

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE BATTLEFIELD OF RORKE'S DRIFT, NORTHERN NATAL*

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ABSTRACT

Archaeological excavations were undertaken at Rorke's Drift with the aim of further elucidating the course of events at the mission station during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The foundations of the British Commissariat store as well as the hospital burnt down by the Zulu were located. Walling, which can probably be linked to Fort Bromhead was recovered and a preliminary survey with a metal detector provided new information on the Zulu side of the war. Very few items were recovered which could unequivocally be linked to the battle despite the scale of military operations at the site both during and after the conflict of 22 January 1879.

INTRODUCTION

The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 ranks as one of the most significant military encounters of the nineteenth century between British Imperial forces and a foe not as well-equipped from a technical point of view. Using a "number of minor incidents" (Laband 1992:11) along the Zululand border during the latter half of 1878, the British precipitated the war with one objective in mind, namely the destruction of the Zulu kingdom. Much was made of the heroic defence of Rorke's Drift at the beginning of the conflict in order to divert a public outcry following the devastating defeat suffered by the central column of the British army at Isandlwana. At Rorke's Drift a small group of British soldiers successfully defended their mission station-cum-military post against a large Zulu army resulting in the final allocation of no less than eleven Victoria Crosses, the highest number of VC's ever awarded to one regiment for a single action.

Rorke's Drift was named after James Rorke who purchased the approximately 1200 ha farm on the banks of the Buffalo (Mzinyathi) River in 1849 (Fig.1). A natural drift across the river at this spot enabled Rorke to trade with the Zulu kingdom to the north of the river (Morris 1965). He built his house and store on the slopes of Shiyane some 3 km from the ford. Rorke died in 1875 and his widow sold the property to the Swedish Missionary Society in 1878. The newly appointed missionary, Otto Witt, turned the store into a 'rude church' and settled his family into Rorke's house. Its strategic location on the Buffalo River prompted Lord Chelmsford to send the central column of the British forces through Rorke's Drift during his three-pronged invasion of Zululand in January 1879.

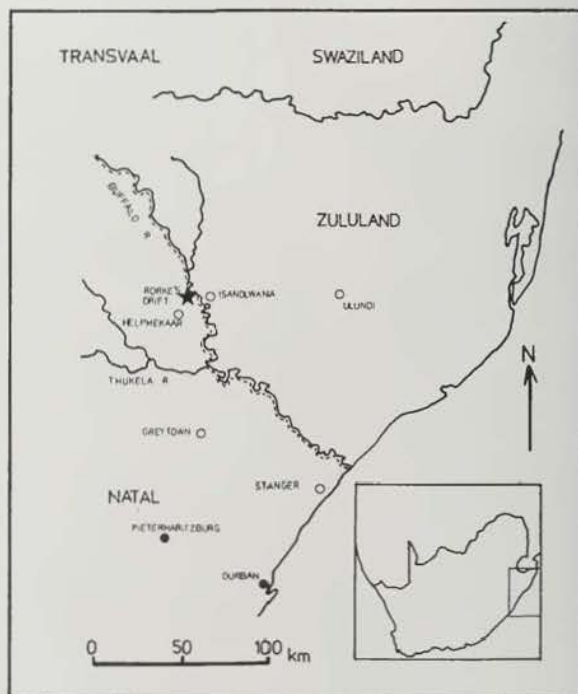


Fig. 1. The location of Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana on a map of northern Natal and Zululand, ca 1878.

Before the Central Column descended on Rorke's Drift, Assistant Commissary Chermiside turned the church into a commissariat store and the missionary's 'eleven-roomed house' into a field hospital. Soon after 5 January 1879 some 4500 men, 300 wagons and carts and

1500 oxen arrived at Rorke's Drift and turned the place into a 'waste of trampled grass, mud and garbage' (Gon 1979:206). The troops crossed the river on the 11th January leaving behind B company of the 2/24th Regiment in charge of the stores at Rorke's Drift. On the 22nd January Lt. Chard, who was in charge of the ponts across the river, received note of the annihilation of at least one entire infantry battalion at Isandlwana, some 10 km from Rorke's Drift. He, together with Bromhead and Dalton, immediately set about fortifying the structures at Shiyane. Scouts sent to the top of the hill were able to watch a Zulu force of approximately 4000 men under chief Dabulamanzi (half-brother to the Zulu King, Cetshwayo kaMpande) taking snuff after crossing the river to attack the stores and hospital (Laband & Thompson 1983). Dabulamanzi had been under strict instructions not to attack positions across the border but the uDloko, iNdluyengwe, iNdlondlo and uThulwana regiments (Laband 1992), which had been held in reserve during the final attack at Isandlwana, were anxious to 'wash their spears' and eager for some of the spoils of war.

The British set up a temporary barricade of mealie-sacks, biscuit tins and meat boxes between the store and hospital, which have variously been described as 40 and 20 yards apart. Witt gave the dimensions of the store as 80 foot by 20 foot while the hospital was 60 foot by 18 foot in size (Bancroft 1991:24,25). Although the walls of the store are reported to have been of solid stone (Glover 1975), photographs taken of this structure soon after the battle indicate a combination of stone and brick (Fig.2). Both structures were loop-holed and barricaded by the troops. The hospital was described by Hook (Emery 1977:127) thus: "The ends of the building were of stone, the side walls of ordinary bricks and the inside walls or partitions of sun-dried bricks of mud." During the height of the battle, when hand-to-hand conflict took place in the hospital, holes were made in these inside partitions through which the British troops were able to escape.

During the battle itself some 20 000 rounds of ammunition were fired by the British soldiers (Barthorp 1985). The majority of these cartridge cases are likely to have fallen within the temporary barricades. The British used the Martini-Henry breech-loading rifle and, while some of the Zulu are reported to have owned obsolete firearms, such as muzzle-loading flintlocks (Glover 1975), these are considered to have had no significant effect on Zulu tactics (Laband & Thompson 1989). The hospital was set alight during the battle and the ruins offered cover to the few remaining injured Zulus the next morning. For this reason Chard ordered that the walls of the hospital be pulled down (Glover 1975). The stones of the walls were brought across to the storehouse to strengthen the redoubt.

The following day the British buried approximately 379 Zulu dead, according to Hook (Emery 1977:130), in two big holes in front of the hospital; Laband (1985) has suggested that they were tossed into grain-pits. The Zulu weapons and shields were collected and burned in a trench (Bancroft 1991). The British dead were buried in



Fig. 2. This photograph was taken after the site was abandoned and shows the Commissariat Store with the loop-holed walls of Fort Bromhead (Killie Campbell Africana Library).

a small cemetery behind the hospital. It is the only feature on the present landscape which dates to 1897, and may be used as a reference point for the location of the store and hospital (Fig. 3). While some of the men were burying the Zulu dead, "the remainder brought in stones for reconstructing and strengthening the barricades" (Child 1978:37). On the 25th February it was reported that a "fort consisting of an eight foot stone wall is also being made at Rorke's Drift" (Emery 1977:141-142). The fort was narrow and rectangular, without bastions but with its walls *en cremaillere* (Laband & Thompson 1983). There are a number of photographs as well as a sketch of this fort which has become known as Fort Bromhead (Figs 4 & 5). According to Weallans (Emery 1977:123) there were some 600-700 men occupying the same extent of ground that 90 men had occupied during the battle. The commanding officer refused to allow anyone to sleep outside "being afraid the Zulus might sweep down on the place again" (Child 1978:39). Harford continues "To make matters worse we had a lot of rain, and the interior of the fort became a simple quagmire from the trampling of so many feet. Fatigue parties were employed for the best part of the day in carrying liquid mud away and emptying the slush outside" (Child 1978:38).

In March 1879 troops started with the construction of Fort Melvill on the drift in order to both protect the pont and move the troops out of the old fort which was very unhealthy. The majority of the troops moved out in April although some stayed on until the end of the war in July. It is not known when the walls of the old fort were finally dismantled although the defences of the area were finally abandoned in October 1879. Otto Witt returned and constructed a large house and church on Shiyane after the war (Mitford 1883). There are no records indicating whether the new mission house was built on top of the foundations of the hospital or whether the church was built on the ruins of the store. It would appear however, that the eight foot high stone walling of



Fig. 3 A photograph taken from Shiyane showing the British cemetery, the Commissariat Store on the right and the ruins of the hospital on the left near the tree (The National Army Museum, Chelsea).

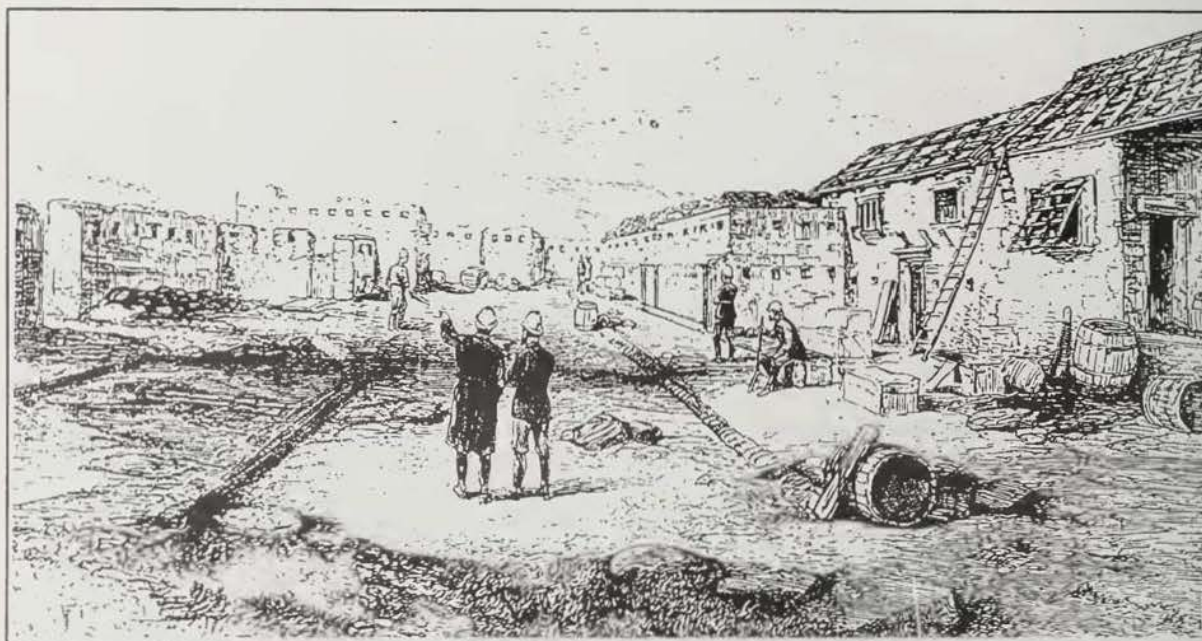


Fig. 4. A sketch (Illustrated London News) of the interior of the Fort looking in a north-easterly direction, with the Store on the right.

the old fort was demolished and the stone used in the construction of the new buildings.

Witt's house and church are still standing and while the latter structure continues to function in daily use the former has now been converted into a museum. The land on which the battlefield is located still belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church but has been let to the Natal Provincial Administration on a 99 year lease. The battlefield area was declared a National Monument in 1969.

AIM OF THE EXCAVATIONS

Prior to the conversion of the mission house into a museum the author was requested to undertake an archaeological research programme in order to establish the following:

1. The original position of the hospital;
2. The position of the commissariat store;
3. To determine whether there was any evidence to



Fig. 5. A photograph of the site after it was abandoned with the Store clearly visible on the left and the ruins of the hospital on the right (The National Army Museum, Chelsea).

substantiate the present position of stones which have been placed to demarcate the original lines of the battle of 22-23 January 1879;

4. To try and find the foundations of Fort Bromhead which was constructed on the site immediately after the battle;
5. To determine whether any evidence could be found for the position of Zulu snipers who apparently fired at the British troops from caves in the hillside of Shiyane.

Excavations were also considered to be of a rescue nature as significant artefacts or in situ features had to be recovered before they were destroyed by building contractors. Archaeological excavations commenced in September 1988 with subsequent fieldtrips in May 1989, March, June and August 1990. Members of the Evangelical Lutheran Community assisted with the excavations during the first three fieldtrips.

1. The location of the hospital foundations

To avoid confusion regarding this structure, some of the above history is briefly summarised. Rorke's house, subsequently occupied by Witt, became the field hospital during the Anglo-Zulu War. Burnt down by the Zulu it is believed that Lutheran missionaries returning to the site rebuilt their mission house on the foundations of the hospital. It is this house which has been converted into a museum.

Since the renovation of the mission house into a museum involved digging a one metre wide trench around the building to provide an underground drainage apron, this area was sampled first through the excavation

of a number of random test pits, one metre square each (Fig. 6). Some 20 metres were excavated around the house but no trace of previous foundations was observed. The deposit around the house was nowhere very deep. At the back of the house the dark loam interfaced with a compact gravelly red clay at around 0.5 m, while the outer wall of the front of the house rests directly on top of the granite bedrock. Virtually no stratigraphic layering could be discerned. The deposit was not particularly rich anywhere except around the kitchen area where fragments of ceramics, glass and bone were recovered.

A number of trenches were then excavated inside the building. Since most of the rooms have wooden floors, excavations were limited to rooms with concrete floors. A comparison of the original floor plan of the hospital drawn by Lt John Chard (who was a Royal Engineer) with that of the plan submitted by Otto Witt when he rebuilt the mission house in 1882 indicates that the former was slightly smaller than the latter. Excavations inside the house in Room 7 uncovered several large quartzite stones which form a neat straight edge, as well as a more roughly constructed inner wall running at right angles (Fig. 7). These features probably relate to the foundations of the hospital. The deposit around these stones was rich in charcoal and pieces of melted glass which testify to the blaze relating to the battle itself.

2. The location of the Commissariat store

In order to locate the position of the British Commissariat store a trench was excavated at right angles from the present church across the battlefield toward the rocky ledge for a distance of some 12 metres (Fig. 8). As the aim of the excavation was to look for a specific

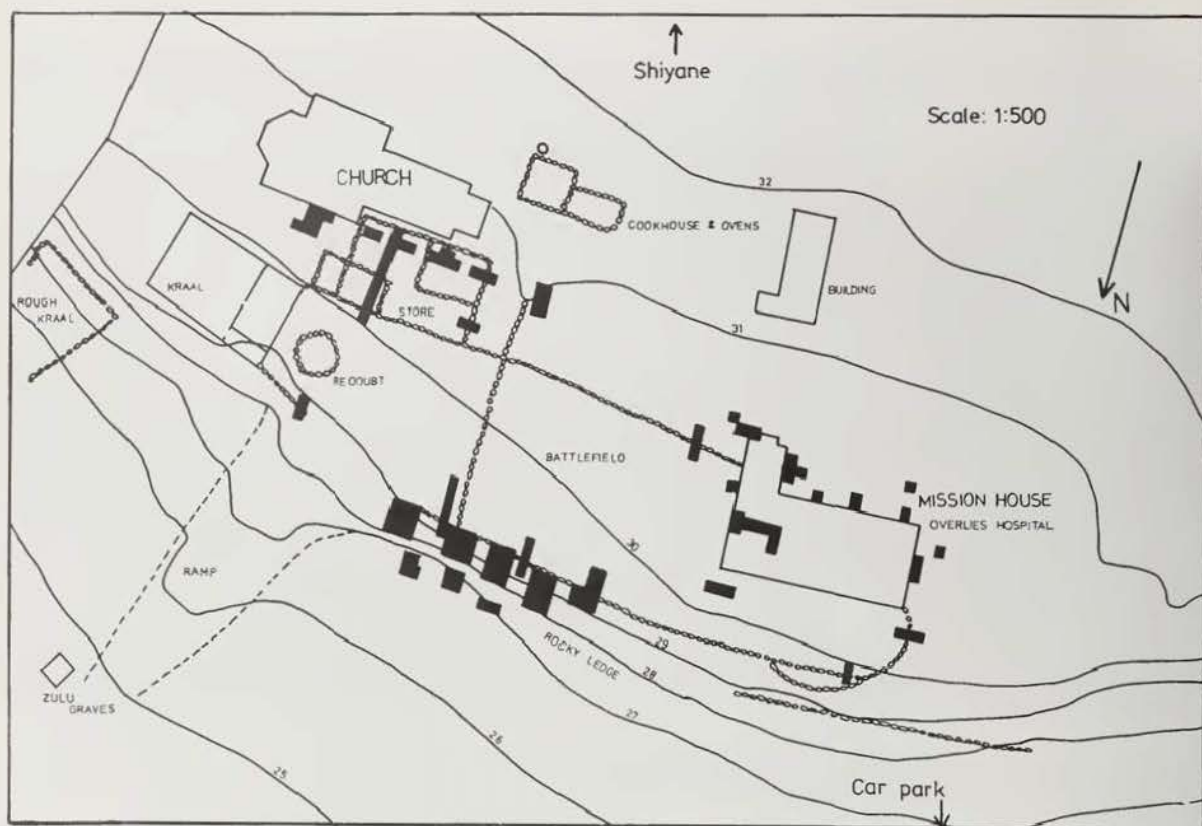


Fig. 6. A survey map indicating the position of the various features referred to in the text. The outline of the fortified area is shown as well as the position of the excavations.

feature, the trench was excavated to varying depths with picks and shovels and no sieving was undertaken. Close to the church the trench reached bedrock at about 1.2 m while near the end of the trench it was reached at only 45cm. This is because there is a pronounced slope down from the church to the kraal and the position of the original redoubt.

However, while excavating the trench some dressed stone blocks were recovered three metres from the church. Stratigraphically these stones are associated with a level of sandstone rubble and red brick some 50 cm from the soil surface. Most of the historic artefactual remains such as Martini-Henry cartridge cases and gin bottle fragments were found close to these stones. The excavation strategy was then altered to determine whether these stones were in fact the foundations of the store. Two square metres (called Extentions in my field notebooks) were uncovered to the west of the trench (Fig. 8). More dressed stones were uncovered at the same depth as the previous finds and clearly formed part of the same structure. This led to the excavation of Extentions 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Fig. 8).

Figure 9 clearly shows a well developed line of sandstone blocks, on occasions two stones high. In addition it is interesting to note the presence of decomposing red brick in association with these stones. It would appear that the store was built of both sandstone and red brick. With respect to Extention 2, large numbers of gin bottle fragments, rusted iron objects and

china were found on the inside (i.e. south) of the line of stones. Excavations in Extentions 3 and 4, however, failed to locate any evidence of an interior floor within the structure.

After following the foundations in a westerly direction, further excavations were undertaken to the east at Extention 5. The excavation of 8 square metres revealed what would appear to be the one corner of the store. The corner is well built and more substantial than the foundation stones in the other excavated areas. In addition a roughly constructed stone wall angles out from this corner in a northerly direction (Fig. 10). It is suggested that this roughly built stone wall is the remains of the fortifications of Fort Bromhead. Figures 2, 3 & 5 show the 12 foot high walls built immediately after the battle linking the ruins of the hospital with the store and well-built stone kraal. The stones used for Fort Bromhead were probably used in the construction of the church, mission house and school buildings. The highest concentration of bone and Martini-Henry cartridge cases was recovered from the rubble layer in this excavated area.

It would appear that the clearly defined row of stones relate to the British Commissariat store and I would submit that the foundation stones are probably those of the outer or front wall.

3. Excavations on the battlefield

After establishing the position of the 'hospital' and



Fig. 7. Excavations in Room 7 of the house/museum indicate the interior wall of the original hospital as well as a portion of the outer foundation stones.

'store' a number of trenches were excavated to bisect the outer lines of the battlefield. Some trenches were sited along the southern margin while others were intended to sample the top of the rocky ledge to the north. Although the barricades were of a temporary nature, it was hypothesized that particularly dense numbers of cartridge cases and other military debris might indicate these lines. The absence of a clear stratigraphy on the battlefield itself suggests that both the levelling of the site prior to the construction of the new mission house and church in 1882 and gardening activities over a period of 100 years have destroyed much of the original stratigraphy. The dark loamy soil contained fragments of yellow clay, red brick lenses and the densest concentration of artefacts at depths of 0,3-0,5 m.

It was further hypothesized that artefacts relating to the battle and to the subsequent occupation of the site by British soldiers between February and March 1879 would have been dumped beneath the ledge and would thus be concentrated in this area. Three large areas were therefore excavated (Fig. 6) immediately below the ledge. Very little artefactual material was recovered from these lower excavations. The dark brown soil was very shallow and overlaid a sterile yellow clay. The deposit consisted mainly of recent builders rubble with virtually no historical material. An official from the N.P.A. Work's Branch office in Dundee told me that during the centenary celebrations at Rorke's Drift in 1979 a bulldozer had been used to 'neaten' the area below the ledge. The soil from this area may have been used to construct the ramp onto the battlefield so that visitors to the site could have more convenient access to the battlefield during the celebrations. In addition he reported that members of the public had dug extensively at Rorke's Drift and at Fort Melville during 1979 in search of artefacts relating to the battle and this is confirmed by newspaper reports from that time.

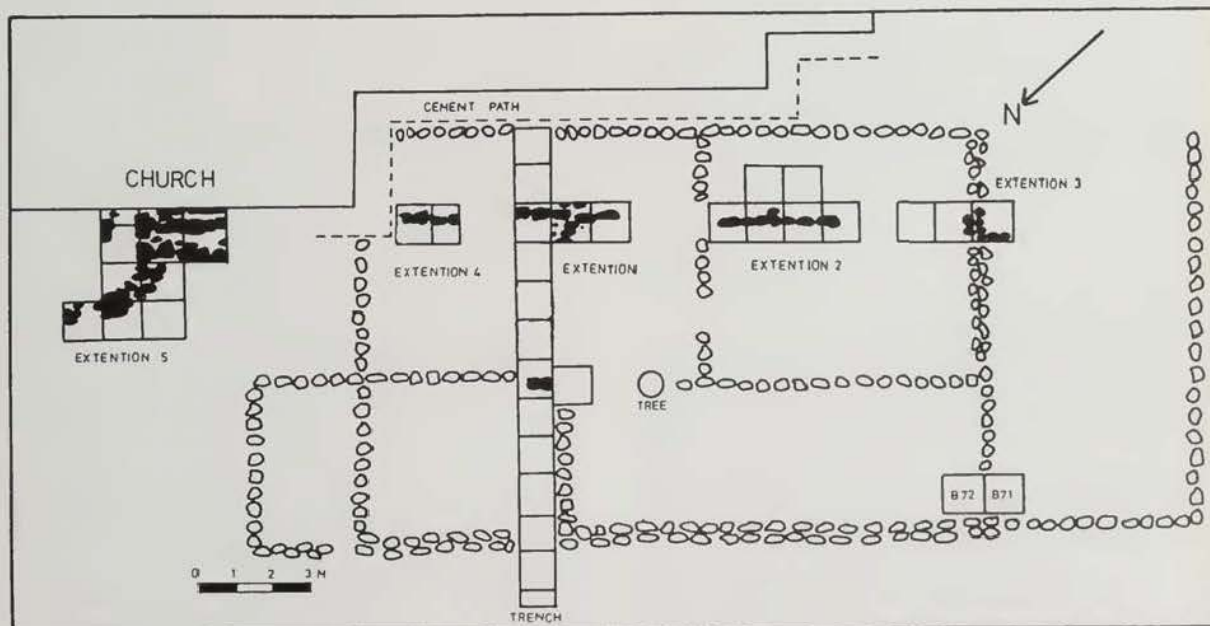


Figure 8: The excavations undertaken to determine the position of the British Commissariat Store are indicated.



Fig. 9. The foundation stones of the front wall of the Store.

4. The walls of Fort Bromhead

Sampling of the area adjoining the rocky ledge immediately to the east of the mission house was undertaken in 1988, then again in 1989 and 1990. The most extensive excavations however, were concluded in June 1990. Preliminary excavations above the rocky ledge in 1988 revealed a short section of stone 'paving'. Further excavations in 1989 toward the northern end of the ledge were not very promising but extensive excavations in 1990 appear to have located portions of stone walling belonging to Fort Bromhead. These excavations were variously called Areas as well as Upper Ledge 1-5 in my field notebooks.

It was hoped that Area 6, which lies next to the ramp leading up to the rocky ledge on the battlefield, would provide some evidence of the gate of Fort Bromhead. However, only recent builders rubble was recovered indicating that this area has been disturbed, perhaps during the construction of the ramp to the site during the centenary celebrations of 1979.

A number of areas were excavated in order to extend the stone 'pathway' first found in 1988 in squares Zd 49 and Zd 50. The first three areas (Upper Ledge 1, 2 and 3 in my notebooks) contained some stone walling but were not very rich in artefacts. Area 4 (situated next to the



Fig. 10. The corner of the Store as well as a portion of the walling of Fort Bromhead found in Extension 5.

concrete plinth), however, was rich in green bottle glass pieces. Two badges, a brass Sphinx and a brass Crown were found here. It was initially thought that the presence of a .577 slug in this area probably indicated extensive disturbance to the deposit but this view has since been re-evaluated.

The most extensive evidence for stone walling was found in Area 5. Quartzite cobbles and red brick seemed to form part of a wall (Fig. 11). The excavations were enlarged to expose more of this feature. Associated with the walling were several cartridge cases, glass, bone and iron objects. It would appear that this may be the remains of the front wall of Fort Bromhead. The wall was left in situ, photographed and then covered in plastic sheeting and sand. Portions of Fort Bromhead were therefore found along the front (northern portion) of the battlefield as well as adjoining the back corner of the British store.

5. A metal-detector survey of the slopes of Shiyane

One of the aims of the archaeological research had been to attempt to gain new insights into the Zulu side of the battle. With the possible exception of the trade beads no artefacts were recovered which could unequivocally be linked to them. With this in mind, we determined to survey the slopes of Shiyane, in particular examining the caves and ledges from which the Zulu are reported to



Fig. 11. The front walling of Fort Bromhead on top of the rocky ledge.

have fired on the British. Most of the mortalities suffered by the British were as a result of Zulu sharpshooters firing from Shiyane. Since this area has been visited by tourists for over a hundred years, we decided that a metal-detector survey would be the most economical means of recovering buried spears and spent bullets. At least three slugs of a .577 calibre were recovered from a cave overlooking the battlefield. They were within a metre of each other and were probably dropped by the same sharpshooter. The calibre of these bullets matched those of a wax-moulded bullet recovered from the front ledge of the battlefield. Furthermore, during the construction of a car park in front of the battlefield similar wax-moulded, fired slugs were recovered. These discoveries suggested that we were recovering bullets which had been used during the battle of 1879. The fact that many of these slugs were recovered from the car park area (to the north of the battlefield) confirms reports that the Zulu were overshooting their targets.

One of the spent bullets from the car park area had three rifling marks which suggested to a gun expert that it had been fired in an Enfield rifle. This would confirm observations in an article on firearms in the Zulu kingdom by Guy (1971), that muzzle loaders were fairly common in the period up to the 1870's. Both percussion Enfields and Tower muskets could be purchased cheaply by the Zulu from suppliers in Mozambique, but these weapons were frequently obsolete and ineffective.

It is tempting to link the percussion caps found on the front of the rocky ledge to muzzle loaders used by the Zulu during the battle. However, Mechanick (1979) has claimed that some of the Natal Native Contingent were still armed with muzzle-loading, percussion Enfields. The percussion caps may well have been dropped prior to the battle, before the NNC fled the scene. However, they may perhaps also be linked to James Rorke's occupation of the site. His will of 1875 lists a Rifle, a Dble (double gun?) gun and a revolver with cartridges. We may also assume that since Rorke was a trader he probably dealt in arms and ammunition.

The metal-detector survey also recovered a number of Martini-Henry slugs in the vicinity of the caves on

Shiyane suggesting that the British soldiers were shooting a distance of 400 yards or more with their rifles.

ARTEFACTUAL REMAINS

Fauna

Large samples of faunal remains were recovered from the excavations. Areas around the mission house as well as close to the rocky ledge were particularly rich in what appeared to be sheep, goat and cattle remains. The historic accounts indicate that livestock was slaughtered for the soldiers at the front of Fort Bromhead. I have tentatively identified pig and baboon from the site. Other finds include a piece of ivory tooth and a grooved and snapped bone tube.

Metal

Two iron hoes were recovered behind the mission house next to doorways which have since been bricked in. The hoes were planted vertically in the soil and were used as shoe scrapers by the missionaries. Rusted nails were most commonly recovered. Other finds include buttons, buckles, tins, a spoon and a fork handle, a penknife, a trowel, iron bars, the heel of a boot, watch chains, brass razor blades, regimental buttons, small brass containers and coins including an 1862 Queen Victoria half penny. The sphinx badge (of the 24th regiment) would probably have been worn on the collar (Fig. 12), while the crown badge had probably broken off a helmet (Fig.13).



Fig. 12. The Sphinx badge.

A total of 33 Martini-Henry cartridge cases and 7 unfired Martini-Henry bullets are all that bear testimony to the battle (Fig. 14). Eleven percussion caps were found to the front of the rocky ledge (Fig. 15). Unusual calibres include a .38 Smith and Wesson cartridge. One 12-bore shotgun firing pin was recovered from Extention 5 among all the Martini-Henry cartridges suggesting that other firearms may also have been used during the battle. It is possible that this cartridge dates to the occupation of the site after the battle as many officers owned their own hunting rifles. The wax-moulded slug of .577 calibre (Fig. 16) recovered from the rocky ledge matches slugs found in both a cave on Shiyane and in the car park area



Fig. 13. The Crown badge.



Fig. 14. Martini-Henry cartridge cases.

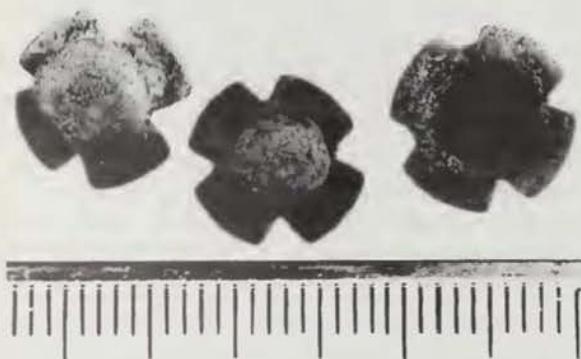


Fig. 15. Percussion caps.

to the front of the actual fortified area. They present new light on the Zulu side of the battle.

Glass

Of interest were the many pieces of melted glass around the kitchen area of the mission house and under the floor in the excavated room. They suggest a high



Fig. 16. A .577 slug from in front of the battlefield.

temperature which may be related to the fire in the hospital. Generally most of the glass fragments from the excavation were either olive green or aqua coloured. One bottle stopper bore the embossed letters of Lea & Perrins. The majority of glass fragments recovered near the store were dark green and probably derive from spirit bottles. Two square-based gin bottles were partially reconstructed; one had the name 'Schiedam' embossed on the side, another had 'Schiedam' embossed on a shoulder seal.

Ceramics

Large numbers of ceramic pieces were recovered, the majority from around the mission house and very few from the store area. Several potsherds were found around the mission house. They are all undecorated and it is impossible to determine whether they predate 1849 or are contemporary with the historic occupation. However, the sherds are most common around the kitchen area and were found together with imported glass and china fragments. This may indicate that either Rorke or the later missionaries used locally fired clay pots or employed people who did.

A large number of stoneware, earthenware and porcelain pieces from many different vessels were recovered. The only two trademarks identified were those of 'Doulton, Lambeth' and Messrs T.C. Brown-Westhead, Moore & Co. of Cauldon, which may be dated between 1872 and 1904. In general the collection is difficult to identify or date. Many of the ceramics show signs of being burnt. Other ceramic finds include fragments of clay pipe stems (the names Limerick, Glasgow and Ducall were incised on three of the stems) and bowls, a fragment of a china doll's head and fragments of an ointment jar lid.

Stone artefacts

The stone artefacts may all be described as Middle Stone Age and were recovered from the basal red gravels beneath the historical material. The morphology of the

blades and flakes suggest they probably pre-date 30 000 BP. Most of the artefacts are on indurated shale and are heavily patinated.

Miscellaneous finds

A number of glass beads were found scattered around the western section of the mission house. They probably all relate to a single beaded object. Apart from this several large, purple glass beads were also found on the battlefield.

CONCLUSIONS

All the aims of the archaeological project at Rorke's Drift were achieved but with varying degrees of success. Sections of the foundations of the hospital were recovered under the floor of room 7 in the present mission house-cum-museum. Charcoal pieces and fragments of melted glass confirm that this structure overlies the ruins of the field hospital burnt down by the Zulu.

The foundation stones on the front wall of the British Commissariat store were also located. It appears to have been largely situated underneath the present church which would mean that the marker stones used to delineate the position of the store are incorrectly placed. They should be moved back (i.e. southward or toward Shiyane) some 8 metres. Excavations have uncovered 20 metres of the front foundations of the store and it is therefore quite possible that the store could have been 80 foot in length as described by Otto Witt.

It is clear that the very intensive occupation of the battlefield for some three months after the battle probably resulted in a fairly complex stratigraphy. However, the deposit in and around the battlefield appears to have been subject to considerable disturbance right up to 1979 and it now seems unlikely that much would be gained by more extensive excavations of the area.

In addition to finding the position of the store, excavations also appear to have uncovered at least a portion of the walls of Fort Bromhead. A section of roughly constructed stone wall was found adjoining the back corner of the store while a substantial portion of walling was also uncovered on the edge of the rocky ledge.

The recovery of a .577 slug on the ledge sheds a new light on the Zulu side of the battle. It is of the same calibre as the slugs found in the car park area in March 1990 and the three slugs found in a cave on Shiyane. It would appear that the Zulu were using heavy calibre Enfield rifles or Tower muskets. It is imperative that the rifling marks on the slugs be re-examined by a firearms expert in order to verify this. One important discovery which resulted from the metal-detector survey is that it appears that the Zulu were indeed overfiring the battlefield. It is recommended that another survey be undertaken of the slopes of Shiyane once the grass has been burnt. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the present sample will be substantially increased since I believe that most of the material has been collected by visitors to the site during the last 100 years.

Aerial photographs of the mission area have

highlighted some unusual features such as cross-hatching in the field in front of the mission house and circular features near the turnstile in front of the rocky ledge. These features may be due to the British occupation of the area in 1879 but they could equally be ascribed to the agricultural activities of the missionaries; only archaeological research will solve this issue. Furthermore, I believe research should also be aimed at integrating the site with Fort Melville, the military road to Isandlwana, May's Hotel, Sihayo's kraal and Isandlwana itself as Rorke's Drift should not be viewed in isolation.

The excavations at Rorke's Drift are a salutary reminder of the significant changes which can occur at a particular site over a very short period of time (archaeologically speaking). Despite the scale of military conflict at Rorke's Drift, very few military items were recovered which support the historical accounts.

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