

An Imperial Progress

The 94th Regiment in Zululand

By Ian Castle

The news of the disastrous engagement at Isandlwana in Zululand brought a rapid response from the British government. Although it had hoped to avoid a war, with pressures mounting elsewhere in the world, the die was cast and Parliament acted swiftly to authorize the despatch of reinforcements to Natal. One of the regiments destined to join this force was the 94th Regiment, stationed at that time in Aldershot. A telegram received at Headquarters on the evening of 11 February 1879 warned the regiment to hold itself in readiness to proceed to South Africa for service in the field.

Six days later, on 17 February, H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge inspected the regiment as it prepared for departure. In order to bring the regiment up to its war establishment a number of volunteers joined the strength. On 21 February 259 were signed up, the following day a further 32 and on 24 February a final draft of 57, giving a total addition of 348 volunteers. Then, on 25 February, 'A' Company under Captain J. Browne left for Southampton to prepare their transport, the *SS China*. The following day Captain Buller and 188 NCOs and men proceeded to Armagh where they were to join the Depot, being declared unfit for duty. At the same time the Headquarters and remaining seven companies of the 94th left for Southampton and embarked on *SS China* that same morning. The total strength of the regiment on board was 28 officers and 897 other ranks. The officers are as listed:

Lt. Col. Commanding
S. Malthus

Majors
J. Murray
P.R. Anstruther

Captains
J. Browne
W.E. Montague
F.B. Campbell
G.R.S. Bowlby
G. Froom
S.N.McL. Nairne
E.S. Brook

Lieutenants
J.H. Pöe
H.W.W. Spooner
H.F.G. Campion
J. MacSwiney
H.A.C. Harrison
J. de C. O'Grady

2nd Lieutenants
R.G. Wolrige-Gordon
F.H. Carroll
E. Harding
A.W.D. Maclean
H. Cowper
A.D. Campbell
G.L.E. Massey
J.J.F. Hume
L.L. Nicol

Adjutant
Lieut. L.G. Brooke

Paymaster
Capt. J.M. Elliot

Quartermaster
P. Lacey

On 26 February the *SS China* left Southampton. Having refuelled at St. Vincents she reached Simon's Bay on 25 March. Four days later the ship put to sea once more and completed the last stage of her journey to Durban, which she reached on 2 April after a journey of 35 days. This was an opportune moment for the 94th Regiment to arrive in South Africa. On that same day Lord Chelmsford had defeated the Zulus at Gingindlovu and was about to raise the siege of Eshowe, thus marking the end of the first stage of the war. It would now be possible to put in place those plans that would herald the second invasion and a chance to bring the war to a close. The 94th disembarked the same day, no doubt eager to get back to dry land. It would be three long years before they re-embarked for home. In that time they would endlessly tramp backwards and forwards across Natal, Zululand and the Transvaal; many would not make that return journey.

They set up their camp just outside Durban, close to the 2/21st Regiment. However, the 2/21st marched off the next day and it was another three days, on 6 April, before the 94th received orders to commence their march to the front. The first part of the journey was easy, by train to Botha's Hill, and then began the first of the countless marches that marked their time in southern Africa. Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal, was reached on 8 April and after a couple of days rest the 94th left the city on 11 April, bound for Greytown, where it arrived on 14 April. Men of the 2/4th Regiment had garrisoned the town since January but now these men were to

march on and rejoin their regiment, it falling to the 94th to provide a new garrison of two companies. This tedious task fell to Captain Froom's C Company and E Company under Captain Pöe (1). In a letter to his wife, Major Anstruther reported that he felt Froom was 'in a thundering rage' over the decision (2). The main body of the regiment, Headquarters and six companies, left Greytown on 16 April and marched through the rugged thorn country via Helpmekaar to Dundee where it arrived on 24 April. Two days later, as the army massed for the second invasion, the divisional commander, Major General Newdigate, inspected the 94th. On 27 April the regiment marched on to Conference Hill, the supply depot and base for the II Division's advance. The march was slow as the 94th had to escort a column of 112 wagons, but eventually they reached the banks of the Buffalo River (Mzinyathi) at Landman's Drift where it took the whole of the following day to get the wagons across. On 3 May the long march was over as the column, stretching for four miles, wound up to Conference Hill on the banks of the Blood River (Ncome). The wagons were drawn up to form a square laager but this was only a temporary formation and soon a more formal defence plan was laid out. Construction began on 6 May of a square fort with a wall of stones about four feet high surrounded by a ditch and small glacis. To complete the defences two small flanking forts were added, each built to hold a half company of infantry. Every day wagon convoys arrived and departed as the stores accumulated to provide three months supplies for the Division. However, having received confirmation that there was a practical wagon track running east from Koppie Allein that would save a fifteen-mile detour for the majority of the infantry still based at Landman's Drift, Lord Chelmsford abandoned Conference Hill as his main depot and relocated to Koppie Allein. Accordingly, on 31 May the 94th Regiment left the fort and joined the main body of II Division. The four infantry battalions of the division now formed two brigades. The 94th served with the 1/24th Regiment, formed mainly by volunteers who had transferred to the regiment after the disaster at Isandlwana and come out from England with the reinforcements. The brigade was commanded by Colonel Collingwood, 2/21st. The 58th and 2/21st formed the other brigade under Colonel Glyn, 1/24th. As the second invasion opened the Headquarters and six companies of the 94th Regiment advanced with a strength of 22 officers and 639 other ranks.

The large number of essential wagons accompanying II Division greatly slowed progress and the stunning news of the death of the Prince Imperial on 1st June, followed by the death of Lieutenant Frith of the 17th Lancers on 5 June, punctuated the march. A fort was built at the site of II Division's camp of 5 June, close to the Nondweni River, named Fort Newdigate. When, on 7 June, the Division moved on a garrison of two companies of 2/21st, a company of Native Contingent and a troop of King's Dragoon Guards were left to man it and keep communications open. A new camp set up that day on the Upoko River remained in occupation by the Division until 18 June, allowing the stockpiling of supplies brought forward from Koppie Allein. This camp was not intended to form a permanent base on the road to Ulundi, therefore, the remaining four companies of the 2/21st received orders to march on and begin construction of the next fort on the line of the advance, Fort Marshall. As two of these companies were to remain as its garrison, the regular infantry of the Division was reorganised into one single brigade under Colonel Glyn, 1/24th. Colonel Collingwood remained behind in command of the two forts. A third fort on the line of advance, Fort Evelyn, established on 23 June received a garrison of two companies of the 58th Regiment.

The II Division and Wood's Flying Column, which had been operating in concert since early June, made camp on the heights of Mthonjaneni overlooking the Mahlabatini plain and Ulundi on 27 June. On 30 June the two divisions began their march down to the banks of the White Mfolozi River, leaving behind a guard for the three wagon laagers formed on the heights, to which the 94th contributed 18 men. By the end of 2 July both divisions were finally encamped on the right bank of the White Mfolozi, within striking distance of Ulundi. On the following day the joint divisions worked on constructing a fort (Fort Nolela) and laager overlooking the river. During the day Zulu snipers opened an irritating fire from a wooded bluff on the far bank of the river, much annoying the outposts and those attempting to collect water from the river. To oppose this the guns were placed on a commanding position and two companies of the 94th were sent out to support the fatigue parties. These were D Company commanded by Captain Bowlby and G Company under Captain Campbell.

The Battle of Ulundi, the final battle of the Anglo Zulu War, took place on 4 July after a combined force from the II Division and Flying Column crossed the river and formed a large hollow rectangle before advancing across the Mahlabatini Plain. The battle resulted in a crushing defeat for the Zulu army. The 94th marched with 20 officers and 593 other ranks. Officers present were as follows:

Lt. Col. Commanding

S. Malthus

Majors

(Bvt. Lt.Col.) J. Murray
P.R. Anstruther

Captains

J. Browne (A coy.)
F.B. Campbell (G coy.)
G.R.S. Bowlby (D coy.)
S.N.McL. Nairne (F coy.)
E.S. Brook (B coy.)

<u>Lieutenants</u>	<u>2nd Lieutenants</u>	<u>Adjutant</u>
H.W.W. Spooner (H coy.)	R.G. Wolrige-Gordon (A coy.)	Lieut. L.G. Brooke
H.F.G. Campion (D coy.)	E. Harding (H coy.)	
J. MacSwiney (F coy.)	A.D. Campbell (Queen's Colour)	
H.A.C. Harrison (B coy.)	G.L.E. Massey (Regimental Colour)	
J.de C. O'Grady (G coy.)	J.J.F. Hume (A coy.)	
	L.L. Nicol (G coy.)	

The 94th Regiment's six companies represented the strongest force with II Division at the battle; the 2/21st and 58th being reduced to two and four companies respectively. The regiment suffered from Zulu musketry with two men killed and 13 wounded (3). In his official despatch, Newdigate, commanding II Division wrote, '...The 94th occupied the rear face with its left adjoining the right of the 2nd Batt. 21st and also the left face of the square - Colonel Malthus commanded his battalion most efficiently. The companies in the rear face under the command of Major Anstruther whose conduct during the whole day is deserving of high commendation. The Adjutant of this regiment Lieut. Brooke rendered great assistance.' Colonel Glyn, commanding the Brigade also mentioned the regiment in his report. He wrote, '... In the meantime the columns of the enemy which I had noticed at first had moved round to the back of a ridge about 300 yards from our left rear and opened a brisk fire on the 94th Regiment from which they suffered some loss. The enemy were, however, dislodged from there by steady volleys fired by sections of this regt.'

After the battle the combined force re-crossed the river and spent the night in the camp they had occupied the previous two nights. On 6 July both divisions returned to Mthonjaneni where they remained, Chelmsford preparing for the return march. Two days later orders were received here from Sir Garnet Wolseley, who been sent out from England to take supreme control, which led to Lord Chelmsford's resignation and return home. On 9 July the two divisions separated, the II Division returning via the line of forts and the Flying Column, moving south-east via KwaMagwaza and St. Paul's towards the I Division which had been operating near the coast. Two companies of the 94th Regiment, Captain Browne's (A Coy.) and Captain Brook's (B Coy.) both under Major Anstruther, were to accompany the Flying Column as far as KwaMagwaza where they were to garrison a small fort which was to be built there (Fort Albert).

The rest of the regiment reached camp on the Upoko River on 15 July where it rested for a few days before the remaining four companies of the 94th recommenced their march on to Fort Newdigate. Orders authorising the break up of II Division directed its elements home or on to other duties. On 26 July the four 94th companies, with 2nd Company R.E., marched about 12 miles northeast from Fort Newdigate to build a new fort in the valley of the White Mfolozi. The fort, two small redoubts in echelon, originally known to the men as Fort Malthus in honour of their commanding officer was shortly after re-named Fort Cambridge by order of Sir Garnet Wolseley. On 5 August the two companies left to garrison Fort Albert at KwaMagwaza, relieved of their duty, marched in to Fort Cambridge with a column under Lt. Col. Baker Russell. Included in this column were some new drafts for the 94th. This column was to operate in northern Zululand and pacify any troublesome groups in the area while searching for the fugitive Zulu king, Cetshwayo.

Leaving Captain Bowlby and D Company as garrison of Fort Cambridge, Baker Russell's column set out on 9 August, the mounted and foot elements taking separate routes. The following day the column reunited close to a deserted Norwegian mission station, about 11 miles east of Fort Cambridge, where they built Fort George. On 13 August the mounted men went on a patrol to search for Cetshwayo, leaving Lt. Col. Malthus in command of the fort. The patrol was unsuccessful but when it returned two days later Malthus could report that he had accepted the submission of a number of local headmen and taken a large quantity of arms. During the following week further reconnaissances brought the peaceful submission of the remaining headmen in the locality. New orders now sent Baker Russell's column further north. Therefore on 25 August, leaving Major Anstruther with Captain Nairne (F Coy.) and Lieutenant Campion (now in command of H Coy.)(4), the main body of the column returned to Fort Cambridge where Captain Bowlby and D Company rejoined. Marching north on 26 August the column advanced towards Hlobane Mountain. Camp was made at the mountain on 29 August where the 94th began construction of a defensive earthwork, named Fort Piet Uys, in honour of the Boer leader who had died whilst fighting for the British at Hlobane in the war. It was here on 30 August that the two companies left at Greytown in April (C & E) rejoined the regiment at the same time that the column received news of the capture of Cetshwayo.

The next role for Baker Russell's column was the subjugation of the recalcitrant marauder Manyanyoba kaMaqondo who had his stronghold in the mountains overlooking the Ntombe valley. On 1 September Baker Russell's column left Fort Piet Uys, leaving Captain L.G. Brooke with G Company as garrison (5). On the same day Major Anstruther with F and H companies marched from Fort George to Fort Cambridge. By 3 September Anstruther had reached Fort Piet Uys. Baker Russell was encamped close to the Phongolo River by 4 September

and on the same day his mounted men had a small inconclusive skirmish with a group of Manyanyoba's adherents.

Baker Russell launched an attack against Manyanyoba's mountain cave stronghold on 5 September. Three companies of the 94th took part in the attack (A, C and D), which was successful this time but Manyanyoba escaped capture. Explosive charges placed to destroy the cave entrances, ensured they would not serve as a future rallying point, a task not completed until 8 September. Before the work was completed the three companies that had been encamped at Fort Piet Uys on 3 September (F, G and H) arrived at the Phongolo and so for the first time since 16 April all eight companies of the 94th Regiment were together. On 8 September another attempt to capture Manyanyoba failed to take the elusive leader. This attack by the 2/4th Regiment received support from the 94th. The 2/4th, based at Fort Clery in Luneburg, lost two men in the attack. The relentless pursuit of Manyanyoba continued until finally, on 19 September, he surrendered.

The column crossed the Phongolo River on 9 September and moved to a new camp a few miles beyond at Myer's mission station, close to the site of the attack on the camp of a detachment of the 80th Regiment at the Ntombe Drift on 12 March 1879. The following day the column was broken up, all the mounted men and artillery proceeding to Utrecht. In its place a new column was formed consisting of all eight companies of the 94th, 2nd Company R.E. and Ferreira's Horse. In addition a troop, about 40 strong, of mounted infantry was formed from men of the 94th and 2/4th Regiments (6). The mounted infantry of the 94th were commanded by Lieutenant J. de C. O'Grady. On 15 September Lt.Col. Malthus said goodbye to his regiment and departed on six months' leave, the command passing to Brevet Lt. Col. Murray.

The period of inactivity that followed did not seem to sit well with the 94th and news that they were to march into the Transvaal on 4 October was well received. Their destination was to be Middelburg and it was hoped their appearance in the country would have a calming effect on the Boers who were displaying signs of unrest. Then, if the problems Britain had inherited with the Pedi people of Sekhukhune, when it annexed the Transvaal in 1877, had not been resolved the column was to form an expedition and subdue this other great symbol of resistance to British expansion. When the column marched the strength of the 94th Regiment was as follows:

19	Officers
37	Sergeants
17	Drummers
38	Corporals
711	Privates

The 94th Regiment had now been away for eight months yet they were still wearing the same uniforms that they wore the day they boarded ship in February. Major Anstruther described their appearance to his wife in one of his regular letters:

You would laugh if you saw the state of rags our men are in. Their coats are all in rags having been patched like Irishmen with every conceivable colour & stuff and their braces are positively absent. Some few managed to buy corduroy trousers at Greytown and they are simply in rags & torn but the bulk of the regiment is wearing (and has been the whole time, having no other) the suit they embarked on the 'China'..... and have never worn anything else day or night..... They are better off for boots than anything but bad is the best. I found 2 men riding on a waggon today and found their captains had put them there as they had no boots at all..... The helmets too have been slept in and on so often that there is no shape about them..... and when the men lose their helmets they make skin caps out of the hides of beasts as they are killed.

And so the 94th Regiment left Zululand, clad in tattered rags but proud of their achievements. For their services they would be granted a new honour for their Colours (7). They marched into the Transvaal where all eight companies of the regiment took part in the successful attack on Sekhukhune's stronghold on 28 November 1879. In 1880 the 94th were widely distributed throughout the Transvaal, garrisons being established in Pretoria (E and G companies), Lydenburg (A and F companies), Wakkerstroom (C company), Marabastad (B company), Standerton (H company) and Newcastle in northern Natal (D company). It was during the re-concentration of the companies in December 1880, in response to outbreaks of civil disorder by the Boers that A and F companies were attacked at Bronkhorstspuit in what proved to be the opening clash of the First Boer War. The 94th lost one officer (Lieutenant Harrison) and 53 men killed in the carnage of the attack. Another four officers and 88 men received wounds of which three officers (Lt.Col. Anstruther, Captain Nairne and Captain MacSwiney) and 18 men later died. One officer and 105 men became prisoners of the Boers. The other six companies of the regiments spent the war besieged by the Boers; C, D and H in Standerton, E and G in Pretoria, B in Marabastad, and a small detachment of 50 men in Lydenburg.

At the conclusion of the war the Regiment remained in the Transvaal until the final ratification of the convention with the Boers, then on 5 November 1881 they commenced their march back to Natal. After almost three eventful years the end of the regiment's service in southern Africa was in sight. Having encountered the Zulu, Pedi and Boer on the field of battle, faced the ravages of disease, the extremes of weather, the boredom of garrison duty and endured the claustrophobia of siege life, it was time to return home. On 24 March 1882 seven companies embarked on the *Dublin Castle* and sailed for Queenstown, Cork where they arrived on 20 April. The remaining company sailed on 27 March and disembarked at Queenstown on 25 April. As they boarded a train bound for barracks at the Curragh much had changed at home too. It was the 94th Regiment that had embarked for Natal when news of Isandlwana first broke, but now it was as the 2nd Battalion Connaught Rangers that these sun-baked warriors returned.

References.

1. Lieutenant Pöe had been made Captain on 1 Feb. 1879. Other officers left as part of garrison were 2nd Lts. F.H. Carroll, A.W.D. Maclean and H. Cowper.
2. See Page 14 Butterfield, Dr. P.H. (Editor), *War and Peace in South Africa 1879 – 1881 – The writings of Philip Anstruther and Edward Essex*, Melville, S.A., 1986.
3. Figures from *Narrative of Field Operations* and *Record of Service* (See below).
4. Captain H.W.W. Spooner (H coy.) is mentioned in Major Anstruther letter to his wife of 3 August 1879 as having had '...leave to go home pending retirement.' Butterfield, pge. 42.
5. L.G. Brooke had been Lieutenant and Adjutant at Ulundi on 4 July. However, his promotion to Captain was dated back to 15 April 1879. His replacement as adjutant was Lieutenant H.A.C. Harrison.
6. See Butterfield, page 59.
- 7: The 94th Regiment was entitled to the Honour 'South Africa 1879' but when the awards were announced in 1882 the 94th had amalgamated with the 88th Regiment and become the 2nd Battalion Connaught Rangers. Due to the previous service of the 88th on the Cape Frontier the Honour was awarded as 'South Africa 1877-78-79'. No Battle Honour, medal or bar was issued for the campaign against Sekukune in 1879 or the Boers in 1881.

Sources.

National Army Museum - 6807/390

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