

85 . Kommandant Scheepers

Gideon

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Die Montagu Konneksie

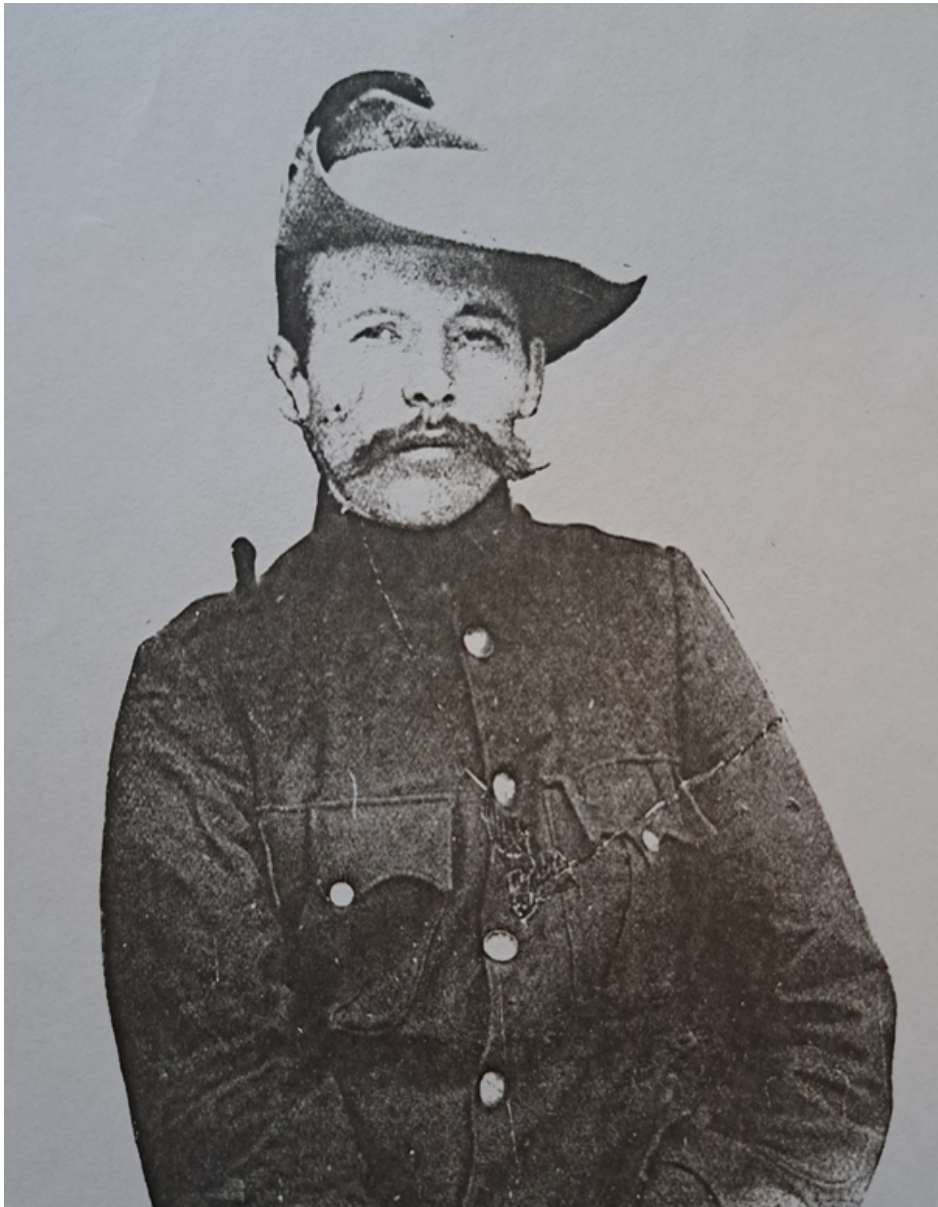


Photo of Gideon Scheepers probably taken by Ivie H. Allan

**Saamgestel deur Irma Jordaan met dokumente en foto's verkry
vanaf**

Die Argief van die Montagu Museum

Gideon Jacobus Scheepers was born on 4 April 1878 on the farm

Grootlaagte, Middelburg, Transvaal.

From an early age he showed promise of being a leader and his need to be in an army which demanded discipline and hard work. At the age of sixteen he joined the ZAR armed forces to become a learner telegraphist. This was two years before the infamous Jameson Raid into the Transvaal. Within a year he became one of the Transvaal's most proficient heliographers.



Cpl. Scheepers in the uniform of the Transvaal Artillery

Scheepers was then asked to join the Free State artillery, and to put the field telegraphy on its feet. He agreed to do this but on the understanding that after a period he could return to his old unit. However he was destined to stay with the Free State Corps and rose rapidly in rank.



Groep van die Veldtelegrafie

Instrukteur Lt. Paff sit heel links; naas hom staan Scheepers met heliograaf

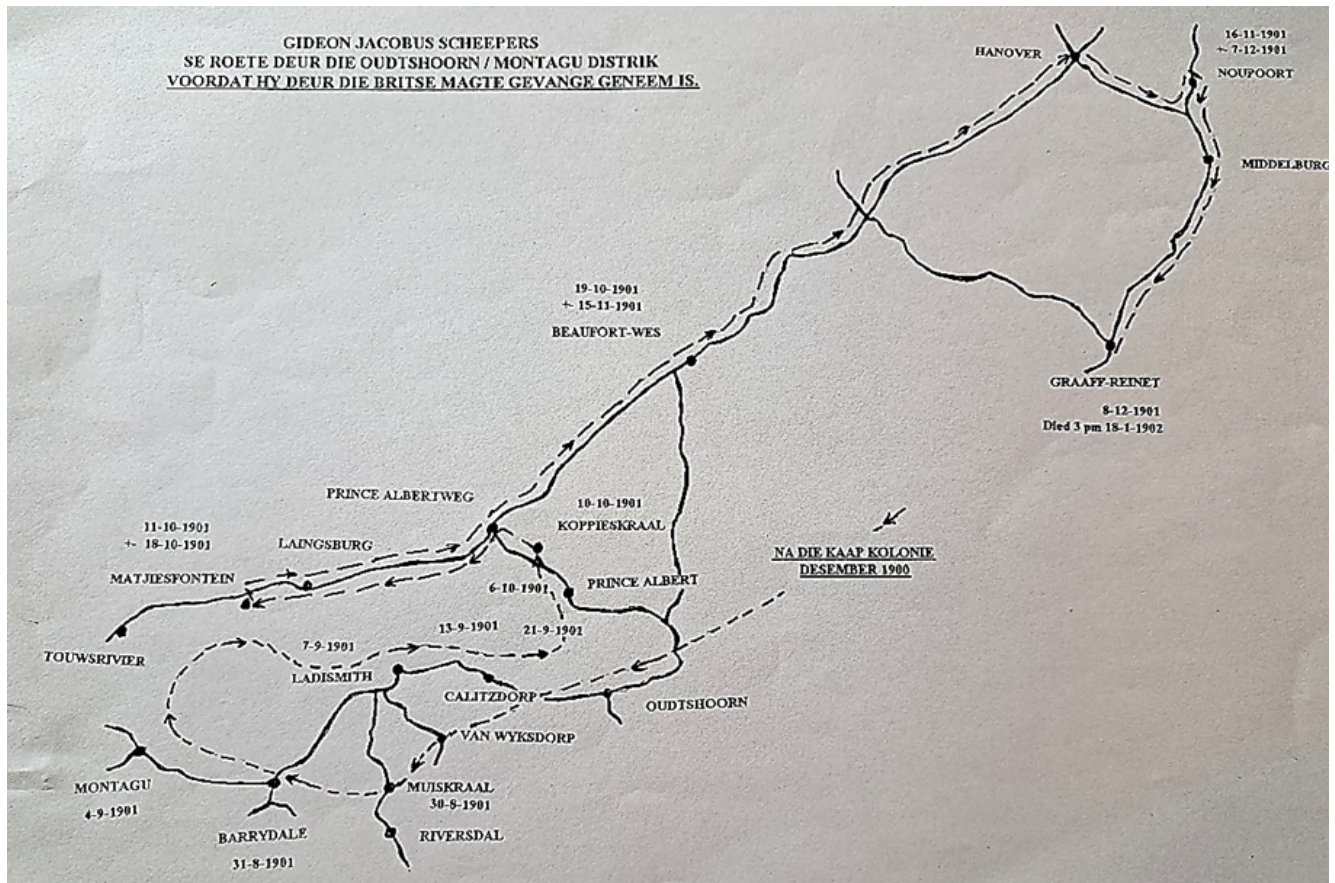
Foto: Montagu Museum

Quoting from Rodney Constantine's book, "The Poisoning of Gideon Scheepers" he says, "Gideon Scheepers entered the Cape Colony in December 1900, under General Christiaan de Wet's orders, and as a part of General Piet Kritzinger's invasion force. The commando of 300 entered on Dingaan's Day, at Odendaalstroom, just west of Aliwal North. Scheepers was then a twenty two year old Captain in the Orange Free State Scout Corps. The primary reason for this invasion of the colony was to foment a general uprising in the colony as a whole, in advance of the arrival of General de Wet. Kritzinger and his lieutenants were under orders to expand the area of hostilities, to divide the British forces deployed in the republics and to drive up the financial costs of the war."

During his raids into the Cape with approximately 250 men Scheepers' reputation of leadership, and sadly, harshness grew side by side. It was said that his men would do anything he asked of them. But on the other side of the coin he gained an unsavoury reputation for one who burnt down houses of colonials who were directly connected to the Imperial war effort. His superior officers urged him to stop this practice, and also the destruction of farmhouses and government buildings. Sadly he refused to heed this advice which was to tell against him at his subsequent trial in Graaff-Reinet in the December of that year.

With his arrival in the Cape Colony in the mid-1900's he embarked on a campaign of harassment of the British forces with some success. In the month of August he operated with success in the Willowmore and Steylerville districts in which he burnt down six houses and enlisted twenty-one rebels. His movements now brought him to the outskirts of Oudtshoorn in the last week of August from where he then trekked west. Clashing with a British column between Oudtshoorn and Calitzdorp. He then turned south west towards Barrydale. A few days later he brushed against a pursuing column near Vanwyksdorp in the Ladismith district.

Turning south towards Riversdale his commando clashed with the defence force of that town. On 31 August he captured Barrydale but occupied it for only one day. He then continued towards Montagu where he clashed with that town's Defence Force, forcing them into retreat towards Ashton.



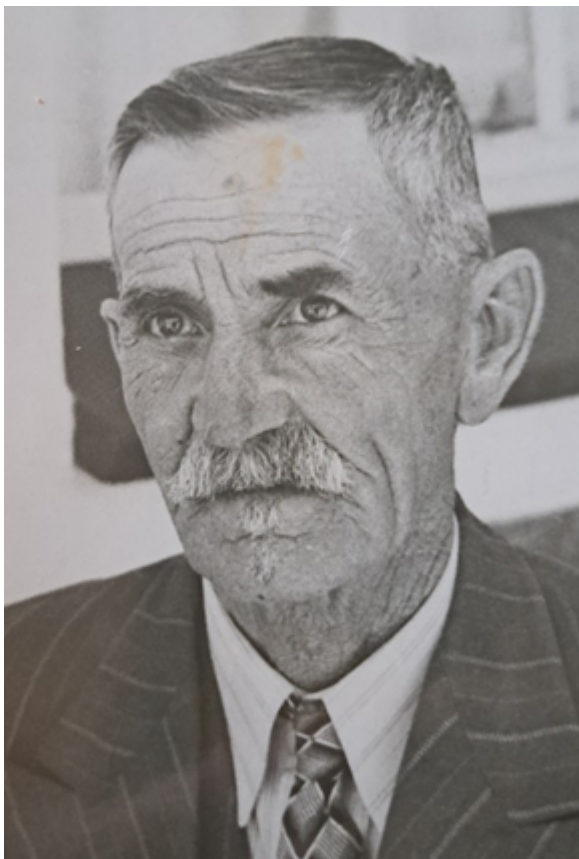
Document: Montagu Museum

Col. Alexander's column attacked his rear guard and the commando swung north towards Ouberg. At this point a few kilometres east of Montagu, Scheepers' westward movement came to an end. The date was 4th September 1901. He was only 150 kilometres east of Cape Town. After a few days in the country south of Touws River the commando trekked eastwards toward the Ladismith district which he reached on the 7th September.

Events were now to take a dramatic turn in the life of Gideon Jacobus Scheepers. In his book, Rodney Constantine writes that on 13th September a lone rider by the name of Danie Hugo entered the Scheepers camp, and after some debate as to his bona fide he was accepted into the group. This new arrival it seemed was to be the undoing of Scheepers and was to end the leadership of that successful commando.

Turning back towards Oudtshoorn on the 21st the commando rested

on a farm near the Kamanassie River. It was here that the new arrival Hugo it is said, poisoned his leader. Quoting again from Constantine's book he says, "A patrol was sent out to scout the approaches to the town (Oudtshoorn). Scheepers and his staff went and sat in a bedroom and discussed plans for an attack on the town at daybreak the following day. One of the cooks brought water into the room with which they could wash. Scheepers and Kareltjie Lehmkuhl sat together on a bed, smoking and working out a plan of action. This was the eleventh hour. At this point Hugo entered the room carrying a tray with two glasses of wine. Wearing a broad smile he called out, "Commandant, I was at least able to get you some wine!" Scheepers and Lehmkuhl downed the wine and Hugo returned to the kitchen. And promptly disappeared forever from the commando, never to be seen by them again."



A much older Kareltjie Lehmkuhl

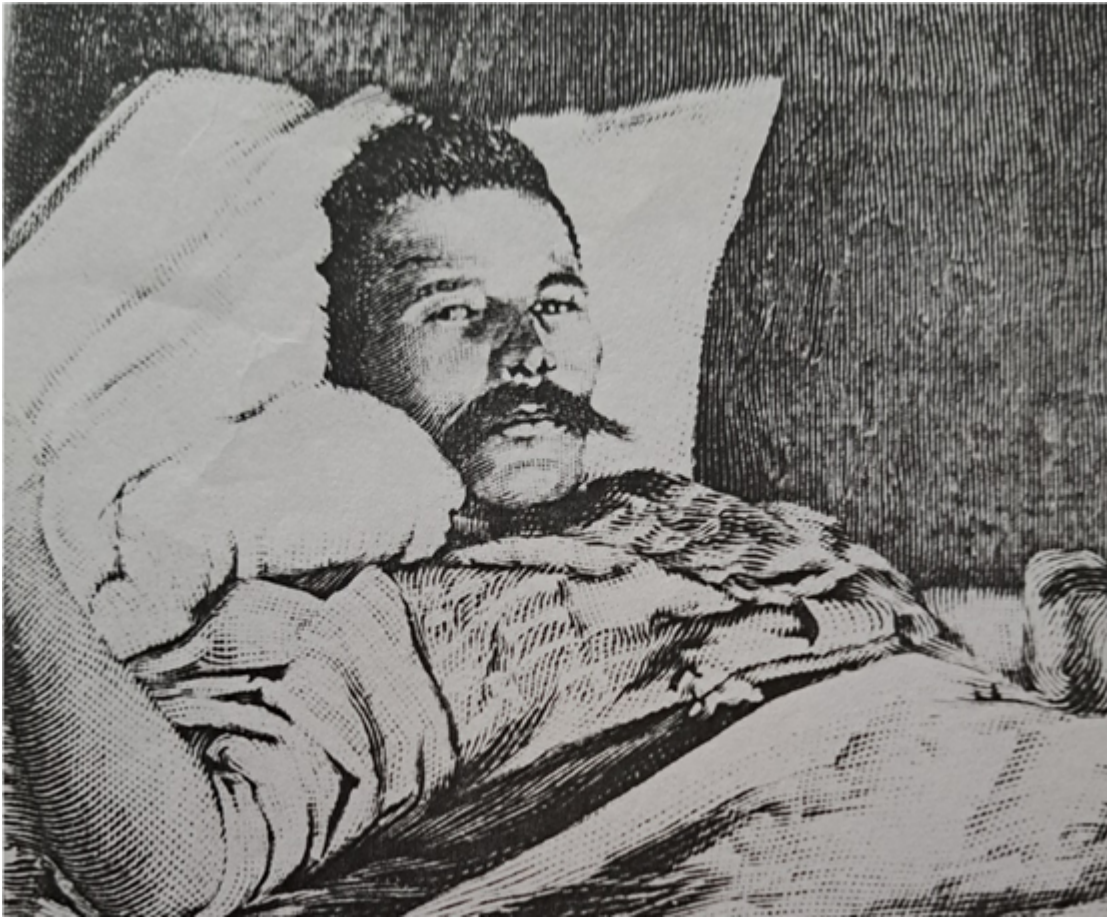
Photo: Montagu Museum

Scheepers became very ill but remained operating in the Little

Karoo for the remainder of September. His health deteriorated daily and he had to be carried in a captured Cape cart as he was unable to ride. On 6th October he summoned a doctor from Ladismith who was met by a commando. The doctor happened to be British and was temporarily stationed in that town. Scheepers' young adjutant Kareltjie Lehmkuhl stood near him while the examination took place. When it was completed the doctor announced his verdict. "You have been poisoned – but it is a slow poison." The doctor then examined Lehmkuhl and informed him the poison had worked out of him, but that it was possible that he would suffer permanent damage. In later years this was to the case.

Scheepers now decided to head for the Calvinia district and so left the Little Karoo travelling north-west. On 10 October the commando reached the farm of Koppieskraal on the Dwyka River, 21 kms north of Gamka's Kloof. Koppieskraal is about 15kms south-east of the railway line, and it was here that he could go no further. It was therefore decided unanimously by the entire commando that he should remain behind and surrender rather than go on and await certain death from the poisoning. That same day he took leave of his entire commando and then dictated a letter to his secretary, Alec van Heerden: "As Commandant G.J. Scheepers is unable, due to serious illness, to accompany us, we cordially request you to urgently send a fully-equipped ambulance to the farm Koppieskraal, Prince Albert district, in order to transport him to the closest hospital." A messenger was then sent with the surrender letter and instructions to hand it over to the nearest column.

In a matter of hours the first British patrol arrived. Dr Mearns arrived shortly afterwards and examined the sick man. Scheepers was immediately taken to Matjiesfontein Hospital and remained there for a week, where he received excellent care. He was then moved to Beaufort West for a month, before spending three weeks, still critically ill, at Noupoot.



Drawing from a photo of Scheepers in the hospital at Beaufort West

Photo: Heroes

On 8th December he arrived at Graaff-Reinet and was tried under martial law. The most serious charges were seven counts of murder (the execution of black scouts and spies) and fifteen of arson. His case was concluded on 28th December 1901, when he was sentenced to death by a firing squad. Lord Kitchener confirmed the sentence on 14th January, 1902. This irreversible verdict was announced by the convener of his martial law court, Col. A. Henniker, on the square at Graaff Reinet on 17th January 1902.



Scheepers being sentenced to death Col. Henniker reads the sentence. Scheepers in a light suit, centre of square

Photo: Illustrated London News



The prisoner is led away after receiving the death sentence

Photo: E Whitlock's Collection

The following day on 18th January at 3 pm, Scheepers was shot dead by firing squad on the outskirts of the town, and was buried where he fell. He had asked to be shot as a soldier, standing upright, but instead he was tied in a sitting position to a chair. When he was buried, the chair in which he was sitting was broken into small pieces which were interred with him. Presumably, so that there would be no souvenir hunters after the execution. As one author put it, "He died as he had fought, a hero, and not yet quite 24 years of age."

A final word on the mystery of Gideon Scheepers' grave, which has to this date never been found, and probably never will be. That night after he had been shot and buried, five men of the Coldstream Guards under the command of Lieut. John Campbell and with a local church minister in attendance, exhumed the body of Scheepers. His body was then taken by stretcher into the Sunday's River valley and in the quiet of night reburied well away from the sight of the first grave. Evidently it rained that night and so all traces of the footprints of the soldiers were washed away, leaving no trace of their macabre work. With that his grave is lost forever. There have been many theories as to why Scheepers' body was removed by the British authorities and hidden away for all time. Perhaps it was they who had engineered the poisoning and a later test might implicate them. Or perhaps the British did not want Scheepers to become a martyr in the eyes of their enemy. Many books have been written on the short military life of Scheepers and his last days, but still the answers on the whereabouts of his grave remain a mystery.

Source: Researched by Mr Rob Reid and printed in booklet form for the Montagu Museum, 1999.

Montagu Museum



Memorial to Scheepers outside Graaff-Reinet

Photo: Internet

'n Persoonlike verklaring deur die fotograaf Ivie. H. Allan omtrent die teregstelling van Kommandant Gideon Scheepers



Fotograaf Ivie.H. Allan

Bron: Montagu Museum

Mnr. Ivie.H. Allan het die volgende verklaring (oorspronklik Engels) op 29 Mei 1942 op Wepener aan ds. Harper Martins gemaak:

“Ek, Ivie.H. Allan is gebore in Wimbledon, Surrey, Engeland en het na Suid-Afrika gekom in 1890.

Ek het toe op Graaff-Reinet gaan woon vanaf 1893 tot Februarie 1904. Daar het ek ‘n fotografiese ateljee gehad.

Eindelik het die “Boer War” uitgebreek in 1899. En ek was persoonlik teenwoordig toe Kommdt. Scheepers in die dorp ingebring was.

Hy is gevang in die Camdeboo deur Gorrings’s Flying column. Het net pas herstel van ‘n aanval van koors, en as dit nie daarvoor was nie, dan sou hulle hom nooit gevang het nie.

Net voordat hy gevange geneem is, het hy ‘n boodskap na Graaff-Reinet aan Kaptein Henniker van die Tweede Bataljon van die Cold Stream Guards, die destydse garnisoen van die dorp,

gestuur. Hy het laat weet dat hy na Graaff-Reinet kom, en dan sal hy vir Kapt. Henniker aan die naaste telegraafpaal ophang.

Die eerste keer wat ek hom weer gesien het, was toe ek sy potret in die tronk gaan afneem het. Hy was gewillig en tegemoetkomend.

Hy het 'n blou baadjie gedra met koper knope, en ek dink daarby het hy 'n baie ligte kleur broek aangehad, met bloed spatsels daarop.

Hierna het ek 'n foto geneem van $8\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ binne in die hofsaal. Dit is die welbekende een, en die enigste ene, want niemand anders was toegelaat om daar foto's te neem nie.



Die foto van die hofverigtinge

Foto: Montagu Museum/Die kamera was 'n Watson met 'n "Cook Triplet" lens.

Ek het nie die saak gevolg nie, want ek is dadelik met kamera en al na my ateljee om die plate te gaan ontwikkel. Een van die baie plate wat ek daar afgeneem het, was goed, want ek kon nie die hof vra om stil te sit nie.

Daarna het ek die parade afgeneem tydens die uitspreek van die vonnis op die markplein.

Die Cold Stream Guards het omtrent drie dele van die plein beset met gevelde bajonette.

Aan die oop kant van die plein was die tafels met die offisiere van die Cold Stream Guards. Kol. Henniker was die voorsitter. Hy het eindelijk opgestaan en die verskillende aanklagtes teen Komdt. Scheepers voorgelees.

Dit het min of meer soos volg gelui : “In as much as on a certain date, etc., you committed murder

Daar was omtrent nege sulke aanklagtes gewees.

Eers het die Sers. Majoor vir hom ‘n stoel gebring. Hy het dit weggeskop dat dit oor die koppe van die soldate gevlieg het.

Verder het hy met sy hoed op die kop gestaan. Hy wou nie toelaat dat hulle dit afhaal nie.

Hy wou vantevore nie toelaat dat ds. Murray vir hom ‘n gebed moes doen nie, maar die volgende dag het hy daarvoor verskoning oor gevra.

Die oorspronklike vonnis was dat hy gehang sou word. Die galg daarvoor was alreeds klaar gemaak. Maar die laksman, sekere King, kon nie opgespoor word nie. Daarop is toe besluit dat hy geskiet moes word. Hy is om 3 nm die volgende dag doodgeskiet.

Dit was baie tragies, want toe die skoolkinders daardie dag uit die skool uit kom, het hulle gejuig en hul boeksakke geswaai van vreugde toe die ambulans, waarin Scheepers gesit het, en omring deur ‘n gewapende wag op weg was uit die dorp na die plek van eksekusie.

Dit was omtrent drie myl uit die dorp uit. En ek het met die

“Town Guard” te voet saam gegaan.

As jy jou rug na die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerkgebou sou staan dan kyk jy in die direksie waarin hulle beweeg het.

Hulle het by die klein koppie ‘n goeie end verby gegaan, Scheepers is in daardie vlakte begrawe, maklik twee myl van die koppie af.

Ek het saam geloop om so instaat te wees om die eksekusie af te neem. Toe ek om permissie gevra het om die eksekusie af te neem, is dit geweier. Ek mag dit onder geen omstandighede dit doen nie. As ek dit sou waag, sou daar sware straf op rus. Ek het egter besluit om dit maar te waag.

Toe die ambulanswa aangekom het, het Scheepers self die trappies afgeklim. Die Sers. Majoor het sy hand aangebied om hom af te help. Scheepers het enige hulp geweier.

Hy het direk na die graf gestap en dit bekyk, en spottend daaroor geglimlag.

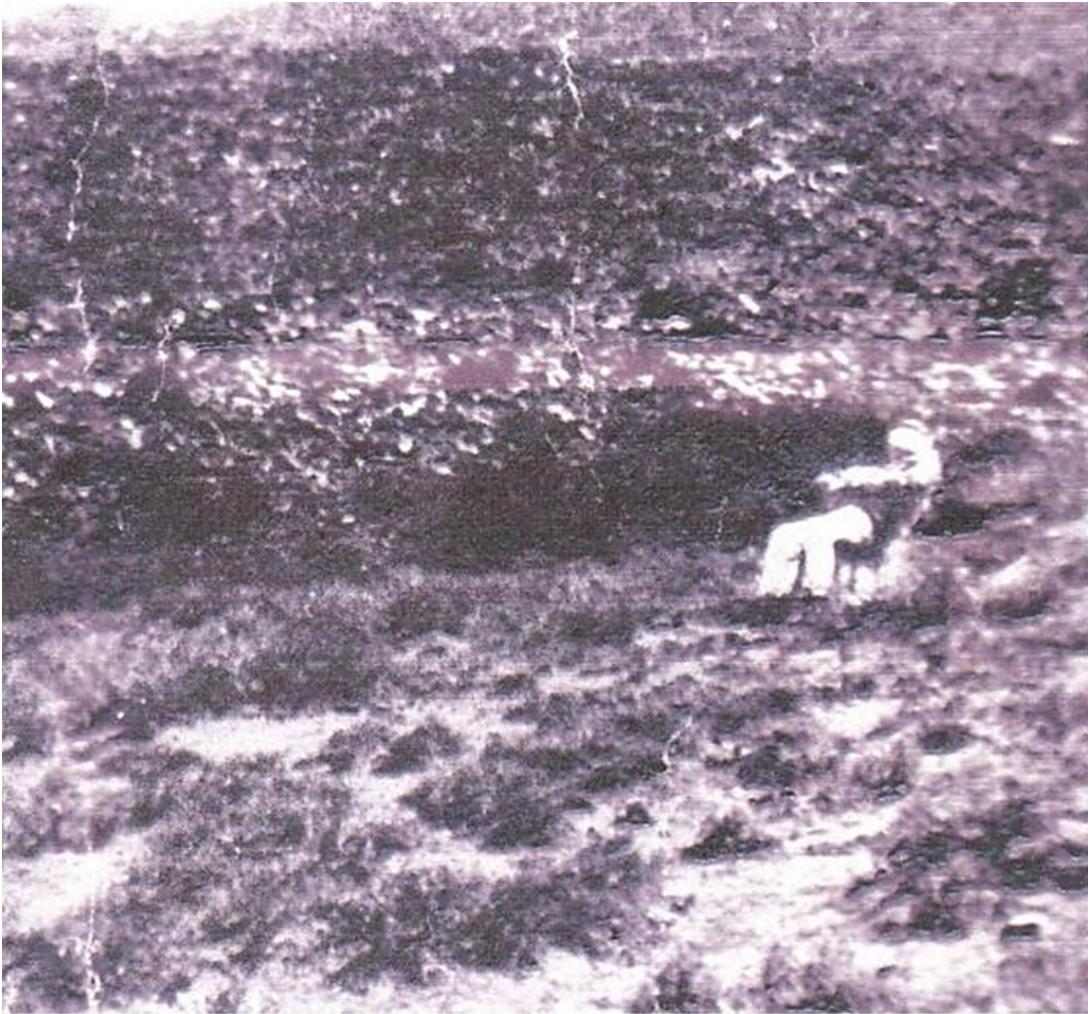
Toe het hy reggedraai vir die vuurpeleton. Hy het regop gaan staan, sy arms gevou, en wou so staande geskiet word. Dit is aan hom geweier, en hy was aan die stoel vasgebind. Hy was nie toegelaat om soos ‘n soldaat te sterwe nie.

Ek het my klein Brownie kamer onder my baadjie weggesteek gehad. Ek het tussen die twee rye manskappe gestaan met net genoeg ruimte om die foto’s te neem sodat ek nie bemerk kan word deur die offisiere nie. Ek het drie opeenvolgende foto’s geneem van die eksekusie:

1.Net toe die prisoniere wat die graf gegrawe het, en hom aan die stoel gebind het, en hom geblinddoek het, weggehardloop het na hul posisies uit die pad uit;

2.Die stoel en die stofdampies van die koeëls gemaak het toe die skote geval het. (By toeval het die vuurpeleton uit 25 man bestaan. Dit is die grootste wat ooit by ‘n eksekusie gebruik

is by Graaff-Reinet.) Die band waarmee Scheepers se hande vasgemaak was, het losgeraak. Sy hande was omtrent ses duim van mekaar af weg toe die skote geval het.;



Teregstelling van Scheepers vasgemaak op die stoel

Foto: SA Military History Society

3. Die liggaam uitgestrek op 'n kombers, met die dokter wat by die lyk kniel om vas te stel dat hy dood is.

Na die eksekusie het die sersant van die prisoniers die stoel stukkend gebreek. Genoeg "quick lime" was reeds al in die graf gegooi. Daarna is die liggaam op die kombers in die graf laat sak.

Die stukke van die stoel is daarna ook saam daarin gegooi. Nog meer kalk is oor die liggaam gegooi. Dit is gedoen sodat die liggaam spoedig verteer kan word. Die graf is daarna

toegegooi.

Die wagte het die graf toe vir 'n aantal dae bewaak sodat die kalk eers sy werk kon doen en sodat niemand die liggaam kon probeer wegneem eerdat dit verteer is nie."

(Let : dat geen veranderinge aan die Afrikaans van die dokument gemaak is nie)

Bron: Afskrif van dokument in Montagu Museum

Kommandant Gideon Scheepers en sy verbintenis met Montagu

Gideon Scheepers het baie duidelik 'n verbintenis met Montagu gehad. Daarvan getuig die name van twee plase in die rigting van Barrydale (R62), nl. "Scheepersrust" en "Scheepersdraai".

Dis hier welbekend dat toe Scheepers met sy manskappe vanaf Barrydale se kant af gekom het, hy vertoef het op die plaas van Oom Jan Swart naby Kruispad. Dié plaas het later "Scheepersrus" geword.

Volgens drie verskillende bronne (Shearing, De Kock en Kriel Montagu Museum) het Scheepers gesondheidsprobleme gehad voordat hy vergiftig is en daar is berig dat hy na Montagu gekom het met tifuskoors wat hom gedwing het om kontak te maak met 'n plaaslike dokter in Montagu. Volgens mev. Alta Barnard van Montagu-suid, en dogter van wyle dr C.A. Wessels, het hy 'n boodskapper na haar vader gestuur met 'n kenmerkende foto van homself met die hoed so skuinsweg op die kop. Die foto moes dien as identifikasie, want hy het ernstig versoek dat die dokter hom moes kom behandel.



Dr. C. A. Wessels

Foto: Montagu Museum

E. R. MARTIAL LAW.

Revised Rules for Permits. Village and District of Montagu.

All previous orders under Martial Law relating to permits and movements of persons are hereby cancelled.

I. MOVEMENTS OF PERSONS.

All farmers and others residing in this District beyond the Municipal limits of the village of Montagu are required to remain at their places of abode unless they have valid reasons for leaving them, viz.: Business with Civil or Military Authorities, purchasing supplies, bringing in produce, church going, or other legitimate business.

II. REPORTING ARRIVAL.

All persons coming into the village must report themselves on arrival to the Chief Constable and at the Commandant's Office promptly, *during office hours*. Should they be in charge of loads of produce, wood, etc., they must state the nature and quantity at the time of reporting.

III. PERMITS FOR TRAFFIC IN PRODUCE.

Permits to bring in loads of produce, etc., to the village from outlying farms will *not* henceforth be required, but for traffic in produce, etc., between farms a permit must be obtained.

IV. HOURS FOR TRAFFIC AND TRAVELLING.

No traffic whatever, unless authorized by a special permit, is allowed between the hours of 7.30 p.m. and 4.30 a.m. Persons may however move about in the village of Montagu and on their farms from 4.30 a.m. to 10 p.m. In the event of sickness it is permissible to travel by night to obtain medical aid from the village but the person so travelling must report himself to the Chief Constable immediately on arrival there.

V. PERMANENT PASSES.

Permanent passes for various purposes will be issued at the discretion of the Commandant.

VI. PASSES FROM MONTAGU VILLAGE.

Persons in Montagu Village must procure permits should they wish to proceed beyond the Municipal limits. As a rule the same restrictions will be placed on their movements as contained in Order I relating to farmers.

VII. TRADING PASSES, HAWKERS LICENCES, COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS.

Trading passes and Hawkers licences in this District are cancelled. Commercial Travellers are not allowed to move about the district without permits.

VIII. HOUSEHOLDERS TO REPORT ARRIVAL: STRANGERS.

Householders are held responsible that the arrival of any strangers without permits, in their houses is reported immediately to the Commandant.

IX. PERMITS OUT OF DISTRICT.

(a) No person whatsoever is to leave the Montagu District unless authorised to do so under a permit.

(b) No loads of Produce or other commodity are to leave Montagu Districts except under the authority of a permit.

(c) Persons may not travel by rail unless provided with a Railway Permit. The issue of these is restricted.

N.B. All permits must be signed by the Commandant.

Any contravention of the above regulations will be dealt with under Martial Law.

S. W. ROBINSON, CAPTAIN,
COMMANDANT.

Commandant's Office,
Montagu, 16 March, 1901.

Dokument: Montagu Museum

Die bloedjong Dr. Wessels (pas terug op Montagu na jare se studie in die buiteland) het Scheepers herken op die foto en verskeie kere uitgery na die plaas van oom Jan Swart. Hy het altyd stilletjies in die donker gery in die kapkar, want die Britse troepe was toe alreeds in Montagu. Hulle het die bestaande N.G. Kerk in die dorp beset, en die horlosie in die toring uitgehaal, sodat hulle alles wat aangaan in die dorp kon bespied en ook daardeur kon skiet indien nodig. Mnr. Ben van Deventer wat lewenslank koster was van die N.G. Kerk, het self duidelik op een van die balke waar die klokke hang in die toring, die naam "Capt. Roberts" gesien.

Die Britse militêre hoofkwartier was in die eerste Poskantoor op die dorp, vandag is dit die huis met die naam "Eerstepos" in Kerkstraat 18, Montagu.

Dus baie duidelik dat Dr. Wessels baie versigtig te werk moes gaan as hy stilletjies in die aand uitgery het na die siek Gideon Scheepers. Hoe dikwels hy gegaan het, en presies hoe lank Scheepers daar gerus het om te herstel kon niemand met sekerheid vasstel nie, maar toe Scheepers genoeg herstel het, het Dr. Wessels gesê "nou kan jy voortgaan".

Mnr. A.J.H. Burger (bekend as Marius) woon vandag nog op die plaas

"Talana", en teken aan soos volg: Volgens oorlewering (van sy vader en ouer broer) het Scheepers hier op Talana by my oupa Alewyn Petrus Burger oornag. Hy was toe reeds 'n baie siek man, en kon nie meer perdry nie, maar het in 'n kar (kapkar) gery. (Die plaas "Talana" is nader aan die dorp).

Die aand het die offisiere met die skooljuffrou en ander van die omgewing in ons huis gedans.

Die volgende oggend moes die Kommando vroeg padgee want die Engelse was warm op hulle spoor. Die Boere het my Oupa in die buitekamer opgesluit sodat hy nie hulle teenwoordigheid kon

verraai nie. Vermoedelik ook om hom 'n goeie alibi te gee vir sy eie beskerming.

Sowat 4 kms hiervandaan, op die plaas "Boererus", steeds in die Montagu rigting, het die kommando regs gedraai, terwyl die agterhoede daar gelaat is om die Engelse te stuit. Die klompie Boere het dan ook daar op die voorste Engelse geskiet, en een of twee gewond. 'n Ambulans het hulle (die gewondes) per perdekar uit Montagu kom haal.

Scheepers se spioene het hom goed ingelig en hulle het geweet die Engelse wag hulle in op die dorp. Hulle draai toe om by Derdeheuvel (R62), 'n plaaswyk 'n paar kms. vanaf die dorp. Die bepaalde plaas heet vandag nog Scheepersdraai. Daarvandaan swenk hulle in die Langkloof, die Karroo-deel van Montagu. Die dorp Montagu word heeltemal ontwyk, en hulle is terug in die rigting van Ladismith deur die Karroo. Toe waarskynlik in die Gamkaskloof rigting, deur Seweweekspoort en Bosluiskloof.

Mev. Esther Hofmeyr, Montagu
14 November 1998

Bronne:

Montagu Museum Argief

Gesprek met:

Mev. Alta Barnard van Montagu-Suid, dogter van oorlede Dr. C.A. Wessel;

Mnr. A.J.H. "Marius" Burger van die plaas "Talana";

Mnr Ben van Deventer, lewenslank Koster van die N.G. Kerk en groot kenner van die Montagu geskiedenis



Foto: Irma Jordaan

Die volgende storie is vertel aan mev Hofmeyr op 12 Februarie 1966 deur mnr. Jacobus Daniel Stemmet van Kromstraat 9, Montagu, rakende sy oom, mnr. Pieter Gabriel Conradie, wie gewoon het op Lettaskraal, in die Karroo-deel van Montagu.

“Kommandant Scheepers en sy mense het deur ons distrik gekom en op Lettaskraal in die afwesigheid van mnr. Pieter Conradie, op sy plaas ‘n kleurling wat ‘n spioen was doodgeskiet en net daar begrawe met die graaf van mnr. P. Conradie met sy naam op die graaf. Die graaf is by die graf in die grond gestee. Toe die Engelse agterna daar verbykom kry hul die graaf, grawe die graf oop en vind die Kleurling. Daarna word mnr. Conradie wat op die dag van die teregstelling op Talana was, en niks met die saak te doen gehad het nie, na Grahamstad geneem na die konsentrasiekamp.

Sy vrou het agtergebly maar is op Montagu vir ‘n tyd lank in die tronk gehou. Sy ouers is te perd aangeja vanaf *Rietkuil* (nou *Sandou*) na Montagu, en is ook in die tronk gesit. Die pa is geruime tyd in die tronk gehou maar die moeder en vrou is

later losgelaat. Die oubaas was die oupa van mnr. Stemmet.

Mnr. Pieter Conradie was ter dood veroordeel op Grahamstad. Toevallig vang die Engelse 'n Boer wat op die betrokke dag by Kommodant Scheepers was. Op sy getuienis versag die Engelse die vonnis van mnr. Conradie maar laat sy familie niks weet nie. Sy familie het klaar gerou vir hom, toe hy onverwags na die oorlog by die huis opdaag. Die Engelse het hom tot op Montagu laat kom. Plaastoe moes hy stap.

Al sy briewe uit die kamp is vernietig, g'n pos het ooit sy familie bereik nie. Sy huisraad is alles stukkend geslaan, sy huis is afgebrand, al wat behoue gebly het, was 'n tafelpoot waarvan mnr. Stemmet se ouma toe 'n koekroller gemaak het".

Brief geskryf deur die moeder van Gideon Scheepers aan die moeder van Jacobus Stemmet en wat geskenk is aan die Montagu Museum deur mnr. Stemmet op 12.2.1966

Roodepoort
12 Desember 1905

Geachte Vriendin

Mijn brief heb ik
ontvangen en ziet dat u vraag wat
ons weet van mijn lieve zoon Gideon
Ach kind het is bij ons zelfs onbekend
zoo als ons dagelijks nog hooren liefde
mijn arme kind en zal hy in 1907
terug wezen mooge onze God toch
geven dat het zoo is en dat ons
hem terug krijgen zullen ach lieve
kind ons heb oobitter in den oorlog
gehad ik in mijn kinders was
verbannen in een woeste plekkucht
aan de zee in Natal en nog meer
andere menschen ons had het bitter
en kon niet leven van de
weinig kost die zy ons elkendag
geven maar God heeft ons er door
geholpen daar is een van mijn
kinders ook dood een meisje
en na beste groete w vriendin
Sophia C Scheepers
Roodepoort
Post Woneromte

Die bogenoemde brief vertaal in Engels:

Roodepoort

12 Desember

Dear Friend,

Your letter I did receive and see that you ask what we know of our beloved son Gideon.

Oh, child it is to us ourselves unknown but we trust that he will be returned to us in 1907 *. May God give that it shall be so.

O, dear child, we too had a bitter time during the war. I and my children were sent to a wild place on the coast of Natal and we could barely exist on the little food they gave us. There were some other people too. God helped us through it. One of my children died too – a girl.

Best greetings your friend.

Sophia C. Scheepers

Roodepoort

Post Wonderfontein

**Apparently Mrs Scheepers believed the rumour that Gideon Scheepers was never executed but banished to "some" island.*

Government House, Pretoria

Lord Selborne erken geheime opgraving en heimlike herbegrafnis in onbekende graf

10th July 1907

Sir, – With reference to McLyttleton's letter to you of the 17th May, I am desired by His Excellency Lord Selborne to inform you that most careful enquires have been made on the subject of the disposal of the body of the late Commandant Scheepers.

The Military authorities have been consulted in the matter, and the report has been received from the General Officer

Commanding-in-Chief at Aldershot from which there can be no manner of doubt that Commandant Scheepers was shot and buried at Graaff-Reinet. Mr. Hoole, the Magistrate, was present at the execution and saw him shot and buried, as were also Brigadier General the Honourable A. Henniker, then commanding the 2nd. Battalion Coldstream Guards, and other officials.

For some reason which is not now known, the body of Commandant Scheepers appears to have been exhumed after the execution and taken away from the spot where the execution took place to some other spot which is not now known.

The Officers who superintended the second burial after the body had been exhumed report that it would be impossible at the present time to identify the spot where the remains were finally interred.

It appears, therefore that it is impossible now to state the actual place where the body lies; but there is no doubt whatever as to the execution having been carried out, and His Excellency thinks that Mrs. Scheepers would be wise to pay no attention to any stories she may hear about her son having been banished to an island.

His Excellency much regrets that his efforts to trace the exact spot where Mrs. Scheepers' son is buried, have not been successful.

Yours Faithfully,
D.O. Malcolm Private Secretary
J.E. Malan Esq.,
Kaallaagte,
Kroonstad.

Bron: Scheepers se Dagboek deur dr Gustav S. Preller

Kerktoring as Fort Gebruik

DIE toring van die Ned. Geref. Kerk op Montagu het in sy dae al as fort diens gedoen. Dit was in die dae toe die inwoners van hierdie rustige Bolandse dorp 'n aanval gevrees het. Enkele lede van die „Town Guards“ het die kerktoring as fort gebruik en daaruit 'n man—dit het later geblyk dat dit een van hul eie mense was—gewond.

Op Sondagoggend 1 September 1900 was alles in rep en roer op Montagu. Berigte is ontvang dat kommandant Scheepers se kommando van Heidelberg, K.F., op-ruk en dat hulle deur Montagu sou trek. Die Britsgesindes was vreesbevange.

Alle weerbare manne is opgeroep om by die „Town Guards“ aan te sluit. Diegene wat geweer het, is in die tronk gestop. Die nood was hoog want die Boerekommando was reeds op die plaas van mnr. David Rossouw daar naby.

Op die plaas het wyle mnr. Alwyn Burger kommandant Scheepers aangeraai om liewer in die rigting van Touwsrivier te trek omdat hy bevrees was dat die Boere swaar ongevallen sou ly as hulle deur Montagu trek.

Montagu moes egter beskerm word. Op die heuwels om die dorp is forte opgerig, waarvan sommige vandag nog te sien is, en selfs van Robertson af is versterkings ontvang. Die „Town Guards“ was vasberade om Montagu te verdedig.

Miskien omdat hy graag die eerste wou wees om op die Boere te skiet, het 'n sekere Inch sy toevlug tot die kerktoring geneem.

DIE toring van die Ned. Geref. Kerk op Montagu is, sover vasgestel kan word, die enigste wat in die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog as fort teen die Boere-magte gebruik was. Waarskynlik is dit ook die enigste toring van 'n Ned. Geref. Kerkgebou waar-aan 'n Union Jack al ge-wapper het.

Saam met 'n paar maats het hulle opgeklim tot by die horlosie bo in die toring en dit met 'n koeyoet aan die regterkant uitgebreek om die opening as skietgat te gebruik.

Onder die „Town Guards“ wat van Robertson gekom het, was ene Preuss. Die versterkings van Robertson het in Badstraat tot regoor die Kerkzaal gery, waar hulle stilgehou het.

Preuss het in die rigting van die kerk gestap om water te gaan soek. Wyle mnr. George Ravenscroft en Phipps, wat daar diens gedoen het, het hom gewaar en hom beveel om sy hande op te steek. Hulle het hom nie geken nie, maar omdat hy geweet het dat hulle „Town Guards“ was, het hy hom daar nie aan gesteur nie.

Die wagte het so hard na hom geskreeu dat Inch dit bo in die kerktoring kon hoor. Sonder om te aarsel het Inch op hom losge-

brand en hom swaar gewond. Hy moes dadelik na wyle dr. Castle gebring word, waar 'n noodoperasie uitgevoer is. Preuss het heeltemal herstel en is onlangs eers oorlede.

Kort daarna het berig gekom dat Scheepers omgedraai het. Inch en sy maats het die kerktoring verlaat, maar moes later die horlosie laat herstel.

'n Paar jaar later was die kerkraad van Montagu weer in die moeilikheid in verband met die kerktoring. Die toring moes skoongemaak en afgewit word.

Twee Ierse matrose was die enigste mense wat bereid was om die werk te onderneem. Een van die twee was maar 'n moeilike kerel. Tot vermaak van die bale mense onder in die straat het hy op sy kop gaan staan bo-op die ronde knop waaraan die arms van die weerhaan vas is. Ook het hy allerhande wase aangevang op die verhogie onderkant die horlosie.

Na voltooiing van die werk het hy gegaan om die orige £5 vir die werk by die scriba, wyle mnr. Pieter Joubert, te gaan haal. Tot sy grootste verontwaardiging het die scriba hom meegedeel dat hy reeds al sy geld weg het.

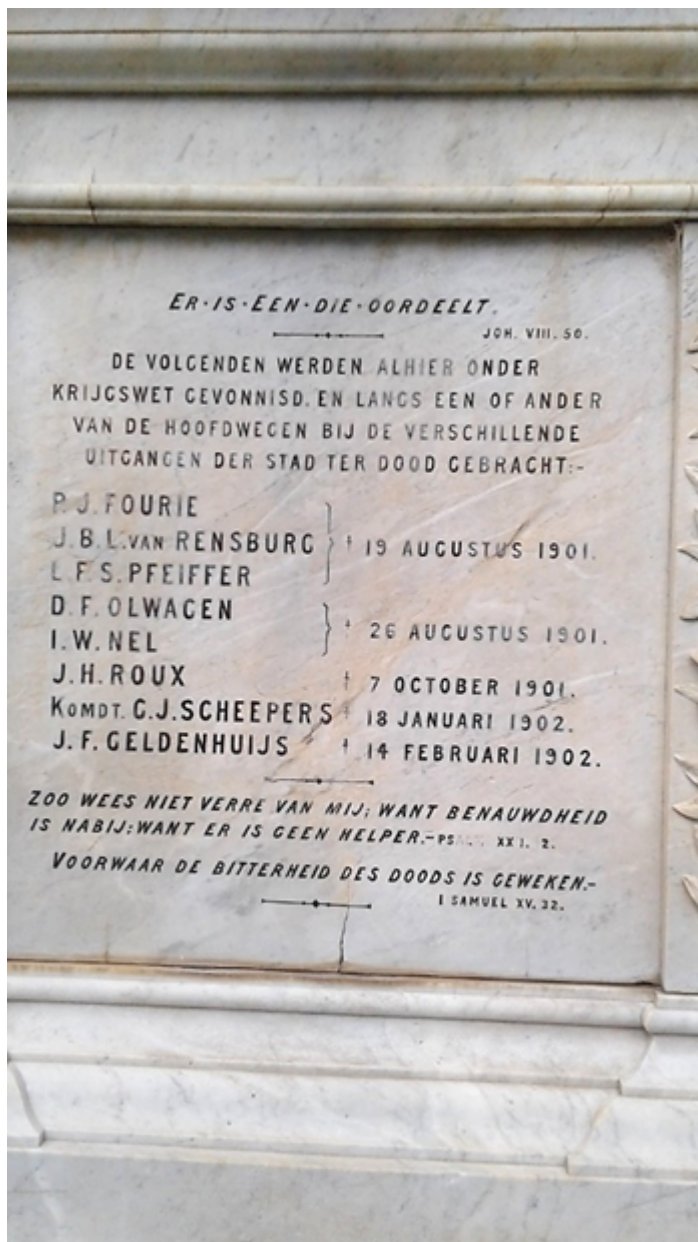
Hieroor was die Ier baie kwaad. Brom-brom het hy 'n Union Jack gaan haal en dit aan die kerktoring gaan ophang. Wat moes die kerkraad nou doen? En die volgende dag was Nagmaal.

Die enigste man wat dit sou waag om die toring te bestyg, was die Ier self. 'n Konstabel het hom gaan haal, maar hy sou dit net op een voorwaarde doen: vyf pond moes eers neergesit word. Die Ier het sy £5 gekry. Deur G.C.

Die datum van publikasie en in watter koerant dit verskyn het is onbekend

Dokument: Montagu Museum





*Monument op die h/v Donkin- en Somersetstrate in Graaff-Reinet
wat die Boere wat tereggestel is deur 'n vuurpeleton herdenk*

Foto's : Irma Jordaan