
The Zulu War was not only a gruelling and bloody campaign; it was also a graveyard of reputations. The commander who fell the furthest, of course, was Lord Chelmsford. His staff, including the unpopular Colonel Crealock, was also tainted with failure and incompetence. The elderly generals who were sent to take part in the second invasion were similarly accused of dilatoriness and none crowned their careers with glory. Naturally, this did not stop the Establishment from handing out awards and honours as a matter of course.

One field officer who did emerge from the shambles with his reputation enhanced was the commander of Number 1 or the Left Flank Column, Brevet Colonel Henry Evelyn Wood. One of the highest decorated officers of the Victorian era, Evelyn Wood's career was rich in incident and bravery. He was born on the 9th February 1838 at Cressing, near Braintree, Essex into a clerical background. His father, Sir John Page Wood, had been the Chaplain and Private Secretary to Queen Caroline and his maternal grandfather was an Admiral.

When he was only nine, Wood was sent to the newly founded public school, Marlborough College, which, at that time resembled Dickens' *Dotheboys Hall*. A near-starvation diet and a brutal headmaster eventually provoked a mutiny amongst the pupils, during which some masters were attacked and the hated headmaster had his desk set alight. Pleading with his parents to take him away from this unenlightened establishment, Wood applied to join the Royal Navy. At the age of fourteen, Wood passed his entrance examination to enter the Royal Navy and joined HMS *Queen* and two years later graduated to midshipman.

When war with Russia was declared in 1854, HMS *Queen* was part of the fleet that bombarded Sevastopol as the Allies began their yearlong siege of the city. Short of heavy artillery with which to shell the Russian defences, the navy was called upon to send ashore a Naval Brigade to man their 68 pounders in the trenches. Commanding the 21-gun battery was the charismatic Captain William Peel, son of the former Prime minister, Sir Robert Peel. Wood and a fellow midshipman, Edward St. John Daniel, became devoted to Captain Peel and were appointed aides-de camp. Despite the terrible weather of the winter of 1854-55, they were constantly on duty in the trenches. Peel later recalled that Wood did not miss a day's duty in nine months. It was this sustained exposure to the percussive effects of cannon fire that undoubtedly contributed to Wood's incipient deafness.

During an artillery exchange, the thatch of a powder magazine was set alight and, as nobody dared approach, young Wood climbed on the roof and managed to stamp out the fire. The two midshipmen seemed to vie with each other in acts of bravery. They frequently would bring up ammunition or repair a damaged parapet, all within sight of the Russian guns. Peel was somewhat perplexed by their devotion for they were risking their lives to impress him. Unable to dissuade them, Peel often mentioned their exploits in despatches.

The following summer, the Allies attempted a number of abortive attacks on the Russian defences. On 18th June, the British made a suicidal assault on the Russia stronghold, the Redan, during which they suffered heavy casualties. The seventeen year-old Wood carried a scaling ladder and was the only one to reach the Redan, despite being twice wounded by grapeshot. Peel was fulsome in his praise of his young ADC and recommended him for a Victoria Cross. As his friend and rival, Daniel, had also been recommended for the same action, during which he had bound up Peel's wounded arm, Wood was turned down. (1) Instead, he was awarded the Légion d'Honneur and the Order of the Medjidie.

Wood was sent home to recuperate from his wounds and reflected on his future career. When he had recovered, he decided, having tasted the excitement of fighting on land, to resign his commission in the Navy and to apply to join the Army. His outstanding service at Sevastopol gained him a cornetcy without purchase in the 13th Light Dragoons.

Upon joining this regiment, he was immediately posted back to the Crimea as part of the reinforcements to fill the losses incurred during the Charge of the Light Brigade. Unfortunately for Wood, he was struck down with both typhoid and pneumonia and was hospitalised at Scutari for five months. This was just the start of his life-long battle against sickness and accidents, for there has rarely been an officer who was as unfortunate with his health. During the next fifty years, Wood was afflicted with malaria, dysentery, sunstroke, neuralgia, deafness, toothache, and eye problems and, to crown it all, ingrown toenails.

Besides his Crimean wounds, he was further wounded by gunshot during the Ashanti War. His penchant for daring escapades led him to receive severe facial injuries after a giraffe, that he attempted to ride, trod on him. He suffered further animal injuries when he was scratched by a tiger, and broke his nose and collarbone when his horse deposited him against a tree during a foxhunt. At an age when he should have known better, Wood

collided with a Hackney cab horse while attempting to ride a bike. The horse bit him and he carried the mark for the rest of his life.

By the time Wood had recovered in hospital, the Crimean War was over and he returned to England. Just a year later, in June 1857, he exchanged into the 17th Lancers, who were being sent to help quell the Indian Mutiny. A wealthy uncle was persuaded to purchase his nephew promotion to lieutenant and, because he had learned to speak Hindustani, he was appointed interpreter. This led to secondment to the 3rd Bombay Cavalry, with whom he saw much action. It was in 1859, with the Mutiny over, that Wood won his Victoria Cross for attacking the camp of a band of robbers who outnumbered his small force by about 10-1. He killed several, put the rest to flight and rescued two captives.

Wood had been on almost constant service for two years when he fell sick and was invalided back to England. When he had recovered, he quickly moved up the promotion ladder and by 1862 was made a Brevet Major. He then exchanged into the infantry and joined the 73rd Regiment. This was but a step, for Wood was ambitious and he entered the Staff College, graduating in 1864. This was a period of learning for him for he held various staff jobs and cultivated influential contacts. One of his most valuable associations was with the Army's rising star, Garnet Wolseley. Wood impressed Wolseley with his energy, intelligence and infectious good humour. Despite Wood's rather hand-dog looks and his hypochondria (he had good reason to worry about his health), he was a popular companion and became one of the original members of the "Wolseley Gang".

All through 1868, Wood suffered from stomach pains, and because he was ill for so long, seriously considered leaving the Army and, using his knowledge of military law, to qualify for the Bar. It was not until the next year that, following prescribed doses of opium that he recovered sufficiently to enable him to continue his duties.

By 1873, he was both married and had become a lieutenant colonel. When Wolseley was made commander of the British force sent to subdue the fierce West African tribe, the Ashanti, he chose Wood to be his Transport Officer and to raise a native regiment. The short hard campaign was successful and both Wolseley and Wood emerged as public figures. Mentioned in despatches and sporting a fresh wound, Wood was made Companion of the Bath and brevetted full colonel.

A series of staff appointments led to Wood being sent to South Africa in early 1878 as Colonel of the 90th (Perthshire Volunteer) Regiment. The regiment was part of an Imperial force sent to help the local volunteers deal with the troublesome Gcalekas and Gaikas tribes who, under the leadership of Sandilli, were waging war on the whites on the Eastern Frontier of the Cape Colony.

The ineffective British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Arthur Cunynghame, was soon replaced by Lieutenant General the Hon. Frederick Thesiger, making his debut as a field commander. The Ninth Frontier War, as this short-lived series of skirmishes was named, was a frustrating campaign, in which the British found it impossible to coax the enemy into fighting a pitched battle. Instead, they adopted a strategy of encirclement and piecemeal picking off of the hostile natives that gradually wore down the opposition. Wood and his regiment marched hundreds of miles, fought a few skirmishes and became campaign hardened. Thesiger came to rely on the experienced Wood and the two became friends and confidants. Having pacified the Transkei, Thesiger and the High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, now turned their attention to what they perceived as the next source of conflict, Zululand.

Wood persuaded Thesiger that the Field Force, called the Natal Column, should march to Natal rather than attempt the complications of sea transport. The Column marched 500 miles over rough terrain and crossed thirty-seven rivers. By the time they had reached Pietermaritzburg, all who had taken part were toughened by the experience and had learned to "rough-it". Wood summed it up,

a healthy climate, for, with proper sanitary arrangements and the absence of public-houses, the young soldiers improved out of recognition.

Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Harness, who commanded the artillery made this observation about his commander; "Wood is the most ambitious man I ever met. He certainly is most energetic and deserves all the decorations etc., he has got, I should think; but he is a hard master to serve – everything must go straight, and success is everything... He has great influence with the general and may get him to alter the present arrangement, but I hope not". (Wood had expressed a wish to have Harness's Battery accompany him to Utrecht and become part of the 4th Column.) This was a rather grudging assessment and shows that Wood and his methods were not universally approved by his subordinates. An Artillery subaltern, Lieutenant Henry Curling, wrote with cautious admiration,

Col. Wood who commands the column is the most energetic, plucky man I ever met, in fact his energy almost amounts to a mania as he wears himself out and everybody under him. He is so plucky that he imagines that everyone is like him and would lead us into trouble if there is any serious fighting. (2)

Thesiger, who was pedantic and cautious, recognised in Wood the attributes he lacked and came to use him as a sounding board and allow him considerable autonomy. Having delivered the Column to the garrison town of Pietermaritzburg, Wood and the 90th were sent north to Utrecht in the Disputed Territory on the Zululand Border. Sir Bartle Frere had appointed Wood as Political Agent for North Zululand and Swaziland and given him the task of enlisting support for the British from the Boer population. Despite serious raids by the local tribe led by Mbelini, the Boers could not bring themselves to ally themselves with the hated British, whose motives they distrusted. Only one Boer leader, Piet Uys, offered his service and he backed this up by bringing about forty of his family who acted as irregular cavalry.

During the last three months of 1878, Evelyn Wood was constantly on the move visiting the small settlements, recruiting support and obtaining wagons and draught animals for the planned invasion. He later wrote;

The incessant work, however, now began to tell on me, and my glands swelled as they had done when I was overworked in the Amatola Mountains, although for pleasure and on principle I played either lawn-tennis or polo for an hour or two every evening, the subalterns of the 90th being always available for a game.

Thesiger had succeeded to his father's title and was now addressed as Lord Chelmsford. He had originally intended that five columns would converge on Cetshwayo's capital at Ulundi but soon modified his plan to just three. Wood, who had the shortest distance to advance, jumped the gun and entered Zululand on 6th January, four days before the ultimatum expired. Crossing the Blood River, Wood's 2,500 strong Column marched ten miles to a flat-topped hill called Bemba's Kop where he built a fortified camp. His force was made up eight companies of the 13th and 90th Regiments, six guns of 11/7 Battery, about 200 Volunteer Cavalry and 300 natives given the rather flattering title of "Wood's Irregulars".

Ordered to delay his advance to allow the other two columns to catch up the extra distance, Wood's mounted Colonials, under the command of Redvers Buller, indulged in some highly successful cattle raiding. This was both profitable and useful as a diversion, especially for the Centre Column, as it kept the local Zulus occupied in the north. This ploy was to no avail, however, as a strong Zulu force overwhelmed Chelmsford's camp at Isandlwana.

On the night of 20th-21st January, Wood led the 90th and Buller's mounted troops into the Zunguin Mountains, collecting cattle and driving off about 1,000 Zulus. When they reached the eastern end they saw beneath them about 4,000 warriors drilling in the shadow of the formidable bulk of Hlobane Mountain. As they returned to camp on the evening of 22nd, the distant sound of guns from the south could be heard. This later proved to be Harness's 7 pounders fired at the wrecked camp when Chelmsford's men returned from their fruitless search for the enemy.

After a couple of day's rest, Wood again led his men towards Hlobane and, after a brief skirmish, saw a large body of Zulus ascend to the safety of the mountain. At this moment, Wood received the news of the Isandlwana defeat. (3) The raiding party immediately returned to their base and Wood decided that he should find a more defensible base. He found this at Kambula Hill, where he had ready access to firewood and water. Here he received a note from an understandably shaken Lord Chelmsford in which he wrote;

You must be prepared to have the whole of the Zulu Army on your hands any day... No.3 Column, when re-equipped, is to subordinate its movements to your column.

Wood took this last statement to heart and later incurred much resentment and jealousy during the Second Invasion.

During this demoralising period, Wood kept his men occupied with constant patrols and cattle raids. For sanitary reasons, he moved camp five times in the Kambula area. Despite digging latrines, he could not persuade the Boers or his native irregulars to use them. In addition, the draft oxen so fouled the area that swarms of flies were attracted so making the spread of disease likely. Wood firmly believed in feeding his men correctly and made sure they included meat in their daily meals. This led to the Commissariat complaining that he had heavily overdrawn his meat ration allocation. This was quickly remedied by another raid by Buller's men who returned with more than enough cattle to rectify the overdraw. Wood also was quite fanatical about fresh bread and established bakeries wherever his men camped. On the march, he personally supervised the siting of a bakery as

a matter of priority. Wood further concerned himself with his men's health by organising sports for the men, in particular tug-of-war competitions, at which the Boers excelled. (4)

The remnants of the Centre Column, who retreated to Rorke's Drift and Helpmakaar, and also Pearson's Coastal Column, who were now besieged at Eshowe, spent many miserable weeks on the defensive. Only Wood's Column was intact and he continued to make his presence felt by taking cattle, burning crops and destroying kraals.

He pulled off something of a propaganda coup when Cetshwayo's brother, Hamu, unconditionally surrendered to him with some 6,000 followers. This would have made any advance towards Ulundi considerably easier were it not for that thorn in his side, Mbelini's band. This tribe had recently slaughtered eighty soldiers of the 80th Regiment as they slept in camp on the bank by the Intombe River near Luneburg and were known to have moved to the southern slopes of Hlobane Mountain. Wood knew that he would have to deal with Mbelini as Hlobane lay in the path to Ulundi.

While Chelmsford waited for Imperial reinforcements to arrive from Britain, he bolstered Wood's force with all the incoming volunteer cavalry. He wished Wood's successful raiding to increase in order to divert Zulu attention away from the south, where he was about to lead a column to relieve Eshowe. His theory was proved wrong, despite fighting a stiff battle at Gingindlovu against 4,000 Zulus and successfully relieving Pearson's men. Cetshwayo's main army had not marched south as hoped, but north to attack Wood's base at Kambula.

Wood had misgivings about attacking Hlobane although he knew its threat had to be neutralised. Buller, with a mounted force of 400 men, was enthusiastic, not only to defeat Mbelini, but also the prospect of capturing so many head of cattle and the prize money they brought. Chelmsford had requested that Wood should make a move on the 27th of March to tie in with his plan to march on Eshowe a few days later. Wood responded to Chelmsford's request in a note in which he wrote;

Buller has started, and at 3pm I follow, to try to get up the Inhlobane at daylight tomorrow. I am not very sanguine of success. We do not know how steep the Eastern end may be, but I think we ought to make a stir here, to divert attention from you, although, as you see by our last reports, it is asserted that you have only Coast tribes against you, and that all Cetewayo's (sic) people are coming here.

Hlobane was like Table Mountain at the Cape and a formidable position to take. It rose 1,500 feet above the surrounding plain and was three miles long by about a mile wide. Narrow tracks led up the steep flanks to the summit, which was a moor-like plateau littered with boulders and scrub. It would be hard to find an objective more unsuited for mounted troops, but Wood decided not to take any of his infantry, except for his native irregulars.

The debacle that followed left a question mark about Evelyn Wood's state of mind for he ignored standard military practice and had no control over the fighting. He adopted a 'floating' form of command, which meant he followed at a distance and was quite unable to influence events. Buller did not send out scouts who could warn of a main impi approach, which was clear from Wood's letter to Chelmsford he fully expected. Wood later wrote that; "In the orders, I stated that, as Cetewayo (sic) was said to be advancing with his whole army, scouts were to be sent to the South and South-West, to watch the avenues of approach from Ulundi." Instead, Buller attempted to fool the Zulus on Hlobane that he was on just another routine cattle raid by leaving fires to give the impression he had gone into camp. Under cover of darkness, Buller led half the command along the southern base of the mountain for about five miles before they began the arduous ascent.

The other half of the command, consisting of six hundred and forty men, was led by another special service officer named Colonel John Russell, who had commanded the mounted troops in Chelmsford's Column. (5) The horrors of the overrun camp at Isandlwana badly affected Russell and he suffered from trauma-induced lethargy. This led to a general inactivity of his command when they were based at Helpmakaar and he was heavily criticised for his lack of energy. Wood was less than enthusiastic when Russell and his mounted infantry were sent to join his column and he made his views known to Chelmsford but to no avail. Russell, in turn, said he would even prefer to command the Remount Depot than serve under Redvers Buller. In the event, he got his wish.

Wood had bivouacked with Russell's command at the eastern end of the Zunguin Range and had instructed them to link up with Buller's men by ascending Hlobane by its western approach. Russell and his men climbed onto the lower plateau but were confronted by the Devil's Pass, a steep slope choked with a cascade of huge boulders. Sending a small party to pick their way up and make contact with Buller, Russell remained at the foot of the Pass.

In the meantime, Wood and his small entourage made their leisurely way along the base of the mountain with the intention of following Buller's route to the summit. Flattened grass, discarded bits of equipment and the odd

dead horse made the trail easy to follow. Soon they heard the sound of gunfire echoing from above. Shortly afterwards they came upon the Border Horse riding towards them and claiming that they had lost their way. Wood forcefully persuaded the commander, Colonel Weatherley to turn about and accompany him to the summit. With Wood and his staff in the lead, they began to climb when a fusillade of shots rang out from some rocks and caves above them.

To Wood's horror, his trusted interpreter and political officer, Llewellyn Lloyd, was struck and mortally wounded. Wood had him carried to a nearby cattle kraal, where most of the party had taken cover. Advancing once more, Wood's horse was shot and he was pinned beneath its body. Struggling clear, he instructed his ADC, Captain Ronald Campbell, to order Weatherley's men to flush out the Zulus, but this they refused to do. Instead, Campbell, together with another staff officer, Lieutenant Lysons, together with Private Fowler of the escort, charged amongst the rocks and into the entrance of a cave. A point-blank shot felled Campbell, but Lysons & Fowler managed to scatter the Zulus into the recesses of the cave. Shock and guilt seem to have gripped Colonel Wood. In the space of a few minutes he had seen two of his favourite staff killed for little good reason. Gathering the two corpses, he retreated to the base of the mountain, where he acted out a bizarre ceremony. With a battle raging above him on the summit, part of the Zulu force had made their way around the mountain and was rapidly approaching. Instead of leaving the bodies or even tying them to their horses to lead back to camp, Wood insisted that they should be buried on the spot. A sort of blinkered obsession overcame him and all the surrounding dangers were blanked out. He even sent his bugler, Private Walkinshaw, back up the slope, under fire, to retrieve a prayer book from the saddlebag on his dead horse.

With no digging tools, Wood ordered his Zulu Irregulars to use their assegais to dig a grave. Despite its unsuitability as a spade, the assegais managed to fashion a hole about four feet deep. The two bodies were lowered into their resting-place only to find that the grave was too short. Some further frenzied digging allowed the corpses to be laid out straight and the grave to be filled. Accompanied by a background of gunfire, Wood read a short service over the grave.

A different account of what happened was revealed in Ron Lock's article about the Battle of Hlobane (AZWHS Journal Dec.1999). A Border Horse officer, Captain Charles Dennison, states that during the previous night the regiment had become lost in the pitch darkness and wandered past Hlobane for a distance of about 4 -5 miles. Several campfires were spotted and Dennison and two companions were ordered forward to investigate. Here they discovered the main Zulu impi in camp. It was from this position that the Border Horse was coming when they met Wood and his party. When informed about the proximity of the impi, Wood refused to believe it and ordered the Border Horse to join Buller on the summit.

Wood is also said to have deviated from the path and headed toward the stone kraal, where there were a number of cattle, which he wanted to capture. It was here that Wood and the Border Horse came under fire.

It was Wood's insistence to launch a frontal assault on the well-entrenched sharpshooters that led to the deaths of his favourite staff. Also on his conscience should have been the deaths of six Border troopers who were killed fending off the attacks while Wood conducted his bizarre funeral service. No doubt in a troubled state of mind, Wood abandoned his own plans to ascend to the plateau above. Instead, he ordered the Border Horse to join Buller, while he and his escort retraced their steps back towards the Zunguin Range. Within a short time of the Border Horse reaching the summit, they were trapped between two huge bodies of Zulus and sustained heavy losses that ended their effectiveness.

Wood's small group made their way slowly westward along the base of Hlobane, quite unaware that the 20,000 strong impi from Ulundi was swiftly approaching from the south. Although both Buller, on the summit and Russell at the bottom of the Devil's Pass, had observed their approach for sometime, Wood, who was the nearest, was completely oblivious to the danger. Finally, one of his Zulu scouts spotted the approaching horde and this galvanised Wood into some action, albeit one that proved disastrous. Thinking to warn Russell of the approaching impi, Wood sent a message via his ADC, Lieutenant Lysons, which reads;

Below the Inhobane 10.30 am 28.3.79.

Colonel Russell there is a large army coming this way from the south. Get into position on Zunguin Nek. Signed E.W.

Lyson found Russell's command, which had taken up a position on the plain between the lower plateau and the edge of the Zunguin range. This was, in fact, the very position that Wood had intended Russell to take up, but it was not named Zunguin Nek. Unfortunately, the feature called the Zunguin Nek was some six miles to the north-west and it was to there that Russell led his command, no doubt relieved to be out of immediate danger. This left Buller's men without any covering fire or support as they scrambled down the Devil's Pass. Where

Wood and his group went next has never been satisfactorily explained. In his autobiography, Wood does not mention what he did or where he was for some eight hours. Instead, all he states was;

I wrote I had seen between 20,000 and 30,000 Zulus, and remained on the Zunguin Mountain till 7 p.m., hoping to cover the retreat of any more men who might come up, being particularly anxious about Captain Barton, of whom we had no news since he descended the eastern end of the mountain. I never knew until that day the depth of regard which Buller felt for me. I was sitting on the summit of the Zunguin range when he climbed up it, and seeing me suddenly, uttered so fervent a "Thank God!" that I asked for what he was thankful, and he explained that he thought I had been cut off at the eastern end of the mountain.

This would suggest that, having reached where he had expected to find Russell, Wood then climbed Zunguin and watched the disaster unfold beneath him. Another account tells quite a different story. Private Fowler, who had charged into the cave with Campbell and Lysons, wrote home in a letter;

After we had ridden about three miles, we saw on our right front (suggest left front is correct) the whole of the Zulu army. The old man (Wood) says 'Gallop for your lives men' which we did, and a hard run we had of it for twenty-five miles. All the poor chaps that we left behind us were cut off and killed. We had a lucky escape, and when we reached camp (Khambula) and told the news it caused a great sensation.

There are several interpretations as to what happened to Wood and his band. The most likely is that they ran the gauntlet of the Zulu advance and managed to reach the Zunguin Range. Having climbed to safety, Wood probably sent some of his escort, including Fowler back to Khambula with news of the approaching impi and to prepare for an attack. Wood then moved to a vantage point where he watched from a distance of about 2 –3 miles, the decimation of Buller's command as they retreated to the western end of Hlobane and then were confronted with climbing down the aptly named Devil's Pass. This would have happened in the early afternoon, with the exhausted survivors covering the twenty-five miles to Khambula by about 5 p.m. This would bring into question Wood's touching tale of being found by a relieved Buller on Zunguin at 7 p.m.! It seems likely that Wood actually reached Khambula just ahead of the remnants of the mounted troops and it was then that he had his reunion with Buller. To his shame, Wood sought to cover up his mistakes by eulogising the deaths of Campbell and Lloyd, both sons of wealthy and influential families. He also unfairly laid blame on Col. Weatherley and the Border Horse, most of whom were conveniently killed.

A more plausible scapegoat was Colonel Russell who had ridden away from the battle. Despite Wood's misleading directions, a man of Russell's rank should have used his discretion and realised that he was expected to give support to those men on Hlobane. In the event, Russell had his wish granted and was sent to command the Remount Depot at Pietermaritzburg.

Luck was on Wood's side. Because Hlobane was a largely Colonial affair and, as there were no war correspondents with Wood, it did not receive the same press coverage in Britain than if it had been Imperial soldiers who had died. His mishandling of the ill-managed assault on Hlobane was conveniently swept under the carpet and overshadowed by the events of the following day.

The huge impi, emboldened by their Hlobane success, attacked the well-prepared British base at Khambula and suffered their biggest defeat of the campaign. For this, Wood was justly able to claim great credit. His handling of his firepower was effective and he timed his counter-attacks to perfection. Typically, he even managed to get involved in the fighting on the front-line.

When a soldier of the 13th fell wounded in the open while retiring from the cattle laager, Wood had to be restrained from running out from the barricades to rescue him. He also joined in the firing and managed to kill a Zulu chief at a range of 250 yards. Having sent out a series of bayonet charges to clear the Zulus from positions which were close to the laager, Wood felt that the attacks were lessening and gave orders for Buller's mounted force to go in pursuit. Thirsting for revenge, the horsemen chased and killed until darkness forced them to stop. Khambula was the decisive battle of the War and convinced Cetshwayo that he could never win against the concentrated firepower of the Martini-Henry, Gatling and artillery.

The next two months were spent stockpiling provisions and supplies for the second invasion. The ever-energetic Wood not only collected for his own column, but also for the central column, which were despondently sitting it out at Helpmakaar and Rorke's Drift. When, at last, the second invasion started, Wood's No.4 Column was renamed "The Flying Column" and given a great deal of autonomy. This created a good deal of jealousy and resentment amongst the senior officers in the 2nd Division, which was the main part of the invasion force. Generals Marshall and Newdigate felt that Chelmsford had 'spoiled' Wood by giving not only an independent

command, but also what they saw as the pick of the provisions, forage and, worse still, all the Gatling guns. The Artillery commander, Colonel Harness complained of following in the wake of Wood's column, which left a rutted trail and polluted campsites. Also, any fighting to be had was conducted by Wood's column to the annoyance of those officers looking to advance their careers. It was no coincidence that the only gallantry awards, three Victoria Crosses and two Distinguished Conduct Medals, were awarded to Wood's mounted men during the advance and the battle at Ulundi.(6)

Wood believed that the Zulus were reluctantly forced into fighting at Ulundi. He wrote;

At 6.30 next morning we moved over the river, marching in hollow square; we stood on some rising ground selected by Colonel Buller the previous day, and on which for five and twenty minutes we were attacked by 12,000 or 15,000 Zulus. The Regiments came on in a hurried, disorderly manner, which contrasted strangely with the methodical, steady order in which they advanced at Kambula on the 29th March, for now not only battalions, but regiments, became mixed up before they came under fire...When the attack slackened and our men began to cheer, led by men who had not been at Kambula, I angrily ordered them to be silent, saying, "The fun has scarcely begun;" but their instinct was more accurate than mine, who, having seen the Zulus come on grandly for over four hours in March, could not believe they would make so half-hearted an attack."

The war was at an end and Wood was looking forward to returning to England. Both Chelmsford and his replacement, Wolseley, were lavish in their praise of Wood and his men. The latter went so far as to say;

You and Buller have been the only bright spots in this miserable war, and all through I have felt proud that I numbered you amongst my friends, and companion-in-arms.

Wolseley wanted his friend to stay and help mop up the pockets of resistance, but Wood had had enough of campaigning. He was exhausted and suffering from acute neuralgia and begged to be allowed home. For his services, he was awarded the K.C.B. although promotion would have to wait. Wood showed his appreciation of his men when he treated his long-serving escort to a costly dinner at the best hotel in Pietermaritzburg.

Back in England, Wood attended numerous dinners in his honour and was a guest of both the Queen and Disraeli. He also gained his promotion to Major General, the youngest to have attained that rank. After six months of being feted, Wood was on his way back to South Africa on a highly unusual and emotional mission.

At the very beginning of the Second Invasion, young Prince Louis Napoleon, who was on Chelmsford's staff, was killed during an ambush of his patrol. The news caused greater shock in Britain than did the disaster at Isandlwana. Queen Victoria, who was no stranger to grief herself, befriended Louis' mother, Empress Eugénie, and a bond grew between them. As a personal favour, the Queen asked Wood to take charge of the pilgrimage Eugénie wished to undertake to see where her son had been slain. Amongst the small entourage was the Honourable Mrs. Ronald Campbell, the widow of Wood's staff officer and friend. When they arrived at Cape Town, Wood paid a number of visits to see Chief Cetshwayo, who was being held at the Castle. The chief asked Wood to get him a rug, which he did not use as a floor cover, but as a cloak. The eighty strong party left Pietermaritzburg on 29th April on what was to be an 800 mile round-trip. They first made for Utrecht, where the whole population turned out to greet them. Wood was re-acquainted with several members of his old Irregulars and met members of Piet Uys' family, who accompanied him to Khambula. (7) Here they erected a memorial stone near the graves by the old camp. On the 21st May, Mrs. Campbell was taken to Hlobane where a tombstone was placed on the grave of her husband and Llewelyn Lloyd. Some of the party, including Eugénie actually climbed up the Devil's Pass to the summit. Finally, they reached the Ityatosi, where the Prince Imperial had met his death.

Another memorial stone was laid and the Empress planted some cuttings of trees she had brought from the family estate at Camden Place in Chislehurst. The party then returned to England by the end of July.

Wood was not finished with South Africa for he was sent out again within six months at the outbreak of the First Anglo-Boer War of 1881. Soon after he arrived, General Sir George Colley, the Army Commander was killed with many of his men, when the Boers overran their position on Majuba Hill. As a result, Wood was sworn in as Acting Governor of Natal and Administrator of the Transvaal. He became unpopular in the Colony and amongst his fellow officers when, acting under the instructions of the British Government, he negotiated a peace settlement with the Boers that ended the war.

He and Buller were reunited for a short time, when the latter took over running the military, and together they took the opportunity to visit the battle sites at Rorke's Drift and Isandlwana, where they interviewed several of the participants from both sides. Wood then rode onto the Ityatosi, where he had the site where the Prince Imperial fell photographed.

At the end of 1881, Wood left South Africa for the last time. Although the rest of his career was long and filled with interesting and responsible appointments, his days of campaigning were over. What made Wood tick? All his life he relished challenges as if to test himself. A rather weakly individual, he attempted to overcome his physical shortcomings by deliberately exposing himself to hardship. His dreadful early school experiences may have conditioned him to endure pain and discomfort without complaint in order to enhance himself in the eyes of his fellow pupils. This would certainly explain his exceptional and rather unnatural conduct during his time in the trenches before Sevastopol. A boy of seventeen has to be driven by more than duty to act in the way that Midshipman Wood did. His bravery seems calculated rather than spontaneous and it is not surprising that he eventually was awarded the Victoria Cross.

His persistent ill-health can be put down to more than a lack of robustness. He appears to have been highly-strung and hyperactive and this nervous condition could have caused his recurring stomach problems that dogged him throughout his life. Those under his command found him to be a demanding chief but, as he was also successful, there was a benefit to be gained in being associated with him. He also rewarded loyalty and was exceptionally solicitous about his soldiers' conditions and health.

During the Zulu War, Wood relished the challenge, politically and militarily, and came genuinely to respect both Boer and Zulu. There is real sense of sadness and disappointment on Wood's part over the decline in spirit of the Zulu army at Ulundi. The only blemish was Wood's mishandling of the Hlobane fiasco and the loss of his close friends. His return to Zululand with Empress Eugénie and his visit to Campbell and Lloyd's grave seem to have helped him cope with the guilty burden he carried.

By the time he retired, Wood had attained the rank of field marshal. In his old age, he wrote books, articles and delivered speeches and eulogies to old comrades whom he outlived. He saw the beginning and end of the War to end all Wars and died during the influenza pandemic of 1919.

References.

- (1) Edward St. John Daniel won the Victoria Cross for helping to defend the Grenadier Guards colours at the Battle of Inkerman and for assisting Captain Peel when he wounded during the attack of the Redan. He accompanied Peel during the Indian Mutiny but took to drinking after the latter died of smallpox. His serious drinking led Daniel to be dismissed from the Navy in 1861 and he was struck off the Register of the Victoria Cross.
- (2) Lieutenant Henry Curling, R.A., served throughout the campaign of 1878-79. He was the only Imperial officer to escape from the front-line at Isandlwana.
- (3) Captain Alan Gardner of 14th Hussars was a Special officer who managed to escape from Isandlwana. Having crossed at Fugitive's Drift, he alerted the men at Rorke's Drift of the approaching Zulus. Riding onto Helpmakaar, he took it upon himself to ride north to tell Colonel Wood of the day's events. This was achieved on the morning of the 24th.
- (4) During one of these tug-of-war contests, a special service officer, Major William Knox-Leet of the 13th, twisted his knee so he was unable to walk. This did not stop him taking part in the raid on Hlobane, where he won the Victoria Cross for saving the life of another officer during the scramble down the Devil's Pass.
- (5) Colonel John Cecil Russell, 12th Lancers, was well-connected officer, whose taste for the brutality of war was questionable. He was greatly affected by the sights he saw at Isandlwana and his performance as a cavalry commander suffered. His apparent disgrace did not adversely affect his career for ended up as a major general and an extra equerry to King Edward VIII.
- (6) Captain Lord Beresford, Captain Cecil D'Arcy, Sergeant Edmund O'Toole- Victoria Cross. Private John Power and Colour Sergeant James Phillips – Distinguished Conduct Medal (AZWHS June 1997 & June 1998)
- (7) Wood came to like and admire Piet Uys and almost regarded him as his right-hand man. His death at Hlobane was greatly felt by Wood, who made a singular gesture. He used his share of the capture cattle prize money to have a memorial to Uys erected in Utrecht. Whether they were willing or not, all soldiers under Wood's command also contributed.

Acknowledgements.

From Midshipman to Field Marshal by Sir Evelyn Wood
Invasion of Zululand by Sonia Clark
Blood on the Painted Mountain by Ron Lock