Women and gender in the South African War, 1899–1902

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The gendered character of the South African War has operated at two levels – both then and now the war has been seen almost entirely as a masculine experience. For the British in 1899, women had no place in war. Women were at best a useful propaganda tool, like the Uitlander (foreigner or outsider) refugees, touted as victims of a callous enemy in a war for justice and equity (Cammack 1990; van Heyningen 1984). In a pioneering work Jacklyn Cock has argued that war is a 'gendering experience':

> It [war] both uses and maintains the ideological construction of gender in the definitions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Women are widely cast in the role of 'the protected' and 'the defended', often excluded from military service, and almost always…excluded from direct combat. Dividing the protector from the protected, defender from defended, is crucial to both sexism and militarism. (1991: x)

It is in the nature of conflict to create stereotypes, to formulate the enemy as 'the other' and the sufferers on the home side as 'victims'. Only with more dispassionate reflection can the multiple stories, the layers of experience and the totality of war be uncovered (Cooke 1996, cited in Vietzen 1999). In the last 15 years, as the binaries of war – civilian and military, home front and war front, women as passive victims and men as defenders or aggressors – have become more obviously blurred, western feminist historians have begun to examine more subtly the way in which gender is constructed by and through war. Writing in 1990, the editors of *Gendering War Talk* observed that:

> A culturally produced activity that is as rigidly defined by sex differentiation and as committed to sexual exclusion as is war points to a crucial site where meanings about gender are being produced, reproduced, and circulated back into society. After biological reproduction, war is perhaps the arena where division of labor along gender lines has been the most obvious, and thus where sexual difference has seemed the most absolute and natural. The separation of 'front'

and 'home front' has not only been the consequence of war but has also been used as its justification. (Cooke & Woollacott 1993: ix)

One reason why the literature on gender and war has evolved so slowly is that most academic writing on the subject, at least in English, has been the work of British and American historians. Neither country was invaded during either of the world wars of the twentieth century and, since the eighteenth century, only the Americans, during the civil war of the mid-nineteenth century, have had any experience of war fought on home ground. As a result, despite the horrors of conflict in twentieth century Europe, they have tended to see war as a relatively positive, empowering experience for women (Brayborn & Summerfield 1987; Marwick 1977). But the hostilities of the late twentieth century, the Bosnian war and the use of child soldiers in Africa, for instance, have forced western historians to reconsider their understanding of war. Women as soldiers, the use of rape as an instrument of war, the contribution of women to the war economy – all these features, and others, have led to a more complex exploration of gender and war.

The South African experience of war has been more neglected than most, despite our legacy of conflict and the huge body of military history which has been produced. In the latter half of the twentieth century other agendas have prevailed. For Afrikaners the history of Boer women has been deliberately constructed to serve the ends of Afrikaner nationalism (Brink 1990; Grundlingh 2002; Stanley 2006). On the Left, other issues, notably resistance to colonialism and apartheid, have been more important. Cooke and Woollacott (1993) suggest that violence is a primary analytical category in understanding the war experience. Yet this is not necessarily the case. For women across the spectrum in the South African War disempowerment, deprivation and disease were often more significant realities. At the same time, although it was disruptive, for a few war was positive; it could be occasionally exhilarating and, more rarely, offer fresh opportunities. But gendered experiences in South Africa play themselves out in a social context which is also penetrated by race and class divisions. Almost invariably the positive experiences were those of more affluent middle-class, white women. The working classes, black and white, starved most and lost more children. In addition, they are usually almost invisible in the record. Only rare fragments give us a glimpse of their lives, and these glimpses are often mediated through the eyes and voices of the middle class, be they well-intentioned philanthropists, *dominees* (ministers) and their wives, or unsympathetic doctors.

Almost all writing on women in the South African War has focused on the plight of the Boer women and children. Like the Uitlander refugees, Boer women are seen as victims of an unjust war; the emphasis has been on passive suffering, a historiographical trend which has continued into the present (Alberts 2005; Changuion et al. 2005; Coetzer 2000; Otto 1954, 2005; Raath 2003).[1] In a paper written at the time of the recent centenary Helen Bradford argued that Boer women should be seen in a more active role, as the real '*bitter-einders*' ('bitter-enders' – Boers who refused to accept defeat) who urged their men to continue their fight. Such a view is not new but her contention that Boer

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men should be seen as essentially domestic puts this argument into a fresh perspective, placing the Boer home at the centre of Boer social life (Bradford 2002). For the Boers the home front became the military front, both on the farms and in the camps. The British had hoped that the scorched earth policy would bring a speedy end to the war. However, not only did the camp women encourage their men to continue fighting, but the knowledge that the women were not left unprotected on the veld, and spared the task of caring for the families themselves, Boer men were able to remain on commando.

Ironically, political emphasis on the plight of the Boer women in the camps has stultified research on the camps themselves (van Heyningen 2005).[2] British women, so often enthusiastic jingoes, have attracted even less sympathy or interest except for Vietzen (1999) and van Heyningen and Merrett (2002). Only fairly recently have black men received attention but their women do not appear (Genge 2002; Kessler 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003; Mbenga 2002; Mohlamme 2001; Warwick 1983). That black women had a role to play in this war continues to be ignored; the impact of the war on their lives has received even less attention. More than this, the main records relating to their wartime experiences have been gutted, leaving only chance fragments with which to reconstruct their lives.[3] Yet war is a social phenomenon, a crisis which tells us a great deal about social attitudes and the way in which society functions under stress. Women, as fully as men, are part of the social condition and no study of war which obliterates them can be regarded as complete.

The greater part of this chapter focuses on the concentration camps, which have been the subject of remarkably little research. Parts of the sections dealing with the refugees, the siege towns and political change have been published previously (van Heyningen 1984, 1999, 2001, 2002a).

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The concentration camps

The concentration camps[4] were a profoundly gendered experience at almost every level. Women's camps[5] were run, not just by men, but by *military* men who were part of a male culture isolated from women and the world of women. Women's needs were little understood and were discounted. Not only was the removal from their homes, the focus of their authority in the family, disempowering, but in the camps their right to manage their lives was restricted by an authoritarian male dominance, by unfamiliar regulations and by the imposition of an alien culture, often promoted by an unsympathetic medical profession. Added to this, in the rhetoric of war the enemy were the 'other'; Boer women, regarded as unfeminine, as peasants, were contrasted with British femininity, fit subjects for the influence of British civilisation. Boer women, however, unlike the women in the black camps, were not silenced. In the camps they often expressed their anger loudly and vigorously. They recorded their experiences on paper, in diaries, letters, memoirs and sworn statements (Stanley 2006; van Heyningen 2005). Black women, on the other hand, offered no grist to the mill of wartime propaganda. In a racist

South Africa their affairs were of little interest, then or later, to the white keepers of records. Apart from a few statistics, their presence has been almost entirely expunged from the files.[6] Moreover, the traumas of the twentieth century have largely erased popular memory of the camps amongst blacks. Their experience can often only be extrapolated from that of Boer women.

The earliest concentration camps, such as those in Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria, were unplanned – they were usually little more than an aggregation of displaced people who needed relief. As black locations became overcrowded, refugees spilled over into unplanned settlements on the fringes of the original town locations. For a considerable time the British authorities gave no thought to the future. Sir Alfred Milner (Lord Milner from 1901) and the military governors were intent upon establishing civilian rule; the relief of destitute families was usually a minor consideration. Eventually about 18 white camps were established in the Transvaal and another 13 in the Orange River Colony (ORC).[7] The early black camps were usually satellites to the white camps with a few exceptions such as Edenburg and Thaba 'Nchu in the ORC, which were entirely independent establishments. They were even more ad hoc in their origins than the white camps.

There were several reasons for the lack of planning, even after the scorched earth policy was formally launched by Lord Kitchener in early 1901. Although it was clear by May 1900 that the fall of Bloemfontein and Pretoria had not ended the conflict, the British still expected that the war would not last long. The need for forward planning was not raised for months. Second was the belief that Britain was acting extraordinarily generously by offering aid to the women and children of the enemy.[8] A third factor arose from the divided interests of the British authorities. Kitchener's only consideration was to end the war as rapidly as possible; civilians were not his concern. However, they were his responsibility for much of 1900 and the middle months of 1901, when Milner was in England. Kitchener left the administration of the camps to his subordinates, who took care not to disturb his peace of mind on the subject. Until November 1901 the War Office failed to pass critical statistical information to the Colonial Office which was, consequently, not fully informed of the rising mortality in the camps, despite the revelations of Emily Hobhouse (Spies 1977). There was also a tendency on the part of government politicians to disregard Hobhouse's disclosures as opposition 'noise', not to be given too much credence.

Thus, although the camps had nominally been handed over to civilian control in January 1901 (Spies 1977), the administration was still military: in the Transvaal Major-General JG Maxwell, Military Governor of Pretoria, held the reins, his subordinate being WK Tucker, a surveyor and the only civilian in the top ranks of the camp administration; in the ORC ultimate responsibility was that of Major HJ Goold-Adams, while the camp administration was in the hands of Captain Arthur Trollope, a relatively low-level military man seconded to the civil administration. These men, especially Maxwell who had Kitchener's ear, were concerned primarily with defending their turf and protecting

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their reputations. They told their masters what they wanted to hear – that there were no real problems in the camps, that the inmates were content, that the rising mortality was merely the result of a passing childhood epidemic. When they had to admit that there was a problem, they blamed the Boers themselves. The highest civilian authority, Sir Alfred Milner, had little to do with the camps until his return to South Africa in November 1901, although he could hardly fail to have been aware of the growing outcry in the British press and Parliament. Once he decided to grasp the nettle, however, conditions changed rapidly and decisively.

It was left to the military men on the ground, then, to manage the crisis of 1901. Oblivious of the different needs of women and children, military standards were applied to the organisation of the camps. Bell tents were expected to house 15 soldiers, therefore they should house 15 civilians, even though soldiers were constantly on the move and had few possessions, while families lived in the tents for months with their household possessions. It did not occur to military men, many of them unmarried, that the concentration of young children was a breeding ground for disease.

Food was supplied in the form of ration scales, similar to those used for the army, prisons, and comparable institutions. It is not clear who was responsible for drawing up the original scales, but a critical feature seems to have been the assumption that the energy needs of camp people were less than those of soldiers (or even prisoners) since they were not engaged in hard labour. The quantity of food for children was half that of adults and there was no regard for the special needs of babies and toddlers.[9] Cost was a critical consideration, with white refugees in the ORC rationed at nine pence a day and blacks at four pence halfpenny.[10] Originally there was also a punitive element in the Transvaal scales, with the families of men on commando receiving no meat, but this was abandoned as early as March 1901 (Cd 819; Spies 1977). The only nutritional elements in the rations were meat, flour,[11] salt and sugar. Even had the quality been good, on this diet declining health was inevitable.[12] In actual fact the meat, especially, was often inedible, lacking in fat, sometimes diseased, occasionally bad.[13] Black ration scales were even more inadequate. Meat was provided at the rate of only one pound per week for adults (compared with half a pound a day for whites) and the diet was heavily dependent on mealies. It is now recognised that it was exactly the kind of diet which contributed to pellagra.[14] From early on some doctors urged that children be provided with a more suitable diet but their requests were refused. 'The scale of rations as already laid down cannot be altered,' Trollope told Doctors Symonds and van der Wall in Kroonstad camp in February 1901. 'If however young children are sick, they can be put on Hospital diet, and be supplied with milk, and what is necessary.'[15]

Male assumptions permeated much of the administration of the camps. Despite the numerical predominance of women and children, refugees were invariably referred to as 'he'. Concern about the mischief-making potential of idle able-bodied men meant that work was provided for men, ranging from the hard labour of digging and trenching to working in carpenter shops, making boots and managing camp livestock. Since camp

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work was paid, usually at the rate of one shilling a day, male-headed households were able to supplement their rations while those without working men were at a double disadvantage. Not only did they not have the additional income, women also had to do the heavy work of carrying water and fuel, sometimes over considerable distances. Almost the only women who were employed in the camps were the young women who worked in the hospitals as 'probationers'. As the camps became more sophisticated and sports were introduced, along with schools, again the emphasis was on games for boys. Cricket bats and balls, rugby balls and other such equipment was purchased. Girls were not entirely precluded from sports and tennis courts were built in some camps, but their needs were rarely mentioned in the camp reports.

By November 1901 it had become obvious to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, and to the High Commissioner, now Lord Milner, that urgent changes were needed in the camps. In the process the camps became increasingly 'Indianised', medicalised and feminised. For the Colonial Office, which had taken over the full management of the camps from the War Office, the obvious source of men skilled in the management of civilian camps was the Indian Medical Service (IMS), which had operated in plague camps in the previous decade. Colonel JS Wilkins (in the ORC) and Lieutenant-Colonel SJ Thomson (in the Transvaal), both military doctors, were recruited from the IMS and they introduced into the camp administration a number of fellow IMS recruits.[16] Their salaries, at £1 000 per annum, were strikingly larger than those of the previous incumbents who had had to shoulder the burden of the worst months. It is not clear, though, that their presence made much difference to the camps. Their main focus was on sanitation, where improvements had been largely achieved by 1902 anyway. They did, however, relieve Milner from the day-to-day responsibility of the camps. The black camps had already, by May 1901, been put into the hands of a Canadian officer, Major GF de Lotbiniere, who had a similar background in the Indian plague camps.

In the early months of the camps there were few trained medical personnel and more were not easily recruited from South Africa, in wartime, when the army attracted most skilled professionals. Doctors in the camps were usually part-time, local district surgeons or drawn from the Royal Army Medical Corps serving nearby military camps. There was also a shortage of qualified nurses in South Africa, where there was still little formal training available. A handful were recruited from the Uitlander refugees living at the coast. Mrs Bullen, who had been in Springfontein camp almost from its inception, typified the position of many of the medical staff who worked in the camps during the crisis of 1901. She resigned at the end of 1901, broken in health.[17]

A first step in improving the health of the camps was the decision to recruit trained nurses in Britain. The large-scale employment of women in this way was an indication of the extent to which middle-class women's labour had become socially acceptable. Advertisements in the British press had a considerable response and some hospitals must have been almost denuded of staff. Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, for instance, lost

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Camp staff had little more comfort than the burgher inmates. Here they are re-erecting their tents after they had blown down in a storm.

five nurses at one time. Eventually about 100 trained nurses went to the ORC camps and as many to the Transvaal. Surviving application forms indicate the broad profile of these nurses. Most came from middle-class homes, the daughters of businessmen, farmers or, occasionally, of clergymen; one or two had medical fathers. None was very young; most were between about 28 and 35 years of age. Most were unmarried although there was the occasional widow amongst them. They came to South Africa for a variety of reasons. One or two had brothers serving in the British army; a few had travelled abroad before and probably came to South Africa out of a sense of adventure and a desire to see the world. The overwhelming reason, however, seems to have been financial. The salaries these nurses had earned in Britain were paltry – none earned more than £40 a year. In the camps they were offered £10 a month, while matrons received £12, with board and lodging supplied, and free passages to and from South Africa.[18]

Life in the camps was hard. The nurses' accommodation was less crowded than that of the Boer families, but they lived in the same tents, threadbare and prone to collapse in the wind and rain. They received the same rations although they were allowed to supplement the food with 'medical comforts' – rice, jam and butter, for instance – but they could not get fresh fruit and vegetables either. The work was hard although the use of black orderlies relieved them of some of the more unpleasant tasks. Because they spoke no Dutch, they had difficulty communicating with their patients, with the result that their intentions were often misunderstood. Stress manifested itself in various ways.

Drunkenness was a problem from the first, especially since alcohol was widely used as a 'medical comfort' for the patients.[19] Exhaustion probably made the nurses more vulnerable to infection and substantial numbers contracted typhoid fever; at least two died in the service of the camps. And they quarrelled, over status, over salaries and over perceived slights or maltreatment.

At Brandfort camp Nurse Wood was 'constantly knocking up, persisting in working when unfit to do so, with the result that she is confined to bed for days together'.[20] But Nurse Wood's ongoing problems suggest other coping mechanisms. A couple of months later the doctor reported that she had had to go to Bloemfontein to see a dentist. 'She is a very good nurse, but it is my duty to inform you that on more than one occasion I found her under the influence of liquor,' he told the chief superintendent.[21] Nurse Allen at Heilbron was another problem. Doctor Tregaskis begged that she be found employment elsewhere. He had nothing to say against the work she did, he explained. It was rather her mode of doing it. 'Her chief fault lies in an unhappy knack of rubbing people including patients the wrong way. When she went on leave and there was no more of her "continual and needless scoldings", it was a great relief not to have to pour oil on troubled waters daily.'[22]

Friction between nurses was a regular problem. Nurses Hunter and Headland at Aliwal North asked that Nurse McLeod be removed. The reason is not given but Nurse McLeod defended herself indignantly, declaring that false reports had been made of her, that she had been left without guidance when she first arrived and it was purely accidental that she had failed to clean soiled beds. Both the children concerned were quite old enough to ask for the necessaries of life, and 'to treat them as babies never occurred to my mind'. She was prepared to take her 'unjust dismissal' to court. Unfortunately she already had a bad record from Bloemfontein camp. There she had left her patients without reporting and had been a careless nurse. Moreover, her conduct had been 'rather suspicious' as she constantly allowed the 'drunken dispenser Mr Kerr in her tent' when she was in bed at night. In her turn, Nurse McLeod claimed that Dr Pern had picked the lock containing delicacies for the patients and had carried off eggs and liquor. The point here is not to highlight the deficiencies of the nurses, most of whom performed admirably, but to draw attention to the human responses to the hardships which they encountered.[23]

Few of these British nurses remained in South Africa after the war; even those who wished to do so found it difficult to obtain work in an overcrowded postwar market. Possibly a more important legacy of the camp hospitals in the long term was the use of probationers, young Boer women who were employed in the hospitals as assistants. These young women did not indicate why they were willing to do such work but they may well have done so for a variety of motives. They were paid, at the rate of between one shilling and two shillings and six pence a day; they received additional rations in the form of 'medical comforts'; they could serve their people by ameliorating the alien and harsh atmosphere of the hospitals; and the work relieved some of the monotony of

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camp life. The British doctors responded to them in various ways – probably a better indication of their own prejudices than the quality of the probationers. Doctor Kendall Franks complained in his inspection report that, 'They are very slow and difficult to train. They do not take kindly to hard or disagreeable work, and are not particular in the matter of cleanliness' (Cd 819: 331). Dr Pern in Bloemfontein camp, on the other hand, believed that they were quick at learning.[24]

In general, as the end of the war approached, doctors were inclined to view the young Boer women more favourably. Doctor Pratt Yule, the medical officer of health for the ORC, believed that most had entered the hospital service to vary the monotony of camp life and to earn a little money but, he noted, some had become interested in the work and were becoming extremely good nurses. 'Many of these girls have little or nothing to look forward to when the time comes for the breaking up of the camp hospitals, and it is possible that a much better training could be gained in the Refugee Camps, provided the matter is taken in hand.'[25] Pratt Yule drew up a syllabus and started formal classes in some of the camps, but the initiative foundered with the end of the war. Only a couple of young women continued their training in civilian hospitals. Nevertheless, the experience may well have begun to modernise nursing in the home, and contributed to the move of Afrikaans women into nursing in the postwar years (Marks 1994).

By the end of 1901 the situation in the camps had changed dramatically. Camps now had up to five full-time doctors and as many professional nurses, in addition to Boer volunteers. Doctors now earned between £500 and £800 a year (rather more than the camp superintendents), while nurses were paid £10 a month, considerably more than most had been earning before. Salaries are indicative of status, and these doctors and nurses were accorded a new respect by the camp administration, contributing sometimes to clashes between personnel. Doctors increasingly laid down the law on the sanitary management of the camps, while professional nurses refused to share their mealtimes with Boer probationers. A hierarchy of authority was also established amongst the nurses, with matrons responsible not only for the administration of the hospital wards, but also for much of the management of the women in the camps.

For many of the Boer women the relationship between doctors and patients was extraordinarily disempowering. By the end of the nineteenth century, when the management of disease through public health measures such as clean water and effective sanitation had done much to reduce the huge mortality rate in industrial towns, the status of doctors had been considerably elevated. Doctors claimed, and were often accorded, the right to pontificate on a variety of topics, not necessarily medical (Deacon 1997; van Heyningen 1989). On the other hand, in the Boer home, the mother was the caregiver. Now, confronted by unfamiliar and intractable diseases, including the appalling *cancrum oris*, a complication of measles which resulted in a form of gangrene of the jaw and was usually fatal, they had little faith in British medicine. Tant Alie Badenhorst complained that the British doctor in the Klerksdorp camp was unable to help her ailing child. Eventually she obtained permission to send for her old 'herb doctor':

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> …as he had no diploma, he could not really take doctor's work, but he doctored the Kaffirs. He had, anyhow, twice saved Wollie from death…and I clung fast to him as my last straw…Well, Mr Steyn gave the child a powder and ten minutes after that he was damp with sweat and we could hope. (Badenhorst 1923: 239)

Maria Fischer was equally dubious about the efficacy of British medicine: *'Ek het die doktor ingeroep om moeilikheid te voorkom, maar ek was bang om sy medisyne te gebruik. Ons gebruik die gewone huismiddels…'* (I called in the doctor to avoid trouble, but I was afraid to use his medicines. We use the ordinary household remedies) (Fischer 1964: 44).

Doctors became a major focus of the women's resentment, sometimes with good reason. The Brandfort doctor seems to have been a thoroughly dishonest man, while three doctors in Bethulie camp were dismissed at one time for drunkenness and sexual peccadilloes (Cd 893; Fischer 1964). Above all, however, doctors in the early twentieth century had few therapies for the multitude of ailments which beset the camp inmates. Enteric fever could be limited by vigilant sanitary controls and an 'antitoxin' existed for diphtheria. Apart from that, western medicine offered little more than traditional Boer remedies could. It was not surprising that the women often hid their sick children from the doctors to prevent their hospitalisation where they believed the children were starved and neglected. For Boer women this war involved a violent modernisation of a pre-industrial social ethos, which greatly enhanced the bitterness of conflict and defeat (van Heyningen 2002).

Over time the controversy about the camps came to be seen as a 'women's issue'; not only was it about women, it was about male versus female styles of aid – impersonal, masculine relief versus feminine personalised philanthropy. For men like Milner, relief meant work for unemployed men, both on the Poor Law principle that the poor should work for their relief, and because idle men, 'loafers', were regarded as potentially mischief-making. Aid for women was incidental to this primary objective. On the other hand, philanthropy, although it had become increasingly professional and depersonalised in Britain by the late nineteenth century, was traditionally women's work. Thus Lady Hobhouse, Emily Hobhouse's aunt, wrote to the War Office in October 1900, inquiring about relief for women and children and offering assistance.[26]

It was this interest which led to Emily Hobhouse's visit to South Africa and her condemnation of the camps (Spies 1977). But it was the style of her investigations, as much as the matter, which set her apart from the male administrators whom she encountered. In one of the few perceptive studies of Emily Hobhouse, Liz Stanley has noted that for Major Goold-Adams, lieutenant-governor of the ORC, the problem with Hobhouse and the South African Women and Children's Distress Fund was their 'personal sympathy' for the Boer women. 'He believed that gifts could be dealt out in a machine-like routine…I said I could not work like that, I must treat people like fellow creatures, and share their troubles. He believed this unnecessary' (Stanley 2005: 73). In

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the suspicious atmosphere of wartime South Africa, sympathy for the enemy was regarded as disloyal at the very least.[27]

The most striking evidence for this feminisation of the camps was the War Office appointment of a 'Ladies' Commission' in mid-1901 to investigate conditions there. The neglect of the history of the camps has meant that the Ladies' Commission has been almost entirely ignored. Little has been published on the reasons for the decision of the War Office to appoint a commission of women to investigate conditions in the camps. It was probably because the British authorities had also come to see the camps as a 'women's issue' that the War Office made its path-breaking decision to appoint a commission of ladies to investigate camp conditions. Paula Krebs has noted:

> The appointment of the Fawcett Commission to investigate the camps was truly a remarkable move on the part of the War Secretary. Never before had there been a government commission, official or unofficial, made up entirely of women, let alone a commission led by a suffragist. The appointment of the commission, and the action taken in response to its (and, uncredited, Emily Hobhouse's) recommendations, testifies not only to the changing status of women in public life but also to the increasing priority of women's issues in public discourse, especially to the press. (1999: 78)

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From the War Office perspective, not only would these women subvert Hobhouse's feminisation of the camp problems, but they would offer the modern woman's solution to them. The hostile presentation of the commission in Afrikaner literature on the camps, as little more than a whitewash, has been widely accepted. In fact, most of the women on the commission had an impeccable record in social and medical work and in the care of women in particular.[28] The head of the commission, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, was a leading figure in the women's suffrage movement, and had considerable experience in government administration as the amanuensis for her blind husband, when he was Postmaster General in WEG Gladstone's Liberal government (Strachey 1931).

Although camp superintendents were sometimes inclined to dismiss the criticisms of the Ladies' Commission, Chamberlain and Milner took their reports seriously and forced their subordinates to do likewise. Some changes were already under way by the time their report was published, but it was the Ladies' Commission which instigated improvements in the diet – above all fresh vegetables, a soup kitchen for the children, and more appropriate food for infants. They also ensured that all the camp inmates had beds, and that the camps were reduced in size by sending several thousand families to the coast in Natal and the Cape (Cd 893).

The changes which occurred at the beginning of 1902 included a shift in mental attitude of the authorities to the inmates. Some of the camp staff took considerable pride in their achievements, to the extent that they began to regard the camps as semi-permanent training grounds for these new British subjects. Dr Pratt Yule, the medical officer of health for the ORC, established a formal curriculum of lectures and classes for

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This photograph was typical of the formal, posed portrayals sent to anxious menfolk in the prisoner-of-war camps. The family are represented as respectably middle class with all the accoutrements of dress, crockery and maidservant. Since blacks in white camps were not rationed, a young woman like this was entirely dependent on her white family for food. Consequently, it was probably only those Boers of substance who could afford to keep black workers.

At first glance this photograph suggests the same middle-class representation as the previous one. It is, however, the family of J Brink, the superintendent of Vredefort Road camp. The young woman at the back, standing in a subservient position, is clearly a domestic worker, rather than part of the family.

the Boer probationers in the hospitals. He hoped to issue them with certificates which would enable them to use the training in the future. The plan was only partially implemented when the war ended and the camps gradually broke up. A couple of young women accepted the offer to continue their training in the new colony.[29]

Black women, by contrast, are almost completely silent in the white concentration camps' records although there were, probably, a hundred or more in most camps. Neither their position in the camps, nor their fate, is at all clear. Probably all came in with white families, as domestic workers or as 'adopted' children. In Pietersburg camp they are nameless, their presence recorded along with the livestock brought into the camp. In the Nylstroom camp their names were recorded but the relevant pages have been removed (see endnote 6). Almost uniquely, the Aliwal North camp register listed two black children as members of the Swanepoel family.[30] Yet, ironically, black inmates of the white camps are visible for they were often photographed with their white 'families', both in formal photographs, sent to menfolk in the prisoner-of-war camps, and in the work context.

Only a handful of black people were in the white camps. Far more numerous were the families in the black camps. While at first some were satellites to the white camps, Edenburg, a labour depot, had an independent black camp. In Thaba 'Nchu, rather than establishing a formal camp, a settlement area was created, with grazing for cattle. Everywhere accommodation was so poor and food so deficient that mortality rates probably rocketed, long before the epidemics started in the white camps.

This young woman from Bloemfontein camp is posed with her employer. Washing, hauling wood and carrying water – the traditional tasks of black women – were the hardest work the women had to perform in the camps.

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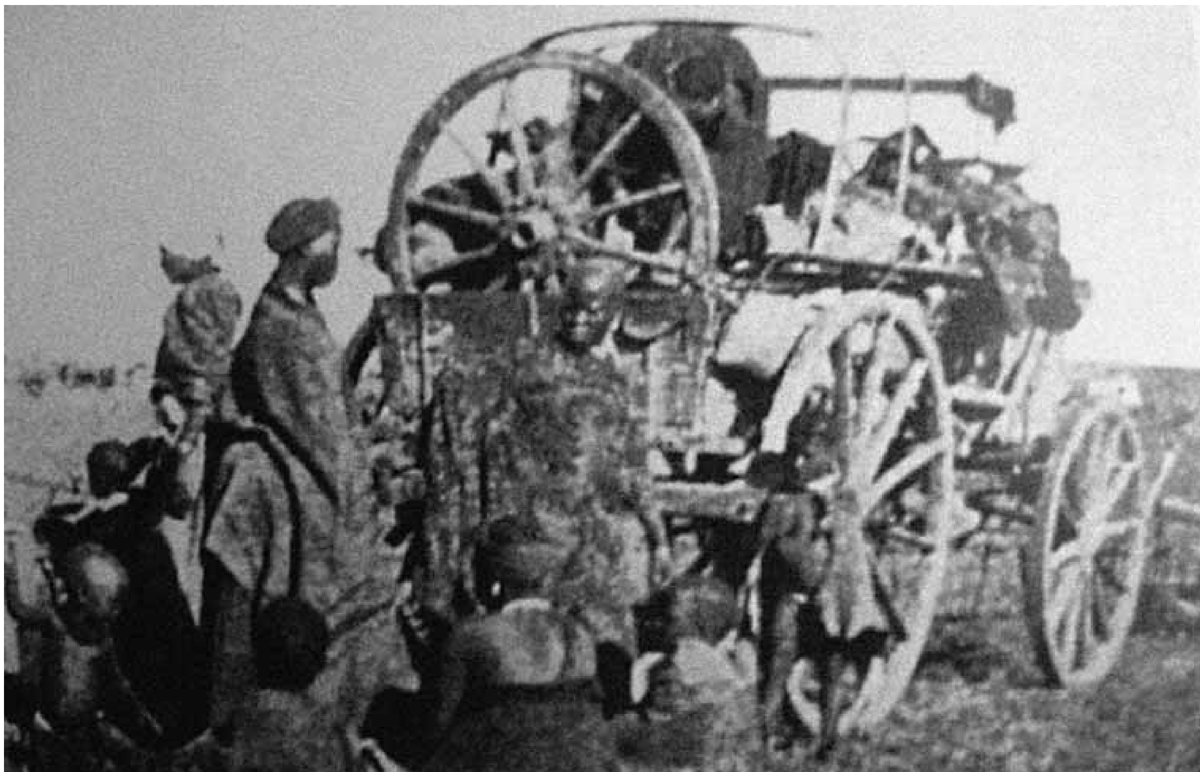
An early report of Edenburg camp noted there were about 700 people there, evacuated mainly from Jagersfontein and Fauresmith and consisting mainly of old men, women and children. Few had money to pay for food. Shelter consisted of 26 sail covers provided by the army, or sacks stretched over a framework of sticks. Food was issued at one pound of mealies and half an ounce of salt a day, and one pound of meat once a week, although it is by no means certain that everyone received this meagre allowance.[31] By April 1901 the population of the Edenburg camp had risen to over 2 000, half of them children, living in 'slightly built wigwams covered with sacking'. The high death rate amongst the children, as early as April 1901, well before the death rate in the white camps had begun to increase, was attributed to the negligence of the mothers. 'Natives do not seem to care for their children till they reach a useful age,' reported J Daller, one of the travelling inspectors. What data has survived suggests that infants perished of bronchitis and pneumonia in the hard winter of 1901, before they could be attacked by measles.[32]

About May 1901 a 'Native Refugee Department' was established under Major GF de Lotbiniere, a Canadian serving with the Royal Engineers. A major consideration was to ensure a regular supply of labour to the British army. De Lotbiniere proposed that the inmates of the new camps should be supplied with the means of cultivating crops, thus supporting themselves and economising on the cost of maintaining the black camp residents. New camps were established on deserted farms along the railway lines, under the protection of the British army. Here crops of mealies and sorghum, as well as potatoes, pumpkins, other vegetables and green forage were sown. By the end of the war there were 29 such camps in the ORC and 37 in the Transvaal. As most of the material on these camps has been destroyed, information is fragmentary. The statistical returns



A black family preparing for evacuation to the camps.

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suggest that mortality was fairly low, but there is no reason to believe that blacks survived better than whites.[33]

Like white women, black women lost homes, livestock and other possessions as a result of the military sweeps. A few claimed compensation, giving us a glimpse of a handful of individuals and their lives. Rose from Bethlehem had lost 14 bags of grain. Sanna, who had lived on the farm of D Swart, and whose husband was in Natal, claimed for 27 bags of grain. Lear, Selena and Sara, all from Mooiplaats, between them claimed for three cattle and 17 horses while Diena at Paardenplaats listed four horses and two bags of grain.[34]

Life in the farm camps was a good deal more hazardous than official reports suggested. Although the camps were located next to railway lines where they were supposed to be protected from Boer depredations, British troops could also be destructive. In the Harrismith district British troops wantonly trampled over the mealie fields, destroying an entire crop, as well as helping themselves to pigs and fowls. At least 600 people were left destitute as a report on the episode noted:

> The natives themselves admitted that such losses were incidental in War time. They also showed the fairest spirit of compromise and placed themselves entirely in our hands, stating at the same time, that they were ruined, and would have to fall on us for sustenance during the coming winter…As you know I have encouraged them to breed poultry, the chickens are coming on well, and would have been a great convenience to the European Community but this is now ruined for the season.[35]

There is other evidence to suggest that black camp inmates were often short of food. Gert Olifant and Daniel Marome of Honingspruit camp petitioned the camp authorities about the inadequacy of the food. 'We have to work hard all day long but the only food we can get is mealies and mealie meal and this is not supplied free but we have to purchase same with our own money. Meat we are not able to get at any price, nor are we allowed to buy anything at the shops at Honingspruit.'[36] Their requests were dismissed out of hand as the demands of men who were lazy and too independent.

While schools were never started in the black camps, church activity certainly existed. The minister of the Primitive Methodist Church, William Nathaniel Somngesi, who attended the people in the camps at Eensgevonden (Brandfort), Vet Rivier and Smaldeel in the ORC, noted with concern that the lack of a marriage officer led some people to live together as husbands and wives, 'thereby forfeiting their places in church membership'. The refugees, he noted, were not allowed to 'knock about the country' and could not, therefore, find an alternative marriage officer. Unlike the request for food, this concern was given serious attention and the plea attended to.[37] The camps may also have been fertile pastures for the newly emerging independent churches. Certainly the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which had begun to spread only recently through South Africa, was active in the camps, perhaps providing solace to women whose husbands were absent, and interest to relieve the monotony of camp life.[38]

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Grief at the loss of children was a natural subject for poetry. The pro-Boer Olive Schreiner was one of the few to give voice to this emotion in English. Her *The Cry of South Africa* contained a lament which was, perhaps, particularly heartfelt, given the loss of her own child:

Give me back my dead
Whom thou hast riven from me
By arms of men loud called from earth's farthest bound
To wet my bosom with my children's blood!
Give me back my dead,
The dead who grew up on me! (Rice 2004: 85)

As Afrikaners began the task of shaping and defining Afrikaner identity after the war, the events of the war were reworked in poetry and prose. Several of the women recorded their own experiences. Often these were straightforward accounts, like that of Hester Magrieta van Zyl, who completed her *'lied'* (song) on 28 March 1902:

Ik moet nu gaan verhaal
Wat gebeur is in Transvaal
Dit om ons lege land
In die koude julie maand
ons was nog in ons huis
Toe kom die Troeps gedruis
Eers by die water sloot
Maak hul die pluim vee dood[39]

I must now tell you
What happened in Transvaal
This in our empty land
In the cold month of July
we were still in our house
When the Troops rushed in
First by the water course
They killed all the fowls

At a more sophisticated level, many poems of the early postwar language movement drew directly or indirectly on the deaths in the camps. Jan FE Cellier's *'Die Brand'* used the metaphor of the bleak natural environment of winter to emphasise the isolation and loneliness of women in the war (Opperman 1950: 35–6): In his *Vrede-Aand* (*Peace Night*) Louis Leipoldt mourned the suffering mother of the camps (Grove and Harvey 1962: 56-59):

Dis vrede, man; die oorlog is verby!
Sien jy die strate vol? Ek sien 'n ramp,

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'n Kerkhof by 'n konsentrasiekamp
Met duisend graffies, elk waarvan bewaar
'n Skat wat alles was wat God aan haar
Gegewe het om eenmaal aan ons land,
In tyd van nood, toe te vertrou as pand!
Sy was die sterkste van ons almal—sy
Wat met gebed en hoop kon samestry!
Sy het die swaarste deel van onse lot
Gedra, gehelp, getroos, gesteun deur God;
En as jy daaraan dink, dan moet jy glo-
Al twyfel jy—daar is tog Iemand bo
Wat so 'n vrou tot yster maak en staal,
Met soveel troos haar steun en hoop betaal;
Maar dan weer dink jy aan haar smart en aan
Die graffies wat daar op die kerkhof staan,
En voel weer twyfel, want 'n mens is swak!
Waarom het Hy die boom gesnoei, die tak
So afgekap tot aan die stam? Waarom
Het hy haar lot so skeef gemaak en krom?
Nee, boetie, drink met my; skreeu saam met my:
Dis vrede nou; die oorlog is verby!

It's peace now, man, at last the war is over!
You see the crowded streets? I see a swamp,
A churchyard near a concentration camp
With thousands of small graves and in each grave
A treasure which was all God to her gave,
That she might it one day in forfeit cede
To our dear country in its time of need!
She was the strongest of us all out there
Who fought along with us with hope and prayer,
She bore the heaviest burden, onward led,
By God supported, helped and comforted.
And when you come to think of it it's clear,
In spite of doubts, there must be One up there
Who makes a woman iron, her courage steeling,
Rewarding strength and hope with comfort healing,
But, then again, you think about her pain,
And those small graves that litter all the plain,
And once again you doubt, for man is weak!
Why did He prune this tree and leave it bleak,
The limbs chopped back right to the trunk? And why

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Was her fate made so crooked and so wry?
No, no, my boy, let's drink and raise a cheer:
The war is over now and peace is here!

More unusually, Eugene Marais remembered the lost children in *Die Oorwinners* (The Conquerors), written at the side of the children's graves in Nylstroom camp cemetery (Marais 1956: 74-75):

Oorwinnaars vir ons volk,
bly u vir al wat beste in ons is 'n ewig' tolk;
nooit weer sal vyands voet u stof so diep vertrap en smoor
dat ons u langer nie kan sien—en hoor.
Nie onse Helde, wat die magtig' leer
op glansryk' velde kon weerstaan en keer;
nie onse Seuns, wat aan die galg en teen die muur
die diepe liefde vir hul eie moes verduur;
nie onse Moeders, wat met bloeiend' hart en seer,
in swart Gethsemané die ware smart moes leer;
nie onse Generaals, vereer met krans en riddersnoer;
—was waardig vir ons volk die hoge stryd te voer en te oorwin.
Nie ons, met vuile hand en hart ontrou was waardig om die vaandel hoog te hou.
Maar u, o bleke spokies, in U kermend', klagend' wee,
staan voor ons ewiglik beskermend—uit die lang verlee.

Conquerors for our people ye,
For all the best in us interpreters to be;
That foot of foe too deep your dust should trample down, ye need not fear;
We still shall see you—still shall hear.
'Tis not our Heroes, who on glorious field
The mighty army met, and would not yield;
'Tis not our Sons, who died by hangman's knot,
And for the deep love of their own were shot;
'Tis not our Mothers, who with bleeding heart and sore
In black Gethsemane their dark hour must endure;
'Tis not our Leaders, brave with wreath and knightly fame;
—It was not these who led the fight for our people and won the victory.
'Tis not ourselves, false-hearted and foresworn,
Who truly have on high the standard borne.
But ye, pale ghosts, who in your piteous, painful woe,
Our saviours stand for ever—long and long ago.

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British loyalists

Although life in the concentration camps was particularly harsh, suffering was not confined to the women of the Boer republics during the South African War. The first women to feel the impact of war were the Uitlanders – the non-burgher families living and working primarily on the Rand. While many of the wealthier families were able to leave before the war started, poorer families could not afford the fares to the coast. When war broke out, they were rounded up, packed into cattle trucks and shipped out of the republics. Most moved to coastal towns like Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth, where they struggled to eke out a living. Their plight was publicised by the British authorities who presented the Uitlander refugees as the innocent victims of Boer brutality. A British-based Mansion House Fund and local relief funds provided some aid but the long war years were nevertheless a bleak period for many. At the end of the war they returned to homes which had been vandalised or destroyed, and it was probably years before working-class women found their feet again (van Heyningen 1984).

The confinement and food shortages in the siege towns of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking probably made life there similar to that in the camps. Nevertheless, the experiences differed considerably. Ladysmith, which was besieged for the shortest time, had a large number of soldiers in the town. Negotiations with the Boers resulted in a civilian camp, as well as a military hospital, established at Ntombi, just outside the town. Few women, therefore, remained in Ladysmith itself and women viewed the siege from the sidelines. Conditions at Ntombi were uncomfortable and occasionally dangerous, but women had little active role to play.

In Kimberley, where there was a greater shortage of military men, civilian males were recruited into the town guard. As a result, many women had husbands, sons or brothers engaged in the defence of the town. Moreover, in Kimberley women were active in the economy, particularly as teachers and nurses. When parents fled the vulnerable town at the start of the war, or kept their children at home as the shelling became dangerous, the income of teachers was jeopardised, like that of 'Bess', who was left penniless when her pupils disappeared (van Heyningen 1999).[40] Cecil John Rhodes, head of De Beers Mining Company which owned much of Kimberley, and his cronies lived comfortably throughout the siege but working-class families suffered severe hunger, queuing for long hours in the hot sun for incompetently distributed rations. Black families were evicted from their homes on the outskirts of the town, where they were most vulnerable to shelling, and struggled to find adequate housing (Meyer 1999).

Mafeking was besieged for a full seven months (van Heyningen 2001). The town was tiny and the military force completely inadequate so that almost everyone, male and female, black and white, had a value in the defence. Unlike either of the other sieges, the lives of black and white women were interwoven and the harsh divisions of South African society blurred.

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This is not to say that stereotypical attitudes regarding women's place in war did not exist. The British newspaper correspondents tended to promote negative stereotypes of women in the context of war. JE Neilly (1900: 24) of the *Pall Mall Gazette* considered the Mafeking women to be 'a terrible incubus', draining limited resources, eating much-needed rations, creating unwanted additional labour running the laager – the camp on the outskirts of the town established for women – incubating disease, quarrelling with one another and making still more work for the men who had to pacify them. In contrast, for many of the Mafeking residents, women represented cherished and civilised family values; memories of home were evoked in times of stress: Charles Weir disliked night guard duty because in the quiet 'my mind reverts to our position and to the loved ones elsewhere' (Weir 1901: 51). Samuel Cawood's thoughts turned to his wife and children when the strain of the shelling brought on nightmares (Davey 1983). Sol Plaatje, who had imbibed so many male colonial values, celebrated all his family anniversaries – the birthdays of his wife and son, their wedding anniversary – in absentia. On Christmas Day he felt the absence of his wife deeply, while the gifts given to the children of the *stadt*, as the Barolong town was known, reminded him of:

> …a little fellow far away, who enjoys whatever he gets at the expense of the comfort of a bewildered young mother, deserving a Christmas box from his father but unable to get it. It squeezed out of my eyes a bitter tear…Surely providence has seldom been so hard on me. (Plaatje 1999: 76)

Many white women in Mafeking had been evacuated before the siege started. Most of those who remained were moved into the Women's Laager, in theory because they were safer there. In fact conditions were harsh, resembling those of the concentration camps. Not only was the laager regularly shelled by the Boers, but the accommodation, mainly tents and wagons, was overcrowded and very hot in the Mafeking summer. Within days the children were suffering from ophthalmia or fever (Algie nd; Bottomley 1997; Craufurd 1900–01). By the middle of December 27 children had expired (Cock 1974: 53; Gwynne 1996: 17; Ross 1980: 69). Conditions became much worse when the shelling started. Women spent hours in dark and cramped conditions in a hastily built trench through Mafeking's blistering summer heat. Huddled together 'like swine', the women found it difficult to maintain decent sanitary conditions. 'So foul did the place become that many of the respectable inhabitants left it, preferring to risk shell and bullet in the town to living in such beastly surroundings' (Neilly 1900: 204).

In an increasingly segregationist South Africa, there was no attempt, however, to separate black from white in the laager. Here one could see 'the dusky brethren in all shades, from coal black graduating in purity to the white' (Cowan 1995: 12.10.1899). Nor was there any division by class. The inhabitants ranged from black domestic servants to their employers who included, on the one hand, a coloured woman, Mrs Graham,[41] and sedate Mrs Sarah Gwynne, both quietly patriotic, to Mrs Hammond, her sister Mrs Poulton, and the Delports, all vociferously anti-British, on the other. Distinctions were

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blurred in other parts of the town as well. Mrs Patrick Sidzumo, the wife of the Mafeking court messenger, who was of Mfengu origin, had her house in the Fingo Location, but was expected to remain in the Barolong *stadt* during the shelling. When she was mortally injured in her own home, the resident magistrate, Charles Bell, commented, with some sympathy despite his dry words, 'These women are supposed to remain in the Stadt; but like most women they won't do as they are told; they persistently chance their luck and do not appear to comprehend the danger there is of their being hit' (Bell nd: 54; Plaatje 1999: 59). But life in the Barolong *stadt* was also much more hazardous than it was in the town or in the Women's Laager. The rocky terrain of the *stadt*, sloping down to the river, provided some natural shelter but, without trenches, more black women than whites were killed by shelling.

Siege life in Mafeking challenged conventional stereotypes. Courage was conventionally regarded as a masculine virtue and fear a feminine weakness (Neilly 1900). The varied responses of the Mafeking inhabitants to their first experience of shelling suggests that gender had little to do with their reactions. Some women behaved as convention dictated, with tears, shrieks or hysterics. The women at the convent were 'on their knees all day long', JR Algie, Mafeking's town clerk, noted dryly, while 'Miss Becker was very hysterical laughing and crying all day long' (Algie nd: 11). But then, some men were also afraid. The convent's chaplain, Father Ogle, ran away to pray with the nurses, Ina Cowan commented tartly (Cowan 1995: 17.10.1899). Other men were even more pusillanimous.

> Some of the men were so frightened that it was with difficulty that they could be persuaded to come out of the trenches. One man, well known, disappeared down his well, while another, with a few War Correspondents, took refuge with some ladies in a cellar. A man credited with lots of pluck has got a huge Red Cross on his arm, a kind of talisman, perhaps, he thought, to ward off the shells. When chaffed about being a nurse he got furious. (Saunders 1996: 92)

On the other hand, many women showed considerable courage in the face of enemy fire. Indeed, a handful, like civilian nurse Ina Cowan, were exhilarated by the experience. 'There are heaps of funny things happening, and if it were not so exciting and solemn it would be the best experience one could have.' When the firing started she could not resist trying to see what was happening. 'The Red Crosses and several refugees, ran down to the river with us, where Captain Hepworth put up a galvanized iron place capped by numerous sandbags…Another girl and myself had a burning curiosity, so we climbed up the river bed to Mrs Minchin's house' (Cowan 1995: 09.10.1899, 16.10.1899). 'Cool that!' Algie commented admiringly (Algie nd: 11).

As the siege bit, women drew on other reserves of courage. To some extent everyone became inured to the shelling, which was one of the reasons why so many women returned to their own houses. But men occasionally expressed surprise at their resilience. In describing one of the many miraculous escapes, Edward Ross, a photographer and one of the town's best-known diarists, commented:

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> The ladies I must say are very plucky, in fact too plucky, and should be kept down more. One would imagine this sort of thing would collapse the nerves of women entirely, but they all kept up wonderfully well, and trot out on Sundays as smiling as ever. (Ross 1980: 167)

For most women in Mafeking the long, monotonous days were passed with the usual round of domestic chores – tending children, preparing meals, church attendance on Sundays when the Boers did not shell. But it was in the hospitals that a few Mafeking women carved out an independent space for themselves. Before the war the little hospital had three professional nurses; once the siege started the Sisters of Mercy, a teaching order whose school was closed down, also turned to nursing. Other female volunteers joined the nursing staff. Since the hospitals employed black domestic workers and orderlies, these 'ladies' did not have to perform the more unpleasant duties which were the lot of nurses elsewhere. Given the small number of doctors in the town and the fact that they were largely preoccupied with military duties, the women also had an unusually free hand in the day-to-day running of the hospitals. This sometimes led to clashes.

The reasons for the conflict are not clear but it seems likely that these volunteers, of whom the most prominent was Miss Friend, previously the music teacher at the Mafeking public school, were unaccustomed to the severe discipline of late-nineteenth century nursing; nor were they as subservient to the doctors as nurses of the day customarily were. The doctors did not respond well to this independence, commenting critically on the volunteer nurses and sometimes quarrelling with them. The volunteer nurses also resented attempts to curb their recreational activities. 'We are volunteers, who have, for weeks past, most willingly nursed our sick & wounded to the best of our ability, from seven in the morning till nine or half past at night,' Miss Friend told Colonel Vyvyan when they were reprimanded 'gruffly' by Doctor William Hayes for singing around the piano when they were off duty. 'Naturally we feel the strain of the life since we are unused to it, and if we are needlessly denied all recreation, we are afraid we shall not be able to continue our work.'[42]

Women's politics

The events which gave rise to the South African War heightened political awareness throughout South Africa, amongst women as well as men, black as well as white. South African women were politically immature compared with their sisters in colonies like New Zealand or in Britain. It took the trigger of imperially-minded British women to provide them with a justification for engaging in political action (van Heyningen 2002a).

Lady Edward Cecil followed her husband to South Africa. While he was tied up in military activity, in Cape Town she moved between pro-British South African circles

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and those of Government House. In discussions with the people she met, including Sir Alfred Milner, she became convinced of the 'completeness and comprehensiveness' of the 'Afrikander plot'. British interests urgently needed strengthening amongst the civilian population in South Africa, she believed (Milner 1951: 151–2). To further this aim, Violet Cecil made a deliberate effort to cultivate Cape Town loyalist women whom she considered 'keen and practical'. In Dorothea Fairbridge, who came from a long-established British family in Cape Town, she found an invaluable ally (Milner 1951). Together with other leading Capetonian women they established the 'Guild of Loyal Women' at the peak of Boer military success in early 1900.

Antoinette Burton makes the point that British feminism was forged in the context of Victorian and Edwardian imperialism. The 'woman question', she adds, 'was as much about the public exercise of women's moral authority as it was about the battle over political rights' (Burton 1994: 33). British feminists had long argued that women acted as 'moral agents' in the life of the nation; as women they claimed a moral superiority which justified their participation in the political domain. This sense of mission was extended to the empire. British feminists shared the conviction of many of their male counterparts that Britain had a special genius for empire, bringing prosperity and civilisation to its colonies, with the gloss that women's participation brought additional ethical dimensions (Burton 1994).

In South Africa this notion of women's moral authority in public life was readily absorbed by colonial women, particularly when it was instilled by leading members of the Government House circle. Moreover, it had the advantage of being less divisive than the issue of suffrage (Burton 1994). The war thus offered loyalist women the first real opportunity to engage themselves politically and to speak out on public platforms without incurring male hostility. Not only was an expression of loyalism acceptable; women could argue that they brought special womanly gifts to reinforcing the bonds of empire and healing the wounds of war. They were the peacemakers who could 'calm the troubled spirits and heal the broken hearts'.[43] In addition, the 'noble and beloved Queen' provided a 'glorious example' to women. If men were prepared to lay down their lives for her, women should also show their appreciation of those who were working 'to strengthen and establish on the firmest foundations' the queen's rule throughout South Africa.[44]

A leading article in the local press also made the point that the Guild of Loyal Women was a means by which Cape women could express their political views 'without at the same time incurring the odium, for odium it would be to many, of being regarded as Women Politicians'. The editor's leading article encapsulated the gendered thinking which allowed women a political voice (provided that it was uncritical), while denying them the right to political power. Party politics was 'narrow', 'puny', 'parochial' and 'petty' compared with the breadth of guild principles. 'By that rare natural intuition which is all their own, the women have seized upon the fundamental principles of loyalty and patriotism as the corner-stones of the new Temple of South African

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Sisterhood, and they have by that means lifted the Guild far above the political organisations established by men for the promulgation of their party objects.'[45]

The guild was commonly described as non-political but the principles laid out at the inaugural meeting were explicitly political: the maintenance of the Cape Colony as part of the British Empire; the supremacy of Great Britain throughout South Africa; and the drawing closer of ties between South Africa and all parts of the British Empire.[46] However hazy these objectives may have been, the formation of the Guild of Loyal Women clearly answered a need amongst loyalist women in South Africa. The speed with which the guild expanded throughout South Africa is suggestive of this desire. By June branches were springing up throughout the Cape Colony – in Stellenbosch, Paarl, Victoria West, Port Alfred, Queen's Town, Mossel Bay, amongst others. By July 1900 the Guild had over 3 000 members with branches in 42 towns and villages of the Cape Colony and moves were afoot to form branches in the ORC and Transvaal.[47] At the end of 1900 Natal had followed suit with a Pietermaritzburg branch formed on 15 November and a Durban branch by 27 November (Atteridge c1930: 6; *Natal Witness* 15, 27.11.1900).

By no means all pro-British women expressed themselves in such jingo terms. Colonial-born women were also developing a South African consciousness. Isabella Lipp, one of the few British women left in Johannesburg after the start of the war, cogitated on the effect of the war in creating a new nation. While she did not doubt the British cause, with the Boers she shared a dislike of the big capitalists. Above all, she believed that a new society must be forged by the war: 'whatever the issues of this struggle may be, Boer and Briton will still have to work and live together,' she observed.

> I have the welfare of my country very much at heart, I am a South African first then a Briton, and though I think the Transvaal Boers have gone into this war on a wrong scent, I cannot blame them…May I live to see this miserable race feeling die out, and the Boer strength and British industry amalgamate and co-operate in developing and perfecting this grand beautiful country of ours – then not before may they together become the bright, beautiful Africander nation of Olive Schreiner.[48]

Such views encouraged some women to promote reconciliation at the end of the war. Georgiana Solomon, the widow of Cape liberal politician Saul Solomon, and Mrs Annie Botha, wife of the Boer general Louis Botha, together formed the Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouwe Federasie (SAVF; South African Women's Federation). In the apartheid era the SAVF was more representative of right-wing Afrikaner nationalism, but Solomon's goal was to provide support for destitute Boer women in the postwar period. Although a militant suffragette herself, she clearly recognised that 'welfare feminism' was more suited to the South African circumstances.

Cape Town, Stellenbosch and the small towns of the Western Cape Boland were home to the most organised groups of pro-Boer philanthropic women. Their network was constructed initially through women who came together to protest against the war

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and to help the women and children of the concentration camps. Centred on the home of Mrs Marie Koopmans-de Wet, the circle included the wives of a number of leading Cape Afrikaners, along with a handful of English-speaking sympathisers.[49] On the fringes was Olive Schreiner, an articulate spokesperson for the pro-Boer cause but never an active organiser, and always too maverick in her views to fit in comfortably with conservative Afrikaner society (First & Scott 1980).[50] In the postwar years the Afrikaans women in this group formed the Afrikaner Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV; Afrikaans Christian Women's Union), overtly a welfare organisation which was to be closely associated with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism (du Toit 1992). Like the SAVF, the ACVV was a proponent of welfare feminism, rarely offering a direct political challenge to males (du Toit 1996).

The limited evidence available suggests that war also sharpened the political consciousness of black women. Like their menfolk, black women at the Cape were aware that their slender liberties were threatened by Boer republicanism. In Calvinia they supported Abraham Esau in his defence of the town. On one occasion at least, they saw the war as a more positive force. At the Moravian mission station of Elim in the Cape, Martha Jantjies led a brief messianic movement which envisaged a new order in which, amongst other desires, taxes would be abolished, Germans would be replaced by Anglican clergy and taverns would be opened (Nasson 1991).

The South African War stirred into life women's movements which barely existed before the war. In doing so, the construction of women as purely domestic figures, operating in the private sphere, began slowly to change. British women moved actively into suffrage movements in the postwar era (Walker 1990). It could be argued that Boer women, rather than internalising the *'volksmoeder'* (mother of the people) concept as Brink and others have suggested, actively used it to claim their place as part of the political Afrikaner nation (Brink 1990; du Toit 1996).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate some of the complexity of the relationship between women and war in South Africa in 1899–1902. Their responses to war varied greatly. Miriam Cooke (1996) has noted that war history is constructed from multiple stories. 'Each story told by someone who experienced a war, or by someone who read about someone who experienced a war, becomes part of a mosaic the many colors and shapes of which make up the totality of that war' (Vietzen 1999: 225). But these experiences are more than a mosaic. Social cleavages emerged more sharply in the context of war, particularly in the closed environments of the concentration camps and the siege towns. At the same time, war was also a catalyst for change, promoting the formation of ethnic identity and stimulating political awareness amongst South African women.

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Biographies

Sister Bakkes

One of the Dutch volunteer nurses.

In Europe the South African War was a touchstone of political morality and the Boer cause attracted a wide variety of volunteers. The foreign commandos have received considerable attention but much less is known of the women who offered their services to the Boers. Amongst these was Sister Bakkes, who was sent by the Dutch government as a volunteer nurse in the camps.[51] She had been in South Africa before the war, as head of the *Volkshospitaal* in Pretoria.[52] She remained in the camps throughout the war, serving in Winburg camp. Although the British authorities were paranoid about Boer sympathisers in the camps, where at least one nurse was dismissed for airing such views,[53] Sister Bakkes received nothing but high praise from the authorities. Her hard work, tact and prudence won her considerable respect from the camp doctor.[54]

> I have nothing but praise for her work. In the early days of this camp she was quite alone, and the amount of work she got through was wonderful, besides she has worked in the camp now for nearly two years without leaving it for a single night. She has always shown great tact and fairness, and it has always been a pleasure for me to work with her.[55]

At the end of the war she was granted a free passage home to Holland, and an award from the British for her services.

Bettie Grobbelaar

Sixteen-year-old Bettie Grobbelaar of the Orange Free State differed from her peers only in her feeling for words, and her decision to record her experiences during the South African War. In the 1930s, at the time of the centenary of the Great Trek and advancing Afrikaner nationalism, she rewrote her diary, translating it into more formal Afrikaans, probably from the Dutch patois, the *kombuis taal* widely spoken by Boers at the turn of the century. However, her language retained the rhythms of the Dutch Bible. She was living on a farm in the Kroonstad district when war broke out and the men in her family joined the commandos. Many of the black farm labourers had also disappeared and the Boer women were forced to engage in the unfamiliar tasks of labouring in the fields and caring for the animals. Bettie found the going very difficult:

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Die stilte op die plaas is swaar, die koring is ryp, ons het net 2 werks kaffers om koring te sny, ons het beetje gehelp maar dit is te swaar werk om met n sekel te sny, die eerste dag was ons fluks, die 2de dag was my rug styf ek moes toe vir die perde sorg, ek was bang om tussen die perde te gaan in die stal, maar 'n mens word aan al jou pligte gewoond die eerste maal toe ek die kar inspan het ek die binne lysel verkeerd vas gemaak. O! hoe eensaam…[56]

There is a heavy silence on the farm, the corn is ripe, we have only two working kaffirs to cut the corn, we helped a bit but it is too difficult to cut with a sickle, the first day we were energetic but on the second day my back was stiff then I had to look after the horses, I was frightened to go among the horses in the stable, but one must get used to your duties the first time that I inspanned the cart I fastened the inner reins incorrectly. Oh! how lonely…

This hard labour was not usual for Boer women. Mrs Pooe, an inmate of the black camp at Vredefort Road, observed that Boer women, unlike black women, rarely worked in the fields, leaving the hard labour to their menfolk or black labourers.

With us blacks, I would go into the fields with my husband and perhaps with my children if they were already old enough. With the Boers as 'bywoners' it was different. Normally their wives could not go out into the fields to hoe. The husband would have to do the hoeing alone. Or sometimes he would take out money to pay for whomever he would hire. With us we would hoe together with Naphtali [her husband] or organize a work party. (Keegan 1981: 141)

Fearful of British intentions when they reached the republic, Grobbelaar's family took the decision made by many others to flee into the veld. Other women had taken refuge on the Grobbelaar farm and, when the British arrived, 37 women and children escaped in the dark with baskets of *vetkoek* and blankets. Between the middle of May 1901, and the middle of August, during the bitter winter months, they wandered from farm to farm through the veld, often cold and hungry.

Dit het dae geduur, die kakies is lastig nie, ons rus nie, ons bly in die veld, en kuier by die huis. Ons maal elke dag koring vir meel, die meule vlug saam. ... Die meel bly maar bietje grof, maar dit maak lekker beskuitjes, ons werk hard ons moet altyd gereed wees om te vlug, dit is so bitter koud…[57]

It lasted for days, The khakis [British soldiers] are troublesome, we don't rest, we stay in the veld, and eat at the house. We mill corn every day for flour, the mills travel with us…The flour is a bit coarse, but it makes nice biscuits, we work hard we must always be ready to flee, it is so very cold.

Eventually even the waterless sandveld, *'waar dit nog altyd veilig was vir ons'* (where it was always safe for us), was no longer a safe haven, and they were betrayed, Grobbelaar claimed, by *'handoppers'* (literally 'hands-uppers', i.e those who surrendered).[58] They were rounded up and taken into the notorious Brandfort camp. Here the families were subjected to endless regulations, apparently harsh and pointless.

Ons houd moet ons buite kamp ontvang net takke, ons mag dit nie deur die kamp sleep nie, en mag ook nie in die kamp kap nie, en die kamp is groot ons moet die ver dra, so moet ons eers buite die kamp dit self kap, dan dit dra, dis nou vir 'n wek se randsoen.[59]

We had to collect our wood outside the camp, just sticks, we couldn't haul it through the camp, nor could we chop it in the camp and the camp is so big we had to carry it so far, so we first had to chop it outside the camp ourselves, then carry it, this was for a week's rations.

Disease and death was all around them. Bettie Grobbelaar's sister and her five children all died, the last buried in her arms. Like a number of other young women, Grobbelaar became a volunteer nurse, a probationer, in the hospital. Here she was particularly troubled by the lack of sustenance for the children (patients suffering from typhoid fever were put on a light diet of milk), and she did her best to subvert this treatment.

Die kinders is uitgeteer al medesyne wat hulle kry, is Cotliver oil, donker bruin van kleur en so dik soos watter goed, en sleg, die pasiente kry nie kos voor die koors 'n paar dae normal kry nie, die kinders is honger, ek gee hulle alger sop, die suster loop die hospital deur so moet ek op my hoede wees. Die kondens melk met water aangemaak dis al wat hulle mag krij, ek more 'n tee lepel beef tee, hulle drink die koppie sop vinnig uit hulle weet wat is wat.[60]

The children are emaciated all the medicine they get is codliver oil, dark brown in colour and as thick as I don't know what, and bad, the patients don't get food until the temperature has been normal for a couple of days, the children are hungry, I give all of them soup, the sister walks through the hospital so I have to be alert. Condensed milk mixed with water is all they are allowed, I [give] them a teaspoon of beef tea, they drink the cup of soup quickly they know what is what.

The image of passive female suffering, which has become integral to the mythology of the camps, has led historians to ignore the totality of the camp experience. The many studies of resistance to oppression, of slaves and of blacks in South Africa, to name only two, should alert us to the narrowness of this focus. Grobbelaar recorded a number of instances of resistance. The most dramatic occurred when the women in Brandfort camp confronted the unpopular camp commandant, EJ Jacobs, about the quality of the food:

Op die 25ste November 1901 vroeg in die more Baie vroeg in the more gaan eenige lydende moeders rond in die kamp om ons aan te sê, dat ons 9 uur by die Komandant se kantoor was: om 9 uur was hondered vroue en dogters by die kantoor. Elk een met die randsoen vleis. van die more. Ek ook in die getal. Ons stel Mevrou van Tonder aan om te praat, met die Komedant, hy was n onbeleefde Kolonie boer. he word virsoek om uittekom. Hy weier so 'n bang broek. hy stuur die hoof dokter om met ons te praat…[61]

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On the 25th November early in the morning Very early in the morning one of the suffering mothers went round the camp to say to us, that we must go to the Commandant's office at 9 o'clock: at 9 o'clock there were a hundred wives and daughters at the office. Every one had that morning's meat rations. I was amongst the number. We sent Mrs van Tonder to talk to him, with the Commandant, he was an ill-mannered Colonial boer [i.e. from the Cape]: he was asked to come out. He was such a coward that he sent the head doctor to talk to us.

Jacobs promised reform and, although the ringleaders were subsequently arrested for a couple of weeks, the authorities had clearly taken fright for Jacobs was replaced by a more efficient man.[62]

Such confrontation seems to have been fairly rare. More common was resistance to the hospitalisation of their children, a practice which the Boer women bitterly resented. 'A Boer woman is used to tend her sick herself, above all her own children,' Tant Alie Badenhorst explained, 'but in camp they were compelled to give them up' (Badenhorst 1923: 304). Bettie Grobbelaar considered that *'Die beste wegsteek plek is in n trommel. as die dokter en suster virby is haal hulle dit uit, en dan weer in die bed'* (The best hiding place is in a trunk, when the doctor and sister have passed the children are taken out and returned to bed).[63]

Another form of resistance was escape, and it was not difficult to do so for the women often visited local towns or foraged for wood and cow dung, for fuel. Spies records 91 women and children who escaped from the camps and most published accounts mention such incidents (Badenhorst 1923; Fischer 1964; Raal 1938, 2000; Spies 1977: 171). The logistics of survival were problematic, however, in a raped countryside swarming with enemy, and the women were a burden for the Boer commandos. Bettie Grobbelaar's family discussed the idea:

…elke aand is ons tent vol, vroue, hulle maak nou ook reg om weg te loop, [Nonnie] Vermaak haar mense is buite ons gaan bij hulle bly, dit moet net donker wees, dan moet ons stil tussen die blokhuise deur en dit is gevaarlik…

…every evening our tent is full of women, they discuss escape, Aunt Vermaak's people are out we can stay with them, it just has to be dark, then we must slip quietly through the blockhouses and that is dangerous…

They were dissuaded by Tant Mieta Rheeder:

sy sê nee, dis te gevaarlik die kakies sal ons skiet en die tweede, ons is vreemd, ons mense is in Kroonstad Dst. nee ou sus bly julle waar julle is, wees tevrede, en moet nie julle kinders laat dood skiet nie.[64]

she says no, it is too dangerous the khakis will shoot us and secondly, we are strangers, our people are in Kroonstad district no old sister stay where you are, be content, and don't let your children be shot dead.

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Grobbelaar's account is, above all, a lament – for her lost youth, for the dead children, for the *'lydende'* (suffering) mothers. Like the women who survived the Holocaust, or the Dutch women in the Japanese camps of the Second World War, recording her experiences was a means of coming to terms with the trauma of her young life (van Heyningen 2005).

Emelia Mahlodi Pooe (Nkgono Mma-Pooe)

Mrs Pooe,[65] a Sotho-speaking woman, was almost 100 years old when her story was recorded by a descendant. Her parents, the Molefes, of Ngwato-Kwena origin, had been unable to survive in Lesotho and had moved into the Orange Free State to become labour-tenants in the Heilbron district when she was born. By the time the South African War started, her family had become sharecroppers on the Zaaiplaas, just southwest of Heilbron. This region, later part of the 'maize triangle', was thoroughly cleared and devastated by the British in the 'scorched earth' clearings. The Molefe family did not escape. The men were conscripted into the British army and the women interned in the black camp at Vredefort Road. Their cattle, already devastated by the *rinderpest* (an infectious disease), were lost to them. To Mrs Pooe the struggle for survival in this crowded environment was a foretaste of urban location life. Like the white camp inmates, rations were limited, firewood was in short supply and the ordinary institutions of daily social life were interrupted. The food was poor, the porridge made from the type of maize she knew as animal feed.

In September 1901 there were 1 579 inmates at the Vredefort Road black camp, 163 men, 496 women and 920 children. Numbers stabilised at about 1 500 in the months that followed. According to the official records mortality was low, averaging between three and four a month. The object of the black camps was to provide for the black inmates as cheaply as possible, by making the people work the fields. Mrs Pooe's memory appears to have been somewhat vague by the time she was interviewed but she recalled the hard work of tilling the fields. 'Although they were accustomed to eating green mealies, they were not allowed to do so in camp, as it was said that by so doing the projected harvest targets would not be achieved' (Keegan 1981: 348). Vredefort Road camp was slow to become completely independent, however. As late as March 1902, 742 inmates were still being rationed on reduced payment (they paid a reduced sum for bags of mealies) and 795 were maintained free. The cost of the camp for that month was £732, one of the most expensive camps in the ORC, of which about £32 was recovered from the men working for the British and £70 obtained through sales of 'medical comforts'.[66]

The postwar era was hard. Blacks had lost as much or more than Boers in the war although, thanks to Lotbiniere's intervention, some received compensation. Before the war the Molefe family had owned a span of oxen, enabling them to sharecrop on a relatively equal basis. After the war, although they returned to Zaaiplaas, without oxen their position was far less favourable. Nevertheless, the family was more fortunate than some who had lost most members of their families and were left with no place to go except on the most difficult terms.

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NOTES

1 The only academic study of the camps, one of the primary historical texts of apartheid-era Afrikaner nationalism, *Die Konsentrasiekampe* (Otto 1954) has been republished, misleadingly passed off by the publisher as a new work (Otto 2005).

2 For a brief overview of the political context of camp historiography see van Heyningen (2005). There are a handful of theses on individual camps, the most outstanding being Hattingh (1967) and Wohlberg (2000). Noteworthy also is Wasserman (1999a, 1999b, 2005).

3 The records of the Native Refugee Department consist only of a few financial papers, although the evidence suggests that they were originally quite extensive.

4 I should like to thank the Wellcome Trust for funding which has made the research on the concentration camps possible. They are not responsible for my opinions. I should also like to thank Dr Iain Smith for his support and for our discussions, some of which have been summarised in the arguments below. The term ‘concentration camp’ is extremely problematic. At first the British referred to the Boer inmates as ‘refugees’, a term which was much resented as the women regarded themselves as involuntary residents. The Transvaal authorities used the term ‘burgher camps’. For the British the term ‘refugee’ was confusing since it was also used for Uitlander refugees, whose plight occupied much of their attention and was a counter point to the position of the Boer ‘refugees’. Increasingly the British authorities used the term ‘concentration camp’; thus the ‘Ladies Commission’ was formally called a ‘concentration camps’ commission. Since the Second World War the term has acquired much grimmer connotations, and has been manipulated by Afrikaner nationalist writers to exaggerate the punitive nature of the British camps in South Africa.

5 It should be noted that, although these camps were often referred to as ‘women’s camps’, this was something of a paradox. There were substantial numbers of men present as well, but because they were usually regarded as hensoppers, traitors to the Boer cause, their presence has been largely ignored, providing little fuel for Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric.

6 In some cases this is obvious. In Nylstroom camp, where blacks appear to have been entered in the same register as whites, the relevant pages have been cut out and a note attached, dating the action. Fortunately the cover, which was not removed, has the first page of the list. See National Archives Repository (NAR), DBC 63.

7 A few other camps of brief duration also existed, usually as transit camps. Others were mooted but were never established, Mooi River in Natal and Ladybrand in the ORC being two examples.

8 See for example the report of Dr TW Hime, Free State Archives Repository (FSAR), SRC 31 RC 10324, p. 9.

9 Children were defined variously as under 12 years in the Transvaal and under 15 in the ORC. This could make a great difference to the amount of food available to families.

10 FSAR, SRC 2 RC 280, 16.02.1901, Chief Superintendent Refugee Camps (CSRC) to District Commissioner, Harrismith.

11 No rising agents were provided; there were no eggs, no milk and no fat. It is hard to imagine what could be done with the flour under these circumstances. At no point were public ovens introduced, which might have helped with the chronic fuel shortages.

12 By 1900 scientific understanding of nutrition had advanced to the point where the relationship between protein, carbohydrates and calories was fairly well established. Several researchers at the time pointed out that the camp ration scales were inadequate on this count alone. Vitamins had not been discovered and the origins of scurvy were not understood but it was realised that fresh fruit and vegetables were desirable. Ration scales are published in a variety of sources. See, for instance, Hobhouse (1902) and Spies (1977). On analyses of the ration scales see United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA), CO 879/75/687, file 45124 no. 79, 02.12.1901, Memorandum by Dr JS Haldane on the rations in the concentration camps; CO 879/75/687, file 882 no. 129, 06.01.1902, Dr Sidney Martin to the Colonial Office.

13 The complaints of the camp inmates seem to have been entirely justified on this point as the huge correspondence in the official records testifies. Some of the other claims, such as blue vitriol and ground glass in the sugar, hooks in the tinned meat and the like, were mythical. By the end of 1901 food and water were regularly analysed. Some was certainly rejected as unfit for consumption but constant efforts were made to ensure that quality was acceptable. See Wessels (2002) on the origin of the blue vitriol story and FSAR, SRC 15 RC 5979, 01.11.1901, HF Wilson to the CSRC and related correspondence, on analyses of water.

14 For black ration scales in the ORC see FSAR, SRC 2 RC 487a, Scale of rations for white and black refugees; SRC 2 RC 291, 15.02.1901, Scale of rations for native refugee camps. On pellagra see Roe and Beck (2000). In all the camps such alternatives as rice were specified but rarely provided.

15 FSAR, SRC 3 RC 591, 12.03.1901, CSRC to the Superintendent, Kroonstad.

16 Thomson had been Sanitary Commissioner of the North-West Provinces in India. UKNA, CO 879/73/682, file 1826 no. 50, 14.01.1902, A Milner to J Chamberlain.

17 FSAR, SRC 34, A 291, 05.11.1901, Correspondence on Mrs Bullen.

18 UKNA, CO 224/5/38048, CO 224/6/36983 and CO 224/6/42355, Nurses for the concentration camps.

19 Alcohol was used as a stimulant, particularly for cases of typhoid fever. The reason for its widespread use was probably the lack of other therapies. The practice was by no means confined to the camps. Great Ormand Street Children’s Hospital, for

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instance, used considerable quantities of alcohol (Lomax 1996). Eventually the camp authorities tightened up on the quantities used, partly because they considered it bad medical practice, and partly because it clearly contributed to alcoholism in the camps. FSAR, SRC 18 RC 7182, 10.01.1902, Report of Dr AJ Tonkin.

20 FSAR, SRC 6 RC 1708, 30.04.1901, Monthly report on Brandfort camp.

21 FSAR, SRC 8 RC 2424, 01.06.1901, Monthly report for Brandfort camp.

22 FSAR, SRC 13 RC 4925, 09.09.1901, Dr Tregaskis to Superintendent, Heilbron camp.

23 FSAR, SRC 14 RC 5260, 16.09.1901, CSRC to Superintendent, Aliwal North camp and related correspondence.

24 FSAR, SRC 2 RC 403, 05.03.1901, Dr Pern to Superintendent, Bloemfontein camp.

25 FSAR, SRC 22 RC 8215, 21.03.1902, Dr Pratt Yule to CSRC.

26 UKNA, CO 879/70/663, file 33845 no. 110, p. 21, 11.10.1900, Lady Hobhouse to Lord Lansdowne and related correspondence, pp. 128, 129, 211, 281.

27 FSAR, A 156/3/11, Steyn collection. Stanley (2005) also contrasts the depersonalised language of the military, concerned with 'sweeps' and 'drives', with Hobhouse's concern about what this meant in humanitarian terms. See also, for instance, Dr T Whiteside Hime's diatribe against the pro-Boers in his report on the ORC camps. FSAR, SRC 31 RC 10324, Report on the Boer refugee camps, Orange River Colony, 10.01.1902, pp. 10–16.

28 The commission consisted of Millicent Garrett Fawcett; Katherine B Brereton, who had been in charge of the Yeomanry Hospital in South Africa; Lucy AE Deane, an official government inspector of factories; Lady Knox, wife of General Sir William Knox, who had some knowledge of the Free State camps; Dr Ella Campbell Scarlett and Dr Jane Elizabeth Waterston.

29 FSAR, SRC 22 RC 8215, 21.03.1902, G van der Wall to the CSRC and related correspondence.

30 FSAR, SRC 69, p. 54.

31 FSAR, SRC 1 RC 182, 21.02.1901, Officer Commanding, Native Refugee Camp Edenburg to the CSRC; SRC 2 RC 478, 04.03.1901, OC NRC Edenburg to the CSRC; SRC 4 RC 1064, 03.04.1901, Superintendent NRC Edenburg to CSRC.

32 FSAR, SRC 5 RC1206, 12.04.1901, Report on Edenburg and Springfontein refugee camps; FSAR, SRC 91, Death register for black camps.

33 The question of health and mortality in the camps is the subject of ongoing research and is still very problematic. There is no reason why black camp residents should have suffered less from the measles epidemic which decimated Boer children, and their inferior accommodation and nutrition suggests that, until 1902, mortality was likely to be higher than in the white camps (Spies 1977; Warwick 1983).

34 FSAR, CO 52/15/1902, 31.12.1901, Compensation claims of native losses.

35 FSAR, CO 48/4353/1901, 25.11.1901, Report on visit to Native Refugee Camps.

36 FSAR, CO 46/4282/1901, 23.11.1901, Correspondence on the insufficiency of food at Honingspruit NRC.

37 FSAR, CO 62/935/1902, 02.04.1902, Necessity for the appointment of a marriage officer for the Native Refugee Camps.

38 FSAR, CO 150/1727/1903, Petition of Samuel James Mabote, Kroonstad, for exemption under the Coloured Persons Relief Ordinance, 1903; CO 150/1728/1903, Petition of John Rees Phakane, Vredefort, ORC for exemption under the Coloured Persons Relief Ordinance, 1903.

39 NAR, A 951, HW Huyser collection, Grobler manuscript.

40 McGregor Museum, Kimberley, KM 87/8523, Letter of 'Bess', pp. 3, 11.

41 Mrs Graham was subsequently injured in the lung by a shell and died in the hospital after the shell led her to 'break a blood vessel'. She was widely known in the town (to Miss Craufurd she was 'Dear Mrs Graham') and her death was much commented upon (Bottomley 1997; Craufurd 1900–01: 109; Gwynne 1996; Plaatje 1999).

42 Brenthurst Library MS.147/5/3/36, Vyvyan Papers, Miss Friend to CB Vyvyan, 28.12.1899.

43 CA, A 333, 'Women and the War', *Cape Times*, c01.03.1900; see also A 333, 'Loyal Women', *Cape Argus*[?], cDec. 1900; leader on Guild of Loyal Women, *Cape Times*[?], 18 January 1905. These news clippings are usually undated except by year and the sources are rarely given although the majority appear to come from the *Cape Times*.

44 CA, A 333, Meeting at The Hill, *Cape Times*[?], 24.03.1900.

45 CA, A 333, 'Guild of Loyal Women', *Cape Times*, 22.04.1900.

46 CA, A 333, Letter, Z Stamper, Honorary Federal Secretary, *Cape Times*[?], c14.07.1906.

47 CA, A 333, 'Loyal Women's Guild', Cape Argus, 07.06.1900; Cape Times, 12, 15, 18.06.1900. CA, A 333, 'Loyal Women's Guild', *Cape Times*, 13.07.1900.

48 NAR, A 1842, Diary of Isabella Lipp, pp. 26–7, 48, 68–9. The original of this diary is in Stellenbosch University Library.

49 Emily Hobhouse's letters from Cape Town give a good idea of this circle (van Reenen 1983).

50 Schreiner was not invited to the opening of the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein, despite her wartime pro-Boer stance (Schoeman 1992).

51 FSAR, SRC 7 RC 1938, Report on Brandfort camp.

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52 UKNA, CO 879/7/665, File 8780 no. 44, 09.03.1901, J Chamberlain to A Milner.

53 FSAR, SRC 10 RC 3903, 03.08.1901, St J Cole Bowen to CSRC.

54 FSAR, SRC 13 RC 4901, 13.09.1901, Dr TH Molesworth to CSRC.

55 NAR, A 2310, 29.12.1902, Dr TH Molesworth to the Superintendent, Winburg camp.

56 FSAR, A 248, pp. 2–3.

57 FSAR, A 248, pp. 22–3.

58 FSAR, A 248, p. 24.

59 FSAR, A 248, p. 41.

60 FSAR, A 248, pp. 30–1.

61 FSAR, A 248, pp. 52–3.

62 This event was recorded by other women as well. See especially the testimony of Maria Els in Hobhouse (1924). Mortality at the Brandfort camp was at its height when it was visited by the Ladies' Commission on 29 October 1901. Even their hostile report agrees that there was disorganisation and corruption. They recommended the dismissal of the camp doctor for stealing medical comforts (Cd 893).

63 FSAR, A 248, p. 42.

64 FSAR, A 248, p. 37.

65 The material on the life of Mrs Pooe seems to be one of the few transcripts from the University of the Witwatersrand Oral History Project which has been analysed and published. This account is taken from Beinart et al. (1986: 343–5) and Matsetela (1982: 212–21).

66 FSAR, CO 45/4183/02.

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