; but their decisions and actions had far-reaching implications for many other people, including white and black civilians, and also for black, coloured and Asian people in general. Consequently, in Part 2 of the book, the military role of black, coloured and Asian people during the war is discussed. This part of the book is based on another earlier Afrikaans publication by the author, namely Die militêre rol van swart mense, bruin mense en Indiërs tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902) (Bloemfontein, 1998). Once again, it has been somewhat expanded for the purposes of this new publication.
Finally, in Part 3, the traumatic consequences and legacy of the Anglo-Boer War, which may be traced throughout the twentieth century, will be evaluated. After all, one cannot understand the history of twentieth-century South Africa (including the country’s political developments) without knowledge of, or insight into the traumatic history of the Anglo-Boer War and the consequences it had for the country’s white, black, brown (coloured) and Asian inhabitants. Of course, all wars are by nature traumatic, but all participants do not necessarily suffer trauma equally. In this study, the emphasis is, of course, placed on the trauma caused by a particular and most devastating war in South Africa’s history; a war that was – as Emily Hobhouse pointed out in her book published in 1927 (see the Source List) – a war without glamour. Part 3 of the study is primarily based on a paper that was presented at a conference held at the University of Toronto in Canada (May 2004), and forms part of the research that was conducted, over the course of many years, on the traumatic and other consequences of the Anglo-Boer War. This research also featured in a paper presented at the 34th annual congress of the International Commission for Military History held in Trieste in Italy (September 2008) and in the concomitant congress publication *Military conflicts and civil populations: total wars, limited wars, asymmetrical wars* (Rome, 2009), pp. 539-556. See also the earlier publications, “Die traumatiese nalatenskap van die Anglo-Boereoorlog se konsentrasiekampe”, *Journal for Contemporary History* 26(2), December 2001, pp. 1-20; F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth* (Cape Town, 2001), pp. 244-245, 250, 254-257, 265 and the Afrikaans version by F. Pretorius (ed.), *Verskroeide aarde* (Cape Town, 2001), pp. 244-245, 250, 254-257, 265. Of necessity, there is some degree of overlapping between Parts 1, 2, and 3 of the study, and where necessary, cross-references are supplied.

Throughout the publication, concise biographical information (for example regarding rank, full Christian names, year of birth and year of death) in respect of all the persons mentioned in the text is provided – as far as it was possible to obtain such information. More information on these people can be found in the *Dictionary of South African biography*, the *Dictionary of national biography*, and in *Who was who*.

Since the Anglo-Boer War centenary, many new books and articles have been published on the war of 1899 to 1902, and where possible, new
insights have been incorporated into the text. See also the Source List for additional sources that can be consulted.

The Anglo-Boer War was a white man’s war, a black man’s war, but also a war that affected coloured and Asian people, as well as women and children of all cultural groups, and traumatised hundreds of thousands of people, including British soldiers and their families. Hopefully this publication will stimulate debate; and readers are encouraged to consult at least some of the sources (referred to in the endnotes and Source List), which provide more information regarding certain aspects of the fascinating, albeit tragic topic of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902.

In this study, the name “South Africa” is used in the geographical sense of the term, because South Africa as a unitary state was only established in 1910. The author wishes to convey a sincere word of appreciation to the following persons: Ms Izette Bredenkamp for general research assistance; Ms Ansie Olivier for typing the manuscript; Ms Ina Malan for assistance with regard to the final manuscript; Ms Alice de Jager for the language editing of the text; Ms Etna Labuschagne for assistance with regard to the photos; the War Museum of the Boer Republics for allowing me to use some of the photos in their vast collection, and Mr Wikus van Zyl of SUN MeDIA Bloemfontein for undertaking the publication of this book, to coincide with the commemoration of the 110th anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War.

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31 May 2011