

Capture of King Cetshwayo (Cetewayo) – a sample from the recently discovered diaries of Colonel Harford.

By kind permission of David Payne

In Harford's own words

In my spare time I went over the battlefield of Ulundi and picked up one or two relics in the shape of shields, assegais, etc. A few days after we arrived, Jim came to me to say that he knew the spot where Cetewayo's "Somtseu" were buried, and asked if he might go and make a search. I told him certainly, but I would like to go with him, but he said that he would rather go at first by himself and if he found that they had not been taken away he would go with me to get them. However, it turned out that they had been removed, and squatting down, snapping his fingers to emphasise matters, he declared that it had only been done that very day, as the earth from the hole was quite fresh. I should much like to have gone with him afterwards, to have a look at the spot, but I never got the chance.

Several small expeditions consisting of officers and men acting independently were traversing the country in the hope of capturing Cetewayo, and as it seemed likely that our Column would be at Ulundi for some little time, Captain Stewart, 3rd Dragoon Guards, who had joined us on special service, came to my tent one afternoon and told me that if he could get Sir Garnet Wolseley's sanction he proposed to start an expedition of his own, consisting of officers only, to hunt for Cetewayo, and asked if I would come as Interpreter. Needless to say, I said that I should be only too delighted, if Colonel Clarke would allow it, and I also begged that my co-Adjutant, Towers-Clarke, might be one of the party; to which he agreed. Happily, both Sir Garnet Wolseley and Colonel Mansfield Clarke quite fell in with Stewart's venture, and the following officers formed the expedition:

Captain Stewart, the Chief; myself, Interpreter; Lieutenants Hutton, Smith and (name forgotten) 3/60th; Lieutenant Shepherd, 80th; and Towers-Clarke, 57th Regiment. We took no food of any sort with us, intending to live on what we could get or find at the Kaffir kraals, but Stewart carried a flask of brandy in case of accidents. Our transport consisted of a mule and my Helpmekaar pony to carry cooking utensils, blankets, etc. The mule had to be led, and all except Stewart and I took their turn at this, and a nice lot of trouble he gave us on many occasions. My pony either followed like a dog or was driven along with a whip. Our time was limited to three weeks, when the Column would be on the move again. On the day of our departure, Major McCalmont, 7th Hussars, and I think it was Lieutenant Creagh, RA. two of Sir Garnet's ADCs, turned up and said that they were coming with us. But the first night out, with only boiled pumpkin for dinner and nothing but boiled mealies to look forward to the next day, so damped their ardour that when we continued our journey at daybreak they decided to return to camp—and were considerably well chaffed on their sudden change of mind.

First of all we headed towards St. Lucia Bay, travelling over some beautiful country and coming across lots of game, buck, zebra, buffalo, etc. We had a rifle and a few rounds of ammunition with us, our only armament, but reserved it for use only if we got hard up for food, otherwise had we been on a shooting expedition we could have had some splendid sport. Being still at war, nearly all the kraals we visited in the hope

of learning something of Cetewayo's whereabouts were denuded of men, none but the very old and the women and children remained, and from these neither information or supplies of any sort could be obtained. When we asked for milk, etc., the invariable reply was, "How are we to get milk when our men are all away fighting?" However, we always got as much food in the shape of mealies and Kaffir corn as we required, by opening the pits in the centre of the cattle kraals (where they always store their crops) and by picking up an odd pumpkin now and again in the fields, all of which we paid for to avoid trouble of any sort.

The Column worked its way along in accordance with the reports received from various quarters by the Intelligence department, until one morning a Kaffir arrived at our bivouac and informed the Brigadier that he knew the place in the Ngome bush where Cetewayo was hiding, and could show him the way to the kraal. Young Oftebro, our interpreter, who was the son of a missionary and who had lived among the Zulus all his life, knew the country well and was also a personal friend of Cetewayo's, so without any delay Colonel Mansfield Clarke sent him off to accompany a squadron of the King's Dragoon Guards under Major Marter and a company of N. N. C. under Captain Barton, Royal Fusiliers, to effect the King's capture. When the party had started, I shall never forget the kind way in which Colonel Clarke said to me, "You know, Harford, I would have sent you, but Oftebro knows every inch of the country as well as the King himself, and his thorough knowledge of the language is most important", (or words to that effect).

The fact of Major Marter's party capturing Cetewayo was a great blow to Lord Gifford's expedition, which had run him to earth and were on the point of bagging him, but not knowing the lie of the country had got to a place where they couldn't move without being seen by day and were holding on till it got dark. Marter's party, being led by experts, took a route completely concealing their movements, almost under Gifford's nose, and rapidly surrounding the kraal captured him. In telling me the story afterwards, Oftebro said that as soon as the kraal had been surrounded and our troops were closing in on it, one or two shots were fired, but Cetewayo saw that the game was up. He himself then went up to the hut that the King was in, and spoke to him from outside, and directly Cetewayo heard his voice he said, "Is that you?" . . . (calling him by his Zulu name), and after a few minutes' conversation, quietly gave himself up.

At dawn, almost at the first streak of light the following morning, a Kaffir messenger from Major Marter appeared with a note fastened in the slit of a small stick. The Brigadier, Towers-Clarke and I were sleeping under our wagon. The Brigadier lay between us, I being on the outside. On handing me the stick, the bearer whispered, very quietly, "He is caught!" and I woke the Brigadier, handing him the stick without a word. "Marter's got him", he said, as he jumped up, and went off to tell the news to Captain Hart, and in a very few minutes it was known throughout the camp. A cart had also been asked for, for the conveyance of the King and his wives, which was immediately sent off under the guidance of the messenger. On the way in, I believe, some of the followers gave a lot of trouble and had to be fastened to the troopers' horses, but eventually all arrived safely. On arrival in camp, the sight of so many soldiers alarmed them considerably, and Cetewayo looked the picture of fright as they drove up. After alighting from the cart, the King (with his wives hanging on to him as if they thought he was doomed to immediate execution, and absolutely terrified),

strode in with the aid of his long stick, with a proud and dignified air and grace, looking a magnificent specimen of his race and every inch a warrior in his grand *umutcha* of leopard skin and tails, with lion's teeth and claw charms round his neck. Well over six feet, fat but not corpulent, with a stern, severe and cruel countenance, he looked what he was, a savage ruler.

A tent was provided for him and his wives, and a guard mounted over it of the 60th Rifles, and for the two days he remained in camp Colonel Clarke very kindly paid me the compliment of giving them [*the royal party*] over into my charge. After that, they were driven to Maritzburg in a mule wagon in charge of Lieutenant Poole, R. A., with a mounted escort. Cetewayo had brought with him when he came in two very nice grass baskets filled with *utshwala*, and on his departure I handed one to Colonel Clarke, and the other I brought home, (the last he drank out of), and gave to Dr Ray.

Cetswayo's Tchwala Basket

Another very interesting relic, Valuable in connection with its associates which I also gave to Dr Ray, was one of the two Tchwala baskets which Cetswayo brought into colonel Clarke's camp at Mnvalosi, filled with Tchwala at the time of his capture, and the last that he ever drank out of, the other I handed to Colonel Clarke. The way I managed to gain possession of these baskets was this. Cetywayo arrived in camp with his four wives; Colonel Clarke most kindly gave me the care of the party as I spoke their language. In compensation for his not being able to spare me, to go out and take part in his capture I kept a special eye on the baskets, which of course were beautifully made. Directly the captive left their tents, to be driven off to Pietermaritzburg. What use colonel Clarke made of his or what he did with it I don't know. But Dr. Ray turned his into a waste paper basket.

Emma Payne with King Cetshwayo's milk pail – 'removed' from the king by the then Lt. Harford who, following the king's capture, escorted the king to his exile from Zululand.

