

VELDPOND: THE TRUE FACTS

PILGRIM'S REST 1902

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Obverse and Reverse¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the Anglo Boer War, the Boers experienced a critical shortage of money with which to buy provisions for the Commandos. At Pilgrim's Rest a group of Boers, consisting mainly of pro-Boer foreigners coined, according to the latest information that came available, about 650 gold pounds, the so-called *Veldpond*, in the workshop of the Transvaal Gold Mining Estate (TGME).

For almost 100 years a one-sided version, that one person was the initiator, leader and expert on minting the Veldpond was consistently repeated without verification². This inaccurate version of history obscures the fact the Veldpond was the product of teamwork by a group of men each an expert in his own field and that the credit should not be attributed to one person only. This aim of this article is to rectify the history of the Veldpond.

2. BACKGROUND

Between 1899 and 1902 the two Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were at war with the British Empire. Great Britain wanted to gain possession of the goldfields of the Transvaal and the Boers fought desperately for their freedom against the most powerful state of the time. Winston Churchill, who was a war correspondent for a London

¹ Veldpond in the ABSA collection

² Letter of Kloppers in *The Rand Daily Mail* 9 October 1902

Interviews with Kloppers:

- September 1927, *The Star*.
- 1933 JT Becklake.
- August 1936, *Vaderland*.
- Sunday 29 October 1939, interview by P Stoker TAB Aanwins 551.
- 1939 Personal correspondence between Kloppers and professor Arndt. TAB Aanwins 551.
- January 1949, *Fleur*
- 1950 CL Engelbrecht in Johannesburg for an article in *Opsaal*. June 1950.
- 1953 P Stoker in Pretoria for *Yskor Nuus*. December 1953.

newspaper, thought that the Boers had no chance against the British and wrote:

I thought it very sporting of the Boers to take on the whole British Empire.

In conventional warfare the Boers, with 35 000 civilian men, could not prevail against a British army of 150 000 men. Kruger left the country and by 1 September 1900 both the Orange Free State and the Transvaal had been declared British territory. The British military leader Lord Roberts triumphantly returned to England under the impression that the Boers were conquered. The Boers, however, embarked on guerrilla warfare and for almost two years continued the war, which cost the British government dearly in terms of money and moral prestige.

The British reacted to the guerrilla warfare with a *scorched earth* policy in which farmhouses, harvests and even churches were burnt. With their houses destroyed, the women, children and old people were taken to concentration camps. Resources for the Boers on the battlefield became limited. Food was scarce, their clothing in rags and they slept in the open under pieces of canvas.

3. PILGRIM'S REST



Pilgrim's Rest

By September 1901 the war had been raging for two years and General Ben Viljoen took his commando consisting of about 900 exhausted men to Pilgrim's Rest from where they launched guerrilla attacks on the British's forces. This mining town³, deep in the mountains, was almost untouched by the war. About 40 families lived there and the telephone connection to Graskop, Mac Mac, Sabie, and Krugerspost⁴ still functioned. There the battered Boer warriors could erect shelters with material from the mine. Women of the town

³ Gold had been discovered in this area in 1872/73.

⁴ Schultz, JO. *Pilgrim's Rest and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*:38.

made clothes for the Boers from curtains and the linen ceilings of their houses. Food supplies could be bought from the black people in the area for which the war commissioner⁵ Willy Barter, required money.

While spying on the British forces, in the mountains, Michael J Cooney, an Irish born American, discovered gold amalgam⁶ at the deserted mines. He shared this information with his Irish compatriot Willy Barter. General Viljoen was informed about the possibility of recovering and purifying the gold and gave orders to scrape the plates at the mines. Willy Barter⁷, GE Waldeck, Fritz Rothmann and Cooney were among the men who scraped the plates. General Ben Viljoen signed permission granted to Fritz Rothmann on 11 January 1902.⁸ For this Rothmann and Waldeck received 150 ounces raw gold. Cooney received 5 pounds of amalgam, which was 1/3 of what he scraped as payment.⁹ General Ben Viljoen reported in later years, that *neutral persons*, meaning non-citizens, purified the amalgam in the workshop of the mine.

It is interesting to note, that shortly after the occupation of Pretoria, the ZAR state-secretary FW Reitz mentioned the possibility of getting the reduction works at Barberton and Pilgrim's Rest operational again.¹⁰

When the mine bosses left the country, they had put Alex Marshall (also known as *Sandy*)¹¹, the carpenter of Transvaal Gold Mining Estate (TGME), in control of the mining assets at Pilgrim's Rest. Marshall¹². He was a Scotsman who supported the Boers in using the mining facilities.

⁵ The War Commissioner was responsible for the supplies of the commando. Before the war, Willy Barter was the Sherriff of Pilgrims Rest.

⁶ A compound of gold and mercury.

⁷ Smith, *Anna Africana Notes and News*. March 1976 volume 22 No 1.

⁸ MER. Die Pelgrimsponde in *Die Huisgenoot* 5 February 1943.

⁹ National Archive Pretoria. TAB SS R331/1900.

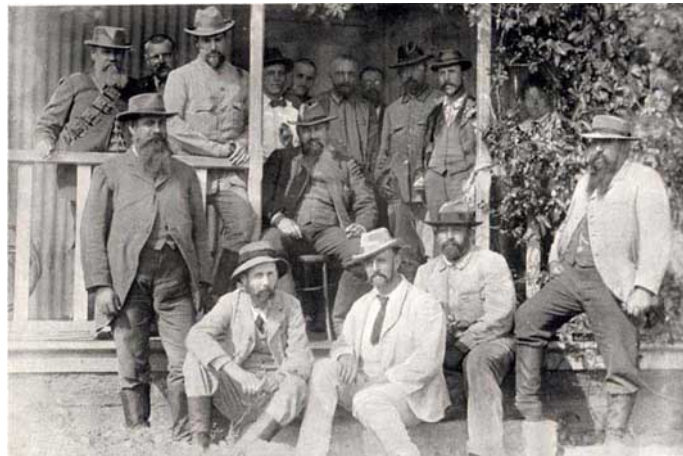
¹⁰ Rosenthal, Eric. *The Best of Eric Rosenthal* 1975:173.

¹¹ Schultz, JO. *Pilgrim's Rest and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* 1999:23.

¹² MHG 89024 Alexander Marshall (1861 Scotland † 30-06-1935 Pilgrim's Rest).



The battery of TGME at Pilgrim's Rest on the far right of the photo, where the amalgam was purified¹³



Marshall in front with the white suit with Willy Barter war commissioner on his left-hand side. In the middle on the chair is MT Steyn President of the Free State visiting the ZAR for talks with the ZAR Field Government (government on the battle field). Photo taken at Pilgrim's Rest during September 1900¹⁴

4. CONTEMPLATING THE MAKING OF GOLD POUNDS

Various members of Viljoen's Johannesburg Commando, who consisted mainly of foreigners, were artisans who worked on the goldmines before the war and the skills to purify the gold and cast ingots were therefore available. Casting gold ingots as a first step towards making gold coins was an idea already expressed by Jules Perrin in 1874 when he tried to convince President Burgers that the ZAR government should establish its own State Mint, using the alluvial gold from Pilgrim's Rest.¹⁵

¹³ Marshall, Alex. *Photos of Boer Commandos*. 1902. Plate 1

¹⁴ Marshall, Alex. *Photos of Boer Commandos*. 1902. Plate 10.

¹⁵ National Archive Pretoria. TAB Aanwins A202.

The gold ingots cast by Viljoen's people were not acceptable to the black people, as they wanted real money as currency. According to Field Cornet AEG Pienaar the feasibility of making gold coins came from GE Waldeck.¹⁶ During that time, General Viljoen was unfortunately captured by the British on 25 January 1902 and sent to St Helena as a prisoner of war.



General Ben Viljoen

General Chris Muller (1865-1945) succeeded him and on his arrival at Pilgrim's Rest during March 1902, Field Cornet AEG Pienaar told him that the Commando was in possession of gold to the value of £500. He also informed the General of the possibility of manufacturing gold coins in the mine's workshop.¹⁷ Muller was impressed and immediately took steps to obtain permission for this venture from the acting president of the ZAR, Schalk W Burger and the ZAR Executive Committee (Cabinet). General Muller gave the order that, in the meantime, more gold should be scrapped. A small amount of alluvial gold, bought from local diggers, was also added. No bar-gold was used for the Veldpond.

5. PERMISSION FOR ESTABLISHING A GOVERNMENT MINT

Within a week the ZAR Government on the Battle Field (*Regering te Velde*)¹⁸ gave permission to mint gold pounds. With this the ZAR Field Mint (*Munt te Velde*) came into existence under authority of General Muller, who had to ensure that the requirements of the Coinage Act of the ZAR (no 14 of 1891) would be met. This law determined that a pound sterling should weigh 7.98805 grams and contain 7.3244 grams of pure gold.¹⁹

Interesting note: Since the occupation of Pretoria, the British regarded the ZAR as being under their rule. In February 1901 Lord Milner proclaimed that both defacing and making

¹⁶ Pienaar, AEG. Boer Field Mint in *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 October 1902

¹⁷ *Vaderland* 21 September 1936.

¹⁸ *Regering te Velde* refers to a government that is not in their capital city any more, but on the *battlefield*. Compare the military rank, of Field Marshall, which refers to a Marshall on the battlefield.

¹⁹ Becklake, JT. Notes on the Coinage of the South African Republic in *Numismatic Chronicle fifth series, vol xiv 1934:185*.

coins was prohibited.²⁰ The manufacturing of the Veldpond at Pilgrim's Rest could therefore, under the British proclamation, be regarded as an unlawful act.



*General Muller with his officers. Willy Barter in the middle row, second from left
Pienaar sitting on the ground next to General Muller, third from the right*

6. ZAR FIELD MINT AT PILGRIM'S REST

After receiving permission from the ZAR Field Government in March 1902 to establish a Government Field Mint who will function under a Mint Commission, General Muller²¹ appointed the 24-year-old Andries Gustav Erlank Pienaar as *Officer in Charge*.²² In later years it is clear from letters²³ that General Muller as well as Field Cornet Pienaar were most disturbed that Kloppers presented himself as Head of the Field Mint. Only two authors of numismatic literature acknowledged Pienaar as the real Head of the Field. That is Professor Arendt who acknowledges Pienaar as supervisor of the Field Mint²⁴ and Becklake, who wrote in his book in 1934:

*This unique group of coiners or moneyers was under the leadership of Field Cornet André Pienaar.*²⁵

Muller appointed Waldeck as project leader and requested Pienaar to appoint the rest of the personnel to work under his supervision.²⁶ Pienaar appointed PJ Kloppers, MJ Cooney, WG Reid and D Graham.

²⁰ Proclamation No 4 of 6 February 1901.

²¹ Muller, Chris H. *Oorlogsherinneringe* 1936:166.

²² Pienaar, AGE. Boer Field Mint in *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 October 1902

²³ *Vaderland* 15 September 1936.

²⁴ Arndt EHD. *The South African Mints*. Pretoria 1939.

²⁵ Becklake, JT. *Notes on the coinage of the ZAR* 1934:7.

²⁶ Pienaar, AEG. Boer Field Mint in *Rand Daily Mail*, 9 October 1902

The exact required number of experts namely a leader, assayer, artist, blacksmith and, gold smelter was appointed and even more surprising, they used a screw and press principle instead of a strike action, which had been used since earliest times! Somebody at Pilgrim's Rest must have had first-hand knowledge on the process of minting coins. The most probable person is Michael Cooney.

6.1 Head of the Field Mint: AGE Pienaar

Andries Gustav Erlank Pienaar (1877-1946)²⁷ had been a clerk at the magistrate's office in Johannesburg before the war.



AGE Pienaar

As a 25 year he had led the Field Mint since its founding in February²⁸ till 5th May when he was appointed chairman of the Mint Commission when General Muller was called to attend peace talks in Vereeniging. Pienaar ended his career in the civil service of the Union of South Africa as Secretary²⁹ of the Department of Home Affairs and after that as chairperson of the Government Tender Board.

6.2 Project leader: GE Waldeck



*GE Waldeck*³⁰

GE Waldeck was a member of the Johannesburg section of the Transvaal Red Cross and he was the official in charge of the Field Hospital at Pilgrim's Rest.³¹ General Muller appointed him as project leader for the Field Mint but he soon severed his connection with the Mint³²

²⁷ National Archive Pretoria. MHG 4567/46.

²⁸ Muller, Chris H. *Oorlogsherinneringe* 1936:166.

²⁹ Nowadays called Director General.

³⁰ Plate 23 Marshall's Book. *Photos of Boer Commandos taken at Pilgrim's Rest.*

³¹ Schultz JO. Pilgrim's Rest and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902

³² Pienaar, AGE. Boer Mint Field in *The Rand Daily Mail*. 1902.

most probable because of his responsibilities at the hospital.

6.3 Artist for designing the coin: PJ Kloppers



PJ Kloppers

Philippus Johannes Kloppers (1874-1960)³³ was born in Arnhem in the Netherlands. He was trained as a teacher in Amsterdam.³⁴ His main subject was Botany and he also took drawing lessons at College. He had been a teacher at a Grammar School in Surrey, England before he came to the Transvaal in 1897 where he taught English at the Kaapsche Hoop School near Barberton.³⁵ When war broke out, he joined the Boer Commandos and with the establishment of the ZAR Field Mint, he was appointed on it for his artistic abilities.

On 5 May 1902, shortly before peace was proclaimed and three days before the Mint Commission awarded tokens of appreciation to the members of the team, Kloppers was appointed Head of the Field Mint (*Hoofd van die Muntwerkinrichting*)³⁶ when Pienaar became chairman of the Mint Commission in the place of general Muller who left Pilgrim's Rest for peace talks at Vereeniging.

Kloppers received a remuneration of £10³⁷ (£5 as Mint Master and £5 as coin designer). He ended his teaching career as inspector of schools in Johannesburg.

6.4 Assayer: MJ Cooney

Michael Joseph Cooney (1844-1929) was born in Ireland. He immigrated to the USA where he worked in goldmines, became a master assayer and spent time in Europe prior to coming to the Transvaal.³⁸ Shortly before war broke out, he was found guilty of culpable homicide and sent to jail. The residents of Pietersburg sent a petition to President Kruger asking for

³³ National Archive Pretoria. MHG 8893/60.

³⁴ Meiring, S. *Die geskiedenis van Phillipus Johannes Kloppers (1874-1960) en Maria Magdalena Naudé (1881-1970)*.

³⁵ AM van S. Die laaste stukkie republikeinse goud in *Fleur*, Januarie 1949.

³⁶ National Archive Pretoria. TAB *Aanwins* A551.

³⁷ Financial Statements of Field Mint in the National Archive. Pretoria.

³⁸ Information obtained from professor David Reed Thomas.

Cooney's release, because *he was a decent man*.³⁹ This was granted.



Cooney's signature with the letters ME (Master Essayer)

Cooney was appointed to the team to purify the gold to 24 carat and because of his specialized knowledge of gold. Willy Barter confirmed this in a letter:

*We had an experienced American, Mr. J.M. Cooney, who taught us how to make the gold malleable, so to roll it to the required thickness.*⁴⁰

After the war, Cooney⁴¹ left South Africa with Generals Viljoen, Cronje and others to attend the World Exhibition at St Louis in the USA in 1904 where they tried to collect money for the impoverished Boers. The project, popular known as the *Boere Sirkus* was a failure and Cooney remained in the USA.

It is to be noted that Cooney received the largest remuneration of all the personnel of the Field Mint.⁴² He played a crucial role in purifying the gold and has been grossly overlooked in publications about the Veldpond. It is highly time that he been acknowledged for his contribution in that regard.

6.5 Blacksmith/mechanic

William George Reid (1864-1947)⁴³ was the son of a Scottish immigrant. He received four years apprenticeship in the Cape Colony and had 14 years practical experience in mining workshops where he worked as a mechanic. He was familiar with machinery and he repaired guns and damaged grain mills for the Boers on commando.



³⁹ National Archive Pretoria TAB SP 224 R892/00.

⁴⁰ Letter from Barter to J Hunter McLea, published by AH Smith's in an article "Marshall's Souvenirs of the ZAR Munt te Velde" in *Notes and News March 1976 Part 22 No 1*.

⁴¹ Information obtained from professor David Reed Thomas.

⁴² National Archives, Pretoria

⁴³ National Archive Pretoria. MHG 2404/47.

It was his task to identify and adapt the machinery that would be required for a minting process and also to turn the dies and to harden them after Kloppers had designed and engraved them. Barter describes him as the handyman of the team and Muller refers to him as a clever engineer.⁴⁴ He was paid £5 for the work he did at the Field Mint. This was paid in Veldponte⁴⁵. Later on, he became the blacksmith of the Irene Farm Estate and he retired at Zeerust.

6.6 Smelter

Dick Graham was Irish⁴⁶ and he was responsible for melting and pouring the gold. Melting the gold to get a homogeneous product and then pouring it out in a steady stream, for a good product, needs much skill and practice.⁴⁷ Becklake made special reference in his book to the skill with which the gold at the Mint on the Field was melted and poured.⁴⁸ Pienaar mentioned Graham's *excellent knowledge of gold*.⁴⁹



D Graham

He received five Veldpond for the work he did at the Field Mint. It is said that Dick was a jolly fellow and very strong⁵⁰. His strength helped a lot to drive the metal lathe, the rollers and the hand-punching machine with muscle power. After the war he worked at Sabie.

7. WORKSHOP AND MACHINES

⁴⁴ Muller, Chris H. *Oorlogsherinneringe* 1936:166.

⁴⁵ Personal notes of WG Reid in possession of his granddaughter, Rentia Landman

⁴⁶ National Archive Pretoria. TAB Aanwins A202.

⁴⁷ Robson, CR. in *Journal of the Institution of Certificated Engineers, South Africa*. Dec 1946:244.

⁴⁸ Becklake, JT. *Aantekenings oor Muntstukke van die SA Republiek*. 1933:5.

⁴⁹ Pienaar, AGE. Boer Field Mint. In *Rand Daily Mail*. 1902

⁵⁰ Stoker, P. *Die Avontuurlike Staatsmunt te Velde* 1953:21.



*The Iron workshop of the TGMC mine at Pilgrim's Rest*⁵¹

Alex Marshall gave the Mint Team complete access to the workshop, the foundry and the assayer's laboratory. The workshop of the Pilgrim's Rest mine was the only workshop within miles and served all the mines in the area. Therefore, it was better equipped than most other workshops in the country. The only problem was that the mine bosses had put the hydroelectric power stations, Jubilee and Clewer, at Pilgrim's Rest⁵² out of action before leaving the country to prevent the Boers from bringing the mine into production.⁵³

The most important machines that were needed for minting coins were a metal lathe on which the dies could be turned, a mill to roll out the gold, a punching machine with which gold discs could be cut and a press to imprint the marks on the gold discs.⁵⁴

A surprising discovery was made that some of the ideas expressed by Jules Perrin in 1874, were put into practice in producing the Veldpond in 1902.

8. PROCESS OF MAKING VELDPOND

8.1 Purification of the gold

To comply with the requirements of the ZAR Coinage Act (Act no 14 of 1891) Cooney had to purify the gold to 24 carats. The testing was done in the assayer's laboratory. For a better product, silver was added and for which 11/6 was paid.

8.2 Melting process

The team activated the mine's coal furnace house and heated the gold in a crucible to a melting point of $\pm 1064^{\circ}$ Celsius.

⁵¹ Photo of the Mpumalanga Museum Services at Pilgrim's Rest.

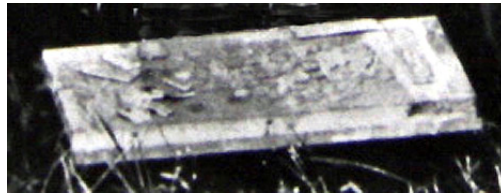
⁵² Schultz, JO. *Pilgrim's Rest and the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* 1999:23.

⁵³ Hydro electric power station that delivered 575 kilowatt. Information from Colonel Koos Erasmus.

⁵⁴ Erasmus, Koos. *Die Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek se Staatsmunt te Velde*.

8.3 Pouring the gold

The molten gold was cast in a greased slate form that had been preheated to prevent it from cracking. The Mint team must have hollowed out the slate themselves as the mine only cast gold bars and would, therefore, not have slate forms. The slate form was 5 mm thick, 7.5 cm wide and 15 to 25cm long.⁵⁵ In Perrin's 1874-submission, gold strips with a thickness of 1/3 inch (8 mm) and a length of 6½ inches (16.25cm) is prescribed.⁵⁶ It seems to be a standard size, which underlines the thesis that the minting of Veldpond was not a trial-and-error exercise but that somebody at Pilgrim's Rest had knowledge on minting gold coins. The question arises around who it was and about the whereabouts of Perrin who was in Mozambique for the duration of the war. Was Cooney the man with the man with the knowledge?



*Slate wherein the molten gold was poured.
Coins and pieces of rolled out gold are on top of it⁵⁷*

8.4 Rolling the gold

The rolling mill is the most important machine in the whole process of making gold coins, according to Perrin. He prescribed cylinders of no less than 1 ft in diameter (30 cm).⁵⁸ Mines did have big rolling machines with which steel plates were bent. A logical conclusion is that the minting team used that machine for rolling out the gold.⁵⁹

The cast gold strip had to be rolled out several times until the correct thickness was reached. After each rolling session, the gold hardened and had to go through a process of annealing that entails heating it in an oven at a low temperature (200° Celsius) for 45 minutes and then cooling down slowly. When the desired thickness was reached, the gold strip was softened once more so that it could be cut into circular discs and the design imprinted on them. The correct heat treatment of the gold plates was most important as it could lengthen the life of the dies.

⁵⁵ Stoker, P. *Yskornuus Desember 1953*.

⁵⁶ National Archive Pretoria. TAB Aanwins A202.

⁵⁷ Slate as it appears on the group photo of the working team.

⁵⁸ National Archive Pretoria. TAB Aanwins A202.

⁵⁹ Information from Colonel Koos Erasmus

⁶⁰ Engelbrecht, CL. *Money in South Africa*. 1987:84.

Kloppers⁶⁰ told journalists that the Lydenburg alluvial gold cracked when it was rolled out and that he got the bright idea to use mercuric sublimate⁶¹ from the mine's first aid stock and added it to the gold, after which *it rolled out like butter*. It is not clear for what the mercuric sublimate was actually used as it would evaporate when heated. The Field Mint did made use of mercuric sublimate to recover gold dust for which £1 was paid to the mine⁶².

8.5 Turning the dies

The dies had to be made out of small iron rods of 20mm wide and 15mm thick that would fit in the mine's punching machine.⁶³ The electric metal lathe in the mine's workshop was used but it had to be turned by hand. After Reid turned out each die, heating it to a light straw colour, keeping it at that temperature for 30 minutes and then cooling it down slowly to be annealed. That would give a soft enough product for Kloppers to engrave.

8.6 Letter design

Kloppers designed the coins. His first effort was engraved on one of the mine's copper rulers and then imprinted in lead. This design was rejected. Marshall⁶⁴ got the ruler with the proof dies and Field Cornet Pienaar⁶⁵ the lead proof pieces, which they kept as souvenirs.



Rejected proof dies on a copper ruler of the mine⁶⁶

Proof coins, in lead

The second design was accepted. Becklake⁶⁷ wrote in his book:

It will be acknowledged that the later dies are greatly superior in design and artistic merit to the earlier pair tested, and one is impressed, in considering these pieces, with the skill and ingenuity which was displayed, firstly in the work of refining the gold (Mr.

⁶⁰ Engelbrecht, CL. *Money in South Africa*. 1987:84.

⁶¹ Mercuric sublimate, $HgCl_2$, also called corrosive sublimate and mercury bio chloride and very poisonous. It is used as an antiseptic in a 0.1% solution.

⁶² National Archives Pretoria

⁶³ Information from Colonel Koos Erasmus

⁶⁴ Smith, Anna H. *Africana Notes and News March 1976 Volume 22 No 1*. W Makepeace bought Marshall's souvenirs.

⁶⁵ Becklake, JT. *Notes on the Coinage of the SA Republic*. 1933:5

⁶⁶ These proof dies are in the ABSA coin collection in Johannesburg.

⁶⁷ Becklake, JT, *Notes on the Coinage of the South African Republic*. 1934:193.

Cooney was the assayer), later in melting and pouring the necessary gold bars, and, finally, in stamping these blank pieces.

8.7 Engraving the dies

According to Becklake⁶⁸, Reid and Barter, beeswax was put on the surface of the dies and Kloppers drew his design in mirror writing on it. An acid that eroded the design in the steel was dropped on to it. Kloppers denied it and said that the design had been drawn on the steel with a pencil. Kloppers' version is the correct one as scratch marks on the coins shows that Kloppers engraved the design with a fine chisel and a light hammer. On the one die was engraved *EEN POND* and on the other *ZAR 1902*. The small chisel Kloppers used also had to be made in the workshop.⁶⁹

8.8 Hardening the dies

The next step was hardening the dies. Kloppers claimed that he did it and that six dies cracked in the process. Reid the blacksmith applied case hardening and none of the dies cracked.⁷⁰ With case hardening the dies were packed in a mixture of ground bone and charcoal inside a container that was then sealed off and heated. The outer steel absorbed the carbon, thereby creating hardness on the outer steel, while still preserving the toughness of the softer iron core. Uniform hardening by heating and quick cooling down would have created a product too brittle for stamping the coins.⁷¹ Both Pienaar and Kloppers testified that only one pair of dies had been used.⁷²

8.9 Cutting blanks

Blank circular discs were cut out of the gold strips with the small hand-punching machine in the photo below. The machine was a small screw press that had been used at the mine to cut holes into steel plates for joining them together with bolts. The sizes of standard punches are $\frac{5}{8}$ and $\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Converted to metric measure, $\frac{7}{8}$ inch equals 2.1875cm and this gives us the size of a Veldpond of which the diameter was 2.28cm. With the pressure on the blanks when the press was turned on, the gold would expand to the milled edge.⁷³ The result was a somewhat smaller gold pound than the standard but, to compensate for that, the Veldpond was a bit thicker than a standard gold pound.

⁶⁸ Becklake, JT. *Aantekeninge oor die Muntstukke van die SA Republiek* 1933:4.

⁶⁹ Stoker, P. in *Yskornuus* December 1953.

⁷⁰ Reid's personal notes in possession of R Landman

⁷¹ Information obtained from metallurgist HS Jordaan.

⁷² Becklake, JT. *From Real to Rand* 1965:31.

⁷³ Information from Colonel Koos Erasmus.

Blank discs could only be punched out of the middle of the gold plates, because the sides would be thinner than the middle.⁷⁴ The bits and pieces as well as discarded blanks, were melted, poured, rolled, annealed and cut again.

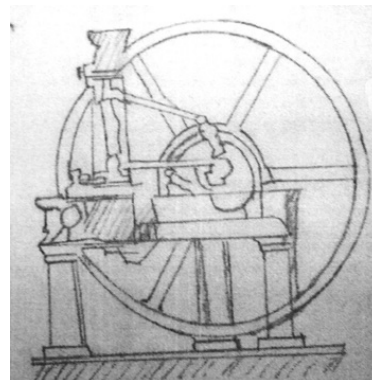
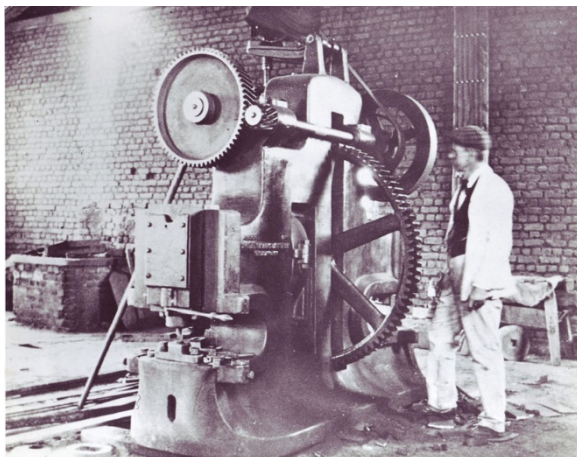
According to Stoker⁷⁵ every coin was weighed on an essayer scale and those that were too heavy were scraped off and those that were too light were melted again. Mr JT Becklake, later head of the Royal Mint in Pretoria, weighed 17 Veldpond and found that the weight varied between 7.544 grams and 8.508 grams.⁷⁶ The difference in weight could be ascribed to the fact that gold is a soft metal and that some coins had worn out more than others.



Small hand-punching machine of the TGME mine compared to Perrin's sketch of 1874

8.10 Stamping the blank pieces

For imprinting the blank discs with the coin marks, the team used the mine's big electricity driven punching machine. Electricity was not available and the mint team had to apply muscle power. Strong poles were attached to the flywheel, which made it possible to apply sufficient manual force for stamping the coins.



⁷⁴ Levine, Elias. *The Coinage and Counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*. 1974.

⁷⁵ Stoker, P. Yskornuus. *Desember* 1953.

⁷⁶ Levine, Elias. *The Coinage and Counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* 1974.

The big punching machine⁷⁷ of TGME compared to Perrin's sketch of 1874



Strong poles attached to the flywheel⁷⁸

The team at Pilgrim's Rest skipped one stage that is usually applied to minting and that was to provide the coins with a raised edge.

The engraved steel dies were attached to the machine: obverse to the top and reverse to the bottom. Reid made a collar for the outer edge. Kloppers filed flutes on it. He judged it by eyesight and at the end there was an opening that was too big for one flute and too small for two. He then made two small flutes close to each other with a thinner file (5 o'clock position seen from the ZAR side).⁷⁹ The milled collar was attached to the reverse side die. ⁸⁰ With a blank gold disc in-between, the screw was turned on to imprint the markings on both sides of the coin.

The two flutes in the milled edge close to each other are characteristic of a Veldpond. This is however not a test of originality. Veldpond did not always impress uniformly and the flutes were not all filled up. A well-impressed Veldpond would have 76 equal flutes with the two small flutes in the milled edge.

In a letter from Willy Barter addressed to John Hunter McLea⁸¹ he mentioned a ringing test. That would have been to test the coins for cracks and flaws.

9. CABINET MINISTERS VISITED PILGRIM'S REST

⁷⁷ Photo from the Mapumalanga Museum Services at Pilgrim's Rest.

⁷⁸ Kloppers's drawing on Arndt's manuscript. TAB Aanwins A202.

⁷⁹ Kloppers' notes on Arndt's manuscript. TAB Aanwins A202

⁸⁰ We know this because the Veldpond with one blank side which were issued on 1 June to the members of the Mint on the Field, have the ZAR mark on it, with a smooth edge.

⁸¹ Smith, Anna. *Notes and News* March 1976 volume 22 No 1 Africana Museum Johannesburg.

Two members of the ZAR Executive Committee (Cabinet) of the ZAR government, General Lukas Meyer and Mr JC Krogh accompanied by the secretary of the Government D van Velden visited Pilgrim's Rest during May 1902 to inform the burghers of the peace process and to elect representatives for the discussions at Vereeniging. General Muller was elected to attend the peace talks and he had to leave Pilgrim's Rest. A restructured line of reporting became necessary and a Mint Commission, chaired by Pienaar came into being.



Van Velden, General Lukas Meyer & JC Krogh

10. THE MINT COMMISSION

On 5th May a Mint Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Pienaar. Philip Carl Minnaar (1876-?) who had been the Justice of peace at Pilgrim's Rest was appointed as secretary of the Mint Commission⁸², Willy Barter as treasurer and JS Joubert as additional member.



Pienaar (chairman), PC Minnaar (secretary, WJ Barter (Treasurer) & JS Joubert (additional member)

William Joseph Henry Barter a pro Boer Irishman had been the sheriff of Pilgrim's Rest since the middle 70's where he established an espionage network in the area to expose the smuggling trade of firearms to chief Sekhukhune.⁸³ During the Anglo Boer he was sworn in as war commissioner for the Lydenburg district and served under General Ben Viljoen and

⁸² Muller in *Vaderland* 15 September 1935.

⁸³ National Archive Pretoria. TAB SS 206 R744/76.

later General Muller. He was a correspondent for the *Standard Diggers News* and *The Star*. The British police was trying to capture him for sending war news abroad.⁸⁴

Johannes Stephanus Joubert, the additional member of the Commission who had been the ZA Government's Mine Commissioner at Pilgrims Rest was omitted from the list of people who got medals for the work they did for the Field Mint. It is still unsure whether he stayed on as a member of the commission up to the end and received a medal or not.

11. FINAL PRODUCT



85

The final product is a particularly beautiful gold coin with a handmade character. Veldpond is classified as *Siege Pieces* or *Money of Necessity*. While the team was still in the process of making the coins, the Boers realised the exceptionality of the Veldpond and the *burghers* exchanged one pound for a Veldpond. After the war, British soldiers paid several pounds to get hold of a single Veldpond.

12. MEDALS AWARDED

The two government gentlemen Meyer and Krogh were so impressed with the activities of the ZAR Field Mint that they gave an order on 5 May 1902 that everyone involved with the Veldpond was to be given an award (*gold plaatje*). Three days later on 8 May 1902, awards were issued to General Muller, Field Cornet Pienaar, Kloppers, Minnaar, Reid, Graham, Cooney, Marshall and Barter⁸⁶. In total nine of these medals were awarded.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ National Archive Pretoria. TAB PMO 40 PM 2702/01.

⁸⁵ Veldpond in the ABSA Coin Collection.

⁸⁶ Copy of the letter from Meyer and Krogh to Pienaar in Becklake, *Notes on the Coinage of the South African Republic 1934:12*.

⁸⁷ Becklake, JT. *Notes on the Coinage of the South African Republic 1934:11*.



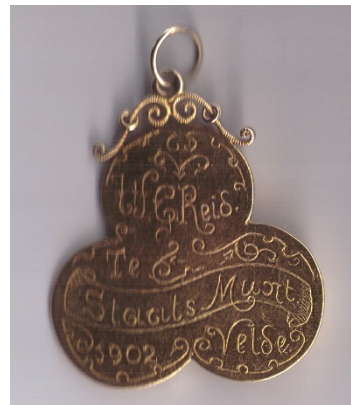
Both sides of Field Cornet A Pienaar's Medal



Klopers' Medal



Marshall's medal⁸⁸



Both sides of Reid's Medal

The clover shaped medal was cut out of a gold plate with a jeweller's saw. The ZAR Veldpond mark was struck in the middle on the obverse side. On the reverse side, the recipient's name and the words *Staats Munt te Velde 1902* were engraved. The decorations around the medals were most likely also done at Pilgrim's Rest, because they look alike.

⁸⁸ Marshall's souvenirs of the Veldpond were sold to a coin collector, Mr Makepeace.

Who the person is that was responsible for making the medals, is a question that has not been answered yet. Two possibilities present themselves in this regard. The one is that the Swiss, Jules Perrin did it. He was an assayer and head of the Mint in Pretoria until the British closed it down, and after the war he opened a jeweller's business in Schoeman Street, Pretoria.⁸⁹ His whereabouts during the war are not clear. After the war he and the German born pro-Boer, AH Hanneman⁹⁰ who was the owner of a hotel and shop at Komatipoort, took the oath of allegiance on 30 June 1902 at the office of the British Consul General in Lourenço Marques which indicates that he could have been in the vicinity of Pilgrim's Rest.⁹¹ No trace can be found that he had been in Pilgrim's Rest during the war and his name is not mentioned by anyone involved with the Veldpond and the medals. According to Ernest Meyer, the bookkeeper of the ZAR Mint in Pretoria, Perrin was not positive supportive of the Boer cause, which makes him an unlikely candidate for being involved in the activities of the Field Mint.⁹² The other possibility is that Michael Cooney, an assayer with goldsmith knowledge, made the medals. Whoever made the tokens, the question is where did the jeweller's saw come from, with which they were cut out of gold plate?

13. VELDPOND AS A REMINDER

On 1 June 1902 the contributors also received a Veldpond with a blank reverse side on which the name of the receiver could be engraved, as a reminder of the work being done for the Field Mint. These one-sided Veldpond have smooth edges without flutes. It is uncertain who received these. Reid, Graham, and Pienaar got one and Marshall two⁹³, It seems unlikely that Cooney got one as he left Pilgrims Rest earlier than the other men and also because he engraved a Veldpond for himself with his name on as reminder.



"Pienaar veldcornet Staats Munt te Velde"

⁸⁹ National Archive Pretoria. TAB MHG 11148 (Perrin died in 1907 and the University of Pretoria bought his assay equipment).

⁹⁰ National Archive Pretoria. TAB SS R7768x00 & CAJ 718.

⁹¹ National Archive. TAB Aanwins A202.

⁹² TAB Aanwins A185

⁹³ Reid mentioned it in his memoirs.



“ZAR 1902” & “WG Reid Staats Munt te Velde”



Left: “Presented to Alexander Marshall by General Vilgeon (sic)”⁹⁴

Right: “Presented to Alexander Marshall for auld langsyne by AC Pinnar (sic) vc”



Left: “D Graham Staats Munt te Veld” & “ZAR 1904”



“M.J. Cooney – essayeur – staats munt – Pelgrims Rust”

14. HOW MANY VELDPOND WERE MINTED?

Cooney mentions in a letter to his niece that 530 coins were made:

⁹⁴ Both coins are part of the ABSA Coin Collection

When peace was proclaimed between the British and the Boers (papa will explain to you) we had only fairly started to make the crude coins of which enclosed is one, and all we made when the British supplanted the Boers in the Transvaal by treaty was 530 Coins.⁹⁵

Reid says in his war memoirs that 400-500 pound were distributed amongst the Boers⁹⁶ and that the rest was handed over to the government. According to Kloppers, General Lukas Meyer took 80 coins with him when he left for Vereeniging for the peace talks.⁹⁷ Barter wrote in a letter, dated 6 September 1932 to John Hunter McLea, that gold to the value of more than £500 pound was used.⁹⁸ In an autographed signed letter addressed to Dr A Kaplan, General CH Muller states that 525 Veldpond were produced.⁹⁹

Two very interesting financial documents¹⁰⁰ came to light recently. It reveals that the first Veldpond was made on 9 April and that a total of 145 Veldpond were minted during that month of which £10 were handed over to General Muller on 21 April 1902, £10 paid for a mule that the ZAR bought from Marshall (24/4/02) and £25 handed over to General Muller on 3 May 1902. The balance is indicated as £100 and that was handed over to D van Velden, secretary of the ZAR Executive Committee during the first week of May 1902.

The other document is a financial statement for the period 10 May to 1 June 1902 signed by Barter, Pienaar, Joubert and Kloppers. It states that raw gold of the value of £426-19 (142-6-14 ounce) was handed over to the Mint Master in May from which 525 Veldpond as well as a balance of gold to the value of £144-16-0 were received at the end of May. (See Annexure B)

The expenses paid (10 May-1 June 1902) were the following:

Graham, Reid, Cooney, Kloppers each £3 for necessities	12- 0 0
Sublimate	1-0-0
Tobacco	1-0-0
Pienaar for maize	2-0-0
Mint Master remuneration	10-0-0
D Graham remuneration	5-0-0
W Reid remuneration	5-0-0
Assayer (MJ Cooney) remuneration	20-0-0
Natives' remuneration	6-0-0

⁹⁵ Letter in possession of professor David Reed Thomas.

⁹⁶ The coins were exchanged for one £ per Veldpond by the *burghers*.

⁹⁷ National Archive Pretoria. *Aanwins* 551.

⁹⁸ Smith, Anna. *Notes and News March 1976 volume 22 No 1*. Africana Museum Johannesburg.

⁹⁹ Kaplan, A. *Journal of the Institution of Certificated Engineers*, South Africa. Dec 1946 p 242.

¹⁰⁰ National Archives, Pretoria.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these to financial statements is that 145 Veldpond were minted in April up to 9 May and 525 up to 1 June 1902.

According to Kloppers, they continued their work until 7/8 June 1902 and produced a total of 968 Veldpond..¹⁰¹ None of these claims could be verified. The value of the raw gold used during May plus the coined gold for that period ad up to a total of £967-2-6 which is not the total of Veldpond coined at the Field Mint.

The burghers did stay on at Pilgrim's Rest up to 7/8 June waiting for General Muller to return from Vereeniging, to lead them in laying down arms at Potloodspruit but the Boer Republics and the Field Mint ended together on 31 May 1902. The financial statements reflect that the Field Mint came to a standstill when peace was declared. This is confirmed by Reid¹⁰² as well as Cooney¹⁰³. Engraving the blank Veldpond and making the decorations for the medals could have been done during the first week in June.

15. MINING PROPERTY LEFT BEHIND IN EXCELLENT CONDITION

Hugh Hughes was appointed as General Manager of TGME after the war and on 14 July 1902 he reported as follows after visiting the mine at Pilgrim's Rest:

The machinery in the workshop is in splendid order. The Boers used our punching machines for the minting of a few hundred 1902 sovereigns... The three large safes inside the strong room were not touched in any way. The cash balance of £137-0s-10d was intact.

He also mentioned that bar gold to the value of £17 000 was untouched by the Boers.

At the first annual general meeting of the TGME mine in 1902 in Johannesburg, the chairperson said the following:

*The action of the Boer authorities in the Lydenburg district in connection with the mines under their control has been highly creditable to them. Of course, they commandeered all stores and material of which they could make any use, but they avoided wanton destruction. It must be remembered in this connection that our property, which is scattered over a great area, was under the control of the Boers throughout the whole period of the war, excepting for a few days when General Buller's forces passed through Pilgrim's Rest.*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ In Kloppers se handskrif op Arndt se manuskrip vir sy boek *South African Mints*. 1939.

¹⁰² Memoirs of Reid and letter of Cooney.

¹⁰³ Letter in possession of professor David Read Thomas.

¹⁰⁴ Cartwright, AP. *Valley of Gold* 1980:100.

*Our manager, on his return, found all the Company's safes, books, documents, and plans as he had left them in the strong room. He found unlocked in our store room the lead bullion for September and part of October 1899 and, above all, he found practically intact the whole of the buildings, plant and machinery, valued at 200 000 pounds.*¹⁰⁵

16. THE LAST TIME THE DIES WERE USED

Many counterfeit Veldpond, is said to have been struck with the Veldpond dies after the war. In 1934 the Mint master of the Royal Mint in Pretoria, Mr Becklake, began a search for the original dies. At that time, it was believed that Lord Kitchener had seized them. Becklake's search into Kitchener's correspondence revealed that it was never in his possession.¹⁰⁶ Two years later professor EHD Arndt discovered that when General Muller came back from Vereeniging to assist his commandos with laying down arms, Kloppers handed the dies to him around 14 June 1902.¹⁰⁷ General Muller donated the pair of Veldpond dies, between 1910-1914, to the diamond magnate Sir T Cullinan. In 1939 Sir Cullinan's widow knew nothing of it and in a letter written by her secretary it is stated that the dies were most probable been thrown away by one of the employees.¹⁰⁸

17. MARSHALL'S BOOK¹⁰⁹

Alex Marshall had a camera with which he took several photos of the Boers at Pilgrim's Rest. After the war he took his photos to Turnbull & Sons, Photographers, Jamaica Street, Glasgow in Scotland¹¹⁰ to be developed. He published a book, *Photos of Boer Commandos taken at Pilgrim's Rest*. One of the photos in the book is the well-known photo of the mint team posing at the small punching machine. The big machine that was mainly used was too heavy to be carried out into the sun for a photo and therefore the small machine was used to pose at.

¹⁰⁵ Cartwright, AP. *Valley of Gold* 1980:100.

¹⁰⁶ National Archive Pretoria. SAB GG 234 3/5239.

¹⁰⁷ National Archive Pretoria. Aanwins 202.

¹⁰⁸ National Archive Pretoria. Aanwins 202.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall, Alex: *Photos of Boer Commandos taken at Pilgrim's Rest during the war*.

¹¹⁰ Marshall Alex, letter addressed to Colonel Sergeant 13 November 1902.



*PJ Kloppers; Sixpence an employee of the TGME; WG Reid; AEG Pienaar; Dick Graham.
Absent: MJ Cooney*

The photo was presumably taken during the first week in June, after peace was declared. Cooney is not on the well-known photo of the members of the Field Mint, because he had to flee before the British military police could arrest him on charges of spying on the British troops, for giving a Boer, named Kraemer, an electric battery for firing dynamite and as he had made a bomb for General Viljoen with which the bridge over the Spekboom river was blown up.¹¹¹

18. DIORAMA OF THE FIELD MINT AT THE EMPIRE EXHIBITION 1936

In 1936, a diorama¹¹² of the State Field Mint with the mountains of Pilgrim's Rest in the background was set up for the stand of the Pretoria branch of the Royal Mint at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg.¹¹³ The head of the Mint, Mr Becklake, took a photo of the original press at the Transvaal Gold Mining Company's workshop in Pilgrim's Rest, especially for the exhibition.

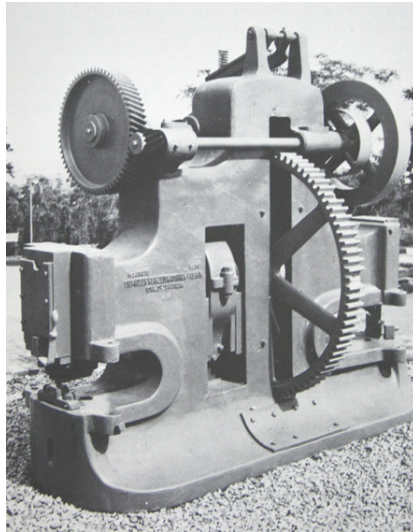
¹¹¹ TAB SS R331/1900

¹¹² Photo from *Ons Erfenis* by M Esterhuysen.

¹¹³ Becklake, JT. *Real to Rand* 1965:50.



The diorama of the mine workshop where the Veldpond was made



*The mine's punch machine as photographed by Becklake
for the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg*

19. CONCLUSION

The production of Veldpond in the workshop of the Transvaal Gold Mining Estates Ltd (TGME) at Pilgrim's Rest was a remarkable achievement. It speaks of specialized knowledge, skill and creativity. This article is an attempt in acknowledging every member or the team for their contribution in making the Veldpond.

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TAB MHG 4567/46
TAB MHG 5937/71
TAB MHG 24743
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TAB Aanwins A202
TAB Aanwins A185

TAB IOP4 IOMG 224/00 *H Hanneman, Pretoria. re 600 bags of flour at Transvaal hotel Komatipoort*
SAB GG 234 3/5239 *Request of Master of the Royal Mint, Pretoria, for assistance in tracing the*
correspondence of the late Lord Kitchener relating to the seizure of the dies with which the
"veld pond" was forged at Pilgrim's Rest

TAB PMO 40 PM 2702/01 *Inquiry re Mr WH Barter*

TAB CS 8 841/01 *Proclamation No 4 of 6 February 1901 Disfigurement of Tvl coins*

TAB CS 104 6738/02 *Permit to return for Mr. Jules Perrin. Forwarding correspondence re above from*
Lourenço Marques to Pretoria

TAB SP 224 SPR 892/00 *Staatssecretaris afdeeling b. landdrost Johannesburg zendt in memorie*
vragende kwijtskelding straf van J Cooney

TAB SS R331/1900 *Landdrost, Pietersburg gevangene MJ Cooney vraagt gratie*

TAB SS R7768/00 & CAJ 718 *Proviand commissie Pretoria. H Hanneman komatipoort zendt in lyst*
van levensmiddelen voor handen in den winkel van police die gevluht is.

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Annexure