

ZULU DAWN: A Review

By John McAdam

The film *Zulu Dawn* evokes all that is British and is still highly popular with cinema and television audiences in Great Britain and all those peoples who value our national character and British pluck, but this international marketplace is not sufficient to generate the required gross profits. The one country in the world where a film must succeed, if it is to realise these expected financial returns, is the United States of America. Unfortunately, the film did not rise to such high expectations and was therefore deemed a failure in that vast cinema going country. The principal reason for this failure was simply that there was minimal American presence, no leading character in the storyline, which could be played by an American star with whom the American public could identify. Fortunately, the film's director, Douglas (Duggy) Hickox, was British and faithful to his country's heritage. Totally ignoring commercial considerations, he nobly remained true to the storyline by keeping it a British epic of courage, self-sacrifice and valour. No doubt, if the producers had cast Henry Fonda as Lord Chelmsford, explaining that our noble Lord was really an American fighting for the British, just as Prince Louis, the Prince Imperial was French; the film would have been a huge international and commercial success.

A film can be placed in one of many categories, ranging from a 1st Feature film through musicals, documentary and drama documentary, commercials, promotional, political, industrial, training, children's and cartoons. It is with this knowledge in mind that I will now review the film *ZULU DAWN*, a 1st Feature film based on the battle of Isandlwana, the greatest military disaster in British colonial history which occurred in a matter of hours on the 22nd January 1879.

The DVD package states that this is a 'Wide Screen Presentation'; and compared with the well-established old 4:3 aspect ratio of the late 1970's when it was made I suppose it was. But in subsequent years, film formats with wrap-around stereo sound systems have expanded beyond all expectations through Vista-Vision into Cinemascope, Cinerama and now IMAX.

The film opens with the ubiquitous African sunrise showing a Zulu warrior by his kraal and a procession of Zulu maidens in silhouette as a backing for the major credit sequence, reminding us all that we are in rural Africa. This is both appropriate and original as the title of the film is *ZULU DAWN*. With a great cacophony of Zulu stamping and dancing, we are thrown into a rumbustious Zulu dance sequence at the Royal Kraal, before King Cetshwayo, played by Simon Sabela who was the only black actor to play in *ZULU*, *SHAKA ZULU* and *ZULU DAWN*. The Zulu impi had been summoned and they were paraded in their regimental order, yet the shield patterns, which in 1879 would have denoted the particular Zulu regiment in the amaButho system, were not observed. There was a general mix; research should have been undertaken, especially as the assembled Zulus were attending King Cetshwayo at his Royal Kraal, where the order of presentation would have been strictly observed. The music was written by Elmer Bernstein, and contained echoes of his highly successful film *The Magnificent Seven*, which was more synonymous with the American prairie than the African veldt. Although not as internationally well known, I do believe that South African composer Johnny Clegg, famous for his combination of Western/Zulu music, would have composed a score more faithful to the storyline.

The next scene moves indoors to the study of Sir Henry Bartle Frere, played by Sir John Mills, who is in a very private, even secretive conference with Lord Chelmsford, played by Sir Peter O'Toole, as they are conniving to invade Zululand. This conference was so private that they didn't inform or even seek permission from Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Prime Minister Disraeli or even the British government until after the disaster at Isandlwana. This scene is steeped in intrigue; Sir Henry Bartle Frere is composing the famous ultimatum to King Cetshwayo, which ran to 4,000 words and not the 38 words on a single sheet of paper as shown in the film,

Her Majesty's Government hope that by the exercise of prudence and by meeting of the Zulus in a spirit of forbearance and reasonable compromise it will be possible to avert the very serious act of war with Cetshwayo.

Sir Henry had been ably assisted in the composition of this lengthy document, which was to change the culture and existing life style of the Zulu nation. The original ultimatum placed impossible demands on King Cetshwayo and his inability to comply with the demands gave the British the excuse to invade Zululand.

The film moves to Sir Henry's study, where, in the background, we see a bust of Queen Victoria wearing her Empress of India crown, which was presented to her in late 1877. With the problems of

communication and transportation in 1879 Natal, I doubt whether such a sculpture could have been commissioned, cast and delivered to Natal in such a short space of time. I believe the property department obtained a bust of Queen Victoria - irrespective of design and dates - and placed it in view. Sir Henry is wearing spectacles, which are called 'cresta half eye', and that design didn't appear until 1914. He should have been wearing *pince-nez*, with a golden cord attached to his lapel buttonhole, which was the fashion for gentlemen of his calling in 1878.

Lord Chelmsford is then seen with his Acting Military Secretary, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel John North Crealock, mounted on thoroughbred chargers. Peter O'Toole, who played Lord Chelmsford, couldn't stand horses or any other four-legged animal, so a stand-in had to be substituted for the walk-off. The make-up department rather over compensated on the rather large nose, with echoes of Cyrano de Bergerac.

Additionally, we have two Lancers acting as escort to Lord Chelmsford with a further troop trotting in the background, and attractive as they are, they are all incorrectly dressed. Besides being armed with both cavalry sword and Martini-Henry carbine, the 17th Lancers' principle weapon was the 9ft long, 1868 pattern bamboo lance sporting the red and white pennon, just below the spear point. When they eventually arrived in South Africa, they were issued with a white Foreign Service helmet, with no spike on the crown as shown in the film. Their very elaborate uniform included a double breasted tunic in dark blue with a plastron front of white facing colour and not the bright red panel over the chest as shown in the film. The back of the tunic had a slashed flap, piped in white and the waist belt was of red and gold stripes. Lord Chelmsford made a special request for more regular cavalry from England and the 17th Lancers were despatched, but they didn't arrive in South Africa until the 7th April 1879, six weeks after Isandlwana. In the following scene we have a Natal Carbineer, wearing a blue helmet, whereas he should have been wearing a white helmet. Blue helmets for the Natal Carbineers were introduced post - 1879; this, together with numerous costume errors, is a hallmark of this film.

The 24th Regiment of Foot is paraded on the Natal cricket ground in Pietermaritzburg with their very fine cricket pavilion, which is still operational today, and is undoubtedly a very attractive backdrop. The only problem is anachronistic, in that the foundation stone for this very fine pavilion wasn't laid until 22nd June 1897 and the pavilion wasn't completed until the 24th May 1898, only 19 years after this scene was played. The adjutant, Lieutenant Teignmouth Melvill, who won a posthumous Victoria Cross for saving the Queen's Colour, is inspecting a section of the 24th Regt. He is looking down the barrels of their Martini-Henry rifles in an extremely dangerous and unprofessional way. The parade should have been ordered to 'Port Arms', which brings the rifle diagonally across the chest, with the breech open and the right thumb placed inside the breechblock. The inspecting officer would then, and only then, examine the degree of fouling within the rifling inside the barrel. The soldier's thumbnail in the breech had a dual purpose, providing a good reflective surface to illuminate and also reassuring the inspecting officer that no live round existed in the breech.

Lord Chelmsford then rides forward to inspect his troops and Lieutenant Melvill, played by James Faulkner, presents a very smart salute with his right hand. Unfortunately in this scene, he is wearing his sword and should therefore have drawn it from its scabbard and saluted Lord Chelmsford with his sword and not given a hand salute.

We then have the comedy sketch of Colour Sergeant Williams, played by Bob Hoskins, sending young Private Williams to tell the corporal "I love you Corporal, more than my Colour Sergeant" and the Corporal's insignia, like Sergeant Williams, is equally incorrect. The Corporal drilling the Natal Native Contingent is holding the wrong pattern of Martini-Henry rifle. In December 1878 he should be holding a Mk 1 or Mk 2, which has an external indicator. His Martini-Henry is a Mk. 4 or possibly a Wesley-Richards, both of which had internal indicators, the small 'tear-drop' button on the right of the breech, to indicate if the rifle is loaded. According to regimental records, there was no Colour Sergeant Williams serving in the 24th Regiment during December 1878. The only Sergeant Williams in the 24th Regiment at this time was a Lance Sergeant Williams and during December 1878 he was stationed at Rorke's Drift and left for Helpmakaar before the defence of the Mission Station on 22nd January 1879. Colour Sergeant Williams is wearing a red sash over his left shoulder, whereas it should have been over his right shoulder and tied on his left hand side. The only regiment in the British army to have this distinction is the Somerset Light Infantry (SLI).

The next scene shows a civilian supply wagon, surrounded by red-coated troopers clamouring for gin and other luxury goods and one foreground trooper has a moulded fibreglass Martini-Henry rifle with a badly distorted and broken barrel. The film unit were so short of Martini-Henry rifles that they made a mould and manufactured their own in the field

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony William Durnford, played by Burt Lancaster, then rides into camp on his charger, *Chieftain*, with his faithful Sergeant Major Kambula as his escort with two troopers of the Edendale contingent. In the background we see a troop of Lancers, who did not arrive in

Pietermaritzburg until after Isandlwana. When the invasion of Zululand began, Lord Chelmsford with his staff attached themselves to No. 3 Column, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Glyn (24th Regt.), leaving Durnford commanding No. 2 Column to defend the Zululand/Natal border. Just prior to his leaving Isandlwana, with two thirds of No. 3 Column, Lord Chelmsford sent Lieutenant Horace Smith-Dorrien with an urgent message to him at Rorke's Drift. He was ordered to bring his No. 2 Column, comprising his African horsemen, to Isandlwana to assist Lord Chelmsford against Matyana in the Mangeni valley.

The very artistic Director, Hickox, whose principal directorial debut was *The Killing of Sister George*, obviously thought that the British mounted 17th Lancers in their splendid red, white and blue uniforms, with regimental cavalry pennons fluttering from their lances, were much more cinematically appealing than the Basuto horsemen in khaki uniform. Durnford specially recruited Hlubi, a young Basuto chieftain who had served him so faithfully at the disastrous battle of Bushman's Pass, where Durnford tragically injured his left arm. He placed him in command of this large troop of Mounted Basuto Guides who so impressed Lord Chelmsford in the film with their riding ability as they cantered through the ranks of the drilling Natal Native Contingent. They are all immaculately uniformed with highly polished riding boots and spurs, whereas in reality they all rode superbly with only their big toes thrust into a rawhide loop, which acted as a stirrup iron. Officially known as Sikali's Native Horse, they were all enthusiastic mounted soldiers, completely loyal to their founder, and were affectionately and colloquially known as 'Durnford's Horse'. With commercial considerations taking precedence, Hickox obviously thought there was no necessity for historical truth to get in the way of a pretty picture.

The next scene opens with a close-up of a crab-like creature being taken out of a beaker of gin and Major Francis Broadfoot Russell, RA. saying "Don't leave your gin around or Harford will have it to preserve his butterfly collection". Lieutenant Harford was nicknamed 'the beetle collector' and he was only 21 years of age in 1878, yet was played by Ronald Pickup who must have been in his late 30's. Harford would have preserved his beetles in brandy or whisky, which are grain based, but never gin from the juniper berry.

The film then moves on to Lieutenant Colonel Pulleine with Lieutenants Nevill Coghill and Teignmouth Melvill. Every photograph I have ever seen of Pulleine shows him wearing a very large moustache and described as below average height. Denholm Elliot playing him is 6ft tall and clean-shaven: all three are incorrectly dressed. Melvill speaks to his friend Coghill, "I hear he (Lord Chelmsford) is thinking of making Colonel Durnford, 2nd in command – asking an Engineer to do soldier's work" and this very same 'Engineer officer' myth was also perpetuated throughout the film *ZULU*. Royal Engineer officers entered the 'Shop' at Woolwich as gentlemen cadets – without purchase on pure merit, as opposed to family and social connections or wealth to buy a commission. They were trained as fighting soldiers, but had specialist training in building and maintaining roads, fortifications, bridges, signals (line and heliograph), etc. Many Royal Engineer officers rose to the highest rank of command, such as Field Marshal Lord Kitchener RE, General (Chinese) Gordon RE, General Sir George Graham RE, VC, General Sir Charles Warren RE, and Lieutenant John Rouse Merriott Chard RE, VC, who commanded the successful defence of the Mission Station at Rorke's Drift, and was awarded the Victoria Cross as a fighting soldier.

Durnford is now seen wearing the insignia of a Full Colonel. Admittedly he was promoted on the 31st December 1878, but serving in Southern Africa, it is unlikely he would have been aware of the promulgation in London, as it certainly took more than three weeks for news to reach Cape Town, let alone Pietermaritzburg, which is inland from Durban. All contemporary photographs show Durnford as balding, and even the Zulus described Durnford as having a 'very large drooping moustache'. Durnford was born in Ireland in 1830; he was the eldest son of General E.W. Durnford, Colonel Commandant, and Royal Engineers. After graduating from the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, Durnford obtained a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. He would have had an upper class English accent – certainly not Irish.

Lord Chelmsford with his Acting Military Secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Crealock, then gallop towards camera and in the background there are soldiers carrying Martini-Henry carbines, whereas they had already been issued with Martini-Henry rifles, Mk.1 or Mk.2.

At Isandlwana in January 1879, only the Royal Artillery had Snider carbines, which were the shorter version, to defend their field guns, The Irregular Horse troopers were equipped with carbines, but mainly Swinburne-Henrys.

Returning to the cricket pitch and pavilion, The Honourable Standish William Prendergast Vereker proves his ability to shoot from the saddle at the gallop. The comedy sketch between Colour Sergeant Williams, played by Bob Hoskins and Private Williams, played by actor Dai Bradley, who came to prominence when he featured in the Ken Loach film *KES* continues. As Vereker fires at the side of

beef, the latter falls in the mud, apparently shot dead and we have a shot of Colour Sergeant Williams shouting, “You’ve stopped Private Williams”.

Following the impressive ‘riding and shooting’ scene, Durnford calls for Lieutenant Charles Raw, played by Nicholas Clay, of the Natal Native Horse (Sikali Horse) to “take Mr Vereker to the mess and introduce him”. Charlie Raw appears in a very pretty powder blue uniform, which is much too light blue, again, authenticity is sacrificed in favour of art.

When Lieutenants Charlie Raw and Vereker enter the mess tent on a December 1878 evening, Lord Chelmsford is sitting quietly in the corner reading *THE NATAL WITNESS*. The date of that edition is Thursday, 23rd January 1879, the day after the disaster at Isandlwana. Not only was Lord Chelmsford not there in that chair reading that newspaper in the mess tent, but also there was no camp at Isandlwana. A keen eye can just read the date below the newspaper title. Lord Chelmsford is wearing his KCB and just like Durnford, he would have been unaware that this award had been promulgated in faraway London.

Vereker walks into the Officers’ Mess and greets Lord Chelmsford like an old friend and on Christian name terms, which is extraordinary, considering their difference in military rank. Vereker was twenty-five years old and the third son of Viscount Gort. Under primogeniture, there was no room in the nest for younger sons and little enough room in England, especially if they were not attracted to the Army, the Navy, the Church or the Bar. Vereker was educated at Oxford and the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester and for a while had thoughts of becoming a gentleman farmer. He then embarked for Capetown and by August of 1878 he had drifted to the Transvaal. The British operations against Sekukuni were about to begin and Vereker enlisted as a trooper in the Frontier Light Horse under the command of Colonel Redvers Buller. He did well in this campaign and his exploits came to the notice of Commandant Lonsdale, who immediately offered him a commission in the 3rd Regiment of the Natal Native Contingent.

The part of Vereker, is played by Simon Ward, who came to cinematic prominence when, as an unknown actor, he was cast as ‘The Young Winston’ (Churchill) in the film of the same name in 1965. During the opening scene in the film he is seen chatting in a very familiar way with Fanny Colenso, daughter of Bishop Colenso at Lady Frere’s garden party. He casually mentions that he is farming and that it is going rather well, which is an exaggeration and possibly premature, as he had only been in South Africa for four months. The scene of Vereker galloping up to Durnford and offering his services as an officer with Sikali Horse, and his subsequent demonstration of equine and sharp shooting skills are good cinema but pure fiction. Vereker is then introduced to the members of the officers’ mess by Lieutenant Charlie Raw, which is a simple ploy, enabling the cinema audience to recognise and identify who is who in the officer class. Raw calls out, “Sergeant Murphy, drinks for the stranger”. Regimental records show there were lots of Murphys serving in South Africa, but no mess or canteen stewards of that name. The only Lance Sergeant Murphy in South Africa left Zululand in 1877.

Lieutenant Jackson, wearing a monocle, is introduced as an ADC to Lord Chelmsford, which is not so, as he didn’t have a Jackson on his staff. There were only two Jacksons serving as officers in the British army in South Africa during this campaign. Lieutenant Jackson (The Buffs) served with No.1 column and Surgeon Major Jackson, who didn’t serve with No. 3 Column. Also, there were only two officers with No. 3 Column, both of ‘G’ Company, 24th Regt. who wore monocles, Captain Henry Haversham Godwin-Austen and Lieutenant Charlie D’Aguilar Pope. After their death at Isandlwana, an induna of the iNgobamakhosi who killed them inspected their bodies and noticed that both men died wearing their monocles.

Lieutenant Stevenson is then introduced as an ADC to Lord Chelmsford, which is also incorrect as there was no Stevenson on his staff. A Captain Stevenson served with the Natal Native Contingent and deserted just before the defence of the mission station at Rorke’s Drift commenced. Another Captain Stevenson of the 91st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders served in South Africa, but not during the campaign of 1879.

Lieutenant Berkeley Milne of the Royal Navy, played by Chris Chittell, was on the staff of Lord Chelmsford during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and he left Isandlwana with Lord Chelmsford in the early hours of the day of the disaster. During lunch that day in the Mangeni Valley, Lord Chelmsford ordered Milne, to “kindly take your large telescope to a high point, note the events at Isandlwana”. He reported back that, although hazy, the tents were still standing and the NNC appeared to be drilling like good soldiers and all appeared to be well. Milne survived the Anglo-Zulu War 1879 and eventually found fame and failure as an Admiral at Gallipoli in World War 1. He was filmed wearing a moustache, which was not allowed in the Royal Navy. All contemporary photographs show Milne to be clean-shaven.

The film then takes us back to King Cetshwayo and the Royal Kraal at Ulundi. Enter the messenger in the magnificent form of Ken Gampu playing the ‘friend of the white masters’ who is brave enough

to confront the king with the ultimatum, as though he had just come straight from Sir Henry Bartle Frere. The truth was rather different, On the 11th December 1878, Cetshwayo's delegation consisting of three principal indunas, eleven subordinate chieftains and forty retainers met under an old fig tree on the banks of the river Tugela, at the Lower Drift, to hear the Boundary Commission's decision. In the shade of what was to become known as the Ultimatum Tree, the thirteen points of the British ultimatum were delivered and the Zulu delegation departed in fear of delivering this devastating news to King Cetshwayo. Legend tells us that they lingered at every kraal on their way home to Ulundi and what should have been a journey of three days, took them a week.

Meanwhile, Cetshwayo had learnt of the ultimatum through his friend and confidant John Dunn. The Zulu intelligence system and speed of communications in 1878 was well understood. Later, after the battle, news of the disaster at Isandlwana was known in Cape Town, a thousand miles south, within 24 hours. King Cetshwayo would probably have known the decision of the Boundary Commission within hours and certainly would not have been informed by this single messenger, in the form of Ken Gampu. Also, Ken is a very fine African actor, but strangely he is an amaXhosa, who was cast as a Zulu.

The film returns to the Pietermaritzburg home of Sir Henry Bartle Frere, convincingly played by Sir John Mills and meet with the attractive Anna Calder-Marshall, who is playing Miss Frances (Fanny) Ellen Colenso, daughter of Bishop Colenso, played by Freddie Jones. According to contemporary photographs of Fanny, Anna Calder-Marshall is far too attractive for the part. It was strongly rumoured to the point of scandal, but without any concrete evidence whatsoever, that Fanny was very close to the married, but living apart from his wife, Durnford.

The film then moves to an exterior shot, as a column of troops march past Major Russell and Lieutenant Coghill. Coghill looks on with obvious admiration and remarks to Russell, "There goes No. 2 Company". All the companies of the 24th Regiment of Foot were lettered. The scriptwriters most probably confused this Imperial regiment with the Natal Native Contingent, whose Companies were numbered. The film then shows a Company march-past with an officer mounted on a large grey horse of 17 hands, which I identified as Lord Chelmsford's mount. Officers didn't make use of pool horses, they were usually wealthy enough to have their own personal mounts. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Glyn, Commanding No. 3 Column, was a very keen huntsman, and had three hunters and a personal groom with him at Isandlwana. We then see an interesting shot of the bandstand, with all the musicians wearing red Glengarrys. No regimental band wore red Glengarrys in 1878, – I presume the producer co-opted the Pietermaritzburg Town Brass Band, circa 1976.

The film then moves to an exciting shot backed with stirring music, of No. 3 Column crossing the Buffalo river at Rorke's Drift commencing their invasion of Zululand. Although the producers chose the correct location for the crossing on the 11th January 1879, the troops are going the wrong way. The invasion column is crossing from Zululand into Natal. Apparently Hickox decided that for pure artistic reasons, it looked much prettier his way. As the Column of troops advances away from camera, we note that it is advancing towards the Oskarsberg Hill, which lies behind the mission station at Rorke's Drift, where in fact they had been stationed.

As the 24th Regt. cross the Buffalo, we have a very dramatic shot of an officer galloping past with the Queen's Colour of the 1st Battalion, flowing freely in the wind. The Queen's Colour would have been carried, cased for safety and protection, in a transport wagon of the 1st Battalion. But, for dramatic effect, it is carried thus and exposes another technical error. The film's Queen's Colour shows '1st Battalion' embroidered under the XXIV scroll, whereas only the 2nd Battalion had that distinction.

The 24th should have been wearing black bags under their right-hand white ammunition pouches. Regimental orders stated that marching with the column, 70 rounds, still wrapped in packets of 10, would be carried in the white pouch for safety and protection from casual abuse: that is, bouncing around in a pouch. One packet of 10 would be opened and the individual rounds placed in the black bags ready for instant use.

The Royal Artillery cross the Buffalo River in dramatic style, with a team of six horses hauling a 9-pounder with limber. The only field guns to cross into Zululand with No. 3 Column were 7-pounders on Kaffrarian carriages pulled by a team of six horses.

Yet again we see the cinematically attractive 17th Lancers, crossing the Buffalo with No. 3 Column, yet they didn't arrive in South Africa until the 7th April 1879, 3 months after Isandlwana. The only Lancer to be killed at Isandlwana was Farrier H. Simpson of the 9th Lancers and he was on secondment to the Irregular cavalry.

Colour Sergeant Williams, played by Bob Hoskins, is riding on the wagon dressed with a revolver in a holster. Only officers were allowed to carry such handguns. The notable exception to that rule occurred at the defence of the mission station at Rorke's Drift. Corporal Allen was wounded in his right shoulder and couldn't fire his Martini-Henry rifle. He exchanged his weapon for Lieutenant

Chard's Adams revolver and the latter used the Martini-Henry. Alphonse de Neuville, the famous French military artist, recorded this act of exchange in his famous painting of 'The Defence of the mission station at Rorke's Drift'.

Norris (Nogs) Newman, the snivelling, controversial, *STANDARD* journalist in the film was played by actor Ronald Lacey and thereby lies an interesting story. Originally, the actor John Hurt was cast and contracted to play Norris Newman but he was prevented from boarding the aeroplane because, quite erroneously, he was accused of anti-apartheid activities by the then government of South Africa. John Hurt then repaired to Ireland to reflect and contemplate his future. The now internationally famous Director, Ridley Scott (Directed: *TOP GUN*), heard of this miscarriage of justice and immediately cast John Hurt in *ALIEN* and neither man ever looked back. *ALIEN* was a huge international success and John Hurt's acting reputation was enhanced while some that worked on *ZULU DAWN* were allegedly never paid. This apparently applied to the many Zulu extras that were recruited to form the Grand Impi. Film industry insiders believe that these Zulu extras were not paid for many weeks, and rumour soon spread that they would never be paid. When the moment came for the Zulu onslaught at Isandlwana, they allegedly decided to vent their dissatisfaction and seek retribution on the white actors who were playing the British soldiers – who probably weren't being paid either - as though it was their fault. The result being that the battle assumed a much more realistic role than mere play-acting.

Quarter Master Bloomfield is then seen checking the quality and counting the number of cartridges in a bandoleer and he has added a few medal ribbons to his chest. He (or the wardrobe department) has added the Crimea and Indian Mutiny campaign medals, whereas he was only entitled to wear a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, which he earned in 1871.

Nigel Davenport plays Commandant George Hamilton Browne of the Natal Native Contingent; who was much too old for the part. Referring to contemporary photographs, Nigel Davenport looked more like George's father, Montague Browne, who in 1878 was in Ireland looking after pensioners in Ulster. A gentleman, he had a reputation of being one of the most bigoted Ulstermen in Londonderry. It is quite extraordinary that throughout the film, Hamilton-Browne is always filmed wearing a sheepskin coat over his irregular uniform although January is the height of a South African summer.

No 3 Column slowly advances into Zululand and is challenged by the defending Zulus in the hills with "Why do you come to the land of the Zulu". Lieutenant Teignmouth Melvill dutifully asks Lord Chelmsford if he may reply and, with permission granted, shouts back, "we come here by the orders of the Great Queen Victoria – Queen of all Africa".

Quoting from Commandant George Hamilton-Browne's book; *A Lost Legionary in South Africa*, the challenge was made by "my right hand man and interpreter, Captain R. Dunscombe, NNC", who replied "We come here – by the orders of the Great Queen Victoria – Queen of all Africa". Lieutenant Teignmouth Melvill was the adjutant of the 1st Battalion of the 24th Regt of Foot and then calls for "E" Company to advance. That order should have been given by Captain Charles Walter Cavaye, who commanded "E" Company, 1st/24th Regt.

A troop of Sikali Horse is then seen as it canters across the veldt and starts shooting with Martini-Enfield 0.303 carbines, which were issued in 1888, nine years later. A Sikali horseman is pulled from his horse with his slouch hat pulled down to hide his face. He has the cheekbone structure and facial features of a white man and was obviously made up to look like a Basuto. I believe the film unit was running out of black extras who were competent equestrians. Vereker was an officer with the 2nd/3rd NNC but quite suddenly appears commanding a troop of Sikali's Horse. This very fine troop of horsemen was with Durnford and his No 2 Column. Lord Chelmsford had left them behind at Middle Drift (Kranz Kop) to defend the Zululand/Natal border and didn't call them forward until the 22nd January when he was leaving Isandlwana. Vereker then draws his carbine, which is a Martini-Enfield 1888 Pattern. This has an Enfield barrel and sight, with the bayonet fitting at the bottom, whereas a Martini-Henry Mk1 or Mk2 had the fitting at the side. Also, the back sight is too far back on the breech.

Scenic shots then follow of Lord Chelmsford's army advancing into Zululand and Lieutenant Coghill saying "What a wonderful adventure". A wagon passes in foreground from left to right and by the drummer boy's hand is yet another broken and bent fibreglass rifle. This is then followed by a supply wagon and to their credit it is flying a red flag, which denotes it is an ammunition wagon.

We next have a wide-angle shot of a mountain with the caption at the base of frame telling us 'The Camp at Isandlwana'. The mountain is nothing like the distinctive 'sphinx' shaped mountain that we all know to be Isandlwana. Also there are many white bell tents erected, which indicates that the camp was already well established, which is extraordinary as Lord Chelmsford was leading No 3 Column into Zululand and in particular to Isandlwana. A map of Isandlwana is spread out but this was uncharted

territory and Lord Chelmsford would not have had the luxury of such a detailed map at his disposal. This looks very much like a modern Ordnance Survey style map of Zululand.

Quarter Master Bloomfield and a boy soldier are chatting away holding an ammunition box. The large letters on display are W D with arrowhead, which means (War Department). In 1878, the stencil would have read B O meaning (Board of Ordnance).

The film then returns to the comedy element, with Private Williams on piquet duty hearing a sound of approaching horsemen. He calls to his soldier colleague lounging in the wagon, "What was that, Storey". There was no soldier called Storey at Isandlwana. It so happens that Cy Enfield's co-script writer was called Anthony Storey, so in tried and tested cinematic tradition, when short of a name – use your own.

Durnford rides into camp at Isandlwana with white cavalry troopers, who didn't arrive until later in the day of the 22nd January 1879, after Lord Chelmsford and half of the camp strength had already left. Durnford and Lord Chelmsford never ever met at Isandlwana; this meeting and conversation did not occur. The Lancers were not in the invasion force and the Natal Police and the Natal Carbineers were already in the camp at Isandlwana. He should have arrived with his Natal Native Horse, his loyal Sergeant Major Kambula and beloved Basutos. Lieutenant Colonel Crealock then arrives during this supposed conversation, with the news that a large body of Zulus have been sighted to the north of the camp. Lord Chelmsford, with dividers in hand, consults his 'Ordnance Survey' map and written in large letters is ISANDLWANA.

We next have a wide angle establishing shot of the camp at Isandlwana, as Lord Chelmsford mounts his grey to leave camp and a caption at the base of frame reads: ISANDLWANA – Camp at 7 a.m. Lord Chelmsford left with his staff and two thirds of the camp at 4.30 a.m. – in the dark and well before daybreak. Lord Chelmsford issues orders for the Royal Artillery to re-position themselves and Lieutenant Coghill speaks with Major Stuart Smith RA, who in fact had left Isandlwana with Lord Chelmsford. Therefore, this conversation could never have occurred.

A troop of Sikali's Horse are then seen searching the veldt for the Zulu impi and gives chase to a group of herd boys tending their cattle and somehow the troop are now all armed with 0.303" Martini-Enfield rifles, whereas they should have been armed with 0.45" Martini-Henry carbines. Lieutenants Charlie Raw and Vereker, with two troops of Natal Native Horse, ride up to the ridge overlooking the Ngwebeni valley and discover the elusive Zulu impi resting, awaiting the passing of the Dead Moon. A small stream runs through this valley, not a large pond like Tarn Hows in the Lake District. In reality, Lieutenant Higginson rode down from the plateau with a confused report for Durnford and the more Durnford pressed Higginson for an accurate appraisal, the more confused it became. In frustration, Durnford despatched two of his own officers, Lieutenants Raw and Roberts with troops of Natal Native Horse on a thorough reconnaissance of the northeast and north west of the Nqutu range. As they rode towards the edge of the hidden valley, they discovered the elusive impi, having rested as ordered and quietly preparing to move towards the camp at Isandlwana. A volley was fired into the impi, which stirred them into a premature action and the attack on the camp at Isandlwana had begun. Lieutenant Vereker was with Captain Barry, many miles away, searching for the same elusive impi, but in a different area of the Nqutu plateau.

The order to 'Stand to' is given and the same incorrect 9-pounder is driven across the field. The 24th are marched into line to repel the Zulus, while the drummer boys are despatched with range marker poles. The 24th were not formed in two ranks, standing shoulder to shoulder, but in one file and in open order about 10-15 feet apart. The infantry line stretched about 1.5 kilometres, which possibly contributed to their downfall. A few of the troops of the 24th are now shown equipped with 0.303 Martini-Enfield rifles, which was a development of the Martini-Henry and evolved many years after 1879. The Zulus are carrying rather shiny cardboard shields with a jumble of regimental cowhide patterns that bore no resemblance to those of the attacking Zulu regiments.

The film returns to Lord Chelmsford, lurching with his staff in the Mangeni valley and he has a slight altercation on social standards with Commandant Hamilton Browne, who justifiably reasons that he couldn't sit down to lunch when his men were starving. Lord Chelmsford calls him 'Colonel'; as an irregular cavalry officer, he held the rank of Commandant.

The Royal Artillery couldn't get recoil from their artillery piece, because they were firing blank ammunition. The property department ingeniously attached a line to the carriage and pulled it back to simulate recoil. Their simulation was far too late, too leisurely and nothing like the sudden leap of a real recoil. In reality, the Royal Artillery positioned a 7-pounder to the left front of the infantry firing line, yet in the film, all artillery pieces are positioned on a slope behind the 24th and firing over their heads. The Rocket Battery was under the command of Brevet Major Francis Broadfoot Russell, RA. played by Donald Pickering, with 8 gunners. Also, 3 gunners, Johnson, Trainer and Grant, managed to

escape the Zulu attack and lived to tell the tale. I feel that this extraordinary escape would have provided an exciting addition to that particular cameo.

Durnford suddenly appears back in camp at Isandlwana, where he has a very poignant and final conversation with Sergeant Major Kambula, quietly and sensitively played by Sydney Chama. Durnford orders Kambula to ride to Pietermaritzburg and convey his respects to Bishop Colenso and love to Fanny and explain that he was obliged to remain with his men. Durnford's final moments are still the subject of conjecture, because there were no survivors from his desperate last stand only yards from the main camp. He was shot through the heart and his body was assegaied, although he wasn't stripped and disembowelled to 'release his spirit'. Around his body was evidence of a desperate, back-to-back and shoulder-to-shoulder last stand, with Lieutenant Durrant Scott and fourteen of his Natal Carbineers around him. Close by, there were also elements of the Natal Native Police, Buffalo Border Guard, Newcastle Mounted Rifles with Imperial and Black Infantry lying close by. This scene was described at first hand by Norris Newman, in his well-documented, journalistic report in *The Graphic*.

Colour Sergeant Williams, fights like a demon possessed to the very end, touchingly looking after his protégé Private Williams. I am reliably informed that Douglas Hickox couldn't get this final death scene to his ultimate artistic satisfaction, but persisted with a total of 36 takes over the next few days. If one looks closely, take 36, which was printed, one can see the Oskarsberg Hill, which is behind the Mission Station at Rorke's Drift, as an impressive scenic backdrop. This is not the location at Isandlwana, where he drew his last breath.

During the film's final battle sequence, with panoramic shots of thousands of Zulus overrunning the camp, the film inter-cuts with a variety of scenes featuring Quarter Master Bloomfield and the contentious question of ammunition boxes and the distribution of their 0.45" Boxer cartridges. Quartermaster Edward Bloomfield joined the army at the tender age of eleven and had been with the 2nd Battalion of the 24th Regt. of Foot ever since. He was described as upright, conscientious and intensely thorough and stuck rigidly to the rule that "2nd Battalion ammunition was only to be used by 2nd Battalion rifles". If the film script had stuck to the truth, they would have featured Lieutenant Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien, (who was dismissed by Field Marshal Douglas Haig in WW1) pleading with Q.M. Bloomfield at the height of the battle, "Hang it all - you don't want a requisition now, do you". It took a more senior officer in the form of Captain Edward Essex, to authorise Bloomfield to distribute his ammunition to anyone in need.

To the film's credit, Cy Endfield, the Co-Producer/Co-Script Writer, got the ammunition box scene 99% right, which was a great improvement on the film *ZULU* where he couldn't have been more inaccurate. As was revealed in close-up, a single screw secured the wedge, which was easily removed with a smart tap from a soldier's boot or rifle butt. The protective foil was then ripped open to reveal packets of ten 0.045" Boxer cartridges, wrapped in beige greaseproof paper. If one studies the famous painting *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* by the French military artist Alphonse de Neuville, one will observe Padre 'Ammunition' Smith, handing a packet of 10, still in a protective grease proof paper parcel, to Corporal Allen kneeling at the barricades.

Major Stuart Smith, RA. played by Brian O'Shanghnessy, is shown escorting a 9-pounder away from the battlefield at Isandlwana where it quite correctly toppled over the edge into the gully, where all of the gunners and horses, still in their traces, were assegaied. In reality, this 7-pounder was positioned 300 yards to the left front of the firing line and when the Zulus approached in great numbers, Major Stuart Smith, ordered the gun crew to limber up and reposition back to the centre of the camp. This they did in good order, with Major Stuart Smith and his deputy, Lieutenant Curling, riding ahead to clear a road for the guns. When they arrived in the middle of the camp, they found it was overwhelmed by Zulus, so continued their escape across country towards Fugitives' Drift, but the gun and limber soon toppled into a gully. Smith and Curling made good their escape, the former being killed along Fugitives' Trail and Lieutenant Curling, escaped across the Buffalo at Fugitives' Drift and lived to tell the tale. Lieutenant Curling's letters have been collected, collated, and published as a hardback book.

In the film, Lieutenant Colonel Pulleine senses the end is nigh and summons Lieutenant Melvill, adjutant of 1st/24th Regt, "To take the colours to a place of safety", and this scene is incorrect in so many instances. The Queen's Colour that Pulleine hands over, is in fact the colour of 2nd/24th Regt., which was lost during the battle and only the colour pole was ever recovered. A keen eye will see 2nd Battalion embroidered underneath the XXIV. Because there were no survivors at this late stage of the battle, there were no material witnesses to verify this very dramatic event.

The colours were kept in the guard tent and would have been cased in a canvas, umbrella type protective sheath and if the film unit had researched and observed this point, no one would have noticed this additional error. Melvill, now with the colour flying in the breeze, gallops off in company of Coghill and Vereker, all of which was incorrect. Melvill, with the Queen's Colour cased and

awkwardly positioned across his saddlebow, left Isandlwana alone and fought his way down Fugitives Trail to the Buffalo River. He didn't leave in a blaze of glory, with the Queen's Colour flying in the breeze for all the defenders to see, as it would have been far too demoralising for those soldiers of the gallant 24th Regt. Neither did Coghill leave with him: he had deserted the camp some time beforehand.

The next scene with Vereker is even more bizarre and a total departure from the well-documented facts. In the film he is seen galloping away from Isandlwana, as a self-appointed escort to the colour carried by Melvill and accompanied by Coghill. They all make the Zululand shore of the Buffalo River at Fugitives' Drift and he remains as the two officers gallop into a somewhat calm Buffalo River. On the 22nd January 1879, the Buffalo was in flood and a raging torrent at this crossing point.

Nevertheless, the film erroneously tells us that our two young officers successfully ford the river where they are immediately assaiged on the riverbank. A Zulu warrior captures the Queen's Colour and triumphantly runs with it, up the riverside cliffs, where Vereker shoots him dead. The Queen's Colour falls majestically into the river and floats gently down stream. The final frame is of marksman Vereker, falling into a slow faint, totally ignored by the Zulus, who moments before were desperate to 'wash their spears in the blood of an invading British soldier'. Possibly, the Executive Producers were anxious to preserve their options for a follow up film – *Son of Zulu Dawn*.

There are two famous paintings by the French military artist, Alphonse de Neuville, both depicting incidents concerning the saving of the Queen's Colour of the 1st/24 Regt. In the first painting, Melvill and Coghill are pictured together, fighting their way out of the battlefield at Isandlwana with the Colour. The second painting depicts their demise on the Natal bank of the Buffalo River at Fugitives' Drift, with the Colour draped over their recognisable bodies. Both of these stirring paintings are technically incorrect and I understand that Cy Endfield studied both of these paintings and scripted accordingly. In the first painting, Melvill is saving the Regimental Colour, not the Queen's Colour that was cased, when he left the battlefield at Isandlwana. In the second painting, they didn't die by the riverside, but 500 yards up the cliffs. The Regimental Colour is wrongly draped over their bodies, whereas the Queen's Colour that Melvill was supposed to be saving was lost in the Buffalo River. Personal items found in their tunic pockets identified both bodies.

When the last of the Natal Native Contingent had left the battlefield at Isandlwana, Vereker prepared to leave with Lieutenant Charlie Raw. In the confusion of battle, he had lost his horse but Raw snatched a loose horse that Vereker quickly mounted. As they were about to gallop off, a dismounted black trooper rushed up and indicated that the horse was his. Without hesitation, Vereker dismounted and with the courtesy of his class, handed the black trooper the reins. Raw then galloped off and survived. The body of Vereker was eventually found among the bodies of those who died in the last stand surrounding Durnford.

In conclusion, despite my critical analysis, *Zulu Dawn* remains a very fine action-packed film, documenting our Empire builders of the 19th century. Nevertheless, one must always remember it is a 1st Feature Film, based upon events that occurred, leading up to and including the disastrous British defeat at Isandlwana. In truth, there were so many acts of courage, comedy, courtesy, death and escape that the scriptwriters could have used, without resorting to unnecessary artistic invention.

There were so many missed opportunities in the making of *ZULU DAWN*; all the script writers had to do was research the historical records that are freely available in the military libraries, both in Great Britain and South Africa. They could then have produced an accurate, exciting and tailor-made script, without resorting to invention.

Acknowledgements.

Morris. Donald, *The Washing of the Spears*
Knight & Castle. *The Zulu War, Then and Now*
Greaves. Adrian, *Isandlwana*
Greaves. Adrian, *The Curling Letters of the Zulu War*
The Anglo-Zulu War Historical Society Journal-December 2001
Gon. Philip, *The Road to Isandlwana*
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ZULU DAWN The Film (Video-DVD)

The Pattern Room library – Nottingham
Firepower library/museum – Woolwich
South Wales Borderers Museum – Brecon
The Somerset Light Infantry Library/Museum - Taunton