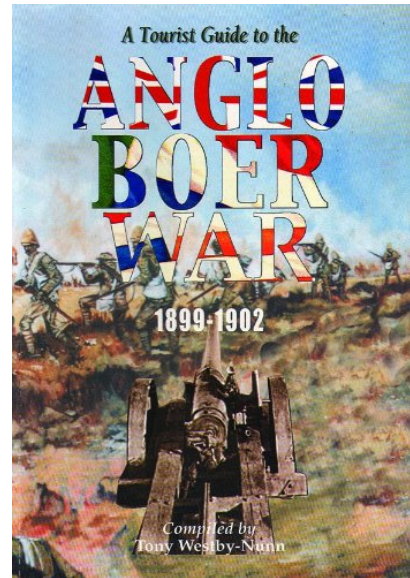
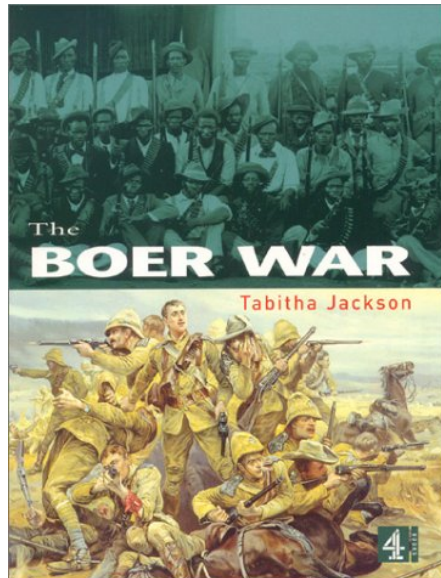


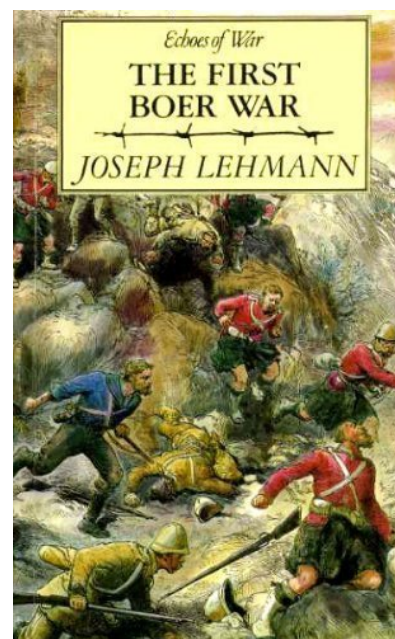
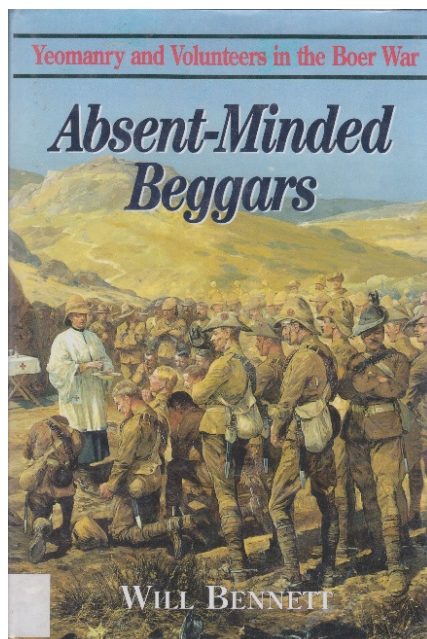
The In & Out Club Library

25 September 2020

The 17th September marked two events of 1901 in the Second Boer War (a British defeat at the Battle of Blood River Poort, and the capture of the 17th Lancers at the Battle of Elands River), so it seems an appropriate time to look at the Club's holdings of books on both First and Second Boer Wars.

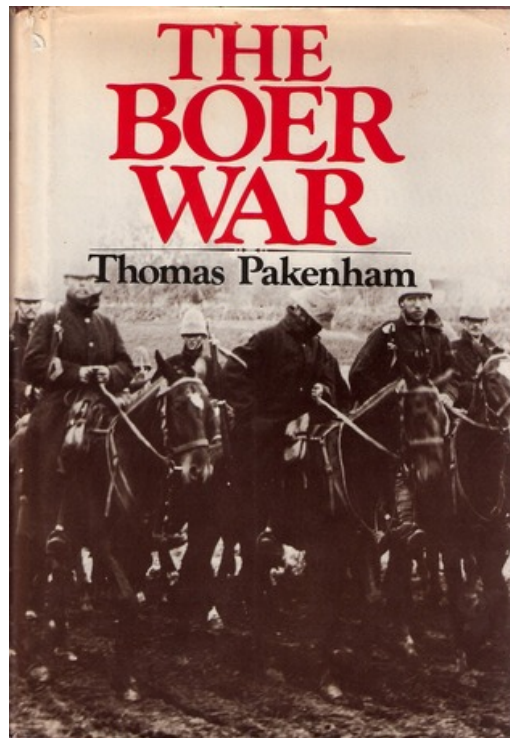


They are actually quite extensive, covering a range of different approaches - from the very workmanlike account by Tabitha Jackson (*The Boer War*), published to accompany a Channel 4 television series and amply illustrated with popular prints and cartoons, photos and paintings, to the practical handbook, *A tourist Guide to the Anglo-Boer War* (also very well-illustrated with modern and contemporary pictures and a great many maps).



We also have a copy of Will Bennett's *Absent-minded beggars: Volunteers in the Boer War*, chronicling the first modern war to include 'civilian volunteers and part-time soldiers' – 90,000 of them, all

told; and Professor Joseph Lehmann's 'perceptive, beautifully written and erudite study', *The First Boer War* (a paperback).



Finally, there is Thomas Pakenham's weighty and well-researched history, *The Boer War*, which covers the second war in great detail, and – being published in 1979 – has an astonishing and fascinating dedication, '...to the memory of the war veterans who told me what it was like to be there'.

Lehman's book has perhaps the greatest historical scope, in that it summarizes the history of colonization of the Cape back as far as the establishment of a Dutch colony in 1652. 'It was a land of warfare, endemic ever since Cape Town was surrendered to the British in 1806.... the blood never seemed to dry in South Africa. Britons, Boers and blacks clashed and fought and fought again, in a fashion bewildering to those in distant centres of world civilization'. The First Boer War took place from 1880 to 1881, ending at the Battle of Majuba Hill, and allowing the Boers to retake the Transvaal. In the scale of both wars, this latter battle was very small, involving about 650 British; in fact, in the first war altogether 400 British died, whereas 100,000 were to die in the second; but of course the outcome of the first, with its British defeats, gave rise to the far greater carnage of the later war. Those defeats were in large part due to the agility and discipline of the Afrikaners, and to the fact that the British army in the 1880s was still largely an 18th century body, inferior in terms of weapons, attitudes, research & mapping, and lack of discipline, to their opponents.

All the other books concentrate on the second war; and Will Bennett's *Absent-minded beggars* picks up on those 650 British soldiers involved in the last battle of the first war in his very first chapter, beginning with the embarkation of the City of London Imperial Volunteers by rail on their way to South Africa.



In January 1900, ‘...a large force of mounted police... struggled to force a way for the 500 men of the first contingent of the CIV as they began their march through the city... to Nine Elms railway station’. General Redvers Buller (who was, of course, a member of the Club) commanded the British, only to see the score of defeats steadily mounting: ‘A nation used to easy colonial victories against opponents armed with spears and unsophisticated firearms had suddenly suffered more than 2,000 casualties in a week’. Commonwealth recruits formed an important part of the numbers of the army right from the beginning, with more than 1,500 men from Canada, Australia and New Zealand joining up, even before those Londoners were marching to the station. They were the first of ‘nearly 30,000 non-South African Colonials who would serve in the Boer War’.



Lilliputian Boers subdue a giant Gulliver/Britain, tying him up with bandages emblazoned with names of lost British battles – many, here, South African.

Just as these more detailed histories take much of their materials from first-hand accounts, unpublished before their authors accessed them, so Tabitha Jackson’s more summary account uses contemporary photographs and cartoons to devastatingly illustrative effect. Cartoons in particular were poured out in an international stream, criticizing whichever side in the war was less in favour

with the nationality of the cartoonist, or – more biting – criticizing the artist's own country for its attitude (American cartoonists highlighting the lack of action by Uncle Sam, and French cartoonists going for the British jugular).



New York: the cowardly British lion
runs away from little Boer hunters



Paris: the British lion is gored
by the Boer bull

This was also, of course, a war which took place under the new and beady eye of the war photographer, providing some striking images of the reality of this struggle.



A Boer mother and her children in a British concentration camp

Thomas Pakenham equals the eye of the camera in his interviews with more than 50 veterans of the Second Boer War, and his use of a great many unpublished written sources, collected over eight years of research, which he has converted into a cinematic, page-turning epic.

All these books provide meticulous, enlightening and very readable accounts of both wars from various viewpoints, bringing what was really the first long armed encounter of the modern period to fully-rounded life.