

Wagga War Heroes - The Boer War



The Boer War began over 100 years ago in 1899, and ended in 1902. It was also known as the Anglo-Boer War, and was fought between the British and the Boers in South Africa, over the economic power of the gold mines in South Africa. As part of the British colonies, Australia offered troops, with 12,000 serving from the six colonies.

- The patriotic enthusiasm in Wagga was overwhelming by the time the war began. The first men to volunteer in Wagga were Jack Edney, Will Annison, Silvio Palazzi and his younger brother Joe, Alfred Twyford, J Nicholson and Ernest Sawtell.
- The locals followed news of the war with great interest, celebrating major victories when the town "hooter" was sounded, and the Town Band paraded the streets for hours playing patriotic songs.
- Wagga soldier Alfred Bennett became the longest serving of all colonial officers from Australia and New Zealand.
- Grantley B Fitzhardinge joined as a non-commissioned officer but was later promoted to a first Lieutenant in Kitchener's Horse Brigade, stationed in Pretoria, South Africa. He was the son of Henry 'Harry' Fitzhardinge, a former Wagga mayor (1879-1882).
- At least 600 Australians died in the war, about half from disease and half in action. Early Wagga recruit Joe Palazzi was killed in 1900 at Palmerfontein in South Africa, and C Wilson also made the supreme sacrifice during the war.
- The honour roll and memorial in Wagga's Victory Memorial Gardens lists all of the Wagga men who served in the Boer War.
- In the history of the war, there are not many references to the native Africans, who suffered greatly. 25,000 Boer civilians (mainly women and children) and 14,000 natives died in the infamous concentration camps.

- One of Australia's greatest and most controversial military heroes was created during the war - Harry Harbord "Breaker" Morant, the subject of the film Breaker Morant.

Did you know?

The Palazzi Monument can be found in Collins Park in Wagga. It was known as Newtown Park when the monument was erected in 1901 in memory of Joe Palazzi, a coach trimmer and one of only two Wagga residents to die in the Boer War.