

Timescale of Fugitives' Drift and George Chadwick.

By Dr Adrian Greaves

George Chadwick was reputed to have been the last person to speak to a Zulu who witnessed the battle of Isandlwana –an old man who was a herd boy in 1879.

George Chadwick (1923 – 2000) was an academic historian who spent much of his life researching Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana. Post WWII, where he had fought at El Alamein he was the battlefield curator across KwaZulu Natal, his interest was equally divided between the battlefields of the Anglo Zulu War and the Boer Wars. He spent many years working for the National Monuments Council and was on the Board of Trustees of the Voortrekker Museum, but his main interest was guiding, especially at Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana. Without doubt, George was the undisputed leader in this field and nobody could rival his breath of knowledge gained over many years 'on the ground'.

I was recently reading through a pamphlet George prepared for the very first Holts' Tour of Zululand in 1988, a tour which I accompanied, and noted that he was very specific about the dates Fugitives' Drift was visited following Isandlwana. Reports from the military vary by a few days either way but George was specific and I quote ...

Fugitives' Drift was visited on 1 February when the bodies of Melvill and Coghill were found. Two days later the Reverend Smith buried them under a common cairn. On the same day a patrol commanded by Major Black searched for the colours. Descending to the river, they erected a sanger to give cover should the Zulus reappear. Lieutenant Harford saw the colour case near the bend of the river and Lieutenant Harber retrieved it. The pole with the colour still attached was found 50 meters upstream wedged in the rocky island.

This date tallies with that recorded by Colonel Glyn who mentioned the matter in his report to Colonel Crealock, Chelmsford's Military Secretary, on 1 Feb 1879.

Chadwick's account also makes an intriguing comment about Lieutenant Adendorff's short visit at Rorke's Drift during the afternoon of the 22 January.

Although firing could be heard and a black mass moved across the col at Isandlwana no definite news was received until Lieutenants Vane and Adendorff arrived at 1400 hrs. They gave the news to Chard, rode off to inform Bromhead and left for Helpmakaar. Chard rode up to the station to find that Bromhead had received the news in a note from Captain Essex. He had already struck the tents and moved two wagons near to the hospital with the intention of moving the sick to Helpmakaar.

Donald Morris confirmed in his *The Washing of the Spears* that, after reporting the Zulu approach to Rorke's Drift, both (Vane and Adendorff) rode on to Helpmakaar. We are left with Chard's comment in his account that 'as far as I know' Adendorff remained at Rorke's Drift for the defence. This is still the only known reference to Adendorff being at Rorke's Drift during the engagement.