

# COMMEMORATING A BLOODY WAR: LOOKING BACK (AND AHEAD) ON THE EVE OF THE 120-YEAR COMMEMORATION OF THE ANGLO-BOER WAR OF 1899 TO 1902

**By A Wessels**

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## **Abstract**

It is fit and proper that there is a 120-year commemoration of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902. After all, it is not possible to understand the history of the twentieth-century South African, if one does not have an understanding of the consequences that the war of 1899 to 1902 have for *all* South Africans. But how should a terrible conflict be commemorated? To shed light on this and related matters, this paper will in the first instance look back at the Anglo-Boer War centennial of the years 1999 to 2002. What can be learnt from that centennial? What has changed since then? Other matters that will also be addressed in this paper include the importance of preserving Anglo-Boer War (and other) historical structures (for example monuments) and sites; tourism; the importance of museums; how and why transgenerational trauma with regard to the war of 1899 to 1902 (as well as other conflicts) continue to haunt our society – and how the commemoration of the war might play a role in healing our people(s). Suggestions with regard to the way forward will be made, and where possible comparisons with other commemorations will be drawn. In conclusion, the paper endeavours to place the Anglo-Boer War, its consequences, and its commemorations in historical perspective.

## **Paper / notes**

## **Introduction**

It is not possible to understand the history of twentieth-century South Africa, if one does not have an understanding of the consequences that the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 had for *all* South Africans. But how should a terrible conflict be commemorated? To shed light on this and related matters, this study will in the first

instance look back at the Anglo-Boer War centennial of the years 1999 to 2002. What can be learnt from that centennial? What has changed since then? Other matters that will also be addressed in this study include the importance of preserving Anglo-Boer War (and other) historical structures (for example, monuments) and sites; tourism; the importance of museums; how and why transgenerational trauma with regard to the war of 1899 to 1902 (as well as other conflicts) continue to haunt South African society – and how the commemoration of the war might play a role in healing the people of South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed also time to, once again, take stock of the impact that the most devastating conflict that has thus far raged in what is today South Africa, had on all the people of this region, and thus also, in the light of everything that has been written since the start of the war's centennial in 1999, re-imagine the Anglo-Boer War, and as far as possible provide new perspectives (or re-emphasise some of the older perspectives) with an eye on the road ahead.

More questions will be posed than clear-cut answers provided to many of the issues that are raised. But then, of course, one must keep in mind what the Dutch historian Pieter Geyl once said, namely that History is a debate without end. In each new phase of a country's history, each new generation can and must ask new questions about the past.

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At 17h00 on the afternoon of 11 October 2019, it was exactly 120 years since the Anglo-Boer War broke out on that fateful day, 11 October 1899. In the just more than two-and-a-half years that followed the outbreak of hostilities, at least 7 792 British soldiers had been killed according to official figures, or had succumbed to wounds sustained in battle, while 14 658 had died of disease or in accidents. Furthermore, 75 430 soldiers were sent home either ill or wounded. It is not clear how many black and

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<sup>1</sup> This study links up with, and is also to some extent based upon research that the author has done over the course of many years, and from which flowed several publications. See, for example, A. Wessels, "Die traumatiese nalatenskap van die Anglo-Boereoorlog se konsentrasiekampe", *Journal for Contemporary History*, 26(2), December 2001, pp. 1-20; A. Wessels, "The Anglo Boer War (1899-1902) and its traumatic consequences" in P. Gobodo-Madikizela (ed.), *Breaking intergenerational cycles of repetition: a global dialogue on historical trauma and memory* (Opladen, Berlin and Toronto: Barbara Budruch Publishers, 2016), pp. 160-173. See also the portions of the text written by A. Wessels in F. Pretorius (ed.), *Scorched earth* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2017), pp. 232-233, 237, 240-242.

brown people, who had served on the British side, became casualties. At least 3 990 Boers and comrades were killed on the battlefield; some 157 died in accidents, while those who died on commando owing to disease or wounds sustained in battle, numbered 924. A further 1 118 died as prisoners of war. As far as the civilian population was concerned, at least 27 927 white people died in the internment camps, as well as at least 23 000 (but probably many more) black people. There is a possibility that more black than white people died in the camps.<sup>2</sup> (The term "internment camps" and not "concentration camps" is used in this study, because it has to be clearly understood that there is no comparison between the British Army's camps for black and white civilians in the Anglo-Boer War, and the Nazi concentration/extermination camps in the Second World War.)

### **To commemorate or not to commemorate**

The Anglo-Boer War was a bloody and devastating conflict, traumatising hundreds of thousands of people; people of different cultures and on both of the opposing sides. But in this day and age (2019) the question is: Is it fit and proper to commemorate such events? After all, what is the prize of victory? The prize is often merely a battlefield strewn with the remains of dead human beings; of friend and foe. What a prize! And what a price to pay for so-called heroism and glory. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that war does not determine who is right, but merely determines who survives.

The views of people who regard the commemoration of conflicts as controversial, is respected. But, one cannot understand history in general without knowledge of and insight into how conflicts contribute towards historical developments – for better or for worse. The fact of the matter is that military history is studied by thousands of people across the globe, and is appreciated by many millions. And worldwide, there are also hundreds of military museums, including some of the most prominent ones (which the author has been privileged to visit in the course of many years), such as the Imperial War Museum and National Army Museum in London; the Royal Navy's Museum in

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<sup>2</sup> A.Wessels, *The Anglo-Boer War: white man's war, black man's war, traumatic war* (Bloemfontein: Sun Media, 2011), pp. 78-79.

Portsmouth in the south of England; the Naval Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, in the United States of America; the Austrian Army Museum in Vienna; the Dutch Army Museum (previously in Delft, now in Soesterberg and known as the Nationaal Militair Museum) and the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. And not to forget the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein, South Africa. These museums are important tourist attractions and centres of research, as well as publishing many books. They are often also the focus points of commemorations and from time to time have special exhibitions that commemorate a particular war or event. See, in this regard, for example, the special exhibition, "After the war" at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, 2018-2019.<sup>3</sup>

It is problematic (yet understandable) when hero myths (and other myths) are created during and in the wake of a conflict. It is unfortunately so that the victors often write the history and determine whose praises will be sung and who will be demonised.

Nevertheless, it is human nature to commemorate events. We commemorate birthdays, wedding anniversaries, independence days, and many other events. Everything taken into consideration, it is also proper to commemorate the outbreak of a bloody war, the events that took place in the course of the conflict, and also the conclusion of peace. But it is, of course, important that commemorations should take place in the correct spirit; not to refight the battles of the past, not to open up old wounds, not to ostracise or vilify "the enemy" (i.e. the "other side", depending on one's perspective), not to hero-worship; but rather to use the opportunity to reflect, and to take stock of one's own (but also, in the South African context, one's shared) history. Thus, commemorations must be inclusive.

## **Past Anglo-Boer War commemorations in South Africa**

On 10 October 1974 (10 October then still a public holiday in South Africa) the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War was commemorated; i.e. a day before the actual anniversary date. At 07h30 that morning there was a short ceremony at the Bloemfontein internment camp site adjacent to the Kimberley road, and at 08h30 there were three simultaneous commemorative ceremonies: one at the statue of

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<sup>3</sup> Observations by the author when he visited the Australian War Memorial in November 2018 and in August 2019.

President MT Steyn, in front of the main building of the University of the (then still Orange) Free State (where Judge MT Steyn, grandson of the last president of the Orange Free State Boer republic, was the speaker); at the statue of General CR de Wet in President Brand Street, and in the Dutch Reformed Church's "Tweeteringkerk"; and at 09h30 there was a ceremony at the internment camp cemetery in Rhodes Avenue, from where those who attended moved to the terrain of the War Museum, where in front of the Women's Memorial wreaths were laid, and the Administrator of the Orange Free State, Mr SGJ van Niekerk, was the main speaker. The previous evening there was a torchlight march by 800 members of the Voortrekker movement to the Women's Memorial.<sup>4</sup> In the political context of the 1970s, this commemoration was a whites-only event.

Fast-forward 25 years to 1999 and the start of the centenary of the Anglo-Boer War.<sup>5</sup> In the period October 1999 to June 2002 there were more than a hundred centennial events all over South Africa. This centennial took place in the context of the so-called "new" South Africa; indeed, it was the first major heritage event to take place after the political changes of 1994 (i.e. when the African National Congress (ANC) formed the first government in a truly democratic South Africa). It took place in a South Africa with a more open and inclusive society.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, since then, and in particular the last few years, the general discourse in the country has become more racialised. Pessimism about the future is also widespread.

From 1999 to 2002, the majority of the non-governmental events were co-ordinated by a national committee which was formed as early as 1994, and was called the Central Steering Committee for the Commemoration of the Anglo-Boer War. Its chairperson was the then Director of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, Colonel Frik Jacobs.<sup>7</sup> Without his endeavours, the centennial would not have been a success.

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<sup>4</sup> André Wessels Private Document Collection, Bloemfontein: *Herdenking van die uitbreek van die Anglo-Boereoorlog vyf-en-sewentig jaar gelede* (programme).

<sup>5</sup> What follows, is a summary of the findings in the article by A-K. Evaldsson and A. Wessels, "The Anglo-Boer War centennial: a critical evaluation", *Journal for Contemporary History* 27(3), December 2002, pp. 125-144. See also A-K. Evaldsson and A. Wessels, "To commemorate or not to commemorate: three important commemorative events in twentieth-century South Africa", *Journal for Contemporary History* 28(1), June 2003, pp. 62-82; as well as A-K. Evaldsson and A. Wessels, "Die herdenking van historiese gebeurtenisse", *Werkwinkel: A Journal of Low Countries and South African Studies* 1(1), 2006, pp. 147-166.

<sup>6</sup> Evaldsson and Wessels, "The Anglo-Boer War centennial", p. 126.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Now it is for others to take Anglo-Boer War commemorative events to another level in the challenging context of 2019, and beyond.

In 1996 the question of whether to get involved in the commemoration or not was discussed by the ANC government. As from November 1998, the commemoration was adopted as a legacy project by the then Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology. Government involvement in commemorations usually leads to controversies as indeed happened in 1999 to 2002, but a positive result was that thanks to the concomitant media coverage, more people took note of the event.<sup>8</sup>

The goals of the centennial included the following:

- \* To honour those who died on all sides.
- \* To increase interest and knowledge about the war and its consequences among the general public, and to make people aware of the importance of history.
- \* To promote a positive image of South Africa, and thus:
- \* To promote tourism from overseas, as well as from within South Africa – which would then:
  - \* Boost employment and economic growth.
  - \* To preserve and upgrade historic sites, monuments, etc.
  - \* To promote reconciliation and nation building.
  - \* To increase scientific knowledge about the war of 1899 to 1902.<sup>9</sup>

All the above mentioned goals can and should be applied to the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war – and all other anniversaries.

The centennial commemorative events included:

- \* The unveiling of new or the rededication of old monuments.
- \* The commemoration of battles (which often included some form of re-enactment).
- \* Concerts, dance performances, plays, festivals and sports meetings.
- \* The upgrading of historical sites connected to the war, as well as of the infrastructure necessary to reach the sites.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128. For an evaluation of the commemorative events, see *ibid.*, pp. 136-143.

\* Academic conferences.<sup>10</sup>

One can only hope that the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary will also lead to the abovementioned kinds of events taking place across the country.

The Anglo-Boer War centenary was covered extensively, especially in newspapers. The local Afrikaans newspaper in Bloemfontein, *Volksblad*, for example, published something on the war almost on a daily basis. Hopefully, the South African media will once again play a constructive role in informing the public about the importance of the latest commemoration.

In the meantime, since the end of the Anglo-Boer War centenary in 2002, many people across the globe took part in the Great (First World) War (1914-1918) centenary (2014-2018). With the exception of official events at Delville Wood and with regard to the sinking of the *Mendi*<sup>11</sup> this centenary was unfortunately, to a very large extent, neglected in South Africa, albeit that certain military units (for example, the School of Armour in Bloemfontein), veterans' organisations and others did pay homage to those South Africans of all cultural groups that took part, and paid the highest price. At present (2019), the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second World War (1939-1945) continues across the globe; unfortunately, once again, a commemoration that is largely neglected in South Africa.

Commemorations are often relatively insignificant events, but in some instances they can have far-reaching consequences for a society; for example, by creating enhanced feelings of cohesion and nationalism. (See, for example, the Great Trek centennial of 1938 and concomitant rise of Afrikaner nationalism.)<sup>12</sup> But commemorations can also divide a society; for example, when certain groups are excluded, or when politicians misuse events to score political points. Ideally, however, commemorations should be a source of learning about and creating an interest in the past.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 128-135; including many practical examples of events that took place.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, *Cape Times*, 13 July 2016; *Volksblad* 13 and 19 July 2016; *Cape Argus*, 13 July 2017.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Evaldsson and Wessels, "To commemorate or not to commemorate", p. 65-68; H. Giliomee, "Afrikaner nationalism, 1902-1948" in F. Pretorius (ed.), *A history of South Africa: from the distant past to the present day* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2014), pp. 281-312 (in particular pp. 307-308).

<sup>13</sup> Evaldsson and Wessels, "The Anglo-Boer War centennial", p. 125.

Everything considered, the Anglo-Boer War centennial of 1999 to 2002 was a successful series of events. It was inclusive of all cultural groups; it was well-organised; it received a lot of publicity; and many new books and articles were published on various aspects of the war, including topics that had – at least to some extent – been neglected in the past; for example, black participation, and the effect the war had on black civilians.

Since 2002, South Africa has unfortunately experienced many problems. But this should not be an excuse not to commemorate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war; as a matter of fact, the country needs positive action, and positive experiences.

### **The trans-generational trauma that still haunts us**

To understand why it is important to revisit the past and thus to also commemorate a war such as the Anglo-Boer War, it is important that one must understand the impact that this war had on the history of South Africa.

The Anglo-Boer War was the 226<sup>th</sup> of 230 wars, campaigns and punitive expeditions in which the British Army took part in the 64 years of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901.<sup>14</sup> Although both the British and the Boers initially regarded the Anglo-Boer War as a "gentleman's war", as well as a white man's war, the conflict was from the start neither the one nor the other. This traumatic conflict may be regarded as the first liberation struggle of the twentieth century, with the Afrikaners being the first African freedom fighters. To this day, it is the most extensive and destructive war that has been fought in what is today, South Africa. The military conflict between the world's only superpower (the British Empire) on the cusp of the twentieth century and two small Boer/Afrikaner republics (i.e. the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek/South African Republic/Transvaal and the Oranje-Vrijstaat/Orange Free State) wreaked havoc on the civilian population in the war zone and caused trans-generational trauma. What started as a white man's war and so-called "gentleman's war" soon degenerated into a conflict that (at least to some extent) displayed characteristics of both a total war and

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<sup>14</sup> B. Farwell, *Queen Victoria's little wars* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) pp. 364-371.

a civil war, affecting the lives of all the inhabitants (i.e. white, black, brown and Asian) in the region.<sup>15</sup>

Just as is the case with the history of South Africa in general (and for that matter, all history), the history of the Anglo-Boer War is also not simplistic. Seldom in history can clear-cut good people and bad people be identified. In an effort to understand the often complex political, social and even economic developments in a country or region, it is important that the wars and other forms of conflict that have shaped societies are studied in an unbiased way.<sup>16</sup>

In the South Africa of today (2019), there are many people who are disillusioned, angry, or bitter; or all these things, and more. There are people who apparently suffer from historical amnesia: i.e. they do not know who they are, or where they come from, or where exactly they are (historically speaking) today, or where they are heading. Many South Africans are also traumatised. Some were traumatised by events that happened in the past (for example, the humiliation and hardships suffered in the years 1948 to 1990 under apartheid), or by more recent events, such as racial incidents or crime. There are those South Africans who yearn for the so-called "good old days" of the past and then there are those who are intent on refighting the battles of the past, including those that took place between the Boers/Afrikaners and the British during the Anglo-Boer War.<sup>17</sup>

From 1996 until 1998 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa<sup>18</sup> was in session, and yet, reconciliation is still a problem in South Africa. The question has to be asked: Why all the hostility, the bitterness, the unresolved trauma? In an effort to try to understand these challenges, it is imperative that one should understand the complex history of twentieth-century South Africa. The root causes go back much further in history, but for the purpose of this study the focus is on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 – a war that set in motion a train of events which, in due course, had

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<sup>15</sup> Wessels in Gobodo-Madikizela (ed.), p. 161.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Rondebosch: Justice in transition, s.a.); *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Cape Town: Juta, 1998); L.S. Gaybill, *Truth and reconciliation in South Africa: miracle or model?* (Boulden: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

profound implications for the political and social development of the country, as well as for inter-group relations in South Africa.<sup>19</sup>

How can the commemoration of, for example, the Anglo-Boer War, contribute towards our healing? Perhaps by inculcating all South Africans with a sense of belonging; by explaining how and why South Africans share the same past, the same history and, ideally, also much of the country's heritage. As many South Africans as possible (especially young people) must be convinced to get off the streets and into museums and libraries. But then they must understand the value of South Africa's historical sites and of museums, and of books – *real* books (not merely words on screens).

Time is running out. The past year (2018-2019) has seen the ominous increase of racism in South Africa; and of the radicalisation of politics in the country. It seems as if there is a large group in the young generation of people who either do not know the history of their country, or who are not interested in their own or shared history. But how many of their parents know the history of South Africa? As has already been mentioned earlier, too many South Africans suffer from historical amnesia. The 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War affords all South Africans the opportunity to once again (or for the first time) take stock of who they are, who they would like to be, and where they are (or should be) heading. In order to do that, young people (and others) must go to or be taken to physical sites (not merely web-sites!) that remind them of their past, their history, including the history of the Anglo-Boer War.

### **South Africa's past must be saved and preserved**

For historically mature people, it goes without saying that a country's statues, monuments, historical buildings, and sites of historical importance must be preserved; and that a country's museums must be properly funded and the artefacts kept by them must be preserved for the broader public to view, to value, and to enjoy.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Since 2016 several of South Africa's statues have been vandalised or removed. For many years, many old historic buildings have been neglected, damaged, and in some instances destroyed. In the light of security

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<sup>19</sup> Wessels in Gobodo-Madikizela (ed.), p. 161.

concerns, it is these days not even possible to visit some of the historical sites in South Africa, including certain battlefields. This situation has negative implications for commemorative events, but also has grave negative consequences for the development of South Africa's tourism industry. In a country which – in terms of its natural beauty – is indeed a world in one country, and with so many cultural groups calling South Africa their "home", there is vast tourism potential. In the light of serious economic challenges, tourism has the potential to create many more employment opportunities and to contribute to the development of many towns and villages. However, nothing will change as long as there are people (including certain people in managerial and administrative positions) who do not really understand *and* appreciate the value of South Africa's shared historical heritage, including the country's military heritage.

You can move a statue from one place to another (albeit that ideally statues should stay in the physical historical context where they were originally erected and unveiled); you can even move a museum to a safer site (as has happened with the Paardeberg museum; once again not ideal, but necessary under the circumstances);<sup>20</sup> but you cannot move a battlefield, or a whole internment camp site, or large fortifications. And, you cannot place everything on a screen. People (starting with young children), should be taught to appreciate historical artefacts and places of historical interest and value, in *real* life; not merely on various screens.

Hopefully, the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War and its concomitant commemorations, will lead to more people developing an interest in the shared South African history and heritage.

## **Concluding perspectives**

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<sup>20</sup> The museum was opened on the Paardeberg battlefield on 24 February 1990. In the past few years it was broken into and to some extent vandalised. Consequently, the pre-fabricated building was taken apart and together with what remained of the exhibits, taken to the site of the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein, where the building was re-erected, and some of the old exhibits installed, together with new ones. The restored building was opened on 11 October 2019; i.e. exactly 120 years after the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War. (Observations of the author, who attended both the 1990 and the 2019 ceremonies.)

All South Africans have a responsibility to take stock of their own and shared South African past, and to contribute towards the safeguarding and preservation of South Africa's heritage. The ideal is that the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War will

- \* lead to greater insight into this bloody and traumatic conflict and the way in which it influenced developments in South Africa over the course of the twentieth century;
- \* lead to the restoration (where necessary) of historical monuments, buildings and sites pertaining to this conflict;
- \* lead to people from all walks of life, and from *all* cultural groups, visiting our museums and places of historical interest in South Africa; and
- \* lead to tourists from across the globe flocking to South Africa, not only to see the Big Five (animals) or the majestic Table Mountain, but also to explore the country's historical sites and museums, and in the process develop a better understanding of South Africa's chequered and complicated but also fascinating history. (Hopefully, many more South Africans will also become explorers in their own country.)

If the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War is as successful as is to be hoped, planning must start not later than June 2022 (i.e. when the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war ends) for the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war, which starts in October 2024. Hopefully the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be successful, so that during the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, people will be able to build on what already has been achieved.

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Together with the Great Trek of the 1830s, the Anglo-Boer War is the most epoch-making event in the history of the Afrikaner, and for many decades these two events have played a major role in the development of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>21</sup> A younger generation of present-day white people find it easier to associate with the so-called "Border War" (which strictly speaking forms part of the much broader War for Southern Africa of 1961 to 2002). There is a huge outpouring of books in that regard<sup>22</sup> while

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<sup>21</sup> See again Giliomee in Pretorius (ed.), pp. 281-312.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, A. Wessels, "The War for Southern Africa (1966-1989) that continues to fascinate and haunt us", *Historia* 62(1), May 2017, pp. 73-91; A. Wessels, "Half a century of South African 'Border War' literature: a historiographical exploration", *Journal for Contemporary History* 42(2), December 2017, pp. 24-47.

most black people associate with the liberation struggle, especially since 1960.<sup>23</sup> But South Africans cannot afford to lose sight of the importance of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 in shaping their society – and the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war affords all South Africans an opportunity to revisit (or discover) that conflict.

So it is indeed fit and proper that all South Africans should commemorate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War and that it should be done in an inclusive manner, keeping in mind the good work that was done by many organisations, as well as museums (such as the War Museum of the Boer Republics) during the centennial of the conflict twenty years ago. Since the end of the centennial in 2002, South Africa has experienced an ever growing number of challenges, but that is no excuse *not* to commemorate the devastating conflict of 1899 to 1902; as a matter of fact, more than ever before, *now* is the time to revisit that war.

From what has already been said, it should be clear why it is so important that Anglo-Boer War (and other) structures, including monuments, as well as sites, be preserved, and that visitor-safety to these structures and sites must be guaranteed, that is, if South Africans are serious about developing their country's tourism potential. Museums are, of course, also of great importance in this regard; thus it is hoped that the War Museum of the Boer Republics (the world's foremost Anglo-Boer museum) will go from strength to strength.

Present-day South Africans must prove that it is possible for the negative consequences of the memory of trauma that they have experienced, either as individuals or collectively, to end. But, for this to happen, South Africans not only need empathy as an important element in overcoming inter-group prejudice, but also economic empowerment and education. Knowledge and insight with regard to South Africa's chequered past, including the history of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902 and its traumatic consequences, are therefore of paramount importance. It must also be kept in mind that history enables one to forgive, without the need to forget.<sup>24</sup> It is

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<sup>23</sup> See, for example, T. Simpson, *The ANC and the liberation struggle in South Africa: essential writings* (London: Routledge, 2018); G.F. Houston, *The national liberation struggle in South Africa: a case study of the United Democratic Front, 1983-1987* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); D.T. McKinley, *The ANC and the liberation struggle: a critical political biography* (London: Pluto Press, 1997); I. Liebenberg *et al.* (eds.), *The long march: the story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa* (Pretoria: HAUM, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Wessels in Gobodo-Madikizela (ed.), p. 172.

the ideal that it will be in this spirit that the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Boer War will take place. South Africa and its people(s) are in need of healing.

The Anglo-Boer War, just as all other wars, should be commemorated, lest we forget .... But then homage must be paid to all who died, victims on all sides of the conflict, independent of who was (so-called) right or wrong when the war took place.

Hopefully, the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary will get the necessary publicity so that the message with regard to the significance of the conflict of 1899 to 1902 will filter through to a large portion of the South African population. After all, through the commemoration of this war, there is a unique opportunity to ensure the future of South Africa's shared past; and that shared past, without any doubt, includes the history of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902.