

This is promised to be a very interesting read. You will enjoy it very much.

In August 1984 Dr. Peter Pirow wrote;

Two thousand years ago Southern Africa was inhabited by Bushmen Hunter-Gatherers and by Hottentot pastorals. I am not aware of any evidence that these people stayed for very long in our area. If there are any painting or artifacts relating to this period, then steps should be taken to preserve them.

About 1900 years ago a group of people moved south across the Zambezi. These people used iron implements and there is a site of one of their kraals just to the east of the boundary between Hartzenbergfontein and Roodepoort. This site is particularly interesting as there is a bend in the outside wall which I could not explain until my son suggested digging, water was found, so the bend was made to ensure water.

I expect there are a number of other Iron Age sites on the Hartzenbergfontein and adjoining farms.

There are many sites around the district to indicate that people have been present here for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years. Three of the better-known settlement remains are in Grade Road, Walker's Fruit Farms; at the base of Perdeberg (thought to be particularly ancient); and at plot 143 Homestead Apple Orchards.

I have also seen the remains of a village, era unknown, whilst standing on the ridge at Walkerville Manor, looking down to the West. These can be clearly viewed in winter when the grass has been burnt.

Local artist, Colleen Mulrooney was commissioned to sketch some of our local historical sites.

One of which is the rock structures that are easily found on the top of Spioenkop. Speculation at the time was that "the deep hole could be a well, or a shaft for iron, which might have been mined by the native tribes which moved through this area on their way to Zimbabwe".

These 'kraals' appear in several places around the area and are not hard to find. Fortunately, most of them appear to have been built on high ground – away from farming and residential activity. Those built at the top of Perdeberg are easily identified and stretch for fairly long distances. As recently as 2006 and 2007 local photographers and hikers have walked to the top of Perdeberg and photographed these sites. Some of the walls appear to be much older than others according to the moss growth and weathering that has softened the edges of the stones.

Is it possible that two groups of settlers have built kraals on top of Perdeberg? First the Iron Age settlers, followed centuries later by the Boer kommandos fighting in the area?

Due to the lack of any kind of written records, it is not known exactly when the first Europeans settled in the district, but it was probably around the same time that gold was discovered on the reef in 1884. Most of what we do know comes from accounts passed on by generations of residents. As far as can be ascertained the first white to settle in the Walkerville area was an unknown Voortrekker in about 1838. The remains of a hut built with the front axle of his wagon is near Dairy Cottage on Woodacres Dairy Farm. This Voortrekker sold the Hartzenbergfontein property to Hendrik Balthazar Greyling in about 1859 and the whole property, in extent over 3,422morgen was transferred to Greyling on the 11th of December 1861. This deed of transfer has been lost but is referred to in numerous other deeds.

Hendrik Greyling died in 1879 and his wife Anna Margaretha nee Scheepers split the farm into undivided portions amongst the nine children and herself. The details may be found in Title Deeds 1879/679 to 687. The children and their husbands purchased the undivided tenth shares for 15 pounds a share. Each share was equivalent to over 342 morgen. Each tenth share forms the basis of the present subdivision of Hartzenbergfontein, Walkerville and its surrounds being on two tenths of the original area. A further two sections are still owned by the descendants of the family, namely the two large Kamffer farms.

Judging by the complex water rights relating to the streams round the area where Aloe Ridge School is presently situated (as well as the Walkerville Show-grounds), I would think that the original Greyling homestead (or the remains thereof) are to be found somewhere in that area.

In the latter part of the 19th century the district was composed of enormous farms. In the way that such matters were executed in those times, a farm's extent was measured by the distance a horse could walk in one day. This was about 3000 morgan, or 6 300 acres. There were no boundary fences, and the law forbade any subdivision, except where portions were left to family members. Probably due to the lack of entertainment as much as any other reason, families were extremely large, and this often led to problems when the head of the family passed away.

After the death of President Paul Kruger early in the last century, this statute fell away -sort of. As the population began to increase, people realised that land was a very valuable commodity, and thus began the division of these huge farms into the 5-, 10- and 20-acre plots that most of us live on today. However, the law pronounced that only 50% of any one farm could be subdivided - the other half becoming a commonage on which the people who had bought the land parcels could graze their livestock. To this day, the area we still know as the common allows any resident to use that land for this purpose.

The farm Faraosfontein plays a central role in the development of the area. It covered the boundaries we know today as The Common, the Weilbach's farm (the dairy), Homestead Apple Orchards, Golf View and Ohenimuri golf course. It was originally owned by a Mr Botha. For many years it was divided by the main Cape Town-Johannesburg Road, which today is the Old Vereeniging Road. The main house was used as one of the overnight stops for coaches travelling to Johannesburg.

Mr. Botha sold the farm to Johan Daniel Weilbach (descendants of which now own the dairy), who sold the farm to a Mr James Butler. **In turn, this was then sold to Mr Arthur Walker in 1918 from whom the area got its name.** As mentioned previously, Mr Walker, after his apple growing venture was disbanded, had the idea of dividing the farm into parcels of land and selling them as Homestead Apple Orchards. As an added incentive, any would-be purchaser would be able to graze his or her livestock on the common.

Commandant Johan Daniel Weilbach

Quite a lot has been said and written about Commandant J.D. Weilbach of Faraosfontein, locally. Some of it was rather negative but others again positive. Johan Daniël Weilbach was born in Uitenhage in 1839. His father was Johan Frederick Weilbach and his mother Maria Aletta Fredrika Landman. He moved to the Orange Free State in the 1860's and participated in the wars between the OFS and the Basutos of Moshes. He later moved to Heidelberg district where he also became the Commandant. He fought in the 1880 -1881 war against the British. With the siege of Potchefstroom, he was there. At the end of January, he fought at the Natal front at Laingsnek, Schuinshoogte and Majuba. After the war he was co-writer with C.N.J. du Plessis of the book on this war: **“Geschiedenis van de Emigranten-Boeren en van den Vrijheidsoorlog.”**

Whilst farming at Faraosfontein during 1898 he participated in a number of skirmishes with the blacks, the Bavendas. When the Anglo-Boer war broke out in 1898 he led the Heidelberg Commando on the Natal border. Apparently he was somewhat of a hothead and it was therefore no surprise that he clashed with some of the other officers. It was touch and go or he would have been discharged. During December he was temporarily suspended as he was held responsible for letting the British capture a Boer canon setup on the 8th of December. However, it was never proved that it was because of his negligence that this happened.

In March 1900 he was again the Commandant in charge of the Heidelbergers when this Commando fought valiantly to defend their positions at the battle of Abrahamskraal. They managed to such an extent against the multitude of British soldiers, that they could retreat in an orderly fashion. By doing this the British were prevented from achieving a great victory.

The Boer forces at Abrahamskraal were under the command of Generals De Wet and De la Rey. They were about 3,000 men strong. The British troops, however, totalled approximately 30,000 under direct command of Lord Roberts himself. High numbers of losses were incurred on both

sides. 30 men died on Boer side, 47 were wounded and 20 were taken prisoner. It was told that the British suffered the loss of 60 dead and 360 wounded.

After the Heidelbergers' retreat during the night, they were ordered to join forces with the Boer forces at Bainsvlei near Bloemfontein on Sunday, 11 March 1900. During that afternoon they were at their posts just to be informed that after an hour's rest, they must again be on the move. This time they had to move to south of Bloemfontein. That night they could have a decent night's rest after being on the road for two very cumbersome days.

It's not for us to say whether Commandant Weilbach was a good leader or not. What is of importance is the fact that Commandant Weilbach was the Commandant of the Heidelberg Commando and that he was one of us, from our area. His descendants still farm at Faraosfontein.

Eugene Weilbach was the Commandant of the local Commando, the Meyerton Commando. He was a good leader and accompanied this Commando several times when they went to fight on the border. What a waste of manpower because of the futility of this war. In any case, we can lift our hats high to the Weilbach's of Faraosfontein!

So, was the Weilbach farm the start of De Deur? According to old records it would appear so. The area got its name early in 1800. The name De Deur means "through," because the Voortrekkers chased wild animals through the kloof between two kopjes. This made hunting very easy.

The area was part of the Heidelberg District. A Mr. L. J. Botha "discovered" the farm in 1860 as government ground. He wrote to the government requesting that the farm be registered on his name. Only on 17 September 1882 did Mr. Botha receive the letter stating that the farm was his property.

Mr. Botha sold the farm "De Deur" after only one year to Johan Daniël Weilbach and Johan Carel Preller. Mr. Preller sold his half of the farm to Mr. Weilbach on the same day. Mr. J. D. Weilbach remained the owner of the farm until 1904.

On 1 February 1904 the farm was sold to "The De Deur Estate Ltd." The company was eager to sell the farm to the Government and on 11 February 1904 the farm was put up for sale. The Government was interested in obtaining land close to Johannesburg. The farm "De Deur" was divided into a number of small farms and was auctioned on 25 February 1904.

Development properly started in HAO in 1928, although some of the older homes date from the turn of the last century. Mrs Elizabeth Cronje has been living in the same house in 9th Avenue,

Apple Orchards since 1945. She and her husband, who had returned from fighting in Egypt, enlisted the help of Italian prisoners of war to enlarge the small house they had bought. These were paid 1 Shilling a day by the family and the same amount by the government. They were repatriated in 1946. At that time there was no electricity nor municipal water.

Around 1948 a bus service was introduced to take children living in H A O to school in De Deur. By the early 1950's, Walkerville's bus service had become a partisan affair, with people taking sides and becoming quite uppity in defence of their preference. The old Vaal Bus Company still operated its Guys, Albion & Bristols but the South African Railways had become serious about taking over the route and they had brought in the Canadian built BRIL streamliners. What buses they were! They easily hit 80 miles per hour on the long downhill run to Eikenhof. Those Busses dominated the scene for more than twenty years and must surely rank as the best busses ever built.

To people in Walkerville, the choice was an open one for years. The Vaal Bus was a good deal less expensive than the Railway Bus and apart from vibrations and low speeds, they were good transport.

Adventures on the Walkerville bus route

Bus travel in those years was a sociable affair and produced many lively stories of the carrying-on of some of the passenger. Syd, Syddie, Jim, Joe and Bob were regulars. All five were family men on the wrong side of forty, so no one could accuse them of juvenile delinquency. It's very likely of course, their earlier lives were marred by acts of juvenile delinquency and possibly even certifiable manic depression, but by the time I got to know them, they were thoroughly semi-respectable adults who worked long hours at their trades in the city with only the Friday afternoon stop-off at the Lido Hotel to ease their need for philosophic discussions with their pals.

It was to such people that the Vaal bus offered real value for money. Early buses would drop off the members of the social club in front of the Lido and Piet, who drove the last bus, saw it as his sacred duty to collect all his passengers from the bar and under the tables, before he continued the homeward journey. Piet must've had another name, but no one ever bothered to find out, it was easier to simply speak of Piet who looked like Bing Crosby. For Piet the operation always went smoothly. He'd park his bus outside of the hotel, then send someone in to warn the men that he'd give them five minutes to get into the bus, failing which he'd come in and get them.

There was always a bit of pandemonium, panicky individuals would come running out, then have to be kicked off the bus again when it turned out they weren't bus passengers. It was rarely that Piet had to drag in more than two or three passengers, after he had pried loose their grips on tables and chairs. Oh yes, they argued blue murder, some of them, but others would shush them and prop them up in a quiet corner of the bus, and by the time we had passed the slasto quarries at Hartzenbergfontein, they were all asleep.

I tell you all these good things about Piet, so you'll understand how everyone felt about him. The gavotte that followed saw everyone anxious not to let him come to any harm.

One Friday night, Piet was doing an almost empty run from Eikenhof onwards with only Syd, Syddie, Jim, Joe and Bob lounging in the seats where he'd put them after loading them at the Lido Hotel. At a point in Hartzenbergfontein, Piet stopped the bus and confessed that he was in a mood for love and that he intended to visit a young lady who lived nearby. The intrepid five promised to guard the bus for their buddy and off he went, setting his cap straight and making snapping sounds with his ticket punch. Sometime later when Piet turned out all the house lights, the five men thought he had left permanently, so they commandeered the bus and drove themselves home. Hours after the bus had left, Piet came out of the house and made the discovery. Having no choice in the matter, he was forced to walk to Walkerville, to find a telephone and report the loss of his bus. In Walkerville everyone knew what was afoot. It's very difficult to misinterpret the sight of a well-lit bus parading through Walkerville in the early morning hours, particularly when the occupants are hanging out of the windows signing obscene songs.

That must have been Syddie's biggest night ever. He'd been a good singer at one time, but he had argued with a cantankerous farmer one night at the Lido Hotel and the ability to sing well, was lost along with his front teeth. His piano honky-tonk playing style was terrific though. It was such a pity that he had to lisp along with the elegant piano playing. The expert manipulation of the bus's horn could only have been the work of Syddies gifted hands. He came darn close to playing the tune his friends were singing. Nor were they beyond all humour. At daybreak the bus was found neatly parked on the tennis court of an old curmudgeon who hated the turtle doves because they cooed too loudly on his side of the fence.

Walkerville folks were killing themselves with laughter but not saying a word to outsiders, until after the police had duly investigated and gone away again. What the heck! Piet had his bus back in good order and he'd enjoyed his visit in Hartzenbergfontein. There was no need for further action. Besides the intrepid five had given us a good laugh and we all saw it as a simple community affair. Our five criminals assumed a low profile for a while, although Joe appeared heavily swathed in bandages and saying awful things about bus doors that don't stay shut. After two weeks everything was back to normal and everyone, including Piet, was glad not to have to answer too many questions.

The Ohenimuri golf course, named after an Australian apple, was once the thriving social centre for the area. Some very important names from South Africa's political past were lifelong members. Built in 1934, the course has seen many an expert golfer grace its greens. Although the original designer remains unknown, the great Bobby Locke restructured the course at a later stage. John Bland who was born close by, would often skip school to perfect his swing there. Mr Bland Snr was manager of the tennis club. It is said that the Walker family donated the land for the course on the condition that it remained a golf club.

Mr Arthur Walker II was a regular who played a pretty fair game. A bit of an understatement really, as he has been both a South African and English Amateur champion.

The old barn on the MacDougall's farm, situated in Varkensfontein, has only ever been used to store hay and teff. The property belonged to the Walker Family until Arthur Walker 2nd death in 2005. The MacDougall's had been renting for nearly 30 years and decided it was time to buy. The shed still stands but is hardly used nowadays, except for the flock of peacocks that have made it their roost. The main farmhouse, still in almost original condition was built in 1896. The high ceilings, sash windows and stained glass bear testimony to a grand old era. The veranda was modified some years ago when the house underwent repairs, but its charm remains intact.

The MacDougall Farm in Varkensfontein, 1926

The area Varkenfontein was named after the arum lilies that grew wild in the area

What a proud man it was when he had completed this charming cottage in the early 1930's for his family.

Traveling from the Free State this corner of Walkers Fruit farms with its trees and plentiful water must have seemed idyllic.

Nothing but a ruin remains of this historic landmark. Surrounded by car wrecks and junk it is a sad sight. Its solid walls and sturdy gables attest to original builder's skill. The property is for sale. Hopefully whoever buys it will feel that same sense of pride the original builder felt and restore it to its former quaint charm.

Built to commemorate his late Mother, a local farmer chose a beautiful view site next to the final resting place of the farm's previous family. Some of the graves date back to the early 1900's among them Charles Glass - not the Charles Glass of Castle Lager fame. Although asked many times the family steadfastly refuses to allow the use of this grave for advertising.

Nestling at the base of this majestic koppie is a house believed to be the oldest in Walkerville.

Built in the late 1870's Paul Kruger was pleased to sleep here when visiting the Heidelberg Commando, who were active in the area.

This sturdy building is situated on Charlie Jacob's farm (now part of the Blue Rose Development) in Drumblade. Nowadays it is used for storage and labourer's quarters. What a fabulous little

B&B, or restaurant, it would make! The inside was in good condition and the cottage is surprisingly large.

Perdeberg

Rumour abounds about this koppie in the Walkerville area.

Was it the scene of fierce fighting between the Boers and the British red Coats in the First War of Independence or an Observation post which changed hands many times during the Anglo Boer War? Is the deep hole a well or a shaft for iron, which might have been mined by the native tribes which moved through this area on their way to Zimbabwe? One thing cannot be disputed, it is a peaceful, beautiful view-site today.

Workhouse Farm

Situated in Walkers Fruit Farms is where craftsmen ply their trade from another era, building coaches and carts. These were made completely by hand including the wheels - using skills passed down over three generations.

The organically run farm is a delight and indicates how a farm operated many years ago in the Walkerville area.

These delightful buildings in Walkers Fruit Farms are situated on Colin Tegner's property. Colin has been a resident in Walkers Fruit Farms since the 1960's. A coach builder with an established reputation - he supplied all the coaches at Gold Reef City and was recently commissioned by the King of Lesotho to build a Landau State Coach for delivery in September 2008.

Colin's property in Walkers Fruit Farms is a mini version of Gold Reef City with an assortment of cottages, workshops and an impressive showroom that houses several buggies, wagons and an Omnibus that is being registered for a resident in Henley. All items on display have either been built or restored in Colin's workshops.

Commandant Hendrik J Kamffer

Hendrik Kamffer, local farmer at Hartzenbergfontein, started out under the other local commander, Commandant Weilbach, who farmed at Faroasfontein. During the battle of Modderspruit on the 30th of October 1899, Hendrik Kamffer was a lad of 20 years old. He had served in the Jamieson Raid three years earlier when he was only 17. With him was his younger brother, Willem, only 18. During one charge Hendrik's horse was hit and he somersaulted over his horse's head. "He rolled and dodged wildly as the others thundered by, then as Hendrik Greyling swerved past, he stuck out his hand and was lifted up behind his friend, then hung on

grimly as they galloped to safety." Hendrik Greyling was killed at Ceaser's Camp (Platrand) on 6 January 1900.

Hendrik Kamffer was "one of the Klipriver men". During the battle of Ladysmith, 7 November 1899, Hendrik Kamffer had already been promoted to Corporal. "He was sent with a group of burghers to occupy a bushy hillock approximately 1,000 metres from the Platrand." On 7 December 1899 he was in charge of the guard on Lombardskop. Their duty was to guard the 4.7 Howitzer guns and a Long Tom of Major Erasmus. At 02h00 the British had stealthily advanced and surprised the sleeping guard. The result was the flight of everyone and the capture of the guns. This resulted in the suspension of Commandant Weilbach and Org Meyer who were held responsible.

On 24 January 1900 the battle of Spioenkop was fought. Hendrik and his brother Willem and three others were together. Willem was shot in the shoulder early in the morning. Willem Marais was killed when he looked over the sheltering rocks. Hendrik watched in horror as one of the others, David van Staden, was shot in the forehead and writhed in pain till he died. This sight Hendrik would never forget. Hendrik's rifle became so hot that as he levered a round into the firing chamber the bullet would go off. Van Schalkwyk, also with the Kamffer's, was shot later in the day and had to wait in pain till dark when Hendrik took him to the ambulance.

On 25 January there was a truce in order for the dead to be buried. Kamffer buried Marais and Van Staden on the northern edge of Spioenkop where burghers from Rustenburg, Middelburg and Pretoria Commandos were buried. "During the mopping up operations he noticed that blood ran in streams from the heaps of British dead."

During the following looting that took place, Kamffer noticed a Pretoria burgher, Wynand Els, take a rifle from a dead soldier. The Tommy's finger was still on the trigger and a shot went off killing Els instantly. According to Philip Pienaar in his book: "With Steyn and De Wet", Els was the only son of a widowed mother. Ironically Els was killed by a dead man. An interesting fact is that the famous General Christiaan de Wet had farmed near Heidelberg and fought with the Heidelberg Commando 20 years before. This Commando was sent to assist the Free Staters at Paardeberg where General Piet Cronje and his laager was trapped. The Heidelbergers were now under the command of Commandant Cornelis Spruyt. When he saw that the British Gloucester Regiment was moving against the position held by Org Meyer's Klipriver men, he went to their assistance himself. Hendrik Kamffer, and his brother Willem, were in the trenches and saw the British troops, with fixed bayonets, advancing. As the first line of troops were axed down, the next just kept on coming. Commandant Spruyt unfortunately rode right into the middle of the British column and had to surrender. Meanwhile Hendrik decided that he and Willem should retreat to where their horses were standing. On their way they saw a number of men had been killed whilst others lay writhing "with their intestines strewn about."

The next morning the Klipriver men retook their former positions. The British bombarded their positions with liddite bombs and Hendrik was hit by a splinter in the fleshy part of his left leg. "Willem assisted him as he limped to the rear." Two Heidelbergers, Willem Johan Ritters and Petrus G. Roos, were killed at Paardeberg; and fourteen captured. The captured Commandant Spruyt managed to throw himself out of the train taking him to the POW camp. He walked for four nights and hid during the day. He had no food during this time.

Not all our local people were of the same calibre as Hendrik Kamffer. It is reported that one Koos Pienaar, of Jackson's Drift, pleaded with his Veldkornet: "Give me a good heart and not a good horse. Give this horse to another burgher who is a better fighter than I, and send me home." When the first terrific bombardment broke out at Driefontein (Abrahamskraal) on 10 March 1900, he rode home as fast as he could!

Local Commandant Weilbach met with severe criticism at various stages in the war. When he abandoned a critical position near Bloemfontein on 12 March 1900 he was bitterly criticised for his half-hearted efforts and lack of discipline. He was later removed as Commandant.

In an effort to hold their positions at Houtenbeek, near Bloemfontein, on 29 March 1900, Willem Kamffer refused to retreat. Hendrik tried to caution him, but to no avail. Willem charged forward and was killed by a bullet through the head.

At one stage Hendrik Kamffer was asked to lead a church service on a Sunday, something he had never done before. Uys says: "He wrestled with a tremendous internal struggle until eventually the Spirit came upon him and he then calmly faced his congregation and led them in worship. They were isolated and weary, their horses thin and no longer able to carry them. His fervent prayer for assistance from the Almighty put new strength into his comrades. The boy had become a man. This did not go unnoticed by his superiors, who marked him for promotion."

After the battle at Mauchberg, near Lydenburg, on 6 September 1900, Hendrik Kamffer was appointed a Veldkornet by General Piet Viljoen and instructed by General Louis Botha to return to Heidelberg to seek out those who had surrendered their arms to the British and to commandeer them. He took five men with him: A and G Marais; C and H Booyesen and A Basson. They reached the Klipriver area the next day and found that Captain Danie Theron had been there a few nights before them. Danie Theron had died at Gatsrand, near Fochville, on the 5th of September.

Hendrik and his men began rounding up burghers who had laid down their arms and ordered them to join him. They had horses but no weapons. So in order to arm them they ambushed small groups of British soldiers to lay their hands on these weapons. "Veldkornet Hendrik Kamffer was back in war with a vengeance." This was also the start of trainwrecking in our area. This was mainly done in order to obtain provisions and ammunition.

The Block House at Walkerville

Located on the road between Alberton and Meyerton, bordering on the extreme eastern edge of Walkerville is a blockhouse, built by the British Forces during the Anglo Boer War of (1899-1902). This was part of a line of defence posts, which started in Johannesburg and finished in Vereeniging some 54 km in length. The blockhouse today is the only remaining one and is preserved as a National Monument. These blockhouses were erected for the protection of the British lines of communication and to restrict the mobility of the Boer forces.

The system was introduced in the November of 1901 by the British Military Forces and was initially authorised by General Lord Kitchener, whose idea it was to protect the area around Johannesburg from attack by the Boer Commando, who at that time was continually assaulting the towns and railway lines. Later strategic roads were taken into consideration and finally the system was extended in an endeavour to isolate the principle combat areas, by means of lines of blockhouses, in an effort to trap within their bounds the forces of General de Wet and De la Rey with General Smuts, but each of these commanders easily defeated the system, General de Wet called it the 'blockhead' system.

There were several types of blockhouses, the usual type consisted of two concentric circles of corrugated iron sheets, with space in between which was filled in with stone chips, except for the loopholes through which to fire, unfortunately no examples exist today (see attached photo which was taken by a member of the party defending the post thus the lack of uniform). The more permanent type consisted of a rectangular two storey forts built of stone, which were built at bridgeheads and at the entrances to towns. These also had several variations, typical examples of these will be seen in various areas and all have been proclaimed National Monuments.

The Battle for Johannesburg via Walkerville

Note: The situation as written here happened before Walkerville was founded, so any reference to Walkerville must be accepted as such.

The situation on the morning of the 27th of May 1900 was very serious for the Boer forces. From Tugela in one direction and the Modder River in the other had been one of constant retreat. Now the British forces were poised on the borders of the South African Republic and here the Boer forces were to make a stand. The commando under General Louis Botha numbered only 60,000 men and these were massed around Vereeniging, General Botha called for reinforcements though eventually they arrived had to come from Johannesburg and Mafeking.

Leaving some 500 men at Viljoens Drift with orders to delay the British crossing of the Vaal River, General Botha retired with his remaining men to Meyerton, where defences had been prepared but he decided the area was not one of secure defence, so again he pulled back to Klipriver Station. Meanwhile the British forces under Lord Roberts had crossed over the Vaal River in two

places – Viljoens Drift after routing the 400 Boers and at Lindique, the troops here were under the command of General Hamilton.

When the crossings were complete General Hamilton directed his cavalry division under General French to hold at Zeekoeifontein overnight. The following morning General French moved his troops as far as Houtkop and sent troops out to reconnoitre after which he moved on to Rietfontein on the Klip River. General French was opposed in his march from Houtkop all the way to Syferfontein, here when the road entered a defile, a part of the enemy forces of some 300 men and an artillery piece endeavoured to stop General French from reaching his destination.

However, they were easily removed with the minimum of casualties, the Boer forces then withdrew to Vlakfontein where a second defile carried the track through the Gatsrand. Here a strong force of Boers under the command of General Lemmer held General French to a pitched battle for some time. General Lemmer held the area for quite some time, but eventually driven back after several attempts and heavy casualties to General French's division the main unit of the British forces to route the Boer forces eventually was dismantled attack by the Inniskilling Dragoons.

General French was further assisted by the 4th Brigade whom was speedily brought to help them; they were under the command of General Hutton. By this time the British troops were very tired having moved some 30 miles during the day so General Hutton and his Brigade of Infantry were sent forward to relieve them, General French and his troops rested overnight at Doornkuil, (this area is now very much a part of Walkerville, being just slightly North East the centre of the village). The area which is now the Blue Saddle Ranches was also an area of combat during the advance of General French to Rietfontein.

During the period of rest of General French and his troops, General Hamilton marched to Wildebeestfontein on the left of General French and halted here to rest his troops. Meanwhile General Botha seeing his men were in an organised retreat continued to ask for reinforcements from Johannesburg, Rustenburg and Marico, saw that he must lose the Gatsrand and so ordered an orderly retreat to Klipriversberg, along a line of hills which fronted Johannesburg and would form a position which he could well defend and endeavour to halt the British forces.

From this the battle of Doornkop came about, which after heavy fighting and many casualties on both sides resulted in the loss of Johannesburg to the Boers and created the retreat of the Boer forces to Pretoria and to the final Battle of what was known as the "Last Gentlemen's War". Though the war in general was over, another 2 years was to pass before the fighting was over, as General de Wet and General De la Rey with General Smuts continued a commando type action until finally defeated in 1902, after many expeditions behind the British Lines.

There followed a period of negotiation which resulted in the "Treaty of Vereeniging" which was signed in 1904.

"The first engagement in which Hendrik Kamffer led an attack was, strangely enough, not only on his 21st Birthday, but also took place on his family farm, Hartzenbergfontein, north-west of Vereeniging." Of course, we know Hartzenbergfontein! Uys describes the encounter thus: "They saw an English cavalry unit was dismounted, so Kamffer immediately led a charge directly at them. His horse outdistanced the rest of his commando and he found himself alone before the rapidly firing enemy soldiers. There was no time to wheel his horse about as bullets cracked the air near him, so he swung its head to the right and in a swirl of dust headed for the soldier on the perimeter. Kamffer sprang from his horse, holding onto the reins, then with a false bravado ordered the soldier to surrender his rifle. His bluff worked. As the troopers stood seven metres apart and as the soldier was on the end of the line, the man probably thought they had been outflanked. After disarming the soldier, Kamffer looked about for his commando and saw that they had taken cover in a stone kraal 180 metres away."

"The other troopers paid no attention to Kamffer, as they must have assumed that he was their prisoner. They poured a heavy fire at the kraal and chips of stone and dust flew about as bullets ricocheted off the wall. The burghers were leaderless and lost heart under the concentrated fire, so soon galloped wildly out of the kraal and raced away. One of their rider-less horses ran towards the enemy."

"The Veldkornet recognised the horse as belonging to one of his youngest burghers, G.S. Viljoen, 14. Kamffer then threatened the trooper with his revolver, warning him that if he called out to his companions he would be shot. He then took the man's horse, threw its reins over his horse's neck, sprang on his horse and raced towards the kraal."

"He held his rifle up, leaned over his heaving mount's flying mane and dug his spurs in, expecting a bullet in his back any second. When about 30m from the line of extended troopers, Kamffer was shot through his right hand and lost his rifle. Blood sprayed onto his body as he pressed his shattered hand against his chest. The soldier's rifle was slung across his back but could not act as an effective shield."

"Kamffer's mother had meanwhile been standing at the back door of her farmhouse, watching the battle. She thought at first that the English had captured her son, then saw to her surprise and horror that he was racing back with a spare horse and was covered in blood. She covered her face in anguish, not knowing how seriously her son was wounded. Young Willem was already dead. Now Hendrik ...?"

"The horse skidded to a stop at the kraal. Viljoen grabbed the reins of the English horse, vaulted into the saddle and followed Kamffer as he raced away. They followed the route the commando

had taken and rode into their camp at 9 pm. They were overjoyed to see the two men, who they assumed had been captured or killed."

"The burghers had bivouacked in large tobacco barns on Pienaar's farm near the Losberg. Kamffer was in great pain, as he had not had time to attend to his wound while searching for them. He ordered his men to remain there until daybreak and then ride to the Losberg and seek shelter there. He then went to the farmhouse for treatment."

"It was here that he met the young widow, Bosman, whose husband had been killed at Mafeking. She had been a Miss Pienaar who had married shortly before the outbreak of the war." "She saved Kamffer's life by immediately tending to his wound. The shattered hand was washed in warm water and the dead flesh cut away, then she soaked his hand in warm bran-water throughout the night. The following morning Mrs. Bosman bandaged his hand before he left to join his commando."

What a spectacle it must have been, right here on our doorstep, at Hartzenbergfontein!

By this time Kitchener had already begun destroying the crops and flocks of the Boers and herding their women and children into concentration camps. In so doing he thought that he could starve the Boers in the veld. This was wishful thinking as the Boers plundered convoys and trains for supplies. From their camp at Losberg they moved to Waldrif, Vereeniging, on their way towards Heidelberg. It's hard to believe that Waldrif then was difficult to cross. But it was. And in trying to cross a commando of 100 men engaged their commando. Kamffer told his men to veer right around a koppie and then to surrender to them. He and a number of younger men went the other way and as they came around the koppie on the left side, they started shooting at the enemy. His commando also retaliated and the whole commando was wiped out. Kamffer then moved his commando into the lower Roodekoppen hills where they could rest for a while.

At the end of January 1901 Kamffer's men were camped to the west of Heidelberg. One evening General Smuts and his adjutant arrived at Kamffer's camp and asked for his assistance as they intended attacking the English forces near Jachtfontein on the West Rand. Kamffer knew the area well and agreed to guide them to the forts in that area. Smuts would attack from the west and Commandant Breytenbach from the east.

They took fort upon fort and when dawn broke, they advanced and scaled the forts walls and were in the camp. An English officer shouted: "Fix bayonets!" Where upon General Smuts shouted back: "If one of my men are stabbed with a bayonet, I will have you all shot. I am General Smuts." The soldiers chose to obey General Smuts' order and surrendered. It was later learnt that Commandant Breytenbach had been killed while taking the first fort east of the camp.

As part of the spoils Hendrik Kamffer was presented with the English commanding officer's dappled brown horse and its full accoutrements. "After loading his new horse with all the supplies it could carry, Kamffer proudly returned to his own corps."

Ian S Uys's book continues to describe Kamffer's war experiences in great detail – from the betrayal by a family member to the many hardships the Boers had to endure. If you enjoy researching the Boer War history, this little book is a gem.

In 1902 Hendrik married his war time fiancée, Alida Laubscher. Two years later the Treaty of Vereeniging would be signed. The Kamffer family were very active in the area, even donating land for the "Hartzernbergfontein (132) Goevernment Skool" later to be renamed Aloe Ridge Primary School. Hendrik and Alida had eight sons and four daughters. In 1914 Kamffer served as a commandant during the Rebellion. In 1922 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and served actively during the Rand Strikes. In 1943 he was made a full colonel. He died in 1952, aged 73, at his home in Johannesburg, the day before his golden wedding anniversary.

After the Anglo-Boer War our Commandant Kamffer wrote a book which he called: "Herinneringe" (Memories). The book was never published but a copy of the manuscript could be obtained from the archives in Pretoria.

How ironic that the founding families of our beautiful Walkerville that had fought so bitterly against one another would all come to live alongside each other. Had Hendrik Kamffer and Arthur Walker met a few years earlier there is no doubt they would have tried to shoot each other.

Today there are three Kamffer farms in the area - Piet Kamffer's farm on Platberg Mountain, Matthys Kamffer's farm in Hartzenbergfontein in the Walkerville area, and Willie Kamffer's farm in the Drumblade area.

The communities of Walkerville, Walkerville Manor, Walkers Fruit Farms, Homestead Apple Orchards, Golfview, Blignautsrus, Hartzenbergfontein, Drumblade, Blue Saddle Ranches and Savannah City. With De Deur to the South and Eikenhof to the north comprise the greater Walkerville Area. Situated in Gauteng, the smallest most densely populated province in South Africa.

Walkerville is approximately 35kms south of Johannesburg and can be reached by both the new R82 highway (via Southgate, Mondeor, Kibler Park and Eikenhof) or from the R59, taking the Walkerville turnoff just after passing Kliprivier. Walkerville offers the peace and tranquillity of rural living yet is a short drive from the hustle and bustle of the major conurbation that is Johannesburg.

A lack of any formal records means that there is no concurrence as to just when exactly Europeans first settled in the district of Walkerville, but many believe that it was around the same time that gold was discovered in the area in 1884. Walkerville has no shortage of history and streets are witness to some fine examples of historical buildings.

The area is predominantly rural, and farming is a way of life for many who reside here, which translates into a town in which there is plenty to do and a great sense of community. The De Deur Flea Market, on every Saturday in Cross Road, boasts a sizeable number of stalls and stands right next door to De Deur Auctioneers, which makes it interesting if you're up to watching the auction of livestock and household goods after browsing through the stalls.

There is no shortage of bird life in Walkerville and anything from finches to Cape robins and African hoopoes have been spotted in local gardens, which abound with indigenous trees. Even barn owls and African orioles have been sighted. Nearby is the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve, a hiker's paradise with hikes that take anything from a few hours to a few days that traverse the 12 000 hectares that lie just outside Heidelberg.

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