

The Zululand journeys of the Woodward brothers 1894–1899

by Adrian Koopman

Introduction

THIS article traces the steps of the brothers Richard Blake Woodward and John Deverell Stuart Woodward, who undertook three bird-collecting expeditions in Zululand between 1894 and 1900. Very little is known about these brothers and the details of their Zululand expeditions come entirely from three articles they themselves published in the British ornithological journal *Ibis* shortly after each journey. These articles are of interest for three reasons: first, they give a detailed account of travelling conditions in Zululand at the end of the nineteenth century; second, they provide insight into the aims and interests of the ‘naturalist’ of the times: a missionary, soldier, farmer or trader with an amateur interest

in science who made many important contributions to our knowledge of the natural history of a particular region; and third, they tell of the challenges faced by collectors, who had to obtain specimens, prepare and preserve them under field conditions, and then arrange for these specimens to be sent to museums or to agents in Europe, hoping to sell all or most of them in order to recoup their travelling expenses.

This article traces the details of each of their three Zululand expeditions, and then in a concluding section, examines the role they played in extending knowledge of the birds of KwaZulu-Natal. In this section, the different roles they played are examined: explorers, naturalists, ornithologists, collectors, and

missionaries. Two maps are included in the article showing the route the brothers followed on their expeditions.

The background of the Woodward brothers

In his entry on the bird name ‘Woodwards’ Batis – *Batis fratrum*, Charles Clinning gives the following brief information:¹

This species was named² for the Woodward brothers J.B. and R.D.S. [*sic*] Woodward (dates uncertain), farmers, missionaries and naturalists. They were probably British but had worked in the United States and published on missionary work in that country before they came to South Africa. At first they farmed sheep near Amersfoort in the south-eastern Transvaal, then moved to Ifafa, in Natal, where they ran a plantation and mission and later worked at St Lukes Anglican Church in Pietermaritzburg. They wrote *Natal Birds*, which was published in 1899, in Pietermaritzburg.

The lack of clarity on the origins of the brothers is also found in Philip Clancey’s 1983 short article on them, with Clancey saying ‘Remarkably little is known of the origins and closing years of the Woodwards’ and ‘It is not known if they were Americans’.³ R.K. Brooke adds little more in his even briefer piece of a year later, but concludes⁴ that it is more likely that the Woodward brothers were of British origin, on the grounds that they sent their collected birds specimens to the British Museum and ‘[b]efore the Second World War, enthusiastic amateurs normally sent their collections to the principal museums of their country of origin’. There is in fact considerably more evidence of the Woodwards’ British origin in their own writings, with

many references such as ‘The Cornland Crow (*Corvus capensis*) takes the place of the Rook in England’ and ‘*Turdus olivaceus* ... when startled it flies off with a chattering cry, like that of the English Blackbird.’

If their origin is obscure, so also is their end. Clancey tells us that⁵

[t]he younger of the two brothers (the Rev. J.D.S.) was drowned in the torrent of the flooding river on their way back from what must have been the final expedition to Zululand. Resulting from the loss of his younger brother, the Rev. R.B. Woodward ultimately left Natal for Johannesburg. This must have been prior to the outbreak of the Boer War, the ensuing turmoil expunging all possible records pertinent to a knowledge of the fate of the latter.

I return to the drowning of the younger brother and the ‘disappearance’ of the older towards the end of this article.

Clinning, Clancey and Brookes are only able to give the initials of the two brothers⁶; it is Nancy Jacobs⁷ who identifies them as Richard Blake Woodward and John Deverell Stewart Woodward. Richard (W.R.J.) Dean⁸ also gives these full names. Their travel narratives were published in three separate issues of the venerable British ornithological journal *Ibis*, the first journey being published in *Ibis* 39(3) of 1897, the second journey in *Ibis* 40(2) of 1898, and the third journey in *Ibis* 42(3) of 1900. This last article is the briefest account, of only two pages, of their trip to Lake St Lucia, the bulk of the article consisting of an annotated list of the various species of birds they saw there.

Clancey says⁹ that ‘[a]s far as can be established, the Zululand expeditions were all undertaken while the Woodwards were at Adams Mission, and perhaps all in the 1890s’. Assuming



Map of the first journey undertaken by the Woodward brothers

that Clancey means that the Zululand expeditions were undertaken while the Woodwards were based at Adams Mission near Amanzimtoti on the South Coast of Natal, this would mean that in each of the three travel narratives, the journey from Amanzimtoti to the uThukela River has been left out, and

the reader can only speculate as to how they actually got to the uThukela. Did they, for example, take their two horses and their spring cart on the Natal Railway to the northern terminus at Lower Tugela mentioned in the narrative of the third journey?

Clancey's hesitation about the actual

dates (perhaps all in the 1890s) is also curious: the Woodwards were quite precise about their dates of travel in the three narratives, at least about the dates of departure.

As will be seen from the summaries of their travel narratives below, the Woodwards travelled by cart (pulled variously by horses, oxen and donkeys), by ox-wagon, on horse-back, and for considerable distances, by foot. As for the Zululand roads at that time, Bill Guest has the following to say:

Apart from the link between the capital and the port, for most of the nineteenth century the Colony's other 'roads' were little more than wagon-tracks which were often impassable during the rainy season. Rivers had to be forded, or, at best, crossed on pontoons.¹⁰

The first journey (recorded in *Ibis* 39(3) 1897: 400–422)

The narrative begins with the following opening paragraph:

Having provided ourselves with a spring cart large enough to sleep in at night, a pair of horses, and a Kafir boy ... we arrived at the Tugela river, which bounds Natal on the north side, and crossed into Zululand on 14th July, 1894. The Tugela river is wide, and often impassable, but the Government have provided a flat-bottomed 'punt', in which a cart and horses or a waggon and oxen can be easily conveyed across by means of a wire rope suspended from bank to bank.¹¹

There are a number of features in this paragraph worth commenting on. First, we notice that the narrative of their journey begins at the uThukela River, in those days, as the Woodwards point out, the boundary between Natal and Zululand. There is no indication where

they actually started from,¹² they simply indicate that they 'arrived at the Tugela river' and that is where their journey really began.

Second, we see here their first of many modes of transport which will be recorded in the various stages of their three journeys. Here they have a 'spring cart' (see illustration) pulled by two horses (which of course they can ride separately, and indeed do so), and a 'Kafir boy'. Whether this was indeed a boy, or in fact a grown man, is difficult to tell. The Woodward brothers use the term in both senses in their narratives.



A spring cart

Third, the Woodwards describe here a river crossing. It is clear from their narrative that bridges were non-existent in Zululand at that time, but this is the only mention of a 'punt' provided by the Government. It is not clear whether the wire rope actually pulled the punt directly (and if so, presumably by human or animal traction on the other side), or whether this was well above water level, and humans on the punt itself pulled on it. From the description, this seems more likely.

After crossing the uThukela, they camped on the 'Inyoni flats' and left the main road to call at the residence of Chief John Dunn, the well-known 'white Zulu chief'. From there they¹³ 'reached the sea-side at the mouth of the Inlalaas river [= uMlalazi], where

there is a large lagoon...[and]...where the storekeeper keeps a boat and supplies Eschowe [eShowe] with good fish in the summer.’

They remained at the mouth of the uMlalazi River for two weeks, and then moved to the uNgoye Forest, stopping briefly at the trading store of a Mr Green, where for a night or two at least, they did not have to sleep in their spring cart or their tent.¹⁴ ‘Mr Green deals almost entirely in Kafir goods; but all the store-keepers have to keep accommodation for travellers, and we found them most useful in our journeys.’

They left their cart here and rode on to the forest about four miles off, with local Zulu bearers carrying their equipment. Here we see a classic mode of early colonial travel: the white men on horseback, while a line of porters carries their baggage, presumably on their heads.

The Woodward brothers found the uNgoye Forest ‘such an interesting locality for a naturalist’¹⁵ that they decided to build a hut there and remain for some little time. It was in the uNgoye Forest that the Woodward brothers ‘discovered’ a new species of barbet.¹⁶ ‘Here we were fortunate enough to discover a new Barbet, to which Capt. Shelley has affixed our name.’¹⁷

It is not clear how long they stayed in the uNgoye Forest, although if they went to the trouble to build a hut they probably intended to stay for some time. Eventually they decided to leave and head for eShowe, but this now required a change of their mode of transport, as they had ‘heard that there was little chance of our being able to keep horses long in the low country on account of the horse-sickness so prevalent there.’¹⁸ Showing indications of being of a practical bent, the Woodward brothers ‘cut a good

hard-wood desselboom [*sic*], or pole’, to take the place of the shafts of their spring cart and bought four large oxen. This, however, required both a driver and a ‘forelooper’, bringing their hired staff to three.

On their way to eShowe, they became lost after trying to take a shortcut, and the cart ran away from them down a steep incline and capsized, breaking the tent structure. In their description of this harrowing event, the Woodward brothers do not say what happened to the oxen.

They only stayed a brief time in eShowe itself, and then moved on again:

After leaving Eschowe we crossed the Inlalaas [=uMlalazi], which is quite a small stream up here; on its banks there is a water-mill for grinding corn for the supply of the town. After travelling a few miles further on we came to a point from which we had a grand view of the Umhlatoosi [=uMhlathuze] valley about 1000 feet below ...

On one of the high points in the distance could be discerned some of the buildings of St. Paul’s Church of England Mission ... We found good camping-ground under a huge *Euphorbia*.¹⁹

In this spot only some 12 miles from eShowe, the Woodward brothers spent a full three months. As in all the spots where the brothers spent an extended period of time, their main activity was the collecting of bird specimens. It is at this point of their narrative that they give a rare hint of how they spent their days.²⁰ ‘Our rule was to rise and get tea at 5 o’clock, and make an early start for the valley with guns and nets, employing the hotter parts of the day in preserving what we had collected.’

These specimens were later, presumably at regular intervals, sent to the

British Museum, to be catalogued and described. Brooke, as we saw earlier, in weighing up the evidence about whether the Woodward brothers were American or British, suggests that it is the fact that they sent their birds to the British Museum that points specifically to them being British as enthusiastic amateurs usually sent their collections to the principal museum of their country of origin. I would myself say that Brooke has missed a far more vital clue to the country of origin of the Woodwards and that is the mention of how they used to rise at five o'clock and get tea.

After their three months 'near the valley of the Umhlatoozi' the Woodwards returned to eShowe to renew their provisions, and to finally have the broken cart repaired – broken, we recall, in the headlong tumble downhill when they tried to take a shortcut on the road from uNgoye to eShowe. They also did a little unspecified 'visiting' at eShowe, as well as indulging themselves in a little butterfly-collecting. This is their first mention of butterfly-collecting in their narratives, but they mention again later in this and the other travel narratives. Butterfly-collecting was not only a suitable pastime for distinguished English gentlemen, it was also something indulged in by amateur ornithologists. Dr Stark, the amateur ornithologist who went to Ladysmith at the time of the Boer War siege in 1899 (ostensibly as a military doctor) and was unfortunately blown up there,²¹ also spent a lot of time butterfly-collecting when he wasn't dodging shells from the Boers' Long Tom gun.

Having had their cart repaired and having collected a sufficiency of butterflies, the brothers left for the uMfolozi country. The drift across the uMhlatuze (in the eNkwalini valley

between eShowe and Melmoth) was, they noted, 'good, a weir having been made across' and even better there was a roadside house for travellers. 'We rested here for Sunday', say the Woodwards, but there is no mention of any other devotional activity beyond simply taking the Sabbath easy. The steep hill on the other side of the uMhlatuze gave them pause for thought, and it was almost too much for their oxen, presumably still only four in number. They made it, though:

Arrived at the top, we outspanned near a Swedish Mission Station. We were now among high and grassy hills bare and bleak, and if it had not been for the hospitality of Mr. Fristed, we should have been badly off in such an exposed situation, as a thick, cold, misty rain came on, making the roads slippery and impassable for a day or two.²²

The Woodwards, we should note, were not keen on staying out in cold, wet, rainy weather. Earlier in the narrative of this first journey, they took a day trip from their hut in the uNgoye Forest and 'were caught in very heavy rain and had to sleep out; and not having a tent with us, we spent, as may be supposed, a disagreeable night'.²³

So no doubt the 'hospitality' of Mr Fristed, whom we may assume to be the Swedish missionary, included a warm bed for the night. And no doubt they would have been happy to secure similar comfort from the Resident Magistrate at their next stop, Melmoth, especially as they describe it as 'a small village situated in the open veldt'.²⁴ The resident magistrate there also issued them a permit to shoot in his district. This is of interest, as in a narrative which details on nearly every page how they had to shoot birds in order to collect specimens, this is the

only mention of this being done in an officially permitted fashion.

From the highlands of Melmoth, the Woodward brothers gradually descended into the low thorn veldt of the uMfolozi valley. They stopped and camped for a while at the White uMfolozi, and as with all the other spots where the brothers spent some time, the narrative here goes into a great deal of detail about the birds seen. The ‘travel-narrative’ resumes some pages later with:

Towards the end of February,²⁵ having got all we could here, we inspanned our oxen and started for the Umbegamusa [= uMbhekamuzi], a tributary of the Black uMfolozi, which we were told was a good spot for birds. The road was stony and in some spots in very bad order, and some of the spokes of the cart-wheels came to pieces.²⁶

The brothers spent ‘some weeks’ at the uMbhekamuzi River and again at the Black uMfolozi, both roughly halfway between Ulundi and Nongoma, and only a few miles apart. They ‘got a few birds and insects’ but this locality was not nearly as productive as were the areas in the uMhlathuze valley and the valley of the White uMfolozi. So they pressed on and

crossed the Black uMfolozi at its drift, which is low at this season, but swift and treacherous after rains. After rest and coffee²⁷ on its far banks, we journeyed on through country covered with small trees to a store on the Ivuna [River], and early next day ascended to the high lands of the Nongoma district.²⁸

From here their route is a little difficult to follow. They came to the ‘Church of England [Mission] Station’, where the ‘veteran missionary’ Mr Robertson^{29,30}

held sway, but thereafter ‘there was no regular road, and it was difficult to keep to the track’. The brothers relied on their driver to guide them, as he said he was acquainted with the country, but he then took them down a very steep hill, with almost the same results as previously.³¹ ‘We had considerable difficulty in preventing the cart from capsizing ... [and] ... if the little oxen had not been surefooted and the chain strong, the cart and its contents would have been dashed to pieces below.’

Fortunately they were able to get back on the proper track again and ‘sighted the grand mountain Edukumbaan’ [= eDukumbane] where they had been planning to camp. Here within the Hlabisa magistracy, in an area which the Woodwards call the ‘hlwati’,³² with beautiful views of the deep valleys, they managed to collect a few more birds (and got a good collection of butterflies as well).

Noting that ‘[a]s the season was now well advanced and sufficiently healthy’ they decided to go down into the lower country, and consulted with a nearby storekeeper as to the best way of getting down. He told them that they would ‘save a great round’ if they came past his store, situated on ‘Makawe Hill’ [= eMakhowe], offering to lend them extra oxen, as the road was bad.

The Woodward brothers stayed a few days at the store on eMakhowe Hill, enjoying the extensive view of St Lucia Lake below, but the winds were disagreeably cold so in the first week of June they ‘descended to the flats and outspanned under a spreading mimosa-tree’.³³ They must have stayed under this ‘mimosa’ tree for at least two weeks, for it was already 27 June when they ‘started on the backward track’ – meaning, presumably, heading

back toward home. They decided to take the coastal route on their return trip, and ‘accordingly proceeded ten miles towards the Inpokenyoni district³⁴ and outspanned on the veldt’.³⁵

Continuing on their ‘backward track’, the Woodwards crossed the ‘Hluliluwe river’.³⁶ They note that the country was very dry at that point and that they had to ‘trek for 15 miles after wading the stream before we could obtain water’. The countryside around this point may have been very dry, but they were able to collect a ‘good deal’ of wild cotton,³⁷ useful, as they point out, for stuffing bird specimens.

Resuming their way they crossed the uMfolozi, below the confluence of the White and Black uMfolozis, and were soon at a Norwegian mission station, where they were welcomed by Mr Rodseth. He recommended that they visit ‘the locality called Umbonambi, near the sea’, and on 22 July, a year and a week after setting out, they visited the coastal flats near present day KwaMbonambi.

Trekking ever onwards, the Woodwards

soon reached Mr. Maxwell’s Magistry, ten mile north of the Umhlatoosi river. This residency is situated amongst low hills, and is about 20 miles from F. Green’s Ungoye store. After spending a pleasant Sunday here, we proceeded on our way and crossed the Umhlatoosi, where there is a small store and a number of fan-palms.³⁸

Another pleasant Sunday, and as with the last pleasant Sunday noted at the uMhlathuze drift, there is again no mention of Sunday devotions.

As this store was only 20 miles from Mr Green’s store at the edge of the uNngoye Forest, the brothers could not resist the chance of possibly find-

ing another barbet or other previously undiscovered species to which Captain Shelley might ‘affix’ their name. So again they left their cart and oxen, engaged more bearers, and set up camp again in the uNngoye.

On 4 September they returned to their cart and

trekked on to the Inlalaas [= uMlalazi River], and from there over ugly country to the Umbezan.³⁹ Journeying on for seven hours over country nearly level, we arrived at the Inyoni district, where there is a good store. Three and a half hours brought us to the Tugela, and with the help of extra oxen we crossed over into the land of civilization again.⁴⁰

This is the end of the narrative of the first expedition, and the final paragraph closes the narrative in the same way as the first paragraph opened it – at the banks of the uThukela. The Woodwards’ remark about ‘crossed over into the land of civilization again’ is somewhat ambiguous. It could mean that they had been ‘roughing it’ for 14 months (July 1894 to September 1895) and were looking forward to getting back to a hot bath and the other creature comforts of home. If, however, Clancey was correct in his assumption that the Woodwards were based at Adam’s Mission at the time of these expeditions, then there were still many miles to go before they reached home. It is therefore more likely that their statement about the ‘land of civilisation’ refers to the powerful imaginative boundary that the uThukela River was then (and for many remains even today) – not just a geographical boundary but the boundary between Natal (the ‘civilised’ British Colony) and Zululand (the ‘uncivilised native kingdom’).⁴¹

The second journey (recorded in *Ibis* 40(2) 1898: 216–228)

The second trip of the Woodward brothers to Zululand began on 24 February 1896, a bare six months after the end of their first trip. This time they decided to leave their oxen and spring cart behind as they were intending to visit the ‘fly-country’ in the Lubombo district where cattle were said not to be able to live. So this time they decided to hitch-hike:

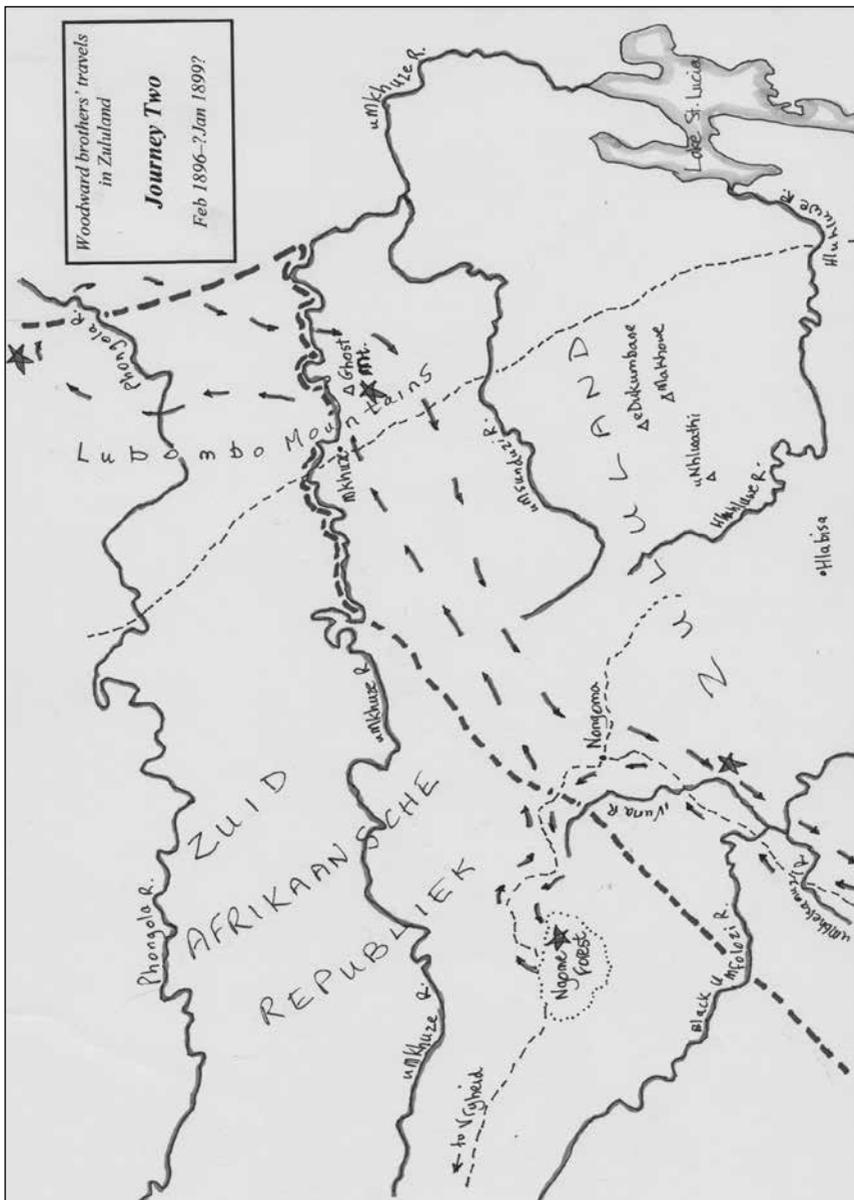
Meeting a transport-carrier, who was taking two waggons with corn to sell beyond the Black Umfolosi ... we made arrangements with him to convey us on to the Umgome forest, just within the boundary of the Transvaal ... We went to Eshowe [note new spelling] by the new waggon-road, and leaving that town we soon reached the Umhlatoosi.⁴²

Of interest here is ‘the Umgome forest, just within the boundary of the Transvaal’. The Ngome Forest lies on the Vryheid–Nongoma road, slightly closer to Nongoma than to Vryheid. As Vryheid and Nongoma are well within the boundaries of the modern-day KwaZulu-Natal, so therefore is the Ngome Forest. One might wonder then at the Woodward brothers situating it within the boundaries of the Transvaal. On the same page they talk of crossing the Zululand-Transvaal boundary on their way to Ngome Forest. However, a map of the area dated 1897⁴³ shows the borders of the old Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek, and both Vryheid and Ngome Forest were distinctly part of the Boer republic at that time. Incidentally, the official name of the republic was Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek at that time, but the British had been calling it the ‘Transvaal’ for twenty years or more, and had in fact recently issued a proclamation stating that the territory

was to be ‘officially’ known as ‘The Transvaal’ – this while it was still an independent Boer Republic!⁴⁴ So there is plenty of excuse for the Woodward brothers to say they were crossing into the Transvaal.⁴⁵

In this second travel narrative, the Woodward brothers rather hurry through the first part of the journey in their eagerness to get to the Ngome Forest. In no time at all the reader is rushed through Melmoth, across the White uMfolozi, the uMbhekamuzi and the Black uMfolozi, and is hustled up the long hill to the Nongoma Magistracy. There is no time for leisurely butterfly-collecting in this rushed narrative and hardly any mention even of the bird life. Once they have trekked through bare, grassy country, and ‘mounted higher and yet higher’ and at last come to the ‘great mountain-forest’ then all is well again, and the ornithologically-minded reader can settle down to several pages of bird description.

The Woodwards remained longer than they intended at the Ngome Forest as on account of the rinderpest^{46,47} there were severe restrictions on the movement of oxen from one district to another. Once again they ‘hitchhiked’: ‘[A]t last we got a Boer, who was on his way home, to take us to the border of Zululand’. It seems the Boer dropped them off there to make their own way forward, and they continued without him on a two-day journey on foot across country to the ‘Umkusi Poort’, which is the point where the river crosses through the Lubombo mountains. On this cross-country shortcut they met up with one of the more classic elements of an ‘adventure yarn’: two huge black mambas, one of which they shot, while the second, believed to be its mate, waylaid them around the next corner.



Map showing the routes taken on the second journey by the Woodward brothers

But the Woodwards were possessed of true British phlegm, and regarded these problems as simply being ‘tedious’:

We were glad enough to come to the end of this tedious journey and rest alongside the river, under the shadow of the great Echanene, a lofty spur

of the Lubombo. This was about the roughest piece of walking we had yet accomplished.⁴⁸

The Zulu name eTshaneni⁴⁹ refers to what is otherwise known as Ghost Mountain, the ‘lofty spur’ which

overlooks the Zululand village of uM-khuze, and the Woodwards had indeed ‘accomplished’ a considerable hike if they had walked nearly all the way from the Ngome Forest. This entire second expedition was, indeed, a trip to be characterised by long-distance walking, for after spending a few weeks under the shadow of the great eTshaneni, they still had to walk 15 miles ‘through the thorns’⁵⁰ to get to the Phongola River. This river forms, as the Woodwards point out, the northern boundary of Zululand. At the drift there, they found a boat, and also an elevated wire with a cage for conveying the mail across when the river was in flood. They were told that sometimes, when the river was in flood, it was impossible to cross for months at a time, hence the provision of a boat. However, when they themselves arrived there, the river was shallow enough for them to wade across, and having done so, they ‘pitched tent in the newly-annexed territory of Sambana, a Tonga chief.’^{51,52} The brothers remained here on the banks of the Phongola, under ‘some huge fig-trees’ for over a month, collecting birds (and no doubt the odd butterfly).

On 31 August, now seven months into this second trip, the Woodwards engaged bearers and headed for ‘the great Hlatikulu forest, which covers a large portion of the Lubombo range’. Here they built a hartebeest-hut as a protection from the weather, clearly not trusting their leaky tent any more. It is not clear how long they stayed at the Hlatikulu forest, but on their planning to return to Nongoma, they did not have to engage any more bearers as

Mr Stewart, the magistrate of the Ingwavuma district, kindly lent us six court messengers to return as far as Nongoma. This was the longest

walk we have taken out here, being a distance of 80 miles; and we had to travel on short allowance of food. A large part of the way was through the *tsetse*-fly belt, so the carriage of goods is very precarious.⁵³

The Woodwards do not, incidentally, record how the six court messengers felt about being deputised to act as porters for an 80-mile hike on short rations.

Their next stopping place for any length of time was at the river Ivuna, halfway between Nongoma and the Black Umfolozi. This was clearly an excellent spot for bird-collecting, and the brothers remained there for six weeks. When they finally left on 13 December they had clearly had enough of the long walks through thorn veldt and they ‘secured the use of a tented wagon’. As with the opening paragraphs of this second travel narrative, there is a sudden rush of geographical markers:

We outspanned above the Hlabatini Mountains on an extension of the Inkonjeni range, passed Moore’s store near the Umfolosi, and soon reached Melmoth. Next day, descending the deep cuttings of the great Izulweni hill, we pitched our tents in a pretty spot not far from the banks of the Umhlatusi.

Here on the other side of the uMhlathuze near Mr. Louw’s Cross Roads Hotel, where the country is park-like, we got some birds.⁵⁴

And then with a final brief sentence ‘After a short stay here we returned to Eshowe’ the narrative comes to an abrupt end.

The third journey (reported in *Ibis* 42(3) July 1900: 517–525)

The narrative of the third trip is exceedingly brief, and serves only to take the reader to the shore of Lake St Lucia, with the remainder of the *Ibis* article

being taken up with an annotated list of the bird species they encountered there.

The brothers left on this trip on 19 September 1899, their departure point this time being described as ‘the Lower Tugela, the northern terminus of the Natal Railway’. It would seem that they had not themselves reached this point by rail for

crossing the river, [we] proceeded with our cart and oxen along the coast road. We forded in succession the rivers Amatikulu, Umsundusi, Umhlatusi and Umfolosi, and on the eighth day reached an extensive wood called the ‘Duku-duku’ or ‘Wandering Bush’, which stretches from the Umfolosi along the coast.⁵⁵

On 8 November they reached St Lucia Lake, near its southern end, where they found the water so shallow that they were able to wade right across it, although (as with the walk to the uMkhuze Poort in the previous narrative) this was ‘rather a tedious process, it being a mile broad at this point’. As there was a considerable deposit of mud, the Woodwards left their wagon on the bank and took their things over by bearers, noting that when the water is deep, a boat is used. The country they wished to explore lay between the lake and the sea and fortunately for them a certain Mr Feyling had a Mission Station in this locality, so they did not have to rely on their tent all the time. Other Norwegian missionaries were obliging in other ways. In their note on the flamingo on the last page of this narrative, the Woodward brothers note: ‘This bird was fairly plentiful, but kept well out of range of our fowling pieces. Mr Lindfield, of the Mission, shot one with his rifle, which we preserved’.⁵⁶

The brothers stayed in this locality for about a fortnight, and then moved about

ten miles further up the coast, where there was ‘an extensive forest stretching for many miles northwards, and covering some peaks of considerable height’. They did not have to walk this comparatively short distance, as they were aided by the missionary’s cart, drawn by a span of donkeys.

The travel narrative ends at this point, and the Woodward brothers then list over the next seven pages all the birds they ‘met with on St Lucia Lake and in its vicinity’, with their field notes added. There is no mention of their return journey. It is possible that it was on this return journey that the younger brother, John, drowned in the uThukela River, and that the older brother, Robert, found it too traumatic to complete the travel narrative. If this is so, then it is a mark of the brothers’ great dedication to ornithology that Robert was still able to send the list of birds from this third journey to the editor of *Ibis*. He must have done this very promptly, for the brothers only left for this trip in September 1899 and the list of birds seen and collected, with the two-page introduction, was published in *Ibis* 42(3), dated July 1900.

Conclusion

Clancey ends his brief piece ‘On the Contribution of the Woodward Brothers’ with the words:

The sorry fact that so little worthwhile is available to us on the Woodwards and also many other southern African ornithological pioneers has always distressed me. In ornithology, as in other biological disciplines, humans are almost as important as the birds!⁵⁷

One would, I think, have to know Clancey himself, and his single-minded devotion to the avian section of the Durban Museum of Natural History of which he was head,⁵⁸ to understand why

he thought that humans were ‘almost’ as important as birds.

As we saw in the introduction to this article, Clancey suggests that the ‘turmoil’ of the Boer War was responsible for ‘expunging all possible records pertinent to a knowledge of the fate of [Robert Woodward]’.⁵⁹ This may well be so, but Clancey has overlooked the very records that the Woodwards themselves left behind in the pages of *Ibis*. Their accounts of their Zululand expeditions, recorded in *Ibis* in 1897, 1898 and 1900, are not only of ornithological interest. Besides the detailed descriptions of a considerable number of Natal and Zululand bird species, the Woodwards have given us a travel narrative of great interest. Not only are we reminded of the dangers of travel in such an ‘uncivilised’ region, with collapsed carts, swollen rivers and black mambas, we are also given something of an insight into the brothers themselves. We discover, for example, that they drink tea at five o’clock in the morning, but prefer coffee after a difficult river crossing. We note that they are not fond of camping in the rain and cold, and are always grateful for a warm bed when such is offered by a friendly storekeeper or missionary. And above all, we discover that these travellers are brothers – an inseparable team that invariably did everything together. In all three narratives of their Zululand expeditions not once is there a suggestion that one of them went off and did something separately from the other, although of course it is possible that this happened. If ever the authorial ‘we’ were justified in a literary work, it is in the writings of the brothers Woodward.

In closing, I return to Clinning’s brief note about the Woodward brothers quoted at the beginning of this article. Clinning says⁶⁰ *inter alia* of the bro-

thers that they were farmers, missionaries and naturalists. They had published on missionary work in America. At Ifafa they ran a plantation and a mission. They later worked at St Lukes Anglican Church in Pietermaritzburg. Clancey, in his writing about the Woodward brothers, never fails to use the title ‘Reverend’ when talking about them. The impression given is that here were two devout brothers deeply committed to their missionary work, somehow managing to find a little time here and there to indulge their interest in birds and bird-collecting. And yet enquiries made among the current archivists of the Anglican Church in January 2016 failed to turn up any record of the Woodward brothers at St Lukes in Pietermaritzburg or indeed at any other Anglican mission station in Natal or Zululand of that time.⁶¹ I have further combed the three travel narratives published in *Ibis* and cannot find any reference to any missionary or even any church-going activities. As we saw above, they twice make reference to how they spent a Sunday, and each time it is in rest and relaxation.

That they were devout Christians is not in doubt. In their introduction to their book *Natal Birds*⁶², they say that ‘everybody should make a point of learning something about God’s wonderful works in some branch of Natural History’. On the same page, after listing some of the botanical delights of Natal and ‘the newly-annexed province of Zululand’, they go on to say ‘All these appeal to the eye and heart, and raise the mind to Him who has done all things well’. Unless these phrases were chosen to pander to a certain readership, their spiritual beliefs are clear. Reading their three accounts of their journeys to Zululand in the 1890s suggests, however,

that they went there not as missionaries but as bird-watchers and bird-collectors. Dean⁶³ uses the interesting phrase ‘business missionaries’ to describe a small group of missionaries, which includes the Woodward brothers, who collected natural history specimens with an eye to selling them to overseas museums or natural history collectors. He has accessed a letter written by the brothers from Eshowe, dated 5 November 1897 (some two months after the end of their second expedition). The letter, addressed to Dr R. Bowdler Sharpe in England, contains the lines

Commercially our three years in Zululand have not been a success. We have not sold half the birds we collected and the butterflies seem even worse – for these we have recovered only £4–18 up to date.⁶⁴

Whether naturalists, explorer-scientists, ornithological authors, or ‘missionary-businessmen’, the brothers Richard and John Woodward contributed greatly to the study of birds in KwaZulu-Natal at the end of the nineteenth century, and it is hoped that this article has contributed to a wider knowledge of the role they played.

NOTES

- 1 Clinning, Charles, *Southern African Bird Names Explained* (Johannesburg, Southern African Ornithological Society, 1989) p. 20.
- 2 McLachlan and Liversidge’s 1958 second edition of *Roberts’ Birds of South Africa* calls this bird ‘Woodwards’ Flycatcher’ and says it was Capt. Shelley who identified and named this bird *Batis fratrum* in 1900.
- 3 Clancey, Philip A., ‘On the contribution of the Woodward brothers’, *Bokmakierie*, 35 (3), 1983, p. 56.
- 4 Brookes, R.K., ‘More on the Woodward brothers’, *Bokmakierie*, 36(2), 1984, p.29.
- 5 Clancey, ‘Woodward brothers’, p. 56.
- 6 With Clinning getting them wrong (see introductory quote).

- 7 Jacobs, Nancy, *Birders of Africa: History of a Network* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2016) p. 314.
- 8 Dean, Richard (W.R.J.), *Warriors, Dilettantes and Businessmen: Bird Collectors During the Mid-19th to Mid-20th Centuries in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, 2017) p. 125.
- 9 Clancey, ‘Woodward brothers’, p. 56.
- 10 Guest, Bill, ‘The new economy’, in Duminy Andrew and Bill Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand: From Earliest Times to 1910* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press and Shuter and Shooter, 1989) p. 305.
- 11 Woodward, R.B. and Woodward, J.D.S., ‘Description of our journeys in Zululand, with notes on its birds’, *Ibis*, 39(3), 1897, pp. 400–1.
- 12 Apart from Clancey’s suggestion, noted above, that they were based at Adam’s Mission at Amanzimtoti at the time of the Zululand expeditions.
- 13 Woodward and Woodward, ‘Journeys’, p. 407.
- 14 *Ibid.* p. 401.
- 15 This is the only occasion in all their writings where they identify themselves as anything.
- 16 Woodward and Woodward, ‘Journeys’, p. 404.
- 17 In a footnote here they give the name of the bird as *Stactolaema woodwardi*. The bird was later known as Woodward’s Barbet, with the Latin name *Cryptolybia woodwardi*. Today, however, the bird is regarded as being conspecific with the Green Barbet (*Stactolaema olivacea*) and the Woodward’s bird has become the subspecies *Stactolaema olivacea woodwardi*. Capt. Shelley was a retired British military man who identified and named a considerable number of South African birds in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Woodward’s would, at the time of writing in 1897, not yet have been aware of the barbet which Shelley would name *Batis fratrum* in their honour in 1900 (See introduction above).
- 18 Woodward and Woodward, ‘Journeys’, p. 407.
- 19 *Ibid.* p. 408.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 409.
- 21 See Koopman, Adrian, ‘Of birds and bombs’, *Natalia*, 46, 2016, pp. 119–22.
- 22 Woodward and Woodward, ‘Journeys’, p. 413.
- 23 *Ibid.* p. 404.
- 24 *Ibid.* p. 414.
- 25 Presumably this means February 1895, meaning that the Woodward’s have been seven and a half months on their journey so far.
- 26 *Ibid.* p. 416.
- 27 Note that the Woodward’s drink tea at five o’clock in the morning, but coffee after the business of crossing a river.

- 28 Woodward and Woodward, 'Journeys', p. 417.
- 29 The Reverend Robert Robertson was appointed to one of the first Anglican missions in Zululand in 1860, so he would have been in place some 34 years by the time of the Woodwards' visit.
- 30 Hetherington, Norman, 'Christianity and African Society in nineteenth-century Natal', in Duminy, Andrew and Bill Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand: From Earliest Times to 1910* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press and Shuter and Shooter, 1989) p. 295.
- 31 Woodward and Woodward, 'Journeys', p. 418.
- 32 Presumably they got this name from the mountain in Hlwathi shown on the 1:500 000 map of this area.
- 33 As there are no spreading trees of the genus *Mimosa* in South Africa, the brothers almost certainly camped under one of the *Acacia* spp., probably *A. tortilis*.
- 34 This presumably refers to the area where the Mphukunyoni clan lived under chief Somkhele (see map in Duminy and Guest, 1989, p. 196).
- 35 Woodward and Woodward, 'Journeys', p. 419.
- 36 The river name 'Hluhluwe' was notoriously difficult for earlier travellers to spell. This, however, appears to be a modern scanning error of a correctly spelt 'Hluhluwe'.
- 37 The wild cotton is *Gossypium herbaceum* subsp. *africanum*.
- 38 Woodward and Woodward, 'Journeys', p. 421.
- 39 I have not been able to trace a uMbezane River on the 1:500 000 map of the area.
- 40 Ibid. p. 422.
- 41 We should note, though, that at the time of the Woodwards' travels in Zululand, the entire region was under the firm control of a (British) Resident Commissioner, based at Melmoth, with each of six districts under the control of a Resident Magistrate, two of which, at least, who figure in their travel narratives.
- 42 Woodward, R.B. and Woodward, J.D.S. 'Further notes on the birds of Zululand', *Ibis*, 40(2), 1898, p. 216.
- 43 Johnston, W. and Johnston, A.K. Map of Central South Africa, https://alabamamaps.ua.edu/historicalmaps/africa/central-south-africa_2_1896-1900.htm (accessed 12 Dec. 2016).
- 44 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_African_Republic (accessed 18 Dec. 2016).
- 45 The districts of Utrecht and Vryheid were ceded by the ZAR to Natal in 1902, leading to the present-day border between KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.
- 46 The rinderpest outbreak of 1897 resulted in an 85% loss of Zulu cattle herds. It was, however, only one of a series of natural disasters to hit Zululand at that time, others being recurring plagues of locusts, and six years of severe drought.
- 47 Laband, John and Thompson, Paul, 'The reduction of Zululand: 1878–1904', in Duminy, Andrew and Bill Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand: From Earliest Times to 1910* (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press and Shuter and Shooter, 1989) p. 317.
- 48 Woodward and Woodward, 'Further notes', p. 221.
- 49 The locative form of *iTshana*, itself a diminutive form of *itshe* 'stone', 'rock'.
- 50 Which took them only five hours, a very creditable pace of three miles an hour through thorn scrub.
- 51 Tongaland (or Maputaland) was incorporated by the British on 24 December 1897, so the Woodwards were perfectly correct to refer to this as a recent event.
- 52 Laband and Thompson, 'Reduction', p. 221.
- 53 Woodward and Woodward, 'Further Notes', p. 225.
- 54 Ibid. p. 227.
- 55 Woodward, R.B. and Woodward, J.D.S. 'On the birds of St. Lucia Lake in Zululand', *Ibis*, 42(3), p. 517.
- 56 Ibid. p. 525.
- 57 Clancey, 'Woodward brothers', p. 58.
- 58 My wife Jewel worked under Dr Clancey at the Durban Museum of Natural History in the 1970s and has shared with me many interesting insights into his character.
- 59 Clancey, 'Woodward brothers', p. 56.
- 60 Clinning, *Bird Names Explained*, p. 20.
- 61 I am grateful to Mary Gardner and Mary Mullinos for instituting enquiries on my behalf.
- 62 Woodward, R.B. and Woodward, J.D.S. *Natal Birds* (Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis and Sons, 1899) p. iii.
- 63 Dean, *Warriors, Dilettantes and Businessmen*, p. 125.
- 64 Ibid. p. 126.