

## Observations on the film *ZULU*.

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The 'Film Industry' is both accurately and descriptively called an industry because like the 'Toffee' factory down the road it manufactures a product. This toffee factory may make the finest sweets and toffees in the world but for, whatever reason, if the people don't like their product, the market place will respond negatively, and the manufacturer will go out of business. And so it is within the film industry. To remain in business, a film studio must be economically viable and therefore make films that the people want to see and are prepared to pay lots of money for that privilege. That film must therefore be popular and profitable. The larger the profit and the sooner that profit is realised, the more successful that production is deemed to be and this is referred to as 'Box Office Gross'. There is an old show business adage, which embraces the entertainment industry in all its forms and that expression is 'Bums in Seats'. To make this entertainment successful, a producer may have to alter, distort, embellish, invent or manufacture scenarios to make the entertainment more attractive to the paying public. The producer may decide to make a film of an event, which on the surface sounds both attractive and exciting and have all the 'Hallmarks' of a potentially successful film. On closer inspection, the original location, characters, historical dates with costumes and uniforms may not be so attractive. The producer will then have the task of changing these various factors to make his ultimate production more attractive to the majority of the public and therefore increase the film's profit margins. This simple economic factor is the principal reason for so much distortion and therefore error in first feature films.

The film *Zulu* evokes all that is British and is still highly popular with cinema and television audiences in Great Britain and all those peoples who value our national character, superbly high standards and British pluck. The film is also popular with the peoples of KwaZulu Natal, but these two international marketplaces are not sufficient to generate the required gross profits. The one country in the world where a film must succeed, if it is to realise these expected financial returns, is the United States of America. Unfortunately, the film *Zulu* did not rise to such high expectations and was therefore deemed a failure in that vast cinema-going country. The principal reason for this failure was simply that there was no American presence, no leading character in the storyline that could be played by an American star with whom the American public could identify. Although Cy Endfield, the film's Director was an American, he remained faithful to the storyline by keeping it a British epic of courage, self sacrifice and valour. No doubt, if the producers had cast Steve McQueen - Star of Bullitt - as Lt. Chard RE explaining that Chard was really an American fighting for the British, just as Prince Louis, the Prince Imperial was French, the film *Zulu* would have been a huge international commercial success.

A film can be placed in one of many categories, ranging from a 1<sup>st</sup> Feature film through Musicals, Documentary and Drama Documentary, Commercials, Promotional, Political, Industrial, Training, Children's and Cartoons.

I will now review the film *Zulu*, a 1<sup>st</sup> Feature film based on the gallant defence of the Mission Station at Rorke's Drift on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879. The film opens with a large Caption: Telegram - 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1879. Lord Chelmsford wrote the telegram on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1879 - the day after the battle - at Helpmakaar, but Colonel Stanley, Lord Disraeli's Secretary of State, didn't receive it at Horse Guards in London, until the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1879. This was the day when the disastrous news broke on the streets of London. The text of the telegram was also wrong, as Lord Chelmsford's actual despatch read thus:

To the Secretary of State for War,

I regret to have to report a very disastrous engagement which occurred on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January between the Zulus and a portion of No.3 column left to guard the camp about 10 miles in front of Rorke's Drift. The Zulus came down in overwhelming numbers, and in spite of the gallant resistance made by five companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment and one company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, two guns, two rocket tubes, 104 mounted men, and about 800 natives, they overwhelmed them. The camp, containing all the surplus ammunition and transport of No.3 column, was taken, and but a few of its defenders escaped. ...

ISANDLWANA - The establishing wide-angle shot is of the aftermath of the battle at Isandlwana with death, destruction and smoke and a few victorious Zulu warriors pillaging on the battlefield. Although the scenery is extremely photogenic and breathtakingly beautiful it is totally wrong as it was shot at Mont-aux-Sources, in the Drakensberg Mountain Range, using Cathedral Peak to good effect as a backdrop. In comparative terms, it is like filming a scene that occurred on Salisbury Plain within the Lake District. Purely for economic reasons, they used the hotel's paddock for Isandlwana as for the principal Rorke's Drift scenes. The camera pans with a group of pillaging Zulu warriors past a cannon with much too large a bore. Only 7-pounders were deployed at Isandlwana and they had all left the field with Major Stuart Smith and Lieutenant Curling who survived to tell the tale. A dead soldier of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment is draped over the large cannon, wearing post 1888 Slade-Wallis accoutrements of white belts and pouches. He should have been dressed in the modified 1871 Valise pattern

equipment. In Shaka's day, the regiments could have been readily identified by their distinctive shield patterns but according to Professor John Laband, by 1879 the uniformity of the regimental shields had gone. So even though we know the Zulu regiments involved in the battles of 1879, it was difficult to identify them purely by their distinctive shield markings.

This opening sequence featuring the British defeat at Isandlwana has an almost existential simplicity in that no explanation is given for the disaster. It is all the more dramatic and therefore creates the tension that sustains the rest of the film for that very reason.

The main title *Zulu* appears, zooming to 100% screen size, with very appropriate stirring music to good effect and we cut to a wedding ceremony at the Zulu capital Ulundi (Ondini), before their king, Cetshwayo. All the men who are about to be married are wearing the *Isicoco*, which is the Head Ring denoting a married man and in reality all the regiments who were given permission to marry would have dispersed to their home kraal to enjoy the ceremony with their own families. The girls are singing a Christian wedding song taught to them by missionaries, which would not be allowed before the king. Cetshwayo hated western missionaries for interfering in Zulu tribal cultures and regarded any missionary-taught Zulu, as a 'Spoilt Zulu'. The lone Zulu figure out in front of the Zulu line is Simon SABELA, who is the only established black actor in either film, *Zulu* or *Zulu Dawn* and he was killed at least five times in *Zulu*. He also played the part of Dingiswayo in the film *Shaka Zulu*.

Otto Witt, played by Jack Hawkins was a Swedish missionary, who had arrived at the Rorke's Drift mission station a few months earlier and regarded Zululand across the Buffalo river as part of his parish. In 1879, he was married with two young children all under three years of age. What pastor Witt did not have was an attractive and shapely daughter of 31 in the person of Ulla Jacobsson. Also, he wouldn't have been welcome or even present at Ulundi, Cetshwayo's Royal *Ikhandla*, for an important wedding ceremony. Otto Witt was not even permitted to cross the border from Natal into Zululand because both Cetshwayo and Sihayo would not condone his missionary activities.

A messenger arrives breathless and as he grovels before Cetshwayo, all the warriors who gather around to listen are chanting *Shiyana*, meaning 'Eyebrow Hill'. This was the Zulu name for the hill behind the Mission Station that Otto Witt had named Oskarsberg, in honour of King Oscar of Norway and Sweden. The same breathless messenger is blowing on his hand, indicating "They had blown away the Red Coats", which Otto Witt translated to mean the Zulu are going to attack Rorke's Drift. This is wrong on so very many counts, because the Zulu always referred to the mission station as 'KwaJimu' or 'Jim's [Rorke's] Place', rather than Shiyane.

Also, the attack on Rorke's Drift was totally unpremeditated and strictly against Cetshwayo's orders. He always maintained that the British were the invaders and he would not cross the Buffalo River, which was the border, with Natal. To do so would alienate the many sympathisers Cetshwayo knew he had in both Natal and Great Britain. This prohibition was not evidence of the King's pacifism but more of his sound military judgement and political common sense. He was well aware of the superior power of the British 7lb cannon, Gatling gun and 0.450" Martini-Henry rifle with bayonet and had therefore forbidden attacks against any British fortified positions. This was further evidence of his military expertise and tactical judgement.

We now have a continuity error in the filming. Otto Witt and his daughter climb into their carriage and leave Ulundi (Ondini) in great haste and the film telescopes the distance of 90 kilometres to Rorke's Drift. When the camera angle is reversed, to show the interior of the carriage as it rolls towards camera, it is not Jack Hawkins. Throughout all the film, Otto Witt is seen as a clean-shaven pastor, yet the carriage driver has 'Mutton Chop' whiskers and a large moustache. I suspect it was Nigel Green, who played Colour-Sergeant BOURNE, who doubled up for Jack Hawkins. If one observes the rear of the carriage, one will notice the dust being thrown out of the back to accentuate the haste of retirement. Cy Enfield, the director, wasn't happy with the amount of dust being thrown up by the carriage wheels, so he ordered the Property Master, Mr John Poyner, to secrete himself inside at the rear and distribute more dust for cinematic effect. The problem is that we see the dust coming out of the back of the carriage and not up from the wheels.

The film moves on to the Mission Station at Rorke's Drift where the topography is very impressive but totally wrong. The film location is in the Royal Natal National Park and we have the very attractive and impressive 'Amphitheatre' as a backdrop. I would liken the area surrounding Rorke's Drift to that of a flat and rolling Salisbury Plain and not the Lake District equivalent as depicted in the film.

In the opening shot at Rorke's Drift, Lieutenant John Rouse Merriott Chard RE. is wearing a post-1881 Full Dress tunic. His collar should be decorated with a crown and not a flaming grenade, indicating he is a lieutenant. In 1879 his rank would be shown on the collar, whereas he wears it on the epaulette. His white cross belt is a Royal Artillery pattern, whereas a Royal Engineer would wear a black cross belt with gold edging and gold centre zigzag. As Chard was working in and around the Buffalo River building a pontoon, he may well have been wearing an undress frock or even a blue patrol jacket. Apart from the fact that a red coat is much more attractive and dashing than a blue patrol jacket, this could have added extra confusion to the scripted scenario. When the Zulu warriors asked Cetshwayo, "Who are the enemy", he replied, "There is your enemy - the Red Soldiers". The Buffalo Border Guard, who were very friendly neighbours to the Zulu, wore a uniform of blue patrol jacket and it is claimed that some soldiers wearing blue jackets escaped death and mutilation for this very

reason. However, there is no evidence to confirm just which dress Chard was wearing at the time and any conclusions would be pure conjecture.

With Chard at the punt on the river is Corporal William Wilson Allan, who is wearing his chevrons on the wrong sleeve, which is a mistake perpetuated for NCOs throughout the film. Allan is also wearing a post-1881 Silver Sphinx on his collar, whereas he should be wearing brass-collar badges. His uniform is post-1887 – Full Dress and is so inaccurate that it must be the invention of Berman & Nathan, the London theatrical costumiers. - In the same scene, the black men pushing the pontoon are Natal Native Contingent and should be wearing a Red Pugaree- [around their foreheads]- to identify them as black Africans, loyal to the British. This fashion was used in another contemporary theatre of conflict; loyal Apaches serving with the United States Army wore a similar headdress to distinguish them from the ‘Hostiles’. Early in 1879, the N.N.C. was not uniformed, despite Colonel Durnford’s protestations and when they eventually were, their uniform was not in khaki.

The ford across the river was not nearly wide enough and there certainly wasn’t a barrage of stones for mounted men to cross. When the attacking Zulu arrived around 4. 20p.m. on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879, the river was described as “Wide, deep and running fast”. Several of those who first tried to cross were swept away and battered to death on the rocks downstream. The ponts are not nearly large enough and should have been big and substantial enough to take 150 fully equipped soldiers or one large supply or ammunition wagon. The company cook was officially Private Hook, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery in the defence of the hospital and not this spare actor who portrayed the company cook. Neither was our hero Private Hook listed in the company records as a hospital patient.

Colour Sergeant Frank Edward Bourne, who in reality was the same height as Lawrence of Arabia at 5’ 4”; was played by 6’ 2” tall Nigel Green, and is displaying his chevrons on the wrong sleeve, and being white are that of a lance sergeant. As a Colour Sergeant, he would have worn the Gold Chevrons of a substantive sergeant and above. If he were in Full Dress, ‘Crossed Flags with a Crown above the Flags’ would have surmounted his Gold Chevrons. However, if he were a Colour Sergeant in ‘Undress’, a lone Crown would surmount his three Gold Chevrons. His two medals are both anachronistic, the left hand is the King George V Coronation Medal of 1912 and the other is the Ashanti War Medal of 1896-97.

The buildings of the Mission Station at Rorke’s Drift are architecturally wrong, as they were not in the distinctive style of Cape Dutch. A patient appears at the hospital window with a large neck brace and asks, “What’s that shooting?” Bourne answers him by saying, “A rifle, Hughes”. This is very strange, as there was no man present at Rorke’s Drift called Hughes.

Private Henry Hook, [played by James Booth] was very unfairly depicted as an insubordinate, malingering, barrack-room lawyer, whereas he is on record as being the perfect soldier. He joined the regular army on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 1877, two years before the defence of Rorke’s Drift, following good service with the Monmouthshire Militia. In reality, Hook was officially the company cook and not a hospital patient.

We next see a cheetah prowling through the bush and Lieutenant Bromhead takes his gun and fires. A few scenes later we see the porters bringing the dead animal back to camp, but this time it is a leopard. I spoke to Mr John Poyner, [the property master] about this apparent discrepancy and he explained that he wasn’t going to allow any animal to suffer because of a film. He further explained that he spent most of the previous evening stitching the only two skins he could obtain on this distant location and stuffing them with straw to simulate a dead leopard. He assumed that because it was a momentary long shot, his deception would go unrecognised. Lieutenant Bromhead’s uniform jacket, although bright red, smart and very impressive was like all the others; a Berman & Nathan theatrical costumier’s invention based on a later pattern full dress tunic. In a later photograph, Lieutenant Bromhead is shown wearing what appears to be an adapted ‘Other Rank’s’ five button serge frock coat. However, as with Chard, it would be pure conjecture to state what he actually wore in the action during the defence of Rorke’s Drift.

Inside the hospital Hook speaks to a fellow soldier who replies with a strong Welsh accent. “Come on HOWARTH”. Regimental records will confirm that there was no Howarth at Rorke’s Drift on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879. There was a ‘Gunner’ called Arthur Howard, but he was English with a pronounced English accent.

Chard and Bromhead appear to have a very dramatic first time meeting on the bank of the Buffalo River. This meeting was certainly not the first between these two officers, as Chard had arrived from Helpmakaar on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 1879 to build the pontoons for the crossing and Lieutenant Bromhead was already at the Mission Station with the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment. In such a small military camp, they must have met many times a day for the past three days and been previously acquainted. Lieutenant Bromhead then says with a distinct cockney accent, which is not consistent with that of a Lincolnshire gentleman, “That is my post”. This is incorrect, as Brevet Major Henry Spalding was the commanding officer of Rorke’s Drift. Spalding had realised days before how tactically important the ‘Drift’ was, as it was a natural crossing point on the Buffalo River for Nr: 3 column’s march to Ulundi. He sent many requests down the line to Helpmakaar, for reinforcements to strengthen his garrison but none was forthcoming. On the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879, he left with a small escort to ride to Helpmakaar to confront the authorities and return with the promised company of the 1<sup>st</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>. Just before he left there was a moment’s discussion and consultation to determine who the most senior officer was. Surgeon

Reynolds could hold no line of command and as Captain Stephenson was an irregular officer, he didn't count. He then consulted the 'Army List' and confirmed that Chard was senior to Bromhead, 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. and therefore appointed him as Acting C.O., until his return from Helpmakaar the following day. As the vast majority of the garrison was 24<sup>th</sup> Regt., this decision not to place command with a 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. officer who had served the longest requires an explanation.

Lieutenant Bromhead had purchased an Ensign's commission in April 1867, but had not been promoted to lieutenant until October 1871. As a Royal Engineer, Chard was not subject to the 'Purchase system' and was commissioned Lieutenant directly on entry at 'The Shop' in Woolwich in April 1868. Although John Rouse Merriott Chard had been in the army one year less than Gonville Bromhead, he was nevertheless 3 years his senior in substantive commissioned rank and therefore assumed command.

I was personally concerned about the social clash between Chard - [An officer of Engineers] and Gonville Bromhead - [An officer of a Line Regiment], which reflected the 1960's rather than the 1870's. My father was a Civil Engineer and my father in law was a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical Engineers. So, when I first saw the film in 1963 and listened to Bromhead (Michael Caine) a 'Regimental Line Officer' talking down his social snout to Chard (Stanley Baker) and describing him merely as [An officer of Engineers] - I quietly crawled under my cinema seat. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a Royal Engineer officer entered the British army [Without purchase] as a Gentleman Cadet, via the "Shop" at Woolwich and they were regarded as the 'Crème de la Crème' of the British army. The Prince Imperial was a Gentleman Cadet at the 'Shop', as were Generals like Lord Kitchener, Sir Charles Warren and 'Chinese' Gordon of Khartoum, all the brightest buttons in the British army. During the 1960's I served at Associated-Rediffusion, where Royal Naval (Retired) deck officers managed us. To our chagrin, we soon learned the phrase - "I will not be ruled by the purple empire", referring to the purple colour between a Royal Naval [Engineer] officers gold rings of rank. When I call for "Full ahead both" I want it and I don't want any excuses from the Engineering Division". Even today in 2001, the job description of "Engineer" is still looked down upon by the shallow Marketing/Advertising Executive Account boys & girls as a dirty/grimy/socially inferior image - no matter what qualifications or executive position that engineer may hold.

Ivor Emmanuel, who played the Welsh baritone soldier, was asked his name by Lieutenant Chard and replies "Owen, Sir". There was no soldier at Rorke's Drift who officially answered to the name of Owen. Soldiers sometimes enlisted under a false name, purely for personal reasons, and at Rorke's Drift a soldier called Owen enlisted under the name of Daniel Lewis. But as he enlisted under the name of Lewis, he was always referred to in army records and answered to the name of Daniel Lewis. Chard gives Owen (Ivor Emmanuel) his pouch with a badge of a 'Sphinx surrounded by a wreath of *Immortelles*'. This special and particular wreath was not incorporated into the badge of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. until it became the South Wales Borderers in 1881. Queen Victoria presented this special wreath of *Immortelles* to the 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight in 1880, in memory of the lost Queen's Colour at Fugitives Drift. But, one must ask, what was a Royal Engineer officer doing with such a pouch anyway. Owen, (Ivor Emmanuel) goes on to say, "Every Welsh Regiment has a choir", but in 1879, the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Warwickshire Regiment – a very proud English regiment.

In the same scene, the Mission Station appears to be only 100 yards from the shallow, narrow river, whereas in reality the Mission Station was at least 1,000 yards up hill from the Buffalo River. Chard's helmet plate is silver, which denotes a Volunteer Regt. and should have been gilt for a regular officer's badge. Also, the helmet badge is the 'Royal Monmouthshire Volunteer Engineers' and should have been the 'Royal Engineers'. A few scenes later, Chard turns his back to camera, exposing the pouch in the middle of his back, the very same pouch he offered to Owen (Ivor Emmanuel). This time, there is no 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. badge surrounded by *Immortelles*. A cinematic, continuity error.

In the film Corporal Allan volunteers to moor the ponts, whereas in fact it was Sergeant Frederick Milne (2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> [East Kent] Regiment, colloquially known as 'The Buffs', who volunteered. Milne was then ordered to fill the water cart and get it up to the Mission Station, preparing for the siege. The Natal Native Contingent (NNC) was then ordered to push the ponts into the middle of the river. Photographic records will confirm that in 1879 the NNC was not uniformed in Khaki.

Chard leaves Milne to secure the ponts in the river, makes his way to the Mission Station and drawing with a stick in the sand, organises the deployment of wagons and mealie bags in the construction of the defensive position. In reality, it was Acting Assistant Commissary James Langley Dalton, a very experienced infantry Senior NCO who had already started to organise the defensive position, with the tacit approval of Bromhead.

The dress of this Commissary Dalton, Acting Assistant Commissary Dalton in the film and played by the actor Dennis Folbigge, leaves much to be desired. If he did wear the uniform befitting his rank, then his trousers should have had a Double White stripe down the outside of each leg and his hat should have been decorated with a Gold Russian Braid band all around the side. In the middle of the top, there should have been a Gold Pearl button. The patrol jacket he wore is a post-1881 Royal Engineers Jacket, although it is feasible that as a volunteer he may well have worn civilian dress. Contemporary writers described Dalton as 6'-4" tall, with vivid red hair and born in London. He served in the British army for 22 years, rising to the rank of Staff Sergeant-1<sup>st</sup> Class and took his discharge in 1871, to farm in South Africa. Although a major part of his service was in the

infantry, he was seconded to the staff of the Army Service Corps. At the outset of the 9<sup>th</sup> Cape Frontier War, he volunteered to resume army service and was immediately recruited into the Commissary & Transport Department; hence his ability and confidence to organised the defensive position at the Mission Station.

Chard asks “Who’s the man with the muscles?” and “Sergeant Windridge” is the reply. Tommy Windridge was a cobbler in civilian life and is officially described as ‘small in stature and puny’. This was not the great muscular gladiator as portrayed in the film.

Surgeon James Henry Reynolds, played by that fine Irish actor Patrick Magee is wearing a post-1881 Patrol Jacket. Like Reynolds, Patrick Magee was a fellow Dubliner, but somewhat older in years than the character he was portraying. We then have a jocular confrontational scene where Private Hook, still playing the insubordinate malingerer reports sick with a boil on his neck. Surgeon Reynolds insists the boil should be painfully lanced as Private Hook suggests that a “Spot of medicinal brandy would do the trick”. This is a very conflicting statement, considering that in reality, Hook was a lifelong confirmed Teetotaller.

Otto Witt did not have Cetshwayo as a parishioner as the King couldn’t stand western missionaries. There is no evidence whatsoever to the claim that Otto Witt was a ‘Gin Soaked’, private drinker and at the time he was walking up the Oskarsberg Hill with Padre George ‘Ammunition’ Smith. There is evidence that he left his Mission Station immediately before the battle, to return to his wife and young children who were living on their outlying farm a short distance away in Natal. Neither did he leave alone in his pony and trap; as he took a wounded NNC officer, Lieutenant Purvis, 1/3<sup>RD</sup> N.N.C. along with him.

Bromhead then quotes figures determining the strength of the garrison at Rorke’s Drift and all these various records are in conflict. Even to this day, the precise figures cannot be truly determined. He also says, “If 1,200 men couldn’t hold Isandlwana....” There were 1,700 men left at Isandlwana and he couldn’t have known the final garrison strength at Isandlwana, because no one at Rorke’s Drift would know how many men Lord Chelmsford took with him earlier that morning.

Bromhead then refers to the Zulus as “Fuzzies”, which is a reference to the indigenous peoples of the Sudan. No one ever referred to the black African of Southern Africa as a “Fuzzy Wuzzy” and indeed dates from the 1880’s - a deplorable script error.

The ‘Interior’ configuration of the Mission Station is totally wrong and back to front as far as the defenders are concerned. The church interior [with pews] was the defenders’ storeroom and Surgeon Reynolds’ hospital was Otto Witt’s house. This was a crazy quilt of rooms, which Reynolds utilised as best he could, converting an alcove into a dispensary opening onto the veranda and reserving the two front rooms for dressing stations. The patients did not enjoy the luxury of iron bunk beds as the film professed, but were bedded down on straw-filled ticking pallets, raised on bricks a few inches from the dirt floor.

Colour Sergeant Frank Bourne, played by 6’ 2” tall Nigel Green, but unlike the actor was only 5’ 4”, the same height and build as Lawrence of Arabia. He was one of the few soldiers who could read and write, and as the British army was very encouraging where education was concerned, his promotion was rapid. In his seven years of service, he rose from the ranks to Colour Sergeant and received the DCM for his efforts in the defence of Rorke’s Drift. He was one of seven children of a poor family, who were totally dependent on the money he sent home. After the defence of Rorke’s Drift, he was offered a ‘Field Commission’, but declined explaining that with his financial commitments, he couldn’t afford the officers’ mess bills. He finally succumbed after a further three offers, was eventually commissioned and retired from the army as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Back in the hospital, Private John Williams gives Hook a rifle, entreating him to help and they both use their bayonets to pick-out firing loop holes and later to gain access to the adjoining room. They would never have used their bayonets, as they were supplied with a special entrenching tool, consisting of a combined ‘Pick & Shovel’ with a short handle. In reality, Hook was in another room with Private Thomas Cole, who eventually panicked through claustrophobia and ran away from the hospital to be killed by the Zulu. The scene between Hook and Sergeant Maxfield is equally puzzling as Maxfield was in another room with Privates Robert and William Jones. Contemporary writers explained that Maxfield enjoyed the luxury of the Witts’ ‘Best Bed’. In the same scene with Maxfield, Hook explains his field punishment with consequent loss of pay, to Otto Witt’s shapely daughter, and how Sergeant Maxfield sent money home to his wife. Hook didn’t get married until the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1897, in St. Andrews Church, Thornhill Square, Islington, London.

Corporal Christian Friedrich Schiess, who earned one of the eleven Victoria Crosses awarded at Rorke’s Drift, introduces himself by way of an aside to the cinema audience. “I belong to the Natal Mounted Police”. He didn’t, Schiess belonged to the NNC, which was a totally different force. Although no known photograph of him exists, he was 23 years of age and described by contemporary writers as a “Short, Fair-haired, improvident Swiss”, who bayoneted two and shot a third Zulu before injury. He was not as the film depicted him, balding and in his early 40’s, adding twenty years to his age.

A column of horsemen rides up to the barricade at Rorke’s Drift and surprisingly they are all white men. In reality, the column that rode in was the Natal Native Horse, commanded by a white officer, Lieutenant Alfred Henderson. He led Hlubi’s Troop of the NNH, with a detachment of the Edendale Contingent, who were all black horsemen consisting of renegade Zulu, mixed up with other natives, all loyal to the British. At about 3-30

p.m. Captain William Stevenson in with a company of the 2<sup>ND</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the NNH. The NNH were then deployed as a screen, out from Rorke's Drift, in the direction of the military road towards Isandlwana. They briefly engaged the approaching Zulu warriors, as a delaying tactic, before riding off to Helpmakaar. In the film they (all white horsemen) just arrived as if hotly pursued advised the garrison to leave quickly and rode off without firing a shot in anger.

Without doubt the greatest distortion of characters are to be found in the casting and portrayal of the Witt family, whose Mission Station at Rorke's Drift was commandeered by Lord Chelmsford's No. 3 Column. Pastor Otto Witt was played by a 65 year old Jack Hawkins, who was previously feted for his portrayals of very senior serving British officers. In this film he was cast as a Swedish missionary half his age, who in 1879 was 31 years of age and married to Elin Pallin who was a few weeks his senior. Their first child was a daughter, born at Utumeni in late 1876, which they also christened Elin after her mother and by January 1879 they had two children under the age of 3 years old. Ulla Jacobsson, who was cast as his naïve, unworldly daughter was not only 30 years older than their first born, but would have been accurately cast as his wife. His portrayal as a 'gin soaked' secret drinker was totally inaccurate as there is no evidence whatsoever to confirm this affliction. This inaccurate scene continued with him ranting and raving in the "Name of the Lord" reminding the young soldier of the commandment 'Thou shall not kill' and inciting him to defect. At this time he accompanied Padre 'Ammunition' Smith up the Oskarsberg Hill behind the Mission Station to observe the Zulu advance. He immediately left the Mission Station to join his wife Elin and children at their homestead farm a few miles into Natal, taking with him a wounded officer, Lieutenant Purvis, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> N.C., away from the Mission Station hospital. Nor did he incite the defection of the NNC. They fled following the departure of their black mounted colleagues, the NNH. Captain William Stephenson and his white NCOs led the defection. It is an interesting point not recorded in the film, that at this juncture the first British casualty occurred. He was a white NCO, Corporal William Anderson, who was shot in the back by one of the defenders, as he deserted, running for Helpmakaar with his NNC soldiers. Some would argue that he followed them to prevent their defection and encourage them to return to stay and fight (!).

Bromhead heroically tells of his famous military family. Yes, his father did fight as a young lieutenant with the 54<sup>th</sup> at Waterloo and lost an eye in the fight, leading the 'Forlorn hope' at Cambrai in 1815. His grand father was a general and had fought alongside General Wolfe at Quebec. He then tells us, "The first lesson my grandfather ever taught me..." In reality his grandfather died in 1838, seven years before Bromhead was born. Listening to the Zulu army approaching in the far distance he says, "Like a train in the distance", which is out of character, as Bromhead was confirmed as 'Stone Deaf'.

There were only three wagons at Rorke's Drift. Two other wagons were used as a barricade, but none were tipped on their side. In the film, they very dramatically tipped four wagons on their side. We then see a pile of ammunition boxes, which were totally the wrong shape, size and devoid of the wedge-shaped access panel.

Chard withdraws his revolver from its holster and is a Webley & Scott, Mk. VI 0.455" with a Bakelite handle. This pattern of Webley revolver was officially introduced into the WW1 trenches in 1915. In addition to it being totally the wrong pattern, Bakelite wasn't invented until 1913. Lieutenant Chard's revolver, which he allegedly used at Rorke's Drift, is currently in the Royal Engineers museum at Chatham and is a Webley - Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) 0.450"

The Zulu attacking force at Rorke's Drift was the 'Right Horn', who were held in reserve, from the battle at Isandlwana, and whose principal job was to cut the escape road from there to Rorke's Drift and Helpmakaar. They were the Undi Corps, commanded by Cetshwayo's Royal brother Dabulamanzi and consisted of three Zulu regiments. They were the uThulwana, consisting of 45 years old married men, the uDloko, who were 41 years old married men and the iNdlyengwe, who were 33 years old unmarried men, who were keen to fight and 'Wash their spears in blood'. The first wave of the attack on the Mission Station was at the rear of the hospital, at the base of the Oskarsberg Hill and not a frontal attack, as portrayed in the film.

We then see a 'Low angle-Big Close Up' of Bromhead in the person of (Sir) Michael Caine ordering his troops to "FIRE" and in so doing exposing his amalgam filled upper right side teeth. I have checked with the British Dental Association and they have confirmed that in 1879, dental amalgam, which is a mixture of mercury, silver, tin & copper, was in its infancy and that a Lincolnshire gentleman of Bromhead's social standing would have had gold fillings in his teeth.

Colour Sergeant Bourne picks up his 0.4450" Martini-Henry rifle with bayonet already attached; yet no order had been given to 'Fix bayonets'. The bayonet was the wrong type in any case and should have been the "Pattern-22 Sword Bayonet", also known as the Yataghan Bayonet. "Rifles - where did they get those, Isandlwana?" asks a defender. No - The attacking force at Rorke's Drift were the Right Horn, which was predominantly the elderly Undi Corps, from Isandlwana. They were deployed to cut the road from Isandlwana to Rorke's Drift/Helpmakaar to prevent any escapers alerting reinforcements and had therefore not been involved in the general massacre or the looting of the British troops at Isandlwana. It was later reported that the Right Horn had overrun 2 companies of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. on the Spur at Isandlwana and could well have recovered some Martini-Henry's from there before advancing on Rorke's Drift. It is recorded that many thousands of rifles of a

variety of makes had been distributed throughout the Zulu army in the years leading up to January 1879. In the twilight of his life, Colour Sergeant Bourne spoke on a radio interview and he specifically referred to the Zulu at Rorke's Drift shooting at them with Martini-Henry rifles.

Private Hitch is seen shot in the left leg, whereas he was shot in the right shoulder at much the same time that Private William Allan was wounded. In fact William Allan was the defenders' first casualty, followed shortly by Hitch. Private Thomas (Old King) Cole was also shot and died instantly, only because he suffered from claustrophobia in the Mission Station and rushed out of the protection of the ramparts. The film shows a disproportionate number of defenders being killed, as only 17 soldiers died during the defence, 15 instantly and 2 later of their wounds.

Chard is seen without his white belt around his body and suddenly he is dressed in a white belt, all in the heat of battle. Lieutenant Chard was never seriously wounded at Rorke's Drift and certainly not to the extent of his being carried to Surgeon Reynolds in the hospital. I believe this scene was manufactured to show that the Commanding Officer would not 'Pull rank' for medical attention, but take his equal turn in the queue alongside his private soldiers. Surgeon Reynolds then asks, "Who is this patient on the operating table." and is told, "Private Cole - a paper hanger". Reynolds replies - "He's a dead paper hanger now". Private (Old King) Cole was killed instantly at the barricades and never admitted to hospital.

The soldiers defending Rorke's Drift were all armed with 0.450" Martini-Henry rifles and suddenly in the film we see them firing with Lee-Metford rifles, with the magazine cunningly removed to foil viewers' identification. Unfortunately for the filmmakers, the action to extract and reload these two rifles is totally different. The Martini-Henry action is to push down on the lever behind the trigger guard, which extracts the spent cartridge case and exposes the breech to receive a fresh round. The Lee-Metford is a bolt action on the back right hand side of the breechblock, which when lifted and pulled back extracts the spent cartridge. A spring in the magazine then pushes the new rounds upwards and the top bullet is pushed into the breech as the bolt is closed and locked downwards. The Lee-Metford wasn't introduced into the British army until 1887, some 8 years later. The filmmakers removed the obvious magazine, hoping to convince the viewing public that the rifles were correct for the period, but the bolt action during extraction and reloading confirmed the error. In a later more famous scene where Chard, Bromhead and Bourne are active with the flying column to 'Plug the gap in the wall', there appeared to be more Lee-Metford than Martini-Henry rifles. To compound their subterfuge, all the 'close-ups' of the extraction and reloading, they used Martini-Henry rifles.

Still in a light-hearted comedy mode, Ivor Emmanuel appears to be more concerned about his company choir than the Zulu attack. He commiserates with a fellow soldier that 470 Davies, his lead tenor was "*Shot in the throat, you say*". There is no record that Private 470 George Davies sustained any wound, let alone a gunshot to the throat. A dramatic scene follows where Private Hook is attempting to rescue Sergeant Maxfield from the burning hospital room. This was in fact Private Robert Jones performing the rescue as Hook was in a totally different room in the hospital.

A scene of stampeding cattle through the Mission Station, so symptomatic of 'Westerns', is included purely for the American cinema market. There is no record of such a stampede, just as there is no record of the defending troops singing 'Men of Harlech', to counter the Zulu songsters. Commandant Hamilton-Browne of the NNC, who was not at Rorke's Drift and therefore a secondary source, claimed that the 'Right Horn' attacked behind a screen of cattle. While the defenders were retiring into the final redoubt, the Zulu invaders were inside the cattle kraal and many of the cattle would have been shot dead with the exchange of fire. Possibly a few cattle may have escaped to run amok and the filmmakers therefore embellished this fact to create an exciting cattle stampede. A typical example of filmmakers' creative licence. We also have a sudden change of location to Wales. Cy Endfield (Director), must have realised he was some exterior shots short, only when he was back in the London edit suite and took his principal players with a 2nd unit, to the closest matching mountainous location in South Wales. It must have been a small relief for the filmmakers to give a location credit as Wales.

The Ammunition Boxes are totally wrong in construction and equally wrong in operation. The scene is of two private soldiers with a jemmy, forcing open the whole lid of the box to get at the ammunition. In reality, the boxes were smaller and a different shape and screwed at each corner. On the top lid, there was a cut wedge, which was secured by a single screw. To open, this single screw was removed and the wedge kicked out with a boot or rifle butt. The ammunition was not loose as shown in the film but tightly packed in packages of ten rounds, wrapped in light brown greaseproof paper. This is a very important factor for consideration during the whole of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. While there was a general complaint about the 'Rolled Brass 0.045" Boxer Cartridges' disintegrating while they were carried loose in soldiers ammunition pouches, while on the move, there was never a complaint from the defenders at Rorke's Drift. This was because the ammunition was protected in a carefully wrapped and boxed state and always close at hand to the soldiers manning the barricades. Even in the famous Alphonse de Neuville painting of the 'Defence of the Mission Station at Rorke's Drift', observers will note Padre [Ammunition] George Smith and Corporal Allan are handing wrapped packages of ten rounds to their colleagues at the barricades and not handfuls of single rounds.

Colour Sergeant Bourne is calling the roll for the 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. and as he calls out Byrne, a voice answers "Present Sir". The only Byrne at Rorke's Drift was Acting Storekeeper Louis Byrne of the Commissariat & Transport Department and he wouldn't have been on the roll of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. Regrettably Louis Byrne was killed in the defence, so he wouldn't have answered "Present Sir", on any roll call. Similarly, a disembodied voice answers to the name of Gwynne and there is no record of any Gwynne at Rorke's Drift. Also, photographic evidence tells us that Private John Williams was blonde and not dark haired as featured in the film.

A dramatic conversation between Chard and Bromhead takes place after the Zulu retire and both agree it was their first taste of action. It was certainly Chard's first action but Bromhead had fought in the 9<sup>th</sup> Cape Frontier War. As the Zulu retire lining the distant hill, Adendorff proclaims rather dramatically, "*They are saluting fellow braves*", which I believe was another invention for the American cinema going public. They may have been saluting fellow braves but the reason for their sudden departure was much more serious. Their scouts had spotted Lord Chelmsford's column approaching Rorke's Drift and they erroneously thought it was a relief column coming to the rescue of the beleaguered garrison.

The film then shows a long shot of the Mission Station and associated buildings after the battle, which was obviously shot at the beginning of filming. All the buildings were intact and there is no evidence of a burnt out Mission Station. There was no body of Lancers at the relief of Rorke's Drift, as shown in the film. The filmmakers have confused Mounted Infantry, who were armed with Martini-Henry carbines and not a lance, who were with the relief column. Although the relief Mounted Infantry were commanded by Lt. Col. John C. Russell, of the 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers.

In the epilogue the film features the Victoria Cross awards and refers to Surgeon Major Reynolds of the Hospital Corps. Reynolds wasn't promoted Major until the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1879, the day the post was officially relieved and he belonged to the Army Medical Department and not the Hospital Corps. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879, the 24<sup>th</sup> Regt. was also named the 2<sup>nd</sup> Warwickshire Regiment, which was an English regiment. They didn't become The South Wales Borders, a Welsh regiment until 1881.

In conclusion, *Zulu* is a first class, 1<sup>st</sup> Feature film, and tremendously popular with British audiences wherever they are, because it fills them with enormous pride and makes us all proud to be British. Writing as a filmmaker for 45 years and a Fellow of the Anglo Zulu War Historical Society, I take a special interest in all productions concerned with British/South African history.

Over the years I have spoken with many film buffs and explained the anachronisms, editing errors and distortions in characterisations, and to a man they all say, "I don't care - I still like it".

My principal regrets are for two important omissions. Firstly the non-appearance of Padre 'Ammunition' Smith, who must have been a character larger than life itself. As he handed out the packets of ten rounds of Boxer cartridges to the firing line with those reassuring words "Shoot straight and true - God is on your side". My only explanation is that he must have been too strong a character and would therefore have taken away much of the starring role and glory of the two principals, Chard and Bromhead. The second omission is the small terrier that was present at the defence of Rorke's Drift and features in Alphonse de Neuville's famous painting. On my research field trips to the Mission Station, I discovered that when the defenders were at the final redoubt, our little dog would run up and down on top of the parapet and bark furiously when the Zulu were massing in the darkness for yet another assault, giving the defenders good warning of an impending attack. My explanation is that featuring a loveable little dog would possibly turn the production away from a serious historical blockbuster into a Disney type comedy film.

Like so many 1<sup>st</sup> Feature films, *Zulu* is a film 'Based upon a true story' and very rarely, if ever will a 1<sup>st</sup> Feature film appear as a totally truthful documentary film. This is true of so very many 1st Feature films, based on historical battles, which has coined the unfortunate phrase, "Hollywood has a lot to answer for". We in the British film industry must share much of the blame for the self-same reasons. Robert Bolt's life of Sir Thomas More was exhibited on the cinema screen as 'A Man for All Seasons', and the critics savaged it with those immortal words "Superb theatre, but woeful history". As a reviewer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Feature film *ZULU*, I would echo those critical words.

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