

## *Book Reviews and Notices*

### **A FIELD GUIDE TO THE WAR IN ZULULAND, 1879**

By J. P. C. LABAND and P. S. THOMPSON

(Published by the University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1979.)

It is a pleasure to welcome the publication of this guide to the battlefields and fortifications of the Anglo-Zulu War as they are today. John Laband and Paul Thompson, together with the University of Natal Press, deserve the congratulations of all students for achieving a landmark in the literature of the campaign. It commends itself to the widest possible use. Buy it, read its concise but comprehensive outline of the nature of the war, and then plan a series of expeditions to explore the open-air history it reveals in such fine detail. As the authors explain, it is not exactly pocket-sized because of the need to make the maps as clear and full as possible, but it weighs only 300 grams and will not overburden the most streamlined knapsack. Bruno Martin has drawn in exemplary style the forty-six plans of battlegrounds and entrenchments. General maps make it easy to locate it precisely. There are also eleven pictures, reproduced from engravings that appeared in 1879; they have been chosen skilfully and will be new to most readers.

The introductory text is particularly valuable for its discussions of 'The Zulu Military System' (pages 3-7), which has been much misunderstood. It is indeed vital to a proper comprehension of how the war proceeded to know that the Zulu army 'was integrated into the whole fabric of Zulu economic, political and social life', unlike the professional machine of the British army. Perhaps there is a parallel danger of assuming we know all there is to know about the latter. Maybe most of the red soldiers came from 'the poorest and most ignorant elements' in society (page 8), but many were forced to enlist by the severe economic recession through which Britain was passing in the 1870s, and quite a few of them could write a decent letter. The opposing strategies of the protagonists are clearly explained, and the tactical moves and counter-movements of the field operations here fall into place thanks to a masterly summary of what was a highly complex, indeed messy, business (pages 11-18). The three arrows showing the first invasion by British forces, as depicted on the map (page 15) are not readily seen, but readers can colour them in for themselves.

Sites of interest are grouped together in six separate sectors, Coast, Dundee, Greytown, Luneburg, Ulundi, and Vryheid. This is a sensible arrangement, but readers who are interested in a particular fort or laager must be sure to consult the appropriate index on page 86, because a fort may be discussed at four or five different and separate places in the text, and it is necessary to look it up in each case. Perhaps it would also be useful to have a distinct list of 'Battlefields' in the index. The authors do not pretend they have said the last word on the subject, and indeed they 'invite useful and informed criticism from others'. There seem to be few errors of fact, despite the immense number of names of places and

persons, units and dates. A reviewer has the duty to record some of the mistakes he sees: an instance will be made here of two pages from the Dundee Sector.

Page 39: (i) Fort Pine was built pre-1879 not “by local settlers” but by Major Dartnell, as a stronghold for the Natal Mounted Police, which he commanded; (ii) for ‘Melville’ read ‘Melvill’, as Lt. Melvill after whom the Fort is named did not (as is usually the case) spell his name with a terminal ‘e’; (iii) the authors mention two forts at Landman’s Drift, whereas, in fact, there were three. Private E. J. Evans of the 1/24th was there when he wrote a letter on 18 May 1879: ‘It is the largest camp I ever was in’, he says, listing the British units ‘and God knows how many natives mounted and on foot. There are three forts in this camp, and cattle laagers for the cattle at night. We are soldiering in earnest this time’ (*The Western Mail*, 28 June 1879). So *two* fortifications have disappeared at Landman’s. Page 45: (i) Lieutenant Chard was serving at Rorke’s Drift with the Royal Engineers, not the 24th Regiment; (ii) it is not true that ‘the hospital and storehouse were fired and gutted’ at Rorke’s Drift, as the storehouse stood intact at the end of the fight; (iii) the figure of 15 British soldiers killed at Rorke’s Drift may puzzle those who examine the old memorial in the cemetery there. It names 13 men of the 24th who were killed or died of wounds, and (on another face) Byrne of the Commissary, Anderson of the N.N.C., and Hunter of the N.M.P.; these are shown correctly as ‘killed’, so the British total should be 16, or 17 if we include the N.N.C. patient who was killed in the hospital when the Zulu broke in.

Great credit must be given to Laband and Thompson for so skilfully disentangling the remains of the Anglo-Zulu War from the many others still to be seen in the landscape of Natal and KwaZulu. Few parts of the world can show such a series of layers of military earthworks. They range from the earliest days of the Boers, to the pre-1879 colonial period, the Anglo-Boer wars, and the Rebellion of 1906. Even so far as 1879 is concerned, a line has to be drawn between the military remains and those defences put up by civilians. No doubt it is possible to compile an inventory of laagers on the Natal side of the Tugela. Some of these may be difficult to trace because their earthworks were so slight and have been vulnerable to obliteration since then.

Even the military entrenchments were sometimes puny. Those at Gingindlovu, from which Chelmsford fought off the attack by 10-12 000 Zulu on 2 April, were not too substantial in their original condition. Laband and Thompson do not refer to their state of preservation, partly because they are hidden in canefields, but also because they were not dug very deeply. The scale of the original defences has also been steadily reduced by Nature and human interference, a case in point being Fort Cherry on the road between Greytown and Middle Drift. Now the maximum depth of the defences of the Fort is shown as 2 m but in May 1879 they were 4 m from the top of the bank to the bottom of the ditch.

Doubt exists over Potgieter’s Farm Laager (pages 58-9 in Laband and Thompson), which could have been known by one of three different names. There may indeed have been three separate forts, because the three names are used with fair distinction by Woodgate in his diary. On 25 April

he rode with Wood, Buller, and Moysey towards *Bivane* Laager, 'they going on to fix site of a fort near the *Burgers* laager'. A company of the 2/4th Regiment were sent 'to *Potgieter's* House near Burger's Laager, which will be the fortified post to protect that district'. On 26 April, he says, 'Moysey with convoy and 60 mounted men started to construct necessary fortifications at *Potgieter's*'. It is by such means that the full story, so clearly charted by Laband and Thompson, will ultimately emerge. Digging into the written sources is still so much easier than it was for the soldiers, in a campaign that was certainly a fatiguing business. Evelyn Wood kept his men at the digging more than most, even on Sundays; although they were allowed to put down their picks and shovels to join in Divine Service parade, this never lasted more than ten minutes.

FRANK EMERY

### A REPLY

Dr THOMPSON and Mr LABAND have replied to Mr EMERY'S review of their book as follows: [*Editor*]

Frank Emery has scrutinized our *Field Guide* with thoroughness. Our slips or errors have not escaped his eye, and a new impression of the book published in November has benefited by his observations. Several points that he has raised, however, require further comment.

#### *Fortifications*

In attributing the building of Fort Pine to 'local settlers', we were misleading. Fort Pine was envisaged as a barracks and stables for the Natal Mounted Police under Major Dartnell. Yet before their construction could begin, mounting tension along the Zulu border caused the local Field Cornet, J. S. Robson, to persuade the Natal government that the outside wall should be built before the barracks and stables so as to serve as a laager for the farmers of the district. At the direction of Captain A. N. Hime, R.E., the Colonial Engineer, a local contractor (John Marshall) built the laager walls between May and November 1878. The Natal Mounted Police did not occupy Fort Pine during this period, nor were the barracks or stables erected. Local farmers took refuge there in January 1879, and the Buffalo Border Guard and Newcastle Mounted Rifles garrisoned it from early February until the end of the war. The Natal Mounted Police occupied the fort early in 1880, and had to live under canvas for several months as the buildings were still not completed.

We mentioned only those forts at Landman's Drift that we could account for, and thus gave the impression that there were only two. In fact, as Norris-Newman states in the *Natal Mercury* of 15 May 1879, there were three earthwork forts in a kind of echelon, with about fifty yards between each one. The imprecision of contemporary descriptions of the fortifications at *Potgieter's* Farm Laager make the possibility of one or more works tantalizing, and the need for further research apparent. Continuing field-work since the book's publication has brought us to the irregularly shaped earthwork fort at Middle Drift, called Fort Montgomery.

*Battlefields*

We are somewhat puzzled at Frank Emery's reference to the extant military entrenchments at Gingindlovu. We twice visited the battlefield in 1978 and were taken to the site of the British laager by the farmer on whose land it had stood. He assured us the works had been destroyed by cane cultivation. Perhaps they have been ploughed over since Frank Emery last saw them? The discrepancy between the number of British dead recorded on the memorial at Rorke's Drift and the figures in our book is easily resolved. We counted two mortally wounded soldiers of the 24th amongst the wounded, and the memorial places them with the dead.

*The 'home-front' fortifications*

In preparing the *Field Guide* we decided, as Frank Emery notes, to treat the 'battle-front' as opposed to the 'home-front'. Indeed, the latter in itself would require a book, as the list below suggests. In this inventory the posts and laagers are grouped according to the colonial Defensive Districts, but any within them with which the *Field Guide* has already dealt (because of their proximity or significance to the field operations of 1879) are omitted.

<i>District</i>	<i>Government post or laager</i>	<i>Private post or laager</i>
I	Ladysmith	Dirk Peters' Doorn Kraal 'Ermelo fort' Paddafontein
II	Colenso bridge Estcourt Ulundi Weston Church	Gretna Green Kruisfontein Strydpoort
III	Pietermaritzburg Fort Napier Baynes' Drift Howick	Curry's Sterk Spruit York Howick
IV	Ixopo Richmond	Cleveland Hill High Flats
V	Durban Pinetown New Germany Umzinto Harding	Ifafa Lower Umkomaas
VI	Stanger Verulam Williamstown	Hulett's store
VII		Rietvlei

JOHN LABAND  
PAUL THOMPSON

### A ZULU KING SPEAKS

Statements made by Cetshwayo kaMpande on the history and customs of his people.

Edited by C. de B. WEBB and J. B. WRIGHT

(Published jointly by the University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, and the Killie Campbell Africana Library (Reprint Series Number 3), 1978).

The centenary of the Anglo-Zulu War has been commemorated in a substantial number of books and articles. Few, if any, of these can be of greater importance than *A Zulu King Speaks*, a compilation of reprints of statements originally made in 1880 and 1881 by Cetshwayo kaMpande, one of the central figures in that conflict and, along with his people, its most conspicuous victim.

There are three statements in all: "Cetshwayo's story of the Zulu nation and the war", initially published in *Macmillan's Magazine* in February 1880; his letter of 29 March 1881 to the Governor of the Cape, which first appeared in the British Parliamentary Papers, C2950 of 1881; and the minutes of his evidence to the Cape Government Commission on Native Laws and Customs, the report of which was published in 1883.

At one level the worth of this volume lies in the information it provides about the Anglo-Zulu War itself. What is of greatest import here is that the first two of the above statements represent amongst the most authoritative of the very few Zulu accounts of its origins and course. There is much of interest and value in Cetshwayo's discussion of the struggle with the Boers over territory in the northern and northwestern marches of his kingdom, and indeed, in his description of the unsettled conditions in that frontier zone. Likewise, the growing disillusionment with Shepstone, the Sirayo affair, and Frere's ultimatum are all set in Zulu perspective. Important information on the execution of the war by the Zulu, their strategy, the strengths and, more unusually, the deficiencies of their military organisation is also to be found.

Beyond this, however, the book — as its sub-title implies — sheds light on Zulu society in its political, social, economic and ideological dimensions. Of greatest importance in this regard is the third of Cetshwayo's statements, certainly one of the most explicit and concentrated sources of inside information on these matters. As the editors point out, Cetshwayo's answers not only reveal much about him, but also dispel many of the cruder European misconceptions about the structure and operation of Zulu society, particularly as regards *lobola*, the 'military' system and the extent of royal power.

Finally, the book provides a Zulu account of the course of Zululand's history since the time of Senzangakhona. Much of this is familiar, but evidence pertaining to the reigns of Mpande and Cetshwayo is of especial interest. This is to be welcomed all the more since it is still too often assumed that Cetshwayo's kingdom was an exact replica of that ruled by Shaka. What emerges from these statements, however, is that though the structure of the later Zulu kingdom bore a marked resemblance to that described by Fynn and Isaacs fifty to sixty years before, not insignificant changes had occurred, not least to the kingship itself.

The introduction by the editors is given over to a short but most useful

and eloquent political biography of Cetshwayo, an assessment of the importance of oral tradition in general, and of these three statements in particular. Though editorial intercession has, wisely, been kept to a minimum, the reader is able to find answers to most of his queries about names, places, dates and events in the notes at the end of each section, or in the index. The book's appeal is further enhanced by the illustrations, the very helpful maps and the glossary of Zulu terms. It is also pleasantly free of typographical error.

Students of Zulu history are already greatly indebted to Colin Webb and John Wright for their work on the Stuart Papers. These two gentlemen are now to be congratulated for bringing out in so convenient a form these important sources of evidence, and thus for performing a valuable service to the general reader, scholar and teacher alike.

P. J. COLENBRANDER

### **THE ZULU WAR AND THE COLONY OF NATAL**

Edited by G. A. CHADWICK and E. G. HOBSON

(Published on behalf of the Natal Provincial Administration under the auspices of the Natal Provincial Museum Advisory Board, Qualitas Publishers, Mandini, 1979.)

As the officially blessed publication of the Anglo-Zulu War centenary year this work demands careful attention. Well illustrated, and reasonably priced, it contains articles, reminiscences and reproductions of contemporary or relatively unknown material relating to the impact of the Anglo-Zulu War on the inhabitants of Natal.

The editors and contributors, particularly the museum curators, must be applauded for bringing to light so many little-known or previously unpublished accounts of the effects of the war on the lives of ordinary people. The most noteworthy of these are the *Methodist Recorder*, reproduced here under the title "They fought for the Great White Queen", which gives the history of the Edendale Contingent of the Natal Native Horse, and, secondly, the "Notes on the Zulu War" written in 1936 by Mary Newmarch of Greytown, together with extracts from her diary written when she was 16. Unfortunately, these vignettes are not well annotated and it will be extremely difficult for researchers to trace the originals from the information given in this book.

The work includes articles by Drs B. J. T. Leverton and J. Clark, Cmdt J. Hulme, Cmdt S. Bourquin, Mrs M. Cliff, Mrs Sheila Henderson and Mrs Daphne H. Strutt among others.

Dr Leverton has provided a detailed account of the financial and political ramifications of the War on settler politics. His work affords us a fresh glance at a seldom considered aspect: the attempt by the British Government to make the Natal colonists pay more than what they considered to be their fair share of the costs of the War. His views on the causes of the War and the role played by Sir Bartle Frere will probably need revision now in the light of Professor C. de B. Webb's article "Lines of Power — The High Commissioner, the Telegraph and the War of 1879"

in *Natalia* No. 8, and of the ideas advanced at the Centenary Conference on the Anglo-Zulu War held in Durban during February of this year.

Dr Clark's article, "The Child of France", is a comprehensive account of the life and death of the young Prince Imperial and of the pilgrimage to his death place by his mother a year later. One would like to see some mention of the embarrassing rôle played by the dubious 'Lady Avonmore'.

Mrs Strutt has described everyday life in Natal in great detail, but her article is not, in my opinion, a well integrated synthesis of this aspect. Mrs Henderson's series of notes on the impact of the War on Northern Natal are fascinating and written in a lively style.

Commandants Bourquin and Hulme have analysed the organisation of and the roles played by the forces raised in Natal: the colonial volunteer units and the 'native levies'. Cmdt Bourquin has handled the seldom-mentioned rôle of the Natal Native Contingent well and provided much detail on the background, composition, training and performance in the field of this amorphous force. On the other hand, Cmdt Hulme has given the briefest outline of the establishment, mobilisation and operations of the volunteer units. One would expect a more substantial account of this aspect in a publication of this nature.

The policy of using the services of well-known writers on Natal history as well as those of the curators of local museums has the advantage of bringing together in-depth articles and analyses, and rare snippets of information from areas most closely affected by the conflict. An unfortunate side-effect of this policy is that the central theme is not well developed — the choice of articles is somewhat random — and the same high quality of content is not always maintained. However this in itself is not a major detraction. A more serious defect is the fact that editors and contributors alike seem by and large to have disregarded the recent trends of historical thought on the War of 1879. For example, the title itself is unfortunate, given the current preference amongst historians for referring to the War as the Anglo-Zulu War. This latter term seems to be the most accurate, and the one calculated to give the least offence in our heterogeneous society. Indeed, this question is raised by Dr Leverton in his article, 'Political and economic aspects of the Zulu War', when he mentions the need "... to advance the concept of an 'Anglo-Zulu War' of 1879 rather than anything else" (p. 11).

Unfortunately the work suffers from a general lack of footnotes, references and acknowledgements of sources. The exceptions to this criticism are the articles by Mrs Cliff and Cmdt Hulme, but on the whole, the omission is a serious detraction from the work. For example, in the article by Dr Clark, he specifically contradicts the generally accepted view, supported (as he states in his only footnote) by Brookes and Webb in *A history of Natal* that, apart from stab wounds, the Prince Imperial's body was left unmutilated. Yet Dr Clark offers no indications of what sources he has used to substantiate his contrary opinion. Another example, as previously mentioned is the fact that the date and edition of the *Methodist Recorder* from which Rev. Owen Watkins's account of the Edendale troops is taken, is not cited. This is a great pity as it seems that this article will prove popular with researchers. Also, surprisingly, the sources of the illustrations are not acknowledged. Some of the sketches appear to have

been reproduced from contemporary periodicals such as "The Graphic" and the "Illustrated London News" but there is no mention of this.

*The Zulu War and the Colony of Natal* is an interesting but flawed work which must be treated with caution by the serious reader, although it offers several items which can be enjoyed by all.

G. A. DOMINY

## THE ROAD TO ISANDLWANA

By PHILIP GON

(Published by AD. Donker, London, 1979)

This book might never have been written had the author not acquired a photograph album compiled by the Bandmaster of the 1st Battalion, 24th Regiment of Foot. This stroke of good fortune sparked off an interest in the fortunes of the Regiment and involved Philip Gon in a thorough, five-year investigation which took him to a great number of museums and research institutions in Southern Africa, London and Wales.

The author makes it clear in his preface to the book that his work is not aimed at the academic but at 'the general reader with an interest in military history and South Africa's past.' The fortunes of a number of the more prominent members of the Regiment, individuals like Richard Glyn, Nevill Coghill and Henry Pulleine are sketched against the background of the political machinations of men like Henry Barkly, Richard Southey and Bartle Frere and the military conflagrations which occurred in the period 1877-79. Indeed, although the author's strength seems to lie in his knowledge of military history, his incisive analysis of the political implications of the actions of these and other statesmen, is impressive. In this connection the author's insight into the so-called 'Black Flag' rebellion in Kimberley and his assertion that the event acted as a catalyst for the formation of exclusively white trade unions as well as the policy of job reservation, is illuminating. Also of interest is his sympathetic description of the so-called Griqua 'rebellion' on the Diamond Fields which, he asserts, was a desperate and brave attempt by illegally dispossessed Grikwas to obtain redress for their grievances by force, the only remaining means of protest open to them.

By far the most valuable contribution in this work is the author's analysis of the Ninth Frontier War, a conflict which has been largely ignored by both contemporaries and modern writers alike. Although Gon's assessment of the military attributes of both Cunynghame and Chelmsford leaves much to be desired, his exposition of the complex movements of the adversaries and his definitive analysis of the battle of Centane, is impressive. However, a more comprehensive and definitive work on this complex conflict is still required.

The long road to Isandlwana also takes the author into the turbulent waters of British-Transvaal politics, but the climax of the saga is reserved for the events of that terrible day of 22 January, 1879. In his detailed analysis of the battle of Isandlwana, Gon has examined most of the available sources and the result is an authoritative and entertaining re-interpretation of the events.



The book also contains a number of previously unpublished photographs and several useful diagrams and maps. This work should engage the attention of both 'general reader' and academic alike.

JEFF MATHEWS

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE AND NATAL TRAINING COLLEGE**

By T. B. FROST

(Published and distributed by Natal Training College, Pietermaritzburg, May 1979.)

(40 pp. Soft covers)

Seldom, at least in this country, does a school or college occupy a building previously used for some other purpose, and with an interesting history of its own. For 54 years the home of the Governors of Natal, the building and grounds at the head of Church and Longmarket Streets have for another 70 years been the home of the Natal Training College. Awareness of this past and tangible reminders of it have done much to create the distinctive *milieu* of Natal Training College.

When the College celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1959, its magazine for the year understandably had an historical emphasis. It contained articles about the House under a dozen or more governors, and the College under four principals — imperial musical chairs being apparently a quicker game than the educational version! These were no more than brief sketches, and Mr Frost's account, though not lengthy, gives the story of Government House a clearer historical framework, and traces the development of the College to the threshold of the nineteen eighties.

Though setting his subject in the perspective of colonial and educational development, Mr Frost has written a social history, and the pages are rich in personal glimpses of people and their lives in this place. Being a lecturer in history at the College, the author's feeling for the past and his affection for the College are clearly shown in what he writes.

Mr Frost's sources are not specifically indicated, though it is clear from the text that he must have consulted, for example, Wolseley's diaries, the Reports of the various Superintendents of Education, and the Rector's official Log Book. This is a work for the general reader rather than the historical scholar, but even so, some sort of bibliography would not have been inappropriate.

The history is illustrated with many interesting photographs and a series of line drawings of architectural features of the College. The portraits of governors (pp. 15-17) serve to remind us that the names West, Pine, Scott, McCallum and Havelock are perpetuated in the names of streets and roads all within three minutes' walk of the centre of the College.

Mr Frost has produced a book which, to echo the Rector's Foreword, shows careful research and is eminently readable. It will be welcomed by all who have an interest in a building and an institution which have an important place in the history of this province.

J. M. DEANE

## NATAL FAMILY HISTORIES

The following notes on some recently-published Natal family histories have been submitted by Mrs S. P. M. SPENCER. [Editor]

*A merchant family in early Natal: diaries and letters of Joseph and Marianne Churchill, 1850-1880, with a narrative of pioneering travels to Potchefstroom and the Soutpansberg:* ed. by Daphne Child. Cape Town, Balkema, 1979. 198 p. illus. (a number of which are sketches by Marianne Churchill).

*Honour without riches: the story of an Archibald family,* by Ruth E. Gordon. Durban, Griggs, 1978. 408 p. illus.

This is the history of the Archibalds of the Umzinto district, and is based on family letters. The story, which is carried through to contemporary times, details their experiences in the Cape (Namaqualand and Kimberley) and in Natal.

*Acutts in Africa,* by Yvonne Miller. Durban, the Author, 1978. 206 p. illus.

This book represents an attempt to trace all the descendants of Robert Acutt and Julianna Cotton (married in Cornwall in 1805). In the period 1850 to 1872 six of their nine children, as well as the children of two others, emigrated to Natal.

*A Norwegian family in South Africa,* by Sofie Norgaard. Priv. print, 1979.

This book, first published in Norwegian early in this century, is the story of Daniel and Caroline Nielsen and their family. The Nielsens went to Zululand in 1860 as members of Bishop Schreuder's mission. Their daughter Sofie married Hans Norgaard shortly after the Anglo-Zulu war. Thereafter the narrative concentrates on the Norgaards — in Natal, in Johannesburg, and finally in Matabeleland at the time of the rebellion.

## JOURNAL OF NATAL AND ZULU HISTORY

Last year *Natalia* No. 8 was pleased to welcome the appearance of this new publication among the ranks of those journals whose focus of interest is South African history. The second volume of the *Journal*, published in August of this year, contains five scholarly articles as well as several book reviews and, as its name suggests, the contents should be of particular interest to readers of *Natalia*. The *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* is edited by A. H. Duminy and P. R. Maylam of the University of Natal's History Department in Durban, to whom all contributions and further enquiries should be directed.