

# The 1879 Zulu War Diary of RSM F.W. Cheffins.

By Lindsay Reyburn.

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The Zulu War of 1879 has been extensively researched and examined and it is probably true to say that not much new can be said about it. The merit of Cheffins' diary is that it is a record of the Zulu War as seen through the eyes of a colonial volunteer.

Frederick William Cheffins was the Regimental Sergeant Major of Raaff's Rangers, also known as the Transvaal Rangers. He wrote his diary as he moved with Col. Wood's Column from Northern Natal down to Ulundi over a period of five months. He was not a literary man and I'm sure he would never have imagined that his modest record would find its way into print. Like most diarists, his sole aim was to record daily events as he saw them and as they affected him. It is an intriguing record of the war. Hopefully Cheffins' writings will expand any specialists' views in some small way. As for the notes I have added, I do not pretend that they will offer any new insights. They are simply there to place things in context and to add to Cheffins' view of the proceedings. Constraints have been many, not the least being trying to hold down a job, and I have had limited access to reference material.

A number of people deserve thanks for this booklet. Firstly, F.W. Cheffins for writing the document under the most trying conditions imaginable. I wish I had known him personally. Then to the unsurpassed Zulu War fundi, guide and friend, Fred Duke – those weekends will never be forgotten Fred, thanks; to Duncan Reyburn whose artistic skills resulted in maps vastly superior to my efforts; to Luigi Morrico who added computer expertise and art direction; to Terry Sole whose timely study of Raaff's Rangers resulted in the discovery of an extraordinary man; To Dave Willis, the Kimberley expert who delved deep to give me information of Cheffins and my grandfather W.S. McAdam's days in Kimberley; to medal collector Henk Loots who kindly contacted me and selflessly relieved himself of Cheffins' medals and to Eugene Ashton who put this lot together.

Cheffins' punctuation and use (or lack of use) of capital letters is idiosyncratic and there are a number of omissions and/or irregularities in the original diary. Apostrophes, full stops, commas are not generally used. I have changed things minimally but have added where necessary in order to make the meaning clearer.

Most paragraphing is mine. Spelling is not consistent, e.g. Raaff's Rangers is elsewhere Raafs Rangers; encounter is also spelled incounter, etc. I have tried to be consistent with spelling in my notes but the spelling of Zulu place names varies immensely. I ask the reader to forgive my errors. With regard to the diary I have generally left things as written. There are a number of grammatical errors. I have not corrected them unless the message is completely obfuscated. The use of the word "Kaffir" and "nigger" is frowned upon these days. I have not attempted to 'sanitise' the diary and in the interests of history have left it unchanged. There is absolutely no wish to belittle or degrade anyone at all. The following is an extract from his diary.

*Diary of Sergt Major Cheffins Transvaal Rangers  
During the war in Zululand 1879. (unabridged with original spelling)*

The reader who takes the trouble to peruse this concoction will please excuse its unfinished form as the outside cover and leaves of the original Book are completely chafed through by being kept in a Saddle bag.

F.W. Cheffins.

March 28<sup>th</sup> 1879

This memorable day never to be forgotten by about three hundred men, broke as favorable to our purpose as could be desired, for every man knew what was expected from him, (that it was one of the most dangerous attacks made during this war cannot be denied). To attack a mountain of such a character required men with strong nerves, "stout hearts could only attempt such a thing". Whether any proceeded with a faint one cannot be said – most proved to the contrary. Our ascent was gradually made in perfect order.

"The following was our strength". The Light Horse under Colonel Buller (who had general command under Col. Wood) numbered 130 mounted men, Baker's Horse 113, Raaff's Rangers 65, Weatherley's

Horse 52, Boers 36; the Artillery with a rocket battery (The Mounted Infantry and Schermbrucker's acted as reserve and took no part in the fight.)

The mountain, as far as I can ascertain, has only two places of ascent which are sheltered by a perpendicular rock of about three hundred feet in height, followed by rugged rocks and overgrown by bush. Beyond this a little more evenness prevails. On this spot the Kaffirs have built their location, so close to the bush that when surprised by an enemy they can immediately retire to it for security, being (when there) quite safe from all attacks, as these bushes shelter caves and hollows from which they have the advantage of seeing and firing on an enemy with effect. Our ascent was gradually made in perfect silence and order and nothing occurred until we reached this spot. Just as we reached it we heard the report of a gun, apparently about halfway up the mountain. It was evidently a signal. We found out afterwards that the object was to apprise the enemy of our approach, not positive as, although the morning was fine, a slight mist which lay on top of the mountain, prevented the greater part of the enemy from seeing us. On our advance to the neck from which place it grew more steep (as some would call the base of the mountain proper) we found the enemy prepared and giving us as a reception a volley from the rocks (having no effect on us) it inspired us with vigour and determination. Shortly after shots were exchanged on both sides and bullets began to fly thick.

The Light Horse, Baker's Horse and Raaff's Rangers were together, but the plucky Commandant Raaff and his men were soon on ahead and had the satisfaction of being first on top without losing a man. The other two Corps followed with the loss of two Lieutenants of the Frontier Light Horse. Weatherley's Horse remained at the bottom to cover our retreat. On our arrival on top we were distributed in groups all along the top (which is about 3 ½ miles long by about 2 miles broad). We now began a severe fire on the Zulus beneath us who were still in their holes, they however soon retreated farther in the bush and so we could only satisfy ourselves with uncertain shots.

The Amaswazies of whom we had about 600, now commenced to collect the cattle and were soon along the sides, driving them down. The Zulus fired on them but they were well protected by our fire, for as soon as a Zulu made his appearance or fired on a Swazie, dozens of bullets were around him in an instant. This continued for about an hour when all the cattle were down at the bottom. (During this one of our men, by name Wagner, got wounded through the arm with a bullet.)

While on the mountain many jokes were cracked as everyone thought of the present not of the future. Had we known better the latter, provision would have been made for our Souls rather than our bodies. At last a sort of reaction set in. Everybody seemed anxious to get down as if a warning voice foretold to them that danger was at hand. At noon a regular stillness prevailed which was however soon followed by a report that a Kaffir Impi was seen approaching.

This announcement chilled our hearts, for knowing what difficulty we made our ascent, our descent was looked to with feelings akin to fear. The Light Horse were the first to take their departure and rode up to the spot we ascended. But they soon returned, finding it impossible to go down in that direction, as I believe that is the spot where Weatherley's Horse were completely cut up. Had we taken the neck for it, every man would have been killed. Only 9 of his men managed to escape, 45 of them being the victims of these infernal barbarians, who are not only taught to look upon us as their enemies, but as their equals.

Every one now seemed struck with a panic, and every one endeavoured to reach the other side of the mountain. On reaching this a regular confusion took place as every one wanted to get down first, for it was observed that large numbers of the enemy were making their way to the spot on which we were all gathered. It was known by every one that we were defenceless in a hand to hand encounter as we had only our rifles which, when once discharged, are comparatively useless at close quarter. And so each one knew as if by instinct that our only hope was our horses. Our prospects were indeed hopeless. The place was most rugged and steep – the most dangerous anyone short of a maniac ever attempted to get over. The greatest difficulty was to get the horses over perpendicular rocks five and six feet high. The horses had to be pushed down, large boulders had to be climbed over. Under any other circumstances no one would ever attempt such a road. To descend such a dangerous mountain with Kaffirs on each side armed with guns, assegais and battle axes, is almost too horrid to think about.

Those who did make their escape cannot be too thankful for their delivery from such wretches. Those on the flanks were cut down like corn and those in the centre (lucky dogs) with difficulty reached the bottom, some rolling, some sliding and the remainder tumbling, managed to reach the bottom, where there was no time left for reflection. Those who had horses mounted and cantered off without even a look back to their comrades, whilst those on foot had to run for their lives. A number of horses were killed. My horse rolled over four times but eventually I got him on all fours and mounted, but soon dismounted in order to assist those men who were covering the retreat of those who were still on top. In this we were of great use as the Zulus were afraid to advance under our fire. As soon as we thought all those who were alive had passed we retreated to another ledge and acted similarly, where unfortunately

we arrived at another steep place. Owing to the agility of the Kaffirs among the rocks many of our men lost their lives. Here again numbers were cut down. Commandant Raaff, who was really cut to the heart, could not see that such a wholesale butchery of his men should take place, appealed to those who were there to turn round and shoot down the Zulus, but alas fear and the love of life was too prevalent and but few gave heed to those words made use of by him (“Men, you are white men. Can you see your comrades killed in such a manner? Stand and shoot them down! Have you any feeling in you? Are there any men who will stand by me and assist the footmen?") But no reply came. Forward was the only movement made. But when he said, “Rangers, twenty of you fall to the left and fire on the Zulus!” 19 responded directly to the call, but I am very sorry to say it was not kept up long. Our numbers gradually dwindled down to about six who kept a steady fire and was the means of saving many a life.

About this time my horse was shot through the chest. I was now in an awkward fix as I was rather far behind. However I did not stop long for reflection but gave leg as fast as I could and succeeded in overtaking one of Baker’s Horse when about halfway from the camp, who kindly gave me a lift. Colonel Buller and the other officers of the regulars brought up the rear as well, Colonel Buller especially showing great determination and pluck. Some of his men also assisted him. Commandant Raaff tried to get his men by sending for them and he himself afterwards followed, but no men ever returned.

The seizure of cattle was immense but the greater portion was retaken about halfway between the mountain and Kambula camp, as the few men who in the rear could only protect the human beings who would otherwise have been left to the mercy of the enemy. Our entrance into camp must have produced an awful feeling amongst those who remained behind. The departure of 400 men well mounted and in the Prime of Life still fresh in their minds (because hardly 24 hours had elapsed since they saw us depart from amongst them) with faces gleaming with joy and satisfaction for the hope of an engagement to avenge the death of our bretheren who had been so foully murdered at Isandhlwana and Intombi river. What must have been their thoughts and wishes when the reverse tide played such havoc among our noble men. “Oh they are sure to be victorious, the Kaffirs will never master them”. But how did our entrance change all these surmises. One by one we came, two men on one horse, some men barefooted, some without hats, coats, guns, ammuniton, all these articles were considered by them as lumber and thrown away. What in other times would be considered valuables were then an impediment and so thrown away in order to facilitate their flight. Those even on horseback cut loose everything in order to pass over the ground with greater speed. When about a mile from the camp we were met by a party with spare horses from the camp from whom I obtained a remount.

On entering the camp we could read despair on every man’s face, not only for our adverses of the day but of what might be expected from the powerful advancing army of the Zulu king. At about 4pm all the men had arrived more fit to sleep and rest than to fight. Our loss for such a small force was considerable. The following is the loss to each Corps:

Transvaal Rangers	8
Light Horse	31
Weatherley(s) Horse	45
Baker’s Horse	13
Boers	1
Artillery and Military	18
Total numbers of Whites killed	116
Amaswazies	400
Grand total	516

As I said before this will be a day never to be forgotten.

The disaster which befell us was caused mostly by the careless manner of our Commanding Officers. Had they the forethought that when all the cattle were collected, to order the men to an immediate retreat, hardly any lives would have been lost. We would have been able to return to camp loaded with Booty. But the Impi coming along at that special time which proved so disastrous to us could only be ascribed to Providence proving kind to the Zulus again.

It has since come to our knowledge that only half of Umbeline’s Kaffirs were there during the attack, the other half having gone to the valley in order to make an attack on us. Luckily we provided for our safety by changing our position after dark. Had we not done so every one would have been killed. It is useless to attach blame to anyone, but if care is not taken in future to secure the better safety of men who form the party of such attacks, I am afraid that discontent and refusal of duty will be very prevalent.

In descending the mountain it struck me that some of the men were possessed of supernatural power and strength. How we endured the running is surprising (15 miles is a long distance to run and many of them ran the whole way.)

Our horses must have been inspired as they seemed to know as well as the men that danger was near, and that on their speed depended many lives. In the evening all preparations were made to meet the enemy should a night attack be made.

It is interesting to hear the different stories that are now related respecting our engagement. Men who I am certain never turned their faces back pretend to give better accounts than those who were defending them.

I think a good many Zulus were killed, but far from enough to compensate for those who have fallen on our side.

### **29<sup>th</sup> March**

This day was as remarkable as the day before, the difference being that it was decided in our favour with great success.

The morning was rather cloudy and it continued so during the day. As the large Kaffir Impi seen yesterday was expected to attack this camp, so every precaution was taken that they should not take us by surprise. In order to avoid this a mounted patrol (of which I was one) was ordered out to make observations respecting the position of the enemy. We (Raaf's Rangers) took the road taken yesterday by us as fugitives and when about 6 miles from the camp we found one of our Kaffirs who informed us that in the confusion which took place on top of the mountain, he had torn off his Puggaree and joined the enemy, and that after the slaughter was complete and the pursuit ended, they all camped behind a hill and had the customary beer drinking. As the beer got into their (word missing) they became communicative and told each other the plan of attack which was to commence about ½ past twelve noon on the next day. By (Orig. "Be" – Ed.) some means he managed to escape and we picked him up and gave him a lift into camp. On our arrival some of the patrol arrived with the information that the enemy was approaching with the intention of an immediate attack.

The rest of the Patrol warned all outlying guards etc. to collect men and cattle and get them into the precincts of the camp. All preparations for our defence were now made. 20 000 Zulus armed as those rascals are now, is not an enemy to be despised or treated with indifference. Soon after everything was deemed in readiness, the enemy could be seen in the distance.

A description of the camp and our position will not be out of place now.

Kambula Hill Camp is situated on a gentle rise having a distant view in all sides, excepting towards the West where a mountain obscures the sight. On all sides it is surrounded by small rivulets so that as far as water is concerned we have a copious supply. On the South West side where the slope of the hill occurs, large rocks are imbedded causing a sudden decline. At all other points the decline is gradual. On about the centre of the hill a small elevation is perceptible and on this is built the fort, consisting of a circular wall of earth and stones. In this has been placed 2 Cannon, and it can further accommodate about 200 men.

The main camp is formed by wagons placed close to each other in (the) form of a circle. The openings from one wheel to another are filled up with sods of earth, and on the tops of the open wagons layers of sods are placed.

The tents occupied by all the Mounted together with their horses are inside the wagon enclosure, whilst the Infantry and Artillery are stationed all round it. The 90<sup>th</sup> Regiment occupying the south side, the 13<sup>th</sup> the North, The Artillery the East, Mounted Infantry and Boers the West.

At about 9am the Kaffirs were seen approaching. At first about 15,000 were surrounding the camp on the South East side, while about 10,000 were doing the same from the North East. The South East or right flank at first seemed to take the direction of the mountain and I had at first an opinion that by so doing they intended to reach it and remain on it to give us a night attack. But as the North East flank was advancing it became apparent that their intention was to completely surround us.

The sight which this vast army produced can only be imagined by one at a distance, as a description could never satisfy the inquisitive. At about 10am the order was given to strike tents. Every tent was then leveled to the ground and the camp exhibited a total wreck.

The mounted men were now ordered to saddle up. Those who were dismounted or disabled in the previous day's engagement were to place themselves in safe spots behind the wagons. The Infantry and all other men now took their places on and underneath the wagons, in order to meet the attack of the enemy.

The various Mounted Corps now left the camp and cantered off to meet the advancing left flank. They very soon let the niggers know that they intended to drive them back. We could not however hold our own as the odds were so terribly against us, but succeeded in causing some confusion by retreating and showing front at every hundred yards until at last we fell back and entered the enclosure. (sic) The Artillery posted on this side now opened and caused sad havoc among them, with shells. Now apparently the left flank gave up operations and the right one now commenced in earnest.

As I said before on the South West side large rock(s) are imbedded and this spot was their attack. Close to this, which I had forgotten to mention, was our cattle kraal defended by one Company of the 13<sup>th</sup> regt.

The fire on both sides now became hot. The enemy creeping up to within about one hundred yards of the enclosure with the object of taking the cattle kraal where they would be to some extent protected from our fire. A hard struggle took place during which many on our side were killed and wounded.

At last the cattle kraal was deserted by the Company in charge – the latter retreating to the enclosure. Here I saw a Zulu assegai a soldier but the honour of doing it to another was denied him as he was completely riddled with bullets. The possession of the cattle kraal did not give them so much advantage as we expected. The fire from the big guns together with rockets on the one sides (sic) and men in the enclosure on the other killed them in such numbers that their advance was admirably repulsed.

At about 3 pm the enemy seemed not inclined to change their purpose, the (unclear word) was still advancing and the firing, was still kept up well. During the intervals some mounted men would leave and make what the Boers call a “sursie” amongst them but it had not much effect, their numbers being too great. It was apparent to all that the Zulus were determined to take the camp – and we, knowing what that meant were determined that they should not.

Our supply of ammunition was luckily more than enough for the emergency and I believe that at first they thought we would soon run short – as in the attack on Isandhlwana where every man was killed with an empty cartridge belt. Now and then a charge would be made by a company of one of the regiments but, although they killed lots of the enemy, still they were losing some themselves and soon had to retreat. The fire still continued with vigour, the enemy falling in dozens and this continued until about 4.30 pm when the enemy was observed to lose courage and soon after it was evinced that flight was their object.

A charge was then made by our men and the enemy retreated leaving many of them never to relate this day's engagement to any of their friends. In all directions they now ran, the exhaustion of the fight lasting so long prevented them from running with the speed usual to them. We (the mounted men) followed and hundreds of them were placed hors de combat.

Unfortunately the low condition of our horses prevented us from following them far. Had we 500 strong horses nothing more would have been heard of the Zulu War. The pride of Cetewayo's Army would have disappeared from the world and his power would have been so broken as to prevent him from ever interfering with the rights and possessions of Europeans. As it is this day has proved to him that white men can fight when they are in danger. The number of men to which his army is now reduced ought to make him reflect before he undertakes to attack a camp composed of men with such determination as Wood's Column.

The loss of the enemy was immense. We cannot truly arrive at the number, but that a considerable portion of the King's chosen men fell there is quite certain, say about 3,000. After the flight of the enemy, everyone with feelings as if the load of a lifetime was taken from him, immersed (sic) from their sheltered nooks, for a view of the result of our day's fight. “What met our eyes”? Horrors above horrors! I have often read of the horrors of war and flattered myself that I was a veteran, but may God prevent me from ever witnessing a large field again. I shall be satisfied at the expiration of my service, of a soldier's life, I shall leave this never to return to it. Only for the protection of my life shall I again take up arms, never for a country in which I have no interest. Here was one Kaffir lying (without) with the best part of his head, there was another with his body torn to pieces, another with his legs mutilated and so on. The Zulu loss is officially stated as 3,000.

In the evening we all retired to rest as we had very little rest the two preceding nights. Our loss is about 20 killed and 70 wounded.

This attack has certainly been the most severe ever attempted in South Africa. To show the confidence which the Zulus had to entirely defeat us when his vast army was attacking us, it was said that Cetewayo (I believe it to have been Umbeline) was stationed on a hill about three miles distant with his wives and other females for the purpose that, as soon as his men would commence the massacre, he and his women would rush in and finish it. This was luckily denied them as the tables were completely reversed.

It is habitual to these rascals to allow their women to finish what their men have begun. In the attack at Isandhlwana it is said that the women mutilated the dead bodies worse than the men. And yet our

government show the greatest mercy both to men and women. Not even are we allowed to kill a man, when there is a chance of taking him alive. No fear of me allowing them a chance to escape. Capturing him alive would only cause unnecessary trouble, whereas an end to his life puts all further nuisance out of the way. Without denial the Zulus are the finest race in South Africa. Well built and possessed of bodily strength, they can endure all manner of hardships. Every Zulu that was killed was about six feet in height and limbs on them that completely throw Europeans in the shade.

### **30<sup>th</sup> March**

During the night or early in the morning an alarm was given that an attack was to be made. Although everyone went to rest with the assurance that no fresh attack would be made, as the Zulus were considered totally beaten and had retired to some distance, still we all turned out as we was (sic) and stood to our arms, a heavy mist obscuring our sight. We could hardly distinguish anything farther than 20 yards. A few shots occasionally fired induced us to think that a real attack was being made. We are all aware of the danger of a night attack because the Zulus can use their assegais to better advantage, and if once inside they will soon make mincemeat of us. About an hour afterwards the retreat sounded and we entered our tents.

During the day various patrol parties reconnoitred the surrounding hills but only reported that the enemy was encamped about 15 miles off, probably meditating on their day's work. Numbers of dead bodies were discovered lying along the road taken by them, and at their night's encamping ground lots more of wounded who had got this far to die. With the exception of burying the Dead, nothing else was done.

### **31<sup>st</sup> March**

Burying the dead of the enemy still continues and I am sorry to say that a good many of our own brave boy's (sic) have died of their wounds and are being buried with military honours.

### **1<sup>st</sup> April**

Burying still continues.

### **6<sup>th</sup> April**

Went out wood cutting and was ordered to return to camp immediately as a patrol was to start to defend a convoy which was in danger of being attacked by the enemy. News arrived that the Zulus had destroyed all the homesteads in the direction of Utrecht and that our convoy was attacked, but the enemy was repulsed with heavy loss.

### **7<sup>th</sup> April**

Everything quiet during the nights. Patrol returned reporting that nothing was to be seen by them. One wounded Zulu we met who was soon released from agony by a shot from one of our men. And numbers of the enemy were observed to have deserted these parts and gone in the direction of Secoconi, capturing some Amaswazie women and cattle.

### **8<sup>th</sup> April**

Fine morning, the change of weather being felt instead of the great heat. We shall soon have sharp frosty nights and then we shall feel it as we are badly supplied. All the covering we have is a red blanket through which one could sift peas. Indeed the majority of the men rolled up to Capt. Dixon and requested him to see to our wants, but it seems that he is afraid to lay the matter before his superior officers, or will not condescend to see that his men are properly cared for. Whatever his reasons are, let them be. Bu it is a confounded shame that such men as we have should be entrusted to see after the comforts and necessities of those under them.

It is a certain fact and can be affirmed by many that many things have been forced on the men at exorbitant prices in order to fill the pockets of our leading officers, and I do firmly believe that many articles to which we were entitled have been sold to us at great profit. It has on several occasions been discerned that the Commissariat Officers have tried to cheat us out of our rations. If men can attempt such actions they are capable of doing worse. What can you expect of men who have always been accustomed to associate with the troupe of a circus? The sight of the beggars is enough to disgust one with all their volunteers movements. The difference is perceptible between ours and Officers of the other Corps, whilst others can be recognized without difficulty as gentlemen. Ours are seen sneaking as

if they were afraid of showing themselves. They might well be so as some of them will not bear being named.

#### **9<sup>th</sup> April**

Fine day. Reported that a Zulu spy had been caught who confessed that Umbeline was wounded in both engagements and that he has one of our men as a prisoner. How far this is true I do not know, as false reports are of frequent occurrence.

Won a watch at a raffle today. Yesterday lost 10/- at a similar game.

#### **10<sup>th</sup> April**

Ordered out for woodcutting, to proceed armed but dismounted. Had a hard day's work carrying wood for more than 500 yards during the best part of the day. Arrived in camp about 5pm as tired as a dog.

About 6 pm the alarm sounded and all hands turned out. I believe the object of this was, that in consequence of so many having left for convoy guard etc., the Colonel merely caused a false alarm to be made to see his strength, and how the various places were defended. All hands warned for wood cutting tomorrow.

It is a confounded shame that we should have to do such work. Other work we have enough and surely they can find natives enough to do this. All the military officers think that Kaffirs are equal to White men, so make us work while they (Wood's Irregulars, about 800 strong) idle about camp doing nothing. What would (unclear word) these Drawing room swells be in Kaffir warfare were they not assisted by volunteers. The bad treatment of the latter will disgust them and no man will in future be induced to join.

The greatest loss every sustained by volunteers was at the Hlobane mountain which would never have happened had each Corps been commanded by their own officers instead of the whole being under one.

#### **11<sup>th</sup> April**

Started for the mountain – stationed on top with three men as videttes.

Left the mountain at 3 pm. Nothing new in camp.

#### **12<sup>th</sup> April**

Cloudy and chilly this morning. At 10 am reports that another attack will be made on Hlobane mountain. How far this is correct will be seen. The force to be taken is said to be as follows: all the mounted men including 500 Lancers who are expected to arrive here tomorrow – will make it about 800 or 900 men strong – 4 artillery guns and 4 Companies of Infantry.

As far as I can ascertain it is intended to make us the attacking column. I dare say in a few days time we will have everything properly laid out.

Lord Chelmsford is expected in a few days.

#### **13<sup>th</sup> April**

Fine day on cattle guard or outlying piquet.

Convoy of about 40 wagons arrived from Balte Spruit with 4 companies of Infantry as escort. They expected regiment of Lancers has not yet made its appearance.

Reported that Cetewayo sent a messenger to Colonel Wood to the effect that he would make another attack on the camp, but that he will take care to bring more men now than he did in his first attack. We are prepared to receive him. Our ammunition stock has been well replenished since our last engagement.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> April**

6 am Monday. Shift camp today. What the deuce they can be doing it for so often I can't understand. Everything appears healthy and clean here.

Detachment of 80<sup>th</sup> Regiment arrived yesterday who gave us the details of the massacre at Intombi River. It appears that the river being up, the wagons could not cross so had to camp on the other side for the night. About 35 men were on the village side and 70 on the other, having about 20 wagons, 5 of which had succeeded in crossing before dark. About midnight it came on to rain and a dense fog enveloped them, so thick that they could hardly see across the river which is very narrow just there. There is no denying that a very bad look out was kept – only one sentry who appears got under the wagons out of the rain. They felt quite secure as they were only about 5 miles from Luneburg. At about 4 o'clock in the morning a shot was heard by the sentry on the village side of the river, which was duly reported to Capt. Moriarty, who however told them it was nothing. About half an hour afterward, the mist clearing a little disclosed a Zulu impi about 9000 strong making for the

encampment. Before the men could get out of the tents the Zulus were amongst them. Some were killed in their sleep and others inside their tents and in fact a regular massacre took place. Capt. Moriarty received a shot in the chest and fell shouting, "Fire away Boys, I'm done." And the next minute he was assegaid. Lieutenant Haywood (actually Harward – Ed.) on the other bank kept up a steady fire on the enemy until they crossed the river and tried to outflank him, when the coward saddled up another man's horse and galloped off to Luneberg, as he said, to bring reinforcements. One man who was wounded asked him for the horse which however he would not give.

The men on the village side, seeing their flanks in danger of being turned, now commenced to retreat slowly towards Luneburg and, being skillfully managed by Sergeant Bruce (actually Booth – ed.), they arrived at a farmhouse with a slight loss.

Old Cock(?) Jones had a narrow escape, he being on the other side of the river with the wagons he was in charge of. He says about 4 o'clock he could not sleep so called Potter, another conductor who was sleeping in the same wagon, to have a smoke. While they were chatting they heard the rush of the Zulus which they knew directly by the peculiar noise made by them when charging. Old Cock says to Potter, "Potter, the niggers are upon us! Tumble out but, for God's sake, get out on the inside of the laager." Potter then got through the canvas but fell out on the wrong side right among the Zulus, the last words he said being the "Lord have mercy on my soul." Old Cock then got out on the other side and ran as fast as he was able to the river with nothing on but his shirt, and plunged into the river and got over somehow or other. On landing on the other side, "He being a very corpulent man", he rested for a few seconds and then commenced going up the hill like a racehorse. On arriving at the top he looked back and saw some Kaffirs already across, but between him and Zulus were 4 soldiers, two wounded and their comrades who would not leave them so died with them. So saying to himself "Amuse yourself with those poor devils for a while," he started down the hill at a smart run. However when he came to the bottom of the hill, feeling dead beat and knowing that to stop meant to die, when all of a sudden he espied a sluit full of water and plunged into it without a moment's hesitation. As luck would have it, it was just deep enough to cover his huge body, so with his head jammed tightly against the one side and his feet against the other, both hands clutching his shirt to keep it under water and just his nose out, he lay for hours and swore that three Zulus passed over him without discovering him.

This is of course his own yarn and should be looked upon with suspicion as far as regards its minor details. But that he was there is certain. Corporal Barnett returned yesterday, from whom the above was ascertained respecting Old Cock.

At about 10 am we had our new camp pitched. Fortifications will be thrown up tomorrow and I dare say we shall get a hard day's work. At 6 pm we had a false alarm, probably for the object of seeing how the men would be placed in our new laager, this being considerably larger than the old one.

### **15<sup>th</sup> April**

Windy and very cold. Winter is setting in with a vengeance. Horses are getting poor, a new lot is expected shortly.

Was served with a new tent today. This was highly necessary as there was no difference between sleeping in the open air as in such a miserable affair as our old one was. Colonel Wood made us a visit yesterday and thought that some of our tents were not fit to live in. His visits will always be welcome if such is his object. Many defects may be remedied which our superiors are too innocent and inexperienced to observe.

Knocked off work at about 5 pm having built against the wagon enclosure a wall three feet high with earth sods and stones.

Very cloudy with every appearance of rain.

Paraded at 6 pm by Col. Wood but, owing to our numbers, everything he said went to the winds more than to us. What I did manage to catch was that he thanked us in the name of someone for our services on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of March and that he personally praised us for our gallant conduct. He alluded to the disastrous termination of the Hlobane expedition, he however taking all the blame on himself.

Warned for mounted work tomorrow.

Reported that numbers of Kaffirs are laying in all directions premeditating an attack on us. We are in all expectation of an attack. To crown this some foolish fellow discharged his rifle. That every man turned out need hardly be mentioned. It was discovered that a Swiss belonging to our Corps was cleaning his gun and to try the spring of the lock he placed a loaded cartridge in the barrel and by some mistake the spring went off discharging the cartridge and causing the alarm to the no small excitement of about 3000 men.

The bugle sounded retreat and everything was soon quiet again.

### **16<sup>th</sup> April**

Nasty during the night. Saddled and mounted to escort ambulance wagons to Balte Spruit.<sup>48</sup> We also heard that yesterday's report had been substantiated – numbers of kaffirs are in close proximity to the camp.

9 am. Everybody seems preparing for an attack from the enemy. Our new camp is in my humble opinion not so well situated as the old one, but of course it's not our business. One man stands the same chance as another of losing his life.

10 am. Nothing fresh. Baker's Horse armed for patrol, wood cutters called in, escort to saddle up, so the report seems another time unfounded.

Started at 11 am. Picked up a Frenchman belonging to Weatherley's Corps. This is one of the unfortunates who was supposed to be killed at Hlobane on the 28th. He was very much fatigued. The soles of his feet were completely blistered and he had evidently endured great hardships and seemed ravenous with hunger.

The following is his story. He was one of the last on the mountain and with another, was captured by the Zulu's. His companion was killed and he detained a prisoner by Umbeline and subsequently sent to Cetewayo to receive the regular judgment. Whatsoever that was, he was left in total ignorance of, but he was returned to Umbeline as a present. As the poor fellow knew very well that Umbeline would not care to be bothered with him any longer and that his life would not be worth a ticky<sup>50</sup> should he ever again put foot on the mountain, so he premeditated flight and succeeded in doing so by killing one of his guards, of whom there were two who had charge of him. The other one became frightened of him and fled. How he truly accomplished this, I shall have to find out.

He further states that Umbeline is dead, having received a mortal wound on the 29th, and the women are still weeping for his loss. The bodies of our men have been fearfully mutilated, cut into small bits. He says that the Zulus when passing him always played with their assegais and pretended to stab him.

According to his report all the Kaffirs have been going towards the King's Kraal so that for a day or two we shall live in peace. I shall perhaps hear more from him by and by.

The Kaffirs seen yesterday was only a small body patrolling. They were sent to recapture the Frenchman. Lucky for him they did not find him.

We escorted the Ambulance as far as Blood River and where there relieved by a detachment of the Frontier Light Horse. Arrived in camp at 6 pm. The camp has undergone an alteration, it having been made smaller.

### **17th April**

Fine day. I was hauled over the coals by a navy lieutenant. The confounded beggar, I shall give him a telling off when this Corps is disbanded. Those regimentals think they can say whatever they like. Our turn will come. They must return to their old haunts and live the cadging life – it will suit them far better, unaccustomed as they are to such superiority, which they can use to advantage over better men than they are. Nothing else can be expected from them but bullying.

Warned for Austrian picquet. This makes three whole days' duty so that a mistake must have been made. Those new Sergeant Majors must be in an awful muddle with the Duty Roster.

10 am. Rather windy. Many wagons passing from our camp to Utrecht. Arrived in camp at about 6 pm.

A Kaffir was picked up today on some mealie lands a few miles distant from camp. He was badly wounded in the leg and had subsisted on mealie stalks and raw mealies. Lying on the ground he gnawed the stalk and it dropping, he picked it up and ate (Orig. "eat" – Ed.) it. He states that he was placed there with several other wounded ones but the rest have all died.

### **18th April**

Very windy. No duty for our Corps today. MacDonald's Horse arrived. Very unpleasant day especially when cook falls to one's turn.

### **19th April**

The Frenchman named Grandier in a conversation with General Wood expressed his pent up feelings in words which were far from encouraging to Englishmen. He said that the Englishmen ran away from Hlobane and left other countrymen to the mercy of the enemy. This is quite true as the Mounted Infantry, which is composed of men of different regiments in the fields, had to remain on the side of the mountain, but instead of this no man ever saw them. When we were descending the mountain, they had already disappeared. It was to some extent the hope of many men that our retreat would have been covered by the Mounted Infantry and Schermbrucker's men. But to our misfortune, they had vanished.

This more or less produced that flight among our men which not only caused the panic with which they were struck, but to it can be ascribed our loss.

#### **20th April**

Started at 8 am with condemned horses for Utrecht. Arrived at Balte Spruit. A detachment of Baker's Horse arrived here with about 20 wagons. Strong wind blowing the whole day which made it very cold.

#### **21st April**

Cloudy and cold. MacLachlan gets his discharge from Schermbrucker's Horse and accompanies us to Utrecht where he can get to Newcastle the best way he can.

#### **22nd April**

Left Utrecht from the farm and after a 5 hours ride reached it.

#### **3rd May**

Arrived today in camp. Nothing new since our departure.

#### **4th May**

General Lord Chelmsford arrived today at six pm. A false alarm sounded and we took our respective positions. This was done to show the general our strength and position should a real alarm take place. All the tents were struck and everything showed as if the enemy were really approaching. Order for a move tomorrow.

#### **5th May**

Struck camp at 4.30 am and at six we were all on the march. The sight we produced ought to frighten the enemy should they be near enough to view us – 200 loaded wagons, 600 mounted volunteers, 2 regiments of Infantry, the 6th Battery of Artillery and 800 loyal Kaffirs is a sight but rarely seen in south Africa. Our position on the march enabled us to take in the whole sight, so that I can truly say it was magnificent. Our marching column was protected on all sides by mounted men and vedettes were stationed for miles around to apprise us in case of the appearance of the enemy's impi which was expected. This however did not take place and we arrived at our destination at about 4 pm without any hindrance. A false alarm was made when the laager was considered strong enough.

#### **6th May**

It appears we shall have to remain here some days as fatigues are the order of the day. This morning we had to cut down all the long grass in camp and this afternoon we shall have to build walls around the wagon laager.

The well known Hlobane is in sight from here. I shall not be the least surprised if we have to make another attack. It is hoped that great care will be taken to adopt a proper plan.

Fortifications completed.

#### **7th May**

Nothing new in camp. 10 am some more mounted men arrived and our Commandant.

Warned for vedette duty tomorrow.

#### **8th May**

Started for our posts at 5 am. Grass fires all around which is very brazen. I believe the Zulus burn the grass with the intention of starving our cattle. They will generally be successful in this as it is not safe for them to come too close to the camp. Wood is very scarce and dung is not to be had so cooking is a matter of great difficulty. Some men go as far as seven miles for firewood. Almost our whole force was today on duty, every available horse was out.

I do not know whether Raaff purchased any horses for this Corps. Fresh horses are decidedly needed. Our nags are getting very low in condition. Read in orders that we will be paid tomorrow.

#### **9th May**

Received our pay today.

#### **10th May**

Warned for escort to load up coal.

### **11th May**

Read in orders that our resignation has been accepted and that we shall be at liberty either to rejoin or skedaddle. Good numbers of the men are uncertain what to do.  
Orders for another move tomorrow. Warned for vedette duty tomorrow.

### **12th May**

Camp struck at 4.30 am. Marching commenced at 7.30.  
I really do not know what to do, whether I shall rejoin this Corps or join another one. Volunteering is all the same so I don't suppose it makes any difference to which one belongs.  
In a (unclear word) Dixon and Silverlock started for Utrecht. May they remain there.  
Fortifications are being made. Water not quite so far at this camp but no firewood. False alarm in the evening to show our position.

### **13th May**

Patrol left for some mountains but except seeing some Kaffirs at a distance nothing else transpired.

### **14th May**

Served out with new saddles.  
Buller absent. Raaff to act in his stead.  
Great consternation was caused last night by the discharge of a gun. Everyone ran out expecting to hear of the enemy's presence but soon were told to retreat as there was no cause for alarm. But hardly had we turned in when the report of another discharge sounded in our ears. Great heed was given to this and mostly all our tents were struck. The report of two shots within such a short time could hardly be ascribed to accident. The men however were told to be steady, but, as no enemy was in sight and our outlying picquets still remained at their posts, it was thought that the cause must be found out in camp.  
It soon transpired that a Lieutenant of the Light Horse was drunk and in a fit of frenzy had discharged his revolver, for what object no one knows.

### **15th May**

The Lieutenant who so foolishly caused last night's alarm has been sent from camp. Very likely the Colonel is satisfied with his bravery, so gave him an opportunity of displaying it elsewhere.  
Very windy today. Warned for flank guard.

### **16th May**

Been very cold during the night. Wagon escort left this morning.  
Manon(?) arrived. False alarm sounded – object to announce the arrival of General Wood, he having been absent some days.  
Light night.

### **17th May**

Last night a report was heard similar to the report of a gun. Some men went out but no cause was discernable.  
We have since heard that some cartridges exploded.  
A large patrol will leave tomorrow for two days. Our mounted force is pretty strong now.  
A new coal pit has been dug. It appears that Africa overflows with undiscovered wealth. Zululand seems never to have been explored by Europeans and old diggers have discovered some nuggets of gold not many miles from here. If when this war is over this becomes inhabited by a white race, the hidden wealth will be sought after and then with the sea coast near and a railway of 150 miles, South Africa may then look forward to a future of which other countries might be jealous.

### **18th May**

Out on vedette duty. Very cold wind blowing.  
Lieut. Weldon visited us during the day. The old rascal wanted to argue with me that I had not posted the men on the best places. What does he know? Perhaps passed his life in barracks but never had any experience as outlying guard. It is quite certain that a vedette is not likely to choose a spot where his sight is obscured so as to give an enemy the opportunity of creeping up to him. When the Zulus advance in large numbers an advance guard precedes the main body and it would be great advantage to kill the vedettes so that they can approach quite near without discovery. Vidette duty is the most

dangerous and the most distant (5 miles and more from camps) Vedettes have lately had some narrow escapes so you can guess it has made them more watchful.  
False alarm in the evening.

#### **19th May**

Nothing else but parades. Cold in the morning and evening. Warned for patrol tomorrow.

#### **20th May**

Left in the morning in the direction of Hlobane. Off-saddled at 11 am. Saddled up at 1 pm and went to the foot of the mountain. Our object was to recover the bones of the men who were lost on the 28th of March. We found the remains of one, a young man named Potter, who was one of the officers commanding Ohamu's Zulus. As some other white men were supposed to have fallen here, search was made all around but we were unsuccessful in finding more. The bones found were collected, a grave dug and in it the last of poor Potter was deposited. Colonel Wood ready parts of the funeral service and this concluded our day's patrol. When the return journey commenced we saw numbers of Zulus on the mountain, who fired at us but we took no notice.

Off-saddled at 2 pm. Saddled at 3 pm and arrived in camp soon after sundown. Colonel Wood took particular care we should not be surprised by sending vedettes to all parts. The three day's patrol armed while we were out.

#### **24th May**

Queen's birthday. Grog served out – more water than grog though.

Some of the men have been warned to leave for Utrecht where they will be transported to Kimberley. They leave about ten days before their time has expired.

Very dull for a public holiday. Work seems to be going on all sides, preparing for another move tomorrow.

Rumoured that peace will be made with Cetewayo. I shall rejoin for another month or two.

Fight between a Dutchman and a soldier (gambling now).

#### **25th May**

Struck camp at 4.30 am and marched at 6.30. A false alarm on the road. The wagons were drawn up in two laagers, each regiment in charge of one. The mounted men were all drawn up in line on the slope of a hill and if through an unforeseen circumstance, the enemy should appear suddenly, then I think we should be able to frustrate their objective.

Arrived at our camping ground about 3 pm. We there formed laager, but it is a miserable place completely surrounded by hills obscuring the vision on all sides. False alarm. Warned for vedettes.

#### **26th May**

Proceeded for duty at 7 am. Our men have not left yet. Probably they will tomorrow.

#### **27th May**

Our men left this morning all in good spirits. I am warned to proceed to left at 10 am.

Sept at Van Roop's about six miles from Utrecht, the only farm on this side of the Orange River where an avenue graces the entrance.

#### **28th May**

Rained during the night which made the road very slippery. Arrived at Utrecht about 8 am while a slight misty rain was falling.

#### **29th May**

Stopping at Utrecht.

#### **31st May**

Left Utrecht for the camp at 7 am and arrived after a stiff ride at 7 pm.

#### **1st June**

Last night orders were issued that an early march would be made and consequently we started at 6 am. After a tedious march we arrived and encamped on the Sand River.

A report was current that a small party consisting of the Prince Imperial with several others had been surrounded and that the Prince and two others had been killed. This produced great uneasiness in camp as the following day's march would have brought us so close together that, in case of need, assistance could be given to either column.

### **2nd June**

This morning we marched at daylight. Our Corps was the advance guard. In reconnoitring hills up and down, through mealie fields and long grass, we arrived at the spot where the party was killed the day before. We first discovered the dead body of a volunteer lying on its back with several assegai wounds. Next another and at last the body of the Prince Imperial also stripped and assegaied. Some valuable rings he had on his fingers were likewise taken. The bodies were not mutilated. The stabs were only made to cause death. Very likely if the Zulus had time to return they would have cut up the bodies. It appears from those who escaped that the party had off-saddled for an hour and, when about to mount, a volley was discharged from the mealie stalks wounding the three named, whilst the others, seeing the overpowering numbers, retreated and arrived safely in camp.

The place where this accident happened was on the side of a hill covered with mealie fields and long grass. Only inexperienced men would ever attempt such to off-saddle where a strong body of men would require great vigilance to prevent surprise from an enemy. The bodies of the two volunteers were buried on the spot and that of the Prince was taken in an ambulance wagon to Newdigate's Column.

I forgot to mention that before finding the bodies large numbers of horsemen were seen approaching. These were the 19th Lancers and the 1st Dragoon Guards.

We proceeded and soon had the advancing column in sight. Pitched camp at about 4 pm.

### **3rd June**

Struck camp and crossed the river where we encamped for the day. General Newdigate's column in sight and following our track.

### **4th June**

Struck camp at 3 am but owing to a heavy fog our progress was very slow. Arrived at the river Opoko and outspanned for 2 hours. 30 of us were then ordered to saddle up and proceed with Colonel Buller in order to look for a suitable place to camp after the next day's march.

After riding through mealie fields and c, which vicinity he chose. (sic)

At about 11 am we halted to give the horses a rest and soon after Colonel Buller and Commandant Raaff cantered off to a rise in front of us, halting the remainder at the foot of the hill. Fortunately this was done, for on our arrival at the top we espied 13 Zulu horsemen riding off to their huts. Shots were fired and no less than 3000 Zulus made their appearance. We immediately retreated and came up to the remainder. We were then ordered to retreat with the greatest speed as we were amongst the hills so that the Zulus could easily have cut us off and surrounded us, and had not Buller gone to the top of the hill, this certainly would have happened, with very little chance on our lives.

When we had cleared the hill the Zulus could already be seen on the top. One of our Basuto scouts informed Col. Buller that about 3000 Zulus were following us. Thereupon a messenger was immediately sent to inform the General. The Zulus however did not follow us far or approach the camp at all. This must be ascribed to fear.

### **5th June**

Struck camp at an early hour and proceeded to the spot chosen the preceding day.

The 17 Lancers KDS and all mounted men are required for patrol. We all left and came to the Ibanango, supposed to be the stronghold of Dabulamanzi. This mountain rises abruptly, the sides being covered with bush which was full of Zulus. We attacked this bush and the Lancers made a fine charge but failed to dislodge the Kaffirs as the ground was very uneven and full of danger.

We were obliged to retire with the loss of the Adjutant of the 17th Lancers killed and 4 or 5 volunteers wounded.

### **6th June**

Quiet today, nothing doing.

Orders for us to return to Koppie Alleen to escort up convoy of 800 wagons loaded with provisions for both Columns. This is a shame as the Column have just come the same road we are now ordered to return on.

**7<sup>th</sup> June**

Trekking back.

**12<sup>th</sup> June**

Arrived at Koppie Alleen. Pitched camp. We are to wait here while the Army Service Corps bring up the provisions from Landman's Drift.

**15<sup>th</sup> June**

Recruits for our Corps arrived numbering about 90 all told.

**16<sup>th</sup> June**

Struck camp and marched at 8 am for Ibabanango with a convoy of 850 wagons. It is indeed a sight to see such a huge caravan going through where never wagon and but few white men have been before.

**20<sup>th</sup> June**

Joined Chelmsford's Column. Both columns are now marching on Ulundi to Beard the Lion in His den in the following order: Wood's Column in the van, Newdigate's in the rear, about 5 miles apart. Chelmsford's Column is composed of the regiments just from England and the scares are pretty frequent there.

"They have made up a pun." – Why is it impossible for the soldiers in Newdigate's Column to be Christians? Because they make an idol of Wood and do not believe in the Lord.

**21<sup>st</sup> June**

Trekking (sic) every day now. Building forts and riding patrols is the order of the day. We have built two new forts and garrisoned them in case of a disaster which I hope will not happen.

**22<sup>nd</sup> June**

Trekking (sic) as usual.

**23<sup>rd</sup> June**

Ditto. False alarm in Newdigate's Camp causing great confusion.

**24<sup>th</sup> June**

Started on patrol. After getting about six miles from camp Zulus were observed on an adjacent hill. The charge was sounded and away we went but our horses being blown could not stop themselves and many of us had some nasty spills. My horse turned a complete somersault going down the hill at a break neck pace and fell right on top of me, rendering me unconscious for the time.

When we got to the top of the hill the niggers had all disappeared so we had to return to camp. The agility of the Zulu warrior is really surprising (sic). They can run every bit as fast as a horse (that is to say the horses we have who get 5 pints of oats a day).

**25<sup>th</sup> June**

Patrol with Lancers and 2 guns of the Royal Artillery. After transversing the ground we went over yesterday we descended the hill and shelled Panda's old Kraal and burnt it into the ground. The view from here is splendid, a beautiful valley about 10 miles long completely shut in by mountains on all sides, through which flows the White Umfolosi, the river which the Zulu's swear no invader shall ever re-pass alive. We can see with the aid of glasses Cetewayo's old kraal at the far end of this valley about 20 miles as the road lies. So we have our goal in sight at last, when we hope to have an opportunity of paying back with interest all old scores.

**26<sup>th</sup> June**

Rested the oxen today.

On cattle guard chased a Zulu from his kraal and captured a lot of pumpkins which are very acceptable.

**27<sup>th</sup> June**

Struck camp at 5 am and marched onward.

**28<sup>th</sup> June**

Half today to construct a defensive laager and leave all heavy wagons, tents, baggage, etc., as we descend into the valley tomorrow with all the able bodied men. The sick will stop here and the dismounted and the useless ones. We are not allowed to take more than one blanket. In fact we are allowed nothing but our arms and food as we have to go through the valley which is thickly wooded and where we may expect an attack any time from our agile enemy.

### **29<sup>th</sup> June**

Laager not finished so stop today.

### **30<sup>th</sup> June**

Started for Ulundi. Patrol on ahead came within sight of the White Umfolosi. Saw Zulu impi on the other maneuvering inside the famous Undini. Returned to camp without having encountered any opposition.

### **1st July**

Stated at 2.30 am. All the mounted men of Wood's Column to reconnoitre (Original 'reconitre' – Ed.) the road. About daylight came up to the Umfolosi but was concealed from view by the trees which grew thick. The strictest silence was kept, no smoking was allowed, and there was a sight well worth looking at. Three Zulu Impies (sic) were marching and counter marching only about three miles from where we were, and singing like mad. There is no doubt they intend to fight it out.

We lay in our concealment until about 2 pm when the advanced guard arrived and began forming a camp. We learnt from them that 2 envoys had come in from Cetewayo to sue for peace bringing with them the late Prince Imperial's sword and two ivory tusks. They brought a letter written by a Dutchman whom he has got a prisoner at his kraal and on the back of it was, "If you come at all, come strong as there are 20 000 of them waiting for you on this side of the river". We watched the Zulus going in different directions, their left horn was seen to retreat, the breast was hidden behind a hill and the right horn appeared to advance in the direction of the camp. In consequence of the fear that was entertained that the enemy was going to make an immediate attack on us, the laager was not made with the usual care. The wagons were not so uniformly placed and its size was rather smaller than usual. Notwithstanding, when the alarm went the wagons were considered properly manned by the men.

With our usual precautions we returned to rest, which was very much needed. At about 11 pm however, a great noise awoke the majority of us and to arms we stood. The rush of our men to the laager was something frightful. The yells some of them made was enough to put fear into the remainder. The whole was not long to secure their places and await the coming of the enemy. The picquet having come in, we heard that the cause of alarm was 4 shots fired from Newdigate's camp. As giving alarms are of frequent occurrence in that camp, it soon put us at our ease, although we might expect an attack from the enemy at any moment.

After having stood to our arms for about half an hour we were told to disperse and go to our blanket, so the rest of the night passed peacefully.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> July**

Reveille sounded at 4.30 am and we stood to our arms till day-light. It seemed now to be the intention of the enemy to attack us when crossing the river. This was denied them as we would not give them the chance today.

The cause of last night's alarm may again be ascribed to fear and haste. An officer making his rounds as usual to the sentries was fired upon and it appears that 3 shots were fired.

The whole marching is put back, I don't know why. It is said that our delay in crossing is occasioned by Lord Chelmsford having given Cetewayo time till 12 noon tomorrow to decide whether he will oppose our march tomorrow or make peace.

We passed a lazy day, the first one our Corps has had for some time. Large bodies of Zulus are continually seen and, from a kraal which is situated only about a mile and a half from here, the enemy is observed carrying things away. An impi was also observed to have marched towards the Hlobane mountain. Their object must be to make an attack in our rear.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> July**

Last night we were again wakened by the report of a gun but soon were on the blanket again, there being no cause for alarm.

10 am. Orders to prepare for a start at twelve so that we may expect something ticklish in a few hours. Some of the Zulus are firing on the men who go down for water but, as a strong picquet is stationed on

the bank of the river, they cannot approach too close. Yesterday a little bugler (was) washing his feet in the river when he was fired on. The poor little fellow ran off leaving everything on the bank until some horsemen came down and brought his things to him.

The confounded Zulus have got any amount of cheek and it is left to be seen whether they can carry it out or not. One of Cetewayo's threats is that no white man shall be allowed to cross the river – every one will be killed. He will have an opportunity of carrying out this threat this afternoon. At 10 am the firing from the enemy commenced. It seemed to be in earnest. Several volleys were discharged from both sides – Private (of the) 58th Regiment wounded in the leg. The mounted men received order to cross the river and take possession of the kraals, each Corps having one kraal to take and put fire to them. Impies are still around them.

At 12 noon we started at a canter towards the enemy. After a stiff one we reached the first kraal but could not see any of the enemy. We passed the kraal and saw some on the slope of a further hill who retired on our approach. This was merely a draw for, a minute after a volley stopped our mad pace, and thousands of grim warriors made their appearance, having been concealed in the long grass. There were so many of them that we could do nothing else but retreat. The enemy followed us and closed in on our right flank firing heavily. We in some measure returned it with what result cannot be told. The casualties on our side was 2 Raaff's Rangers, 1 MacDonald's wounded. They did not follow us far as the cannons covered our retreat. We crossed the river and returned to camp. Orders for a general crossing tomorrow.

Lord Beresford, aid de camp to Colonel Buller, distinguished himself greatly today. At about 11 am he had a pugilistic encounter with the reporter of the Graphic which ended in a drawn battle. And later on the one Zulu we caught at the kraal, he nearly cut in half with his sword and crowned it all by bringing out a Sergeant of the Mounted Infantry behind him who had lost his horse.

#### **4th July**

Reveille sounded at 4 am and preparations were made to cross, which was completed by daylight. The following was our plan of our march, the two columns as it were amalgamated.

After crossing the drift we advanced pretty sharply. Hardly any of the enemy were in sight, but of course it was well known they were thick as peas behind the hills. We came to the Umcityo Kraal which was passed close to by the infantry. The mounted men then went back and ignited it. As soon as this was done the enemy showed themselves in thousands. Our advance still proceeding, the enemy was now commencing to surround us which they completely effected, little knowing they were fulfilling our every wish.

Whilst the mounted men were firing on the advance of the enemy, the Infantry and Artillery were taking up their positions, the Infantry forming a square and the Artillery posting themselves at the corners. The firing on our men now became too hot so we retired into the square. It appeared now that their movements were uncertain as if they were considering what to do. In some parts they were approaching nearer, but the fire from the camp soon proved to them that the well aimed shots were too much for them and that their only chance of life was to look for sheltered spots, which however were difficult to find.

The enemy now bethought themselves and rushed towards a stony ridge where there was shelter and close to which was the trenches of our old encampment. This movement was done to attack the fort and take possession of it, but could not be so easily accomplished as proposed. The fire on them was severe. The numbers lost on our own side was great. (Capt. Nicholson mortally wounded).

One Company of the 90th however managed to repulse them. Had they succeeded becoming masters of this position all would have been up with us. Their superior numbers would have given them the advantage over us and hereby forcing an entrance.

The rush of the enemy was terrible, the bullets flying about like hail. Lucky for us that the Zulus have a knack of firing too high or else many more of our men would have been killed. We took up our position in the middle of the square. This was our first time we were what you might call spectators of the fight going on around us. The enemy charged the square with determination. They evidently could not have been aware of the strength of our Infantry when in square. The Artillery fired several shells right into the densest part of them, but you could not see any difference so numerous were they. At about 7.30 the Infantry discharged their first volley and continued a perfect hail of bullets for about an hour. This proved too much and the enemy was seen to lack courage. The pluck which they exhibited at Kambula was not tried in this. At 8.40 they commenced their retreat and a soul stirring Hurrah went from us. They (the enemy) seemed to rally but only for a short time. Their final retreat was now made. The Lancers were mounted and followed them, being anxious to see what work they would make with their formidable weapons. I mounted my horse but I am sorry to say that I expected more from them. The Mounted volunteers (unclear word) was certainly I in them. Their charge was not done with the

rapidity usual to them but I suppose this was on account of their horses being so low in condition. We made a good race with the flying foe, numbers of them bit the dust. Several prisoners were taken. After about an hour's cantering about we returned to the square and off-saddled. After resting our horses for a few minutes we mounted and started to destroy Ulundi, the capital of Ceteweyo. A crowd of Zulus were rallying round, this probably with the intention of defending it, but a few well directed shots soon made them clear off. The fire was soon put to the huts and in a few minutes the whole was in a blaze. All the other kraals shared a similar fate.

Once incident excited my curiosity very much. When were firing the Nodwengo kraal in which was Cetewayo's parliament (sic) house, I saw a Basuto, assegai in hand, watching at the hole in a hut. It appears that a Zulu had taken refuge there. The fire was applied to the outside and in an instant it was in a blaze. The heat became so intense that the Basuto had to stand back, he with his assegai ready, poised for throwing. But the heroic Zulu chose rather to die by fire than obtain pardon from the hands of an enemy.

When the destruction was considered complete we returned to the square and in the same form as we left we returned to the laager.

The battle of Ulundi as it is called was a very short and not at all desperate one, as might be said of the Kambula battle. The latter lasted four hours and a half and the former 1 hour and a half.

Our loss is as far as I can make out, about 20 killed and 50 wounded, while the enemy lost at least 1500.

### **5th July**

Reveille sounded at 4.30. Last night we got grog and today a bounty ration of meat and bread to commemorate our victory.

At 5.15 B troop saddled up and proceeded across the river to reconnoitre. A dense fog prevented us from seeing more than 15 yards ahead. The greatest care was taken to prevent all noise. We stayed till daylight on the koppie when the fog lifted and disclosed the columns trecking (sic) back to the defensive laager. What this is for I cannot understand. Why we should not follow up the victory and discourage the already beaten enemy, I really don't know. But I suppose Lord Chelmsford has got his orders as well as I have and dare not disobey them any more than I.

I am sent away to the Umcityo kraal with 20 men to collect all cattle visible and take them to camp.

Arrived in camp with 80 head of cattle from Umcityo.

### **6th July**

Reveille at 5 am, march at 6.

Reached laager about 2 pm. All well, no signs of the enemy.

### **7th July**

Rest today, very cold biting (? Word unclear) and cold drizzly rain which our horses can hardly stand, being tied to a picket rope.

Warned for patrol at 3 am tomorrow morning.

### **8th July**

Started on patrol at 3 am. Wet miserable morning, rain with hail at intervals.

Arrived at Kamagwasa Mission station about 12 o'clock, cold wet and miserable.

Burnt 3 kraals to warm ourselves. Our horses feel it badly and the number of falls are great as the ground is so slippery.

Arrived in camp about 5 pm with 450 head of captured cattle.

### **9th July**

Weather still continues. During the night 250 oxen and 16 horses belonging to the Lancers have died of cold. In fact it is pitiful to see the poor creatures all cramped up and shivering like leaves. If this weather continues we shall not have a horse in a couple of days.

Won a revolver today at a raffle. A perfect beauty, self extracting with 50 rounds of ammunition.

End of book.