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The Isandlwana Battlefield

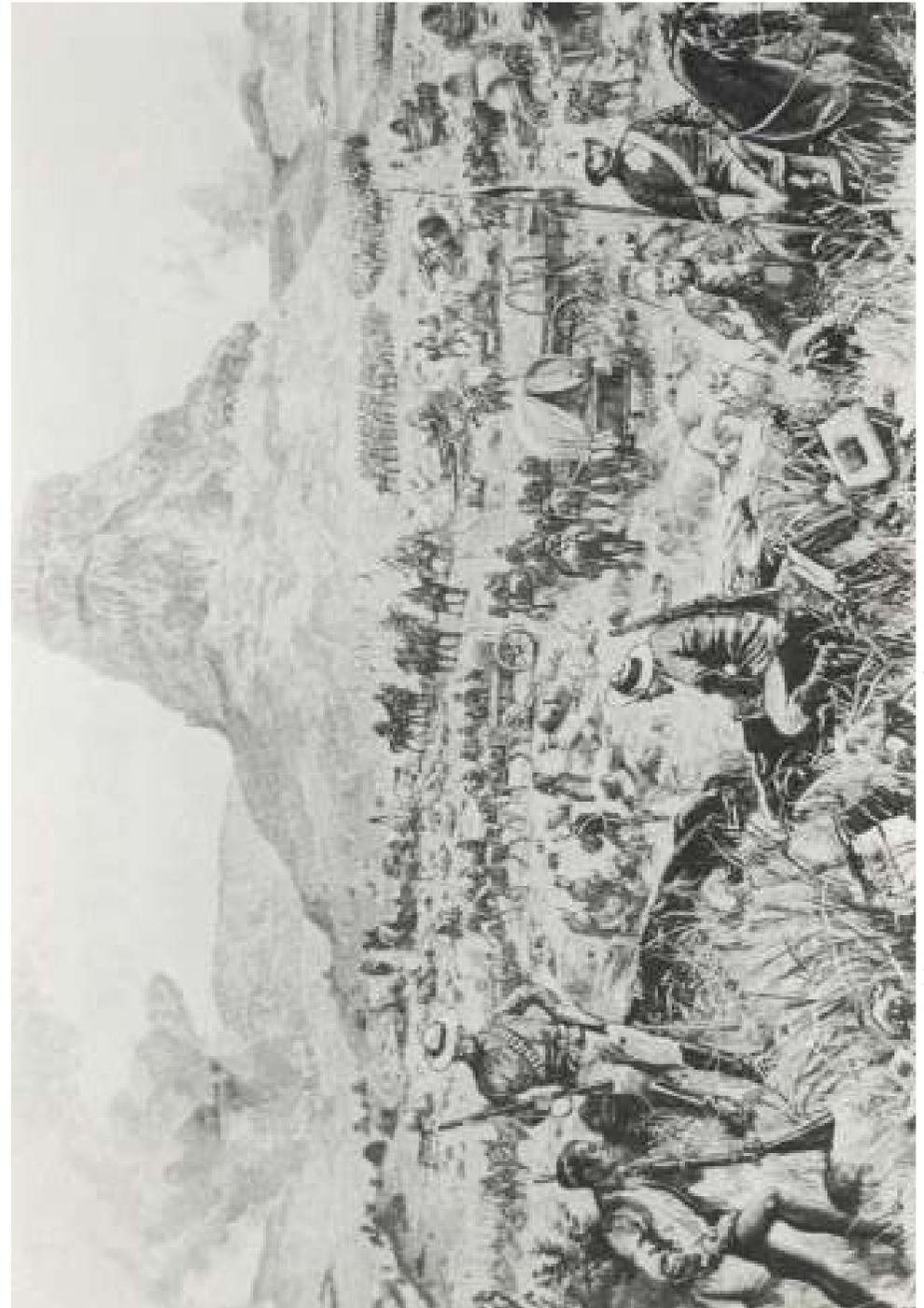


Self-Guided Trail

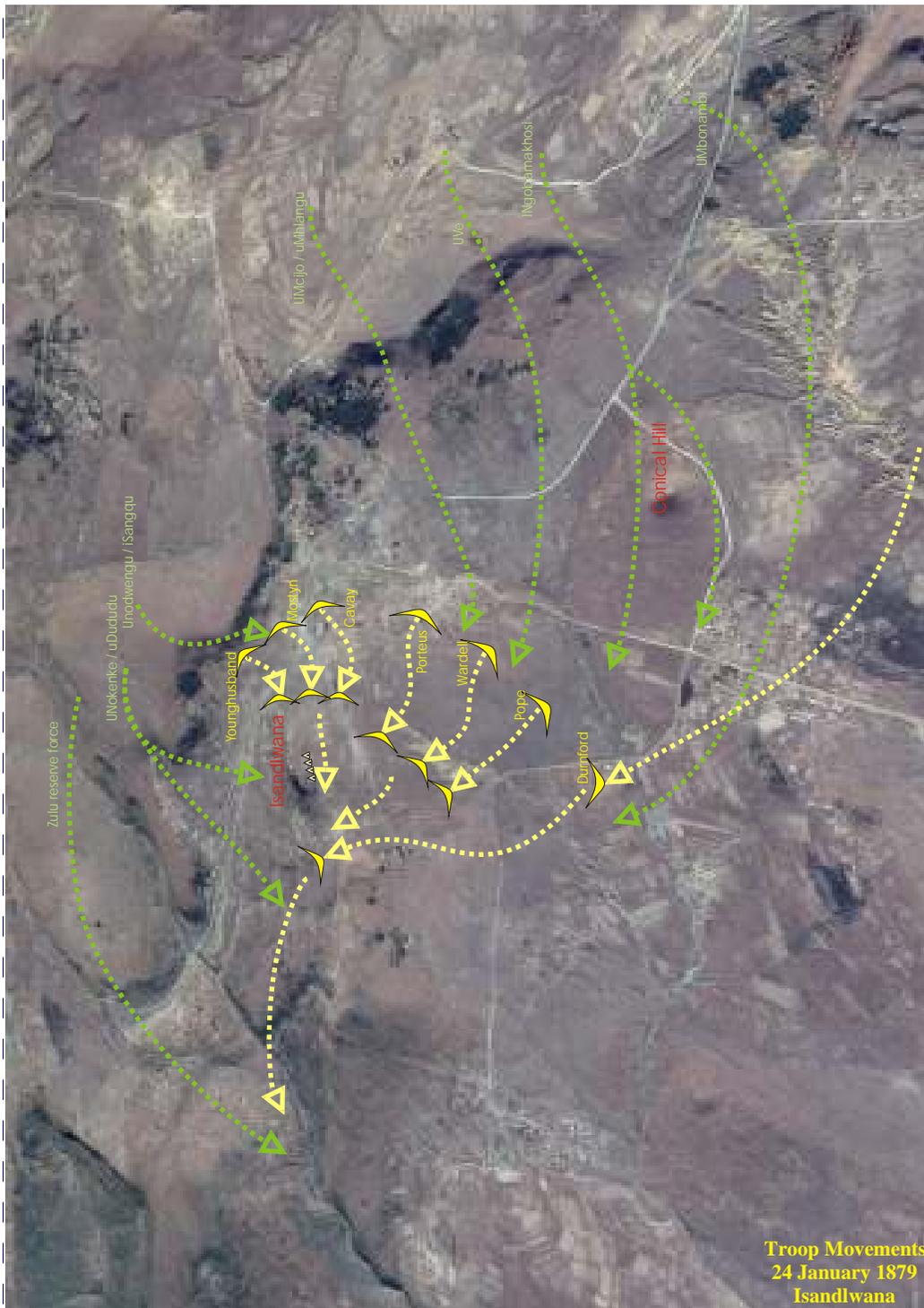
The Battle of Isandlwana

At Isandlwana Hill, a British force of some 1700 men was virtually wiped out by a Zulu army of over 20 000 men under the command of Ntshingwayo KaMahole Khoza and Mavumengwana Ntuli.

Lord Chelmsford's Centre Column had camped at the base of iSandlwana on the night of 21 January 1879. During the early hours of 22 January, Chelmsford lead a force of men eastward to reinforce a small reconnaissance party, leaving the rest of the column under Col. H.B. Pulleine in camp. At about 10.30 am Col. A. Durnford, in response to Chelmsford's order, arrived from Rorke's Drift. Reports had been received that a Zulu force had been spotted on the Nqutu heights. Anxious that this force should not threaten Chelmsford's party to the east, Durnford left camp with about 140 men and rode north to cut off the Zulu. A patrol under Capt. George Shepstone was sent to clear the area to the north of the camp of any Zulu forces. At about midday this patrol, in pursuit of a small Zulu party accidentally stumbled upon the main Zulu force which was concealed in a valley a few kilometres north of iSandlwana. Having lost the element of surprise, the Zulu commanders decided to attack and formed their warriors into the traditional "chest and horns" formation while advancing on the British camp. The right horn swept around to the north and west, while the left horn engaged a forward position under Col. Durnford, who was for a while able to hold his position. The Zulu soon overran this position forcing a retreat. At the same time the "chest" of the Zulu army was engaging the main British firing line, while the right horn was out-flanking the west of the camp eventually blocking the escape to Rorke's Drift. The battle was at its most intense at about 2.00 pm, and a partial eclipse of the sun at about this time made the situation even gloomier. The camp was overrun, but small pockets of British resistance continued until later in the afternoon. By sunset the battle was over and 1000 Zulu and 1357 British were dead. Chelmsford returned to find devastation, and camped among the dead that night, leaving the next morning. The Zulu buried their dead in maize pits and dongas, and many bodies would have been retreated by families. The British returned some months later to bury their dead.



British troops return to the scene of the battle: May 1879
Illustrated London News: 12/7/1879



Twelve Zulu regiments (about 24 000 men) left from Ondini on 17 January to meet the invading British force.

The regiments who fought at iSandlwana were:

Right Horn: uDududu, iMbube, iSangqu and uNokkiiyenke regiments.

The Chest: uMcijo and uMxhapho regiments.

The Left Horn: uMbonambi, iNgobamakhosi and uVe regiments.

The reserve Regiments were iNdluyengwe, uThulwana, uDloko and iNdlondlo regiments.

The typical Zulu warrior was clad in a simple leather loin cover, and carried two or three throwing spears and/or a stabbing spear. A wooden knobkierie as well as a battle shield would also have been carried. Men of rank would have carried battle-axes. In addition to using traditional weapons, the Zulu army also had about 20 000 firearms, mostly muzzle-loaders.



**Ntshingwayo kaMahole Khoza
Zulu Commander**

The British forces involved at the battle consisted of A, C, E, F & H Companies of the 1/24th Regt, G Company 2/14th Regt., N Battery 5th Brigade, No 1 Mounted Infantry, The Natal Mounted Police, The Natal Volunteer Corps (Natal Carbineers, The Newcastle Mounted Rifles, Buffalo Border Guard), 2 Companies, 1/3rd Natal Native Horse, 2 companies 2/3 NBC, 11/7th RA Natal Native Horse (No 1, 2, 3 Troops), Zikhali's Horse, The Hlubi Troop, The Edendale Troop, D & E Companies of 1st NNC - a total of 1770 men.

There were also 102 wagons and 1000 oxen, as well as cooks, grooms and boy recruits.

British soldiers carried Martini Henry rifles weighing about 4kg that fired a 450 calibre lead bullet effective to 400 yards. A bayonet was carried and each man was supplied with 70 rounds of ammunition.



**Col H.B. Pullein
Left in command at the British camp**

Zulu Forces

Unattached regiments

uMcijo - 2500 men
 iNgobamakhosini - 4000 men
 uMbonambi - 2000 men
 uNokhenke - 2000 men
 uDloko - 2500 men
 uVe - 2000 men

UNodwengu Corps

uDududu - 1500 men
 iMbube - 500 men
 isAngqu - 1500 men

UNdi Corps Commanded by Prince Dabulamanzi KaMpande

uThulwana - 1500 men
 iNdlondlo - 900 men
 iNdluyengwe - 1000 men

British Forces: No 3 Column and the supporting No 2 Column

No 3 Column Commanded by Brevet Colonel R Glynn

N Battery 5th Brigade Royal Artillery
 Royal Engineers, No 5 company
 1st Battalion 24th Foot
 2nd Battalion 24th Foot
 No 1 Squadron Mounted Infantry
 Natal Mounted Police
 Newcastle Mounted Rifles
 Buffalo Border Guard
 3rd Regiment Natal Native Contingent
 No 1 Company Natal Native Pioneer Corps

4709 Officers and Men

No 2 Column Commanded by Colonel A Durnford

Rocket Battery
 1st Regiment Natal Native Contingent
 Natal Native Horse
 No 3 Natal Native Horse

3871 Officers and Men

The Memorial to the fallen Zulu

Most of the Zulu dead would have been removed to their homes after the battle. The memorial to the fallen Zulu was unveiled by HM King Zwelithini ka Bhekuzulu on 22 January 1999, the 120th anniversary of the Battle of Isandlwana.

The memorial was jointly financed by the traditional leadership of KwaZulu Natal (*Amakhosi*) and Amafa AkwaZulu Natali, the Provincial heritage agency.

The Buffalo Thorn tree (*uMlahlalankhosi*) adjacent to the memorial was planted on 22 January 1999 by Prince M.G. Buthelezi. Branches from such trees were traditionally used in rituals associated with the dead.

SYMBOLISM OF THE MEMORIAL

The lion claw necklace, worn by the Zulu king, represents strength and the sovereignty of the Zulu nation.

The Zulu beads of valour (*Isiqu*), often crafted from the thorns of the thorny rope creeper, are worn as a necklace. They are only awarded to individuals who have displayed exceptional bravery, courage and sacrifice.

The headrests (*isicamelo*) symbolize sleep as well as a link with the ancestors who fell in the battle.

The red ochre on the steps represents the blood which was spilled in the battle.

The necklace is laid out in a horn formation, as if surrounding the Isandlwana hill, and represents the traditional attack formation of the Zulu army.

Memorials to fallen British

Numerous memorials have been erected to the fallen on the British side. These include the Maritzburg Old Boys Memorial and the Natal Carbineers Memorial. All of these memorials were privately funded by the regiments themselves. Numerous private memorials and headstones have also been erected by family members. These include the graves of Capt. Shepstone on the southern slopes of Isandlwana hill, and Pvt. James Blaikie, in the colonial cemetery.

Please remember that the battlefield is a military cemetery, and behave with respect and dignity whilst on site. Note that it is illegal to pick up relics from the battlefield, or interfere with any of the graves. Metal detectors may not be brought onto the site, and it is also illegal to obtain relics from local residents.

You may report any inappropriate behavior at the orientation centre or to any of the contacts provided on this booklet.

Self Guided walks on the Battlefield

There are two trails which you can walk from the gate. Both start from the Zulu Memorial and end on the neck between iSandlwana and Black's Kopie.

WALK THE CAMP - A SHORT WALK (45 - 60 minutes return)

Marker 1 : The Zulu Memorial

This monument was officially opened on 22 January 1999 to honour the Zulu fallen. The monument takes the form of an *Isigqu* (Zulu bravery necklace or Beads of Valor).

The necklace was the greatest honour which could be conferred on a warrior by the King. It was awarded only in instances of exceptional bravery and would have to be approved by the King's councillors. The award was usually accompanied by *ukuxoshisa*, where the warrior was given cattle as a symbol of appreciation.



Zulu Beads of Valour

From here, follow the road to

Marker 2

To your right lay the British camp. On either side of the road you will see two of the many whitewashed stone cairns which cover the bones of those who died in battle. On your left about 500m distant is where the firing line was positioned, engaging the chest of the Zulu army, while the right horn was sweeping around the back of iSandlwana to cut off the road to Rorkes Drift.

From here, continue along the road towards the Colonial Cemetery.

Marker 3

Here the trail joins the old wagon road. To your right is a small cemetery, where there are both individual and mass graves. About 1 km down the road, near the clinic building, is the donga from where Col. Durnford and his men are said to have held back the left horn for some time before they retreated towards the Nek.

From here, continue up to the Nek to Marker 7.

Marker 7: The Nek (read about this at the end of the long trail).

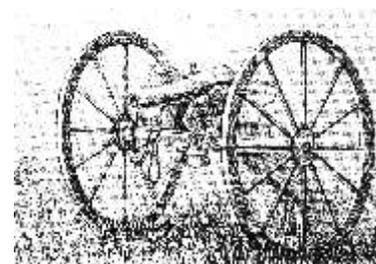
WALK TO THE GUNS: A LONGER WALK (60 - 90 minutes return)

This trail starts at the Zulu Memorial. From Marker 1, follow the path to the east with iSandlwana behind you to the Gunners Memorial. From here continue towards the rocky area 100 m to the south east.

Marker 4 : The 7 Pounder Guns

It is generally assumed that the British firing line followed roughly the line of this path. The firing line was 200 - 300 m wide and up to 20 ranks deep. South of the guns the line was thin, perhaps consisting of no more than 5 ranks. By about 1.p.m on 22 January the British line was in place. Historians differ on the exact positions of the companies, however, the most common order follows:

C Company 1/24th under Capt. R. Younghusband was positioned near to the reserve gate. Positioned in a crescent between Younghusband and the guns were companies of Capt. Erskine, Capt. Shepstone (who retreated from the Nyoni Heights), Capt. Stafford, Capt. Mostyn, Lt. Cavaye, and Lt. Porteous positioned just west of the guns, which were commanded by Brev. Maj. Smith. It was as a result of this line that the Zulu chest comprising the uMciyo and uMxhapho suffered heavily under fire, but were spurred on by a senior induna, Mkhosana KaMvundlana, killed as he ran down from the Nqutu escarpment.



British 7 pounder Gun
2 such guns were captured
by the Zulu forces
at Isandlwana

From the Gunner's Memorial, which was erected in 1999, walk in a south easterly direction towards the rocky ridge.

Marker 5 : The Rocky Knoll

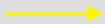
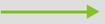
Positioned between the guns and this point were the companies of Lt. Wardell and Pope, while the open space toward the donga to the south east was thinly covered by the men of Capt. Lonsdale

From here proceed towards to Marker 6 (about 1km south-east near the present clinic building) or use the shorter route to Marker 3.

Marker 6 : Durnford's Resistance

Col. Durnford first engaged the Zulu left horn about 8 km east of the camp, but was forced into a steady retreat. At this donga, Durnford, and about 115 officers and men managed to hold off the uVe and the uMbonambi regiments. iNgobamakhosi reinforcements allowed the uMbonambi to outflank Dunford's men and enter the camp. Durnford did manage to reach the Nek, where he made a final stand.

From Marker 6, retrace your steps to Marker 5 and follow the trail via Markers 2 and 3 to the Nek.

 Long Trail
 Short Trail
 Trail Marker

