

Breaker new ground: List Morant on statue

PAUL ASHENDEN

A RELATIVE of Australia's most famous war criminal Harry "Breaker" Morant has launched a bid to add his name to the Boer War Memorial outside Government House in Adelaide.

Canberra-based Cathy Morant said she is "very concerned" her controversial distant cousin, who enlisted with the SA Mounted Rifles in Adelaide in 1899 and rose to the rank of sergeant, was not currently recognised.

Ms Morant, whose great great great grandfather was Morant's grandfather, has written to both Premier Steven Marshall and Adelaide City Council asking them to add his name to the historic monument which was unveiled in 1904.

"He served Australia and

he joined up in Adelaide," Ms Morant said. "So I think he deserves to have his name on the memorial."

Lieutenant Morant and Lieutenant Peter Hancock were executed by firing squad on February 27, 1902, in Pretoria after being found guilty of murdering prisoners during the Boer War.

The fairness of their court martial has been the subject of much debate and military lawyer James Unkles is pushing for an independent inquiry into the matter.

Mr Unkles is also helping Ms Morant lobby the council to include Harry Morant's name on the North Terrace memorial.

The council owns the prominent Adelaide landmark, which is a life-sized bronzed statue of a soldier on horseback perched atop a

3.7m-high Murray Bridge granite pedestal.

Mr Unkles said Harry Morant – an itinerant drover, horsebreaker and bush poet before he signed up – served the 2nd South Australian Mounted Rifles unit "with distinction" in 1900.

After a year's active service he left the Transvaal and travelled to Britain, the place of his birth, but returned to join the British regiment the Bushveldt Carbineers, also known as the BVC in 1901.

It was while fighting for the BVC that Morant and Hancock were arrested

and tried for the murder of 12 Boer prisoners.

"His conduct with the BVC should not preclude the recognition of his exemplary service with an SA unit and the oversight of his inclusion on the Adelaide Boer Memorial should be remedied,"

Mr Unkles said.

Morant's name is included on a plaque in the Riverland town of Renmark, where he lived before enlisting.

But the move to include his name on the Adelaide memorial has met resistance from SA Boer War Association president Dr Tony Stimson, who

has co-authored a book, set to be released in the next few months, about the 60 men whose names feature on the monument.

He has written to both Mr Marshall and Lord Mayor Sandy Verschoor outlining his opposition.

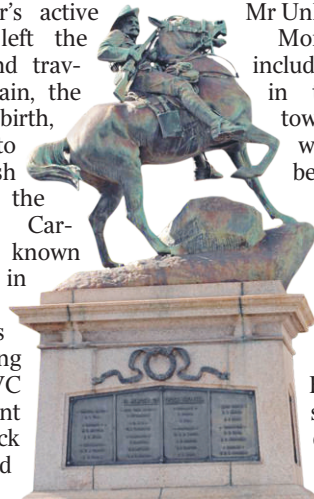
The original memorial included the names of 59 men identified immediately after the 1899-1902 conflict as having enlisted in SA and died as a result of serving in an SA unit. An extra name was added in 1925.

Dr Stimson has since identified at least 24 other South Australians, not including Morant, who died after enlisting in units outside of this state. He said these men would qualify to appear on the memorial, but adding names now would be physically problematic be-

cause there was no room on the existing plaques, which are embedded into the granite. And adding more plaques to accommodate new names would "disfigure one of the most important heritage items on the North Terrace streetscape".

Dr Stimson said adding Morant's name would go against the sentiment of the monument's instigators, who would have not even considered Morant's inclusion because he was a convicted war criminal.

"Morant's courage and swagger are not in question," Dr Stimson said. "In the end though this doesn't excuse what he did in the remote Zoutpansberg district of Transvaal in mid 1901 while serving with the Bushveldt Carbineers. It compromised the rest of his service record."



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