

THE ASSEGAI

The 1879 Group



Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift

AUTUMN 2017

News Letter of the 1879 Group

**The 1879 Group
Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift
Founded 23rd May 1998 at the Barracks, Brecon
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The 1879 Group

Patrons

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1879 Group Committee Members

Mr Douglas Bourne

Mr Jimmy Reynolds

Mr Danny Tully

Mr Glynne Davies

Mr Roger Morgan

Ms Vivien Watkins

Mr Duncan McDonald

Mr Jimmy Patterson

Mr Robert Coates

Mr Barrington Evans

Mr Bill Howells

1. EDITORIAL

Members may have heard that a year ago the Ministry of Defence announced the closure of the Brecon Barracks which of course includes the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh, our spiritual home. Our honorary colonel Tim Van-Rees as chairman of the Museum Committee with the support of its members has through a series of meetings with the MoD clarified the position and at the annual dinner on 14th January announced that the decision was subject to review and would involve a period of assessment which could take up to ten years to come to any final decision. In the meantime all senior personnel directly involved will be working closely with the MoD to ensure all views are fully represented which will hopefully result in the correct outcome. The Group will of course be available to lend any support it can in ensuring that this will happen.

2. ANNUAL RORKE'S DRIFT DINNER

The annual dinner on 14th January was once again held at the Metropole hotel in Llandrindod Wells. After two years in the Spencer Suite, this time we returned to the Powys Suite and whilst numbers were down to 32, the change of location and lower numbers seemed to help the occasion with a very pleasant and relaxing atmosphere which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Roger acted once again as MC and following the three course dinner speeches were given by our chairman Jimmy Reynolds who warmly thanked everyone for supporting the Group and in particular the work of all committee members in driving the Group forward and making for another successful year. Col. Tim Van-Rees then addressed the Group and congratulated everyone for keeping alive the traditions of the regiment and then provided very welcome news on the situation with the Brecon Barracks and Museum as reported above. One other unexpected and exciting piece of news he provided was that a major initiative had commenced which involved a number of organisations, supported by the Welsh Assembly Government to twin Kwa-Zulu Natal with Wales. Because of the historical connection, this could have significant effects on organisations like the 1879 Group and one he and the Group would be following with great interest. To close the formal proceedings toasts were made to the Queen, the Regiment and the Group and thanks given to Danny Tully and all who helped with the organisation of the event.



The Group addressed by Col. Tim Van-Rees.



Jimmy and Roger sharing a joke.

3. 2018 ANNUAL RORKE'S DRIFT DINNER

The Group's annual dinner will again be held at the Metropole hotel in Llandrindod Wells on Saturday 13th January 2018, 7.00pm for 7.30. The cost of the meal with choices is £28 per person. Guests of members spouses, partners, family and friends will be very welcome.

Dress Code: Mess dress and uniform, Black tie and formal dress. If you wish to attend please complete the booking form enclosed and send to the Group Treasurer at his new address : 43 St. Hugh's Avenue, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 7UB.

Accommodation is available at the hotel which those attending must book themselves. The rates are: £48 per person per night sharing standard twin/double room. £58 per person per night sharing executive twin/double room. £58 per person per night single room. £67 per night for sole occupancy. All rates include full Welsh breakfast and use of the leisure facilities. Upon booking a non-refundable deposit of £20 per person is required. Tel. 01597 823 700.

4. MINUTES OF THE 2017 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual general meeting was held on 3rd June at the Brecon Museum of the Royal Welsh with twenty-one members present.

Introduction The Chairman Jimmy Reynolds opened the meeting by listing apologies for absence and thanking all twenty present for attending. He reported the news that Alan Baynham Jones had died recently and as someone who was active in the early formation of the Group he would be sadly missed.

Minutes of the 2016 AGM

Following the meeting agenda, Secretary Danny Tully then read out the minutes of the 2016 AGM which were approved by the membership as an accurate account.

Matters Arising

Some matters arising were a warning about the many counterfeit Zulu items which were being offered on eBay and also the lack of response from the re-enactment team at Tyntesfield.

Secretary's Report

Before commencing his report for the year he explained why the Barracks were closed to car parking for security reasons due to the recent terrorist attacks in the UK.

His report was brief summarising the main events of the year and he thanked all those who had helped with the organisation and particularly appreciated being contacted by telephone at reasonable hours.

Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the Treasurer Danny also presented the financial report and confirmed that the Group's finances were in good order and that the balance sheet was available if any member wished to view the details. Glynne Davies was thanked for his efforts and it was hoped that he would soon be able to take part in the re-enactments once again.

Assegai Report

The editor confirmed that the pattern of publications had now been finalised with a Spring News-sheet confirming coming events for the year with the Autumn Assegai being the full newsletter. He thanked Bill Cainan, Douglas Bourne, Bob Coates and Allen Coles for their contributions. More articles of any suitable material are always needed and there is an open invitation to contribute either by email or hard copy.

Membership Report

The Membership Secretary Vivien Watkins stated that the total membership was 61 which included the honorary ones and that the paid-up ordinary membership was 48. Reminders had been sent to those who had not paid the previous year and to date only one had responded. Renewing subscriptions on time by the end of June each year was important and she thanked those who always did so and urged those who had defaulted to respond.

Events Co-ordinator's Report

Danny advised that the Harlech Castle event had been cancelled by the organiser. The Armed Forces day event at Northenden was on 24th June with the cadet force and British Legion being present for a re-dedication ceremony at the local cenotaph. The implications of using firearms during the event were also discussed following the recent terrorist incident in Manchester.

Spetchly Park was confirmed with the issue of warning orders to be undertaken.

Election of Officers and Committee

In accordance with the Constitution the President Douglas Bourne then formally terminated the committee and requested nominations for the new committee. He thanked all of the committee for their work throughout the year and advised that due to eye problems which affected his driving he

would have to stand down as President but would be prepared to serve for another year whilst a new post-holder was sought.

Tony Burrows also wished to stand down and Russell Dunton has also resigned from his position as Events Co-ordinator. They were politely requested to put this in writing.

Danny spoke of his own position on the committee and now had three roles of secretary, events co-ordinator and armourer which was not sustainable due to other commitments. As a result Richard Cartwright had agreed to take over as armourer and Bob Coates as co-ordinator for the Spetchley Park event. Danny could then give his full attention to his role as secretary.

With all this tabled the following members agreed to stand for the committee. Douglas Bourne, Jimmy Reynolds, Danny Tully, Glynne Davies, Bill Howells, Vivien Watkins, Roger Morgan, Jimmy Patterson, Robert Coates, Barrington Evans, Duncan McDonald.

On a show of hands all were then re-elected to serve for a further year.

Rorke's Drift Dinner 2018

The Group's annual dinner will again be held at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells on Saturday 13th January. Full details will be given in the Autumn issue of the Assegai. Other accommodation in the town was discussed and Danny had asked for a group booking reduction but with no result so far.

South Africa Trip 2019

Because of other commitments Danny was unable to provide any further information at present and it would be towards the end of the year before he would be able to do so. In the meantime he suggested that if anyone could take this on he would support them when he could. In response the chairman was of the opinion that because of Danny's contacts he and others agreed that they would prefer to wait to see when Danny was available to find time to do the organising.

Any Other Business

Bill Cainan spoke on a very significant development proposed for Isandlwana. A royal palace, 66 tourist lodges, conference centre, restaurants and krall were being planned.

It was also the 135th anniversary of the visit of King Cetshwayo to London and to mark this a South African Choir and dancers are visiting the country. The climax will be a re-enactment of the battle of Isandlwana to be staged in Cardiff Castle in August. Watch the media for future news.

There was an open discussion on the implications of members taking part in other non-Group events in the kit of the 24th Regiment and the representation of the 1879 Group. This problem was fully covered in the Group's constitution and members are to strictly comply with Clause 21 and approval obtained. The full constitution is contained in the 2016 Autumn issue of the Assegai.

Jimmy Patterson asked advice on reverting a Martini-Henry rifle back to an antique. He was advised that a section 28 would be required.

There being no other items to discuss, the chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

5. REPORT OF EVENTS

Northenden

The event on June 23rd/24th was part of the Armed Forces day with the British Legion and the Group were invited to attend by Dave Piggot in his role of Chairman of the Northenden Club. The Group were represented by Roger Morgan, Jimmy Patterson, Jimmy Reynolds, Tony Burrows and it was good to welcome back Glynne Davies also Mary and Chris who helped to make up the colour guard. With the British Legion the Group marched to the cenotaph where the service took place remembering those who had fallen during both world wars and since. Dignitaries present were the Lord Mayor, Lord Sherriff, the local MP and other military officers. Local children read out the names of the fallen and when the ceremony ended all marched back to camp with a full band playing along the way. A moving ceremony and a day to remember by all.

Spetchley Park

On 11th August members of the Living History section gathered and set-up camp in the middle of the park and for this multi-period event there were about 1000 other re-enactors present representing various periods of history. The following morning at 10.00 the gates were open to the general public with Group members involved with general conversation with them about the 1879 conflict answering the many questions which came which showed that there is still quite some interest in the Anglo-Zulu war.

At 2.00pm Lance Sergeant Jimmy Patterson marched the men down to the display area in full uniform and with bayonets fixed. Bob Coates over the PA system explained the setting of the war and described the uniforms and accoutrements of the infantry and officers which were used. This was followed by a bayonet drill display and the session ended with Jimmy Patterson firing his Martini-Henry rifle which brought quite a surprised response from the watching public.

At 4.00pm the Group took part in the Grand Parade and it proved quite an experience with two lines of 500 re-enactors from the ancient Greeks through to English and American civil wars to the 1950's cold war period. Many positive comments were received about the Group and how they presented themselves and overall it proved quite a spectacle.

With the events concluding by 5.00pm tea and refreshments back at the camp was much appreciated as were a few beers later at the prefabricated 1940's style pub on site.

Sunday was a repeat of Saturday's events with the event closing at 4.00pm. Fortunately the weather was reasonable and all members agreed the weekend was successful and enjoyable.



At camp preparing for the display.



On parade and under orders.



Bob on PA system.



Bayonet Drill.

Mr. Kevin Cartwright, the father of Richard was present at the event and took these and a number of other photographs. Many thanks Kevin for your support.

6. THE GROUP PRESIDENT

All members will agree that our president Douglas Bourne has done much to promote the status of the group over the years through his counsel and support and has given us a very real connection with Rorke's Drift through his grandfather Colour Sergeant Bourne. His natural modesty has required some persuasion to reveal a little more about his background but we have at last been successful and Douglas has provided the following information.

'Douglas was born in Dublin of an Irish mother whilst his father was born in India and who served for 31 years in the Royal Navy which covered the first and second world wars.

He went to school in Cornwall and later in Devon and then in 1945 joined the Royal Navy where he served in the Pacific and Mediterranean for almost three years. His civilian career centred on the horticultural industry which spanned 40 years. This included some years on market gardens, public parks, estate management and horticultural colleges followed by 30 years sales experience culminating as UK Sales Manager for 'Bord na Mona', the Irish Peat Development Authority.

He has been active in playing cricket, rugby and still enjoys golf. Three children, six grandchildren and five great grand-children also keep him busy.

His interest in joining the 1879 Group stemmed from his grandfather's part in the Anglo-Zulu war and in particular Rorke's Drift. Although to most of us he is remembered as Colour Sergeant Frank Bourne he enlisted in 1872 aged 17 as a private and retired as a Lt. Colonel having been awarded an OBE in addition to the DCM. Almost certainly he was the youngest colour sergeant in the British Army at the time of Rorke's Drift. It was also extremely rare for anyone enlisting as a Private at that time to reach the rank of Lt. Colonel.

'Since I joined the Group it never ceases to amaze me how welcome I have been made not only by all members but also by those who over the years have served with the Regiment.'

Many thanks Douglas for being such a supportive and distinguished President and providing the Group with such a unique and historic family link with one of the heroes of Rorke's Drift.

7. GROUP ADJUTANT

The Group's Adjutant Duncan MacDonald has been unwell during recent months but we understand he is now improving. Our best wishes to Duncan and we hope to see him soon.

8. THE FORGOTTEN MAN OF THE ANGLO-ZULU WAR by Bill Cainan

Most of us reading this newsletter will have visited the regimental museum of the Royal Welsh in Brecon. You will recall that as you go through the front door immediately before you is the VC case displaying the VC's awarded to the men of the 24th Regiment later the South Wales Borderers. The centre piece show the VC's of Lieutenants Bromhead, Melville, Coghill and Browne, Corporal Allen and Privates Hook, Hitch, R Jones, W Jones and John Williams.

However have you looked at the medals displayed in the top left corner? Here are a group awarded to members of the Regiment for an act of gallantry in the Andaman Islands in 1867 including one Private William Griffiths.

In 1789 the British established a penal colony here which was later abandoned but another colony was established in the islands during the Indian mutiny 1857. To control the local in-land natives, the Jarawas, the British armed the coastal natives the Ariotas who then proceeded to butcher the Jarawas which created a deep hatred of the British. In 1867 the Jarawas captured the crew of the ship Assam Valley on Little Andaman Island. The British immediately dispatched 3 officers and 110 men of the 24th Regiment on the steamship Arracan to find and rescue them.

When they arrived two boats were launched under the command of Lt. Much, one containing 17 men landed but soon came under heavy attack from natives armed with bows and arrows. The landing party re-embarked and in trying to get out through the heavy surf the boat capsized and the men were forced to go back to the beach. Rescue boats from the Arracan were then launched.

One boat carried the medical officer Dr. Douglas and four Privates, one of whom was William Griffiths. After much effort and in great danger after two attempts the stranded men were rescued but when the Arracan returned to Rangoon they found that the rescue had become famous. The commander in Chief in India was Sir William Mansfield who decided to recommend all five on board the rescue boat for the Victoria Cross. (The VC was the **only** award for gallantry at this time). After some deliberation however it was decided in December to accept the recommendation to award the medals with the citation reading 'It is stated that Dr. Douglas accomplished these trips through the surf to the shore by no ordinary exertion. He stood in the bow of the boat and worked her in an intrepid and seaman manner, cool to a degree as if what he was doing then was an ordinary act of every day life. The four privates acted in an equally cool and collected manner rowing through the roughest surf when the slightest hesitation or want of pluck on the part of them would have attended with the gravest results. It is reported that seventeen officers and men were thus saved from what must otherwise have been a fearful risk, if not certain death.'

And what has all this got to do with the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879? Well, twelve years later William Griffiths was still serving with the 24th Regiment and was still a Private. He was to die with his colleagues on the slopes of Isandlwana Mountain and is buried there in one of the mass graves on the battlefield.

So next time you look at the VC display case in the Regimental Museum cast your eye to the top left of the cabinet to see William Griffiths – the forgotten man of the Anglo-Zulu war.

9. A PAYMASTER'S PERSPECTIVE by Bob Coates

During August 2016 I was enjoying the summer air at Spetchley Park, the camp bustled with activity. Redcoats were kitting up to take part in the arena battle and the camp kitchen was being tidied up. I busied myself in my tent with final adjustments to my Paymaster and Officer's Life Display, the pay ledger, records, cashbox and general information booklets and then sat quietly. Commands rang out and the men formed up and started to march out of camp towards the arena.



Slowly silence began to descend on the camp around me. With a sense of loss I found myself alone and with all the equipment around me felt a little vulnerable. Then by chance a 'light bulb' moment came to me. What must have it been like for Major Francis White the Paymaster at the battle of Isandlwana?

One minute he was surrounded by hundreds of Redcoat and Native troops, the next they had left quickly for the firing line. Even with the Quartermaster and camp staff there must have also been a feeling of isolation. For me the silence was soon broken by the sound of Martini Henry rifles ringing back from the arena with the assuring message that the lads were doing their stuff.

It's fair to assume that Francis could hear the sounds of the distant battle going on and then the shock of finding Durnford's men tumbling back hotly pursued by the Zulu left flank regiments must have been a horrific and intense experience.

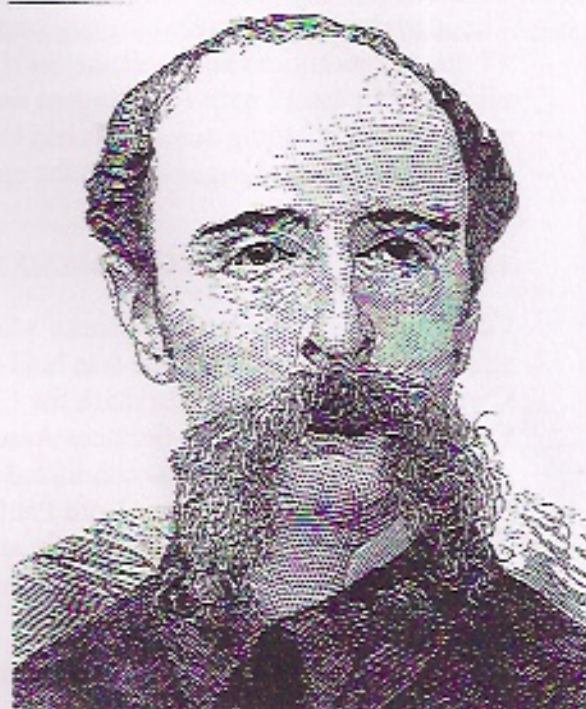
With this picture in my mind I was mightily relieved a few minutes later to see our men in red marching back into camp lathered in perspiration from their exertions on the arena battleground. Inside I felt a huge sense of relief that it was only a mental image I had experienced and not the real thing. The realisation then that the honour to represent and portray those gallant Victorian soldiers was quite humbling.

10. DURNFORD, HERO OR VILLAIN?

In the 'blame game' which followed Isandlwana, Anthony Durnford quickly emerged as the principal scapegoat. A rather complex figure who arrived on the battlefield trailing a good deal of emotional baggage. Durnford had been born in Ireland in 1830 to a distinguished military family. He was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1848 and his career showed early promise but bouts of ill-health and bad luck kept him from active service in the Crimea. Instead he spent more than 20 years in routine peace-time postings. By 1854 he had married but the relationship had crumbled under the impact of two children who died in infancy. Only with a posting to the Cape garrison in 1872 did his prospects improve.

Durnford enjoyed both the country and the diverse societies he encountered there developing a sympathy for the African peoples, a rare attitude amongst British officials at that time. In 1873 he was finally given command under active service but the affair turned out disastrously. One of Natal's tribes, the amaHLubi had tried to cross out of the colony across the Drakensberg mountains in order to escape a dispute with the authorities. Durnford was given command of a small detachment of Volunteer troops and ordered to stop them at one of the mountain passes. Everything went wrong, the maps were inadequate, movements could not be co-ordinated properly and Durnford's party got lost on the mountain slopes overnight. A skirmish with the amaHLubi rear guard at dawn saw the Volunteers retreat in disarray with three dead and Durnford himself wounded in the arm.

News of the debacle caused a furore and although Durnford himself was cleared of professional misconduct he remained something of a social outcast and he never regained the use of his arm. The outbreak of the Zulu campaign however offered him the chance to address old problems and Chelmsford for some reason placed considerable confidence in him by commissioning him to raise the Natal Native Contingent and later giving him command of the defensive columns along the Zululand borders. When the invasion began Chelmsford ordered Durnford first to Rorke's Drift and then to Isandlwana but without in both cases telling him what he was supposed to do. This allowed Durnford to seize the initiative when confronted with reports of mysterious Zulu movements close by and he chose to leave the camp and investigate. His critics later argued that by leaving the camp he had both provoked the Zulu attack and fatally weakened the garrison even further after Chelmsford had of course also left with half the forces encamped there. So more than 138 years after his death at Isandlwana historians are still divided on the question of whether Anthony Durnford was the dashing hero of the hour or the impetuous villain?



11. WAGON AND EQUIPMENT MOVEMENTS DURING THE CONFLICT.

The logistical task an army had of moving equipment over rough terrain during the Anglo-Zulu war was quite a task and what was involved and the way this was carried out is given below as

taken from the 'Regulations for a Field Force' at the time. As we know five columns invaded Zululand and this would have been for just one column.

For one infantry Battalion comprising 30 Officers and 866 men.

Wagons Ox-Drawn

16 wagons for one battalion comprising 1 wagon for Head quarters, 4 wagons for rations, 3 wagons for squadron mounted infantry, 3 wagons for Battery Field Artillery (plus 6 mule drawn), 3 wagons for Battery Field Artillery Headquarters, 1 wagon for Field Hospital, 1 wagon for column staff. 12 wagons for Native Battalion.

Equipment Carried per Wagon (1st Company type)

5 felling axes, 10 hand axes. 107 blankets. 10 leather buckets. 15 billhooks, 10 reaping hooks. 10 tents. 15 pick axes, 5 spare pick axe handles. 15 shovels, 5 spare shovel handles. 1 signalling implement. 54 waterproof sheets. Company's books. Dubbing. 107 valises. 3 officers baggage. Officers cooking pots and stores. 220 two days supply of tinned meat. 2 stretchers.

Equipment carried in 2nd wagon (2nd Company type)

770 rations (2 ¼ lbs per man per day). Reserve ammunition 200 rounds per man. Cooking frame. Kettles, Flanders.

The load carried by the first wagon amounts to 3997 lbs and the second 4864lbs, this being nearly all due to rations and ammunition. So if an average load of 3500 lbs per wagon is assumed and allowing for the 12 native contingent wagons carrying less then the overall loads carried to sustain each of the 5 invading columns could have amounted to some 50 tons. Quite a logistical task for the Commissariat to organise and the quartermasters to handle.

12. JOHN FIELDING VC, COMMEMORATION

Good to know that one of the Rorke's Drift veterans is always remembered each year at his graveside. The annual service was held at St. Michaels & All Angels church, Llantarnam near Cwmbran on 21st January to mark the 138th anniversary of the battle and was organised by the Cwmbran and District Ex-Services Association. The event is well attended each year and the service of remembrance was conducted by Rev. Frieda Evans with local MP Nick Thomas-Symonds and his predecessor Lord Paul Murphy amongst the many assembled at the graveside. John died in November 1932 aged 75 and has a number of establishments in Cwmbran named in his honour. He really is a local hero there. (NB. Enlisted as John Williams)

13. KING CETSHWAYO – THE MUSICAL

Yes there really was a performance of this which took place at Theatre Brycheiniog in Brecon during August and other venues. It was the UK premier depicting the struggle of the Zulu nation against the imperial might of the British. The South African cast included some members of the Zulu royal family and was made up of over 20 artists and musicians. The story was related through song, dance, film, dialogue and story-telling. Did anyone see the performance? If so a review would be very welcome. It was part of the 135th anniversary of the King's visit to Britain.

14. ERRATUM

The 2016 issue of the News letter carried an article on the presentation of regimental colours by the Queen at Cardiff in 2015 and the commemoration plaque presented to the Group for our support of the event. The article stated that the presentation of the new colours was to the Royal Regiment of Wales. The eagle-eyed amongst you would have spotted right away that this should have been The 2nd Battalion of the Royal Welsh though we now understand that there is only one battalion so it is now just the Royal Welsh. Thanks to Bill Cainan for putting this right.

NB. The Commemorative plaque is currently held by the Editor pending a decision on the final depository.

15. ADVERTISING

Should any member wish to sell any article or is looking to purchase any specific item then please send in the details which will be included in the next issue of the Assegai.

16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Douglas Bourne, Danny Tully, Bill Cainan, Jimmy Reynolds, Roger Morgan, Bob Coates and Allen Coles for providing contributions to this issue. Also thanks as always to our printer Andreas Haaf and Son of Port Talbot for their continuing service.

17. ASSEGAI EDITORIAL SUPPORT

Any information, articles, comments on any aspect of the content in this issue or any views on the Group and it's activities which you feel will be of interest to your fellow members will be very much appreciated. It is hoped to include an article on field surgery during the Anglo-Zulu war in the next issue. If there is any other aspect of the history of the war you would like featured please let us know.

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KEEPING ALIVE THE TRADITIONS OF THE REGIMENT