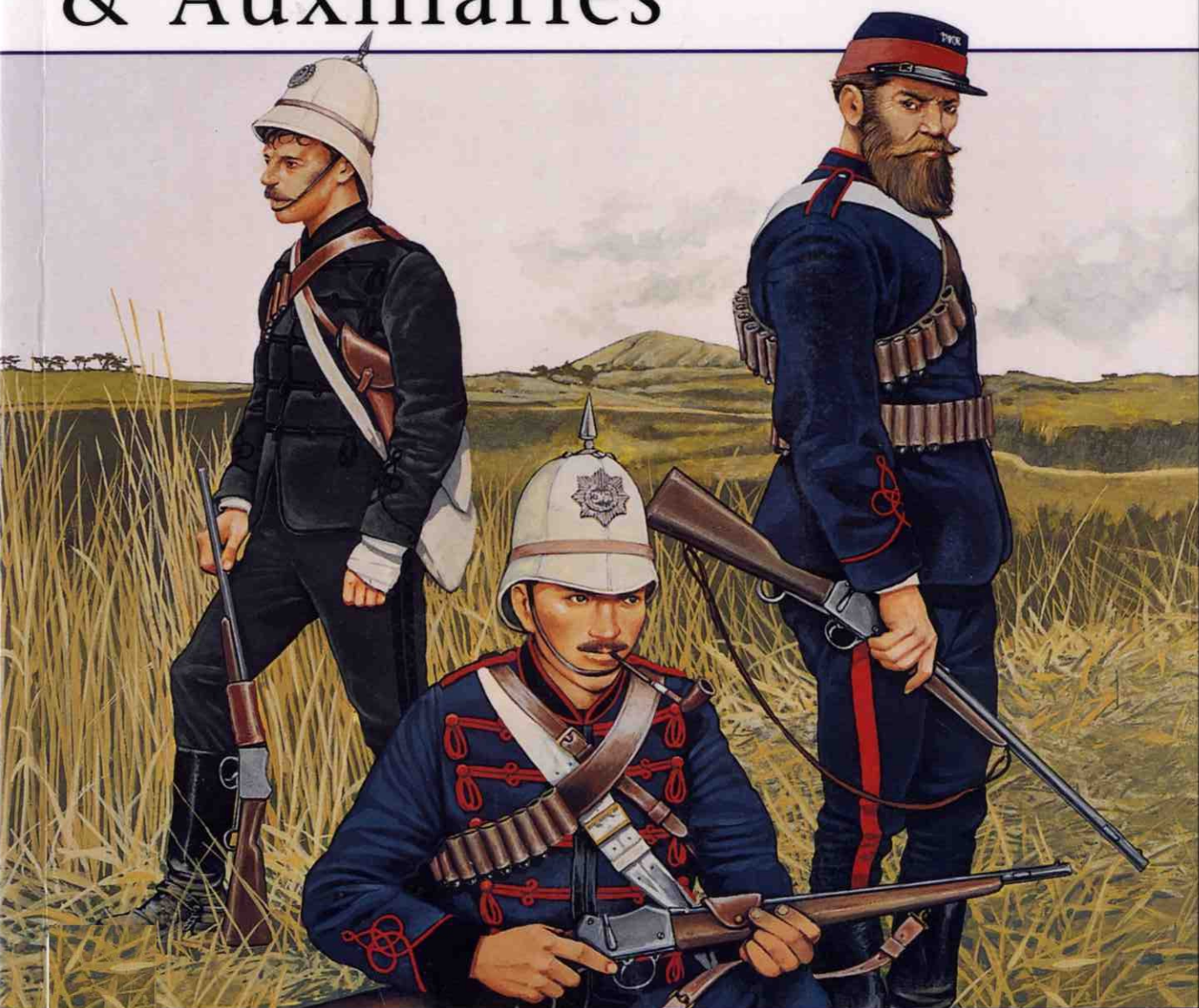


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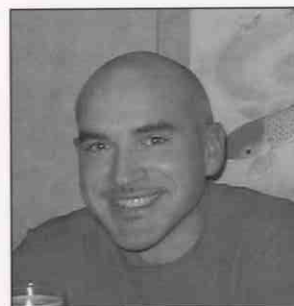
Zulu War – Volunteers, Irregulars & Auxiliaries



Ian Castle • Illustrated by Raffaele Ruggeri



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ZULU WAR VOLUNTEERS, IRREGULARS & AUXILIARIES

INTRODUCTION



Lieutenant-General Frederic Augustus Thesiger became 2nd Baron Chelmsford in October 1878. After bringing the Ninth Cape Frontier War to a satisfactory conclusion he travelled to Natal and prepared for war with the Zulu. Experience gained on the Cape Frontier taught him the value of irregular cavalry and black auxiliaries in South African warfare. (R. Sheeley)

THE URGENT NEED FOR MANPOWER to boost the limited number of Imperial troops available for a war in Zululand in 1879 led to a proliferation of colonial units serving with the British Army, the majority created specifically for this war. Except for the Natal Volunteer Corps they disbanded shortly after the final British victory at Ulundi. Due to their brief existence no official accounts of their war services were prepared. This has led to much confusion and many contradictory statements on their role in the Zulu War. Hopefully this work will help clarify the situation, and highlight the important contribution they made.

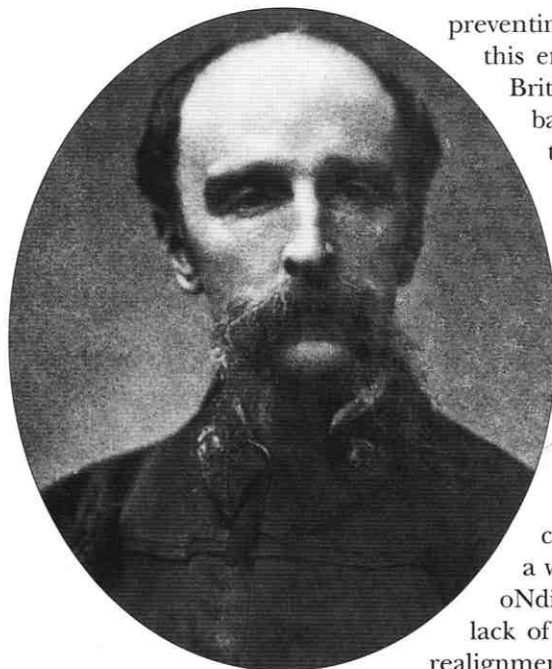
Unfortunately, a book of this type has limitations and it has been necessary to restrict the subject matter to those units that actually crossed the traditional border and saw service in Zululand. Therefore we have been obliged to exclude units such as Fairlie's Swazies; the Swazi Police; Vos' Native Contingent that operated in the fluid Transvaal/ Zululand/ Swaziland border area; Eckersley's Native Contingent and Schutte's Mounted Corps in Pedi country, along with Ferreira's Horse that operated in both areas. Those Volunteer Corps in Natal that remained on defensive duties in the colony have also been excluded; these include the Royal Durban Rifles, Durban Volunteer Artillery, Durban Mounted Reserve, Ixopo Mounted Rifles, Weenen Yeomanry, Maritzburg Rifles and New Germany Rifles.

* * *

In August 1878 Lord Chelmsford landed in Natal having brought the Ninth Cape Frontier War in Cape Colony, South Africa, to a successful conclusion. With the defeat of the Xhosa he prepared for the fresh challenge of a war against the Zulu.

British colonial policy, initiated from London, had from 1874 looked towards the goal of a self-supporting confederation of British colonies and Boer republics that would extend British control and prosperity in southern Africa. Lord Carnarvon, the Colonial Secretary and champion of the confederation cause, was haunted by the presence of bordering independent black states, perceiving them as a threat to his plans. While the threat existed he felt unable to proceed towards his goal. In 1877 Britain annexed the Boer South African Republic (Transvaal) and sent out a new High Commissioner for southern Africa, Sir Henry Bartle Frere, with extensive powers to complete the confederation process. Frere was to be the key figure in the political manoeuvres that followed, engineering a war with the Zulu king Cetshwayo kaMpande that the supporters of confederation deemed essential to drive the policy forwards.

Chelmsford considered his options. Natal's long exposed border area convinced him of the necessity to carry the war into Zululand, thus



Brevet Colonel Anthony Durnford, Royal Engineers. Durnford first came to South Africa in 1872 and developed a great respect for the African population of Natal. Lord Chelmsford accepted Durnford's proposal for a Natal Native Contingent to serve in the Zulu War, but it initially met much opposition from the governor of the colony. (R.England)

preventing Zulu inroads into the largely defenceless colony. To this end Lord Chelmsford could call on the services of five British Army infantry battalions and two artillery batteries based in Natal. Further north one battalion watched the Transvaal border, while another provided widely dispersed garrisons for the Cape and the islands of St Helena and Mauritius. Chelmsford appealed for additional troops from Britain to bolster this force, but met opposition. With more pressing threats developing from Russia and Afghanistan the new Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, felt reluctant to satisfy Chelmsford's request. However, continued pressure from both Chelmsford and Frere eventually led to two more infantry battalions being despatched to Natal.

Chelmsford's original strategy was for five separate columns to invade Zululand and then, like the spokes of a wheel, converge on Cetshwayo's principal homestead at oNdini (Ulundi). It soon became clear, however, that the lack of transport wagons would prevent such an operation. A realignment of the invasion plan proposed three invading columns, with two held in reserve on the border.

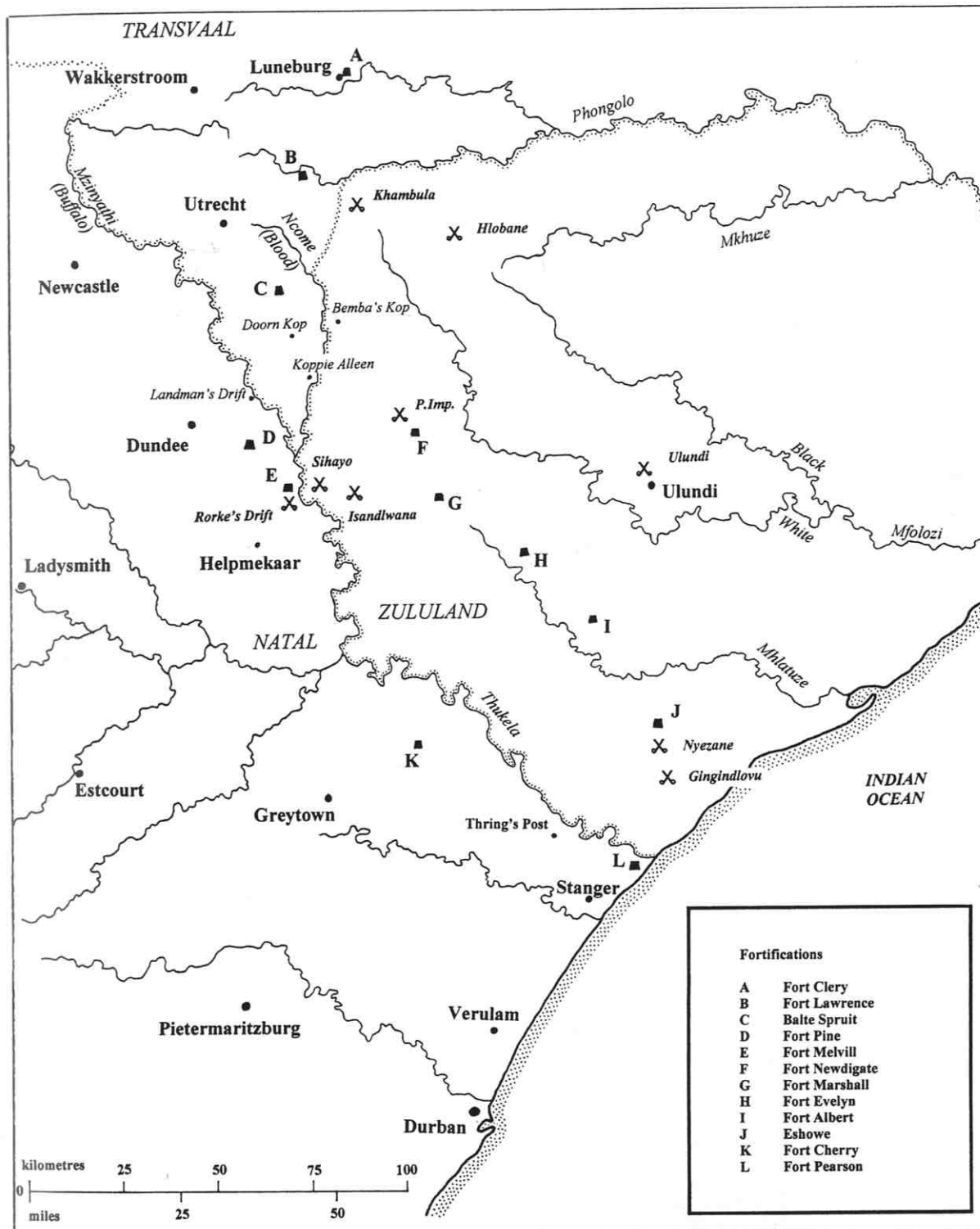
There were other problems which needed urgent attention. Although the number of infantry battalions increased it was clear that their strength would soon diminish as garrisons were required on the line of march. In addition, the open, rolling terrain of Zululand required wide-ranging scouting if the slow-moving infantry columns were not to be surprised on the march; while the lack of accurate terrain maps placed an even greater than usual importance on effective reconnaissance. Only mounted men could carry out this crucial work, but the southern Africa garrison lacked any regular cavalry. Chelmsford had used Mounted Infantry in the Cape Frontier War – volunteers from infantry battalions who received basic instruction in horsemanship. He now called on their services again, but this only provided him with two squadrons, about 200 men – totally inadequate for the task ahead.

As soon as he arrived in Natal Chelmsford pushed for a solution. To augment his infantry the general requested that the Natal government make available 7,000 men from the able bodied African male population (estimated at 65,000) of the colony to serve with the army. He had used local levies in the Cape Frontier War and had generally been pleased by their performance. In Natal he received guidance from Brevet Colonel Anthony Durnford, RE, an officer who held an unfashionable respect for the abilities of African soldiers. To remedy his desperate shortfall in mounted men Chelmsford turned again to the local government, and asked for the services of the Natal Volunteer Corps. Raised for the internal defence of the colony, these small units, manned on a part-time basis by European colonists, formed bodies of artillery, infantry and cavalry, but it was the mounted arm that most interested Chelmsford. Finally, he looked to the Transvaal and the Cape Colony. In recent conflicts against the Xhosa and Pedi, locally raised bodies of European irregulars had provided much-needed mounted support; Chelmsford now turned to these men again.

Map illustrating towns, settlements, forts, battles and geographical features mentioned in the text.

The call to arms

Shortly after his arrival in Pietermaritzburg, the colonial capital of Natal, Lord Chelmsford received his first communication from Col Durnford. It contained a detailed proposal for the formation of a Native



Contingent of five regiments of infantry and five troops (later increased to six) of cavalry, drawn from the African population of Natal and officered by European colonists. Chelmsford submitted a proposal to Sir Henry Bulwer, the Governor of Natal, but Bulwer stalled; he was reluctant to join the warmongers, and hoped an invasion of Zululand would not prove necessary. Besides, he had a responsibility to the colonists, who feared the prospect of a trained African force in their midst after the conclusion of the war. However, Chelmsford was determined to get his way and, backed by Frere, continued to press Bulwer for a decision. As governor, Bulwer held a position as Supreme Chief of the tribal organisation of the colony, and he was further dismayed that Chelmsford's proposals would remove the selected men from his jurisdiction and place them under the control of the military. He also objected to Chelmsford's plan to abandon the men's traditional organisation, similar to the Zulu military system, and form them into regiments along European lines.

With the inevitable approach of war Bulwer found himself cornered, and reluctantly admitted defeat; he authorised the raising of a force of 7,600 auxiliaries named the Natal Native Contingent. The main body formed three regiments of infantry, a total of seven battalions. Chelmsford augmented this force by adding six troops of mounted men, and three companies of pioneers who were to provide manual labour for engineering tasks on the advance into Zululand. Despite Bulwer's obstruction the final formation announced in November 1878 followed very closely that originally proposed by Durnford three months earlier.

Experience gained in the Ninth Cape Frontier War had clearly revealed to Lord Chelmsford the value of locally raised irregular cavalry in South African warfare. In particular the performance of the Frontier

Light Horse (FLH) had highlighted their importance, and other forces such as Baker's Horse and a body of German volunteers led by Commandant Schermbrucker also performed impressively. Chelmsford did not forget their services. Raaff's Transvaal Rangers, originally raised in the Transvaal for the campaign against the Pedi chief Sekhukhune, rode south to join Chelmsford's army, as did Weatherley's Border Horse from Pretoria. To these men the diplomatic skills of Brevet Col Evelyn Wood, commander of No.4 Column, added a body of Boers under their leader Piet Uys. As the campaign developed the need for more mounted men led to the creation of further units, some from Cape Colony, others by allocating horses to the European NCOs of disbanded Natal Native Contingent battalions. At the outset of the war all European irregular cavalry were allocated to either No.4 Column, which was to advance from the Transvaal, or No.5 Column, detailed to remain on the defensive in the Transvaal. The expense of raising these irregular cavalry formations fell to the British government.

Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel John C. Russell, 12th Lancers. Russell commanded the 1st Squadron, Mounted Infantry; just prior to the invasion of Zululand, Chelmsford appointed him commander of all mounted troops attached to No.3 Column, causing friction in the Natal Volunteer camp. (9th/12th Lancers Museum/Derby Museum)



Amidst this flurry of activity, Lord Chelmsford turned to an existing source of manpower: the colony of Natal was home to a number of small Volunteer Corps and a body of Mounted Police. Chelmsford's request for the services of the Police, a Natal government organisation, received approval and soon the men found themselves transferred to the military authorities. The question of the use of the Volunteers was a little more complicated, as Volunteer Law did not permit members to serve outside Natal. To overcome this obstacle a ballot was held to ascertain whether or not they would be prepared to join the invasion of Zululand, and the proposal received an overwhelming 'yes' vote. On 23 November 1878 the Volunteer Corps received orders to be ready to march by the end of the month. At this time there were 15 Volunteer Corps in existence – 11 mounted, three infantry and one artillery – and eight of the mounted corps received the call for active service. In all 336 mounted Volunteers reported for duty at the appointed time, but late arrivals eventually boosted the number serving closer to 370 men. The social standing of these corps attracted the more established elements of the colonial community, including leading citizens, farmers, traders and storekeepers.

Allocated to No.1 (Coastal) Column and No.3 (Centre) Column for the invasion, the Natal Volunteers joined their formations, mustering close to the Natal/Zululand border. A condition under which the Volunteers agreed to serve in Zululand was that Maj John G. Dartnell, the Commandant of Volunteers, would command them. Chelmsford's subsequent decision that all mounted men of each invasion column should be under the command of a single Imperial officer caused great consternation amongst the Volunteers of No.3 (Centre) Column, who refused to serve under Brevet LtCol John Russell, 12th Lancers/1st Mounted Infantry. This awkward situation was resolved when Chelmsford diplomatically appointed Dartnell to his Headquarter Staff with responsibility for the Natal Mounted Police and Volunteers, while Russell acted as field commander.

AUXILIARY TROOPS

NATAL NATIVE CONTINGENT (INFANTRY)

Lord Chelmsford eventually received approval to raise a Native Contingent in early November 1878. The Natal government sent orders via the Resident Magistrates advising them of the quotas required for military service from each of the clan leaders within their areas. On 23 November the military issued regulations for the Contingent, followed five days later by details of the structure and senior commanders. Orders calling the Contingent to assemble followed on 11 December.

Each battalion had a headquarters of a Commandant assisted by an officer interpreter, adjutant (lieutenant), quartermaster/paymaster, and a bugler. Each of the Contingent's seven battalions was theoretically to consist of ten companies, a total of 1,100 officers and men. A cadre of European officers and NCOs led each company: one captain, two lieutenants and six NCOs (sergeants and corporals). The African troops of the company consisted of one officer, ten NCOs and 90 men. Not all battalions were at full strength by the time the war started; in particular the 3rd Battalion, 1st Regiment was far short of its target.



Officers, NCOs and men of the 2nd Regiment NNC. The men are carrying firearms and spears while a number also show the blankets each battalion received. The officer standing on the left wears an Army patrol jacket, while the two men lying at right foreground are possibly NCOs. A number of the African soldiers wear woollen caps: see Plate G3. (Local History Museum, Durban)

colonists; but the hardest task was to find suitable NCOs. The most experienced settlers already served in the Volunteer Corps; others were reluctant to abandon their livelihoods. The best available men appear to have been snapped up by Durnford for his 1st Regiment, and when the net was cast wider the quality of the catch left much to be desired. Having exhausted the possible sources of men in Natal, Chelmsford had no choice but to look to Cape Colony again. Of 202 officers and NCOs who marched from Durban on 20 December 1878 to join the 2nd NNC only 20 men joined in Natal, while all of those recruited for the 3rd NNC signed on in Cape Colony. This resulted in many men with no knowledge of the Zulu language (or in some cases of English either) leading these units. This later became a source of great dissatisfaction for the men of the NNC.

The majority of African troops only reached their mustering areas in the last week of December, leaving them only about two weeks to learn how to fight in companies and battalions under officers and NCOs they did not know and who in many cases held them in low esteem.

Designation	Battalion Commander	Column
1st Regt NNC		
Bvt LtCol Durnford, RE		
1 Bn/1st Regt	Cdt A.Montgomery	No.2
2/1st Regt	Maj H.Bengough, 77th Regt	No.2
3/1st Regt	Capt C.Cherry, 32nd Regt	No.2
2nd Regt NNC		
Maj S.Graves, 2nd Regt		
1/2nd Regt	Maj S. Graves, 2nd Regt	No.1
2/2nd Regt	Cdt W.Nettleton	No.1
3rd Regt NNC		
Cdt R.Lonsdale*		
1/3rd Regt	Cdt G.Hamilton-Browne	No.3
2/3rd Regt	Cdt A.Cooper	No.3

(*Lonsdale was injured in a fall, so command of the regiment passed to Maj W.Black, 2/24th Regt, from 9 January 1879 until Lonsdale recovered.)

Both battalions of 3rd NNC fought in the attack against Sihayo kaXongo's retainers on 12 January; and both battalions had two companies present at Isandlwana on 22 January, where two companies of 1/1st NNC joined them. Corporal C.F.Schiess of 2/3rd NNC was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Rorke's Drift, where he had

been a patient in the hospital. The 1/2nd NNC were present at the battle of Nyezane on the same day.

Weapons and equipment

Due to fears expressed by Natal's colonists only a limited number of firearms were issued to the Native Contingent, and in any case little enough time was available to train them in their use even had more been made available. Accordingly only the African officers and ten NCOs of each company received them. Generally these were Enfield percussion rifles, supplied with belts, bullet pouches and cap pockets. All others would be required to carry their traditional weaponry of shield and spears. The only other equipment issued to the African troops were large cooking pots at a scale of one per ten men. Battalion transport would also carry 100 pickaxes, 100 shovels, 100 cane knives, 50 hand axes and 50 billhooks.

European officers and NCOs were issued with Martini-Henry rifles, bayonets and 50-cartridge bandoliers; they also received basic camp equipment in the form of circular tents, cooking pots, frying pans and kettles. In addition NCOs received a blanket, waterproof sheet, hammock, haversack, waterbottle, canteen, and a short butcher's knife. Officers supplied their own personal equipment and horses.

Uniforms

Durnford's original plan for the NNC had seen them uniformed, but the expense proved too great. Instead the men reported for duty in their basic traditional dress, the *umutsha* – a thin strip of hide worn around the waist with flaps of animal skin covering the groin and buttocks. The front part, the *isinene*, was made of strips of skin twisted until they resembled animals' tails, while the rear cover, the *ibeshu*, was a flat square of soft hide worn with the hair outwards. Some who had worked as labourers for white farmers added items of cast-off European clothing to their ensemble. Each African NNC soldier wore a strip of red cloth tied around his head to help identify him to the British soldiers, who were unlikely to be able to distinguish between NNC and Zulu in the heat of battle. Finally, each man received his most prized possession – a blanket. These were issued on a battalion basis: blue for the 1st Battalions and grey for 2nd Battalions, while those who mustered for the 3rd Battalion/1st Regiment received green. Blankets were to be carried bandolier fashion over the left shoulder. Esprit de corps amongst companies was encouraged and many, particularly in the 3rd NNC,

An NNC battalion on parade; under magnification a very limited number of guns can be seen carried on the shoulder. (Private collection)





Created as part of the Natal Native Contingent, three companies of Natal Pioneers carried out essential road maintenance and basic engineering tasks. Of the infantry component of the NNC only the Pioneers received uniforms at the beginning of the campaign; see Plate F3. (Talana Museum, Dundee)

carried small flags with the battalion number and simple emblems illustrating the nicknames they had chosen, e.g. pigs, young bulls, lions, etc. European officers were not issued with uniforms; many acquired Army pattern blue patrol jackets, while others adapted military, civilian or hunting clothes as seemed appropriate. Some officers wore the white Foreign Service helmet, while others preferred the broad-brimmed felt hat much favoured in South Africa.

The government supplied European NCOs with uniforms. Each man received a coat, a greatcoat, two woollen shirts, a pair of trousers, a pair of boots, two pairs of socks and a hat. Generally the coat and trousers were made from the yellow/brown corduroy common in South Africa. The coats might be double-breasted without decoration; there is also evidence for plain single-breasted coats, and for examples with five rows of plain black braid across the chest. One report in a local newspaper (*Natal Mercury*, 26 November 1878) states that the 3rd NNC uniforms were of brown cotton drill. The broad-brimmed brown felt hats bore strips of red cloth wound around the crown – the identifying badge of the auxiliary and irregular forces of Natal.

Reorganisation

Prior to the second invasion in May 1879 a major reorganisation of the NNC was required, partly due to the fact that the 2nd and 3rd Regiments disbanded after the setbacks suffered during the first invasion but also to a general discontent amongst the men. When the men of the former 3rd NNC eventually reassembled, unsettled by their experiences in the Isandlwana campaign, they were assigned to guarding the border as part of the defensive Border Guard.

Under the general reorganisation the battalion became the highest military structure, with regimental organisation abandoned. To boost the men's confidence Chelmsford authorised the issue of basic uniforms, consisting of red tunics, and an increased allowance of firearms. Some battalions also received white trousers but the men usually discarded them, complaining that they chafed the legs. The 2nd Battalion received 200 breech-loading Snider and 300 Martini-Henry rifles in addition to the muzzle-loading Enfields they already held, but did not receive uniforms until July. The 3rd Battalion took delivery of a new batch of Sniders and Enfields, the 4th Battalion getting Martini-Henrys, and the 5th Battalion Sniders and Martini-Henrys. It is not clear what firearms the 1st Battalion received, but in view of their defensive role it is most likely that their allocation followed that of the 3rd Battalion.

The 4th and 5th Battalions (formed from the old 2nd Regiment) fought well at Gingindlovu on 2 April during the Eshowe relief expedition; and on 4 July, Bengough's 2nd Battalion took part in the final battle at Ulundi with 404 officers and men.

Designation	Battalion Commander	Force
1st Bn NNC	Cdt A.Montgomery	Fort Cherry
2nd Bn	Maj H.Bengough, 77th Regt	II Division
3rd Bn	Capt C.Cherry, 32nd Regt	Fort Cherry
4th Bn	Capt G.Barton, 7th Regt	I Division
5th Bn	Cdt W.Nettleton	I Division

NATAL NATIVE CONTINGENT (PIONEERS)

The Natal government regularly called on clan leaders to supply men to assist in road maintenance and repairs. It was therefore a natural progression to form a part of the NNC as a Pioneer section to work on engineering tasks, repairing roads and river crossings and building earthwork fortifications. In all, three companies were formed with a nominal strength of five European officers, four African officers and 96 African pioneers (although it appears that only No.2 Company attained this target). The original plan proposed that Royal Engineer officers would command each company, but there were simply not enough available. The Natal government therefore accepted responsibility for the Pioneers, recruited officers and supplied equipment.

	Strength	Column	Commanding Officer
No.1 Company	80	No.3	Capt J.Nolan
No.2 Coy	104	No.1	Capt G.Beddoes
No.3 Coy	89	No.2	Capt W.Allen

Unlike other NNC infantry formations the Pioneers did receive uniforms from the outset. Each man was issued with the pre-1872 red serge 'frock' of the British infantry with the facing-colour collar removed; loose-fitting knee-length white canvas trousers; a blue pillbox forage cap with yellow brow band, and an Army greatcoat. Each man was allocated either a pickaxe, a shovel, an axe or a crowbar, while firearms confirmed the status of the African NCOs. Besieged at Eshowe from late January until the beginning of April 1879, the pioneers of No.2 Company proved themselves excellent scouts, as well as handling their allotted engineering tasks efficiently.

NATAL NATIVE CONTINGENT (MOUNTED)

Part of Durnford's original proposal for the Native Contingent called for five troops of African horsemen with European officers. An enthusiastic response, particularly from the amaNgwane people from the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountains, in fact allowed the formation of six troops for the campaign. The amaNgwane formed three troops of the Zikhali Horse instead of the two requested. The African Christians of the Wesleyan mission at Edendale near Pietermaritzburg raised a troop known as the Edendale Horse, but could have formed more. Hlubi kaMota, the current leader of a baSotho clan that settled in Natal in 1867 (known as the Tlokwa in Sotho, and Hlongwane in Zulu) had served with Durnford at Bushman's River Pass in 1873; he now formed a troop from his clan. Another who had served Durnford in 1873, Jantje (also spelt Jantze), formed the final troop at Ixopo in south-west Natal. At the outset of the campaign these units operated under the collective name of Natal Native Mounted Contingent, not the Natal Native Horse as is often erroneously reported.

Troop	Strength	European officer	African leader
No.1 Tp, Zikhali Horse	52	Lt C.Raw	Nyanda
No.2 Tp, Zikhali Horse	55	Lt J.A.Roberts	–
No.3 Tp, Zikhali Horse	50	Lt W.Vause	–
Edendale Horse	54	Lt H.D.Davies	Simeon Kambule
Hlubi Horse	50	Lt A.F.Henderson	Hlubi kaMota
Jantje Horse	54	Capt Ayliff	Jantje

Weapons and equipment

Unlike their infantry comrades the Mounted Contingent all received breech-loading carbines: the Zikhali Horse Swinburn-Henrys, and the Edendale and Jantje Horse Martini-Henrys – it is unclear which weapons Hlubi's men were issued. Some also carried a selection of traditional weapons, secured in a quiver-like hide bag. Each man was required to bring his own horse, for which the military would offer a maximum of £10 compensation should the horse be lost on active service. Camp equipment supplied was the same as for the NNC infantry, which caused a problem with the Edendale men. The military authorities refused a request to supply these volunteers with the same rations as Europeans. Determined to reinforce a spirit of superiority over their 'heathen' comrades, these Christians therefore vowed to provide rations at their own expense – which, as their pay was twice that of the rest of the mounted contingent, was not as great a hardship as it might appear.

Uniforms

All African troopers of the mounted contingent received uniform. This comprised a coat and trousers of the government-supplied yellow/brown cord, often double-breasted, and topped with a brown broad-brimmed felt hat with a high crown and red cloth band. In addition each recruit received a pair of boots, a haversack and a blanket, although generally only the Edendale men chose to wear boots, the rest preferring to ride barefoot. European officers provided their own clothing – generally blue patrol jackets and cord breeches – and personal equipment.

Reorganisation

Initially all six troops had formed part of No.2 Column, which was to have been held in reserve; however, five of the troops were called forward to join No.3 Column and fought at Isandlwana, leaving just Jantje's troop with a reduced No.2 Column.

After the defeat at Isandlwana the Natal Native Mounted Contingent was reorganised. Most had initially returned to their homes, but part of the Hlubi and Edendale Troops remained at the British camp

at Helpmekaar. On 20 February 1879 an Imperial officer, Lt W.Cochrane (32nd Regiment) – formally Transport Officer to Durnford's No.2 Column – was given the command of these men, who were reorganised as the **Natal Native Horse**. New recruits came in, and when the NNH joined Col Wood's No.4 Column in March they mustered almost 120 men. They were involved in the attack on Hlobane on 28 March; they

fought well at Khambula the following day, and subsequently at Ulundi.

The Zikhali Troops failed to reassemble in February as ordered, many feeling disillusioned due to the government's failure to recompense them for their losses at Isandlwana. Their clan leader also insisted that a white officer they trusted and who spoke their language should command them. Captain T.Shepstone Jr, commander of the Natal Carbineers and son of the

respected former Secretary for Native Affairs, accepted the position. The unit, reformed as **Shepstone's Horse** (or 'Shepstone's Basothos'), joined II Division in early May 1879 in time for the second invasion, about 120 strong. The core of amaNgwane men received a boost when 13 recruits joined them from Edendale. Additionally, a separate section of 31 Edendale men from a farming community who had been operating unhappily in the Ladysmith area with Carbutt's Border Rangers transferred to Shepstone's Horse in April.

As part of the reorganisation Jantje's Horse, still in reserve in the Fort Cherry/Kranskop area, rode south to join the Eshowe relief column assembling on the Lower Thukela. Captain Ayliff returned to Ixopo to recruit more men for the unit, and by early March they mustered 68, with command passing to Capt C.Hay, formally of the 1/1st Regiment NNC.

A new mounted unit joined them: at the end of February the amaFunzi clan received notification to provide men for another troop. Responding quickly, the **Mafunzi Corps** (or Horse), equipped similarly to other Native Contingent mounted troops, mustered at Pietermaritzburg 73 strong and marched for Stanger in early March. There they were issued with firearms – only 50 Snider carbines being available at that time – blankets and cooking pots. Nginisa, the clan chief's brother, led the unit under the command of Capt Maclean, formerly of the 2nd NNC. Later command of the unit passed to Capt C.Nourse, who had earlier served with 1st NNC. Both units fought at Gingindlovu on 2 April, and served with I Division during the second invasion.

Three further mounted units of African troops joined the forces mustering for the second invasion. In April, having previously formed part of the reserve of the Native Border Guard under colonial control, the **amaNgwane Corps** (37 men led by Chief Putsha and headman Mfinuyana, European officer G.Evatt) and **amaBomvu Corps** (71 men led by Chief Siphandla and headman Mtengutana, European officer J.Searle) both transferred to the military and operated with the Cavalry Brigade of II Division. They took part in the march towards Ulundi, advancing as far as Forts Newdigate and Marshall where they remained as part of the garrisons, undertaking scouting, escort and despatch riding duties. The amaMpumzu provided about 130 men for



A fascinating photograph of a group of soldiers from one of the African mounted units during the Zulu War. Although it has not been positively identified, we believe it shows the Mafunzi Corps. The men wear the plain double-breasted yellow/brown corduroy coat. One man (kneeling, left) has a Martini-Henry rifle while the rest carry Snider carbines, as well as a collection of throwing spears in hide quivers on broad hide slings. The men wear a red cloth around their hats and a second field sign – a white cloth with a coloured spot – on the left arm. (Private collection)

Men of Jantje's Horse. Although issued with trousers and boots Jantje's men discarded both, retaining the tunics and an interesting range of headgear. The men carry carbines slung on their backs and a selection of spears. (Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) Museum, Hamilton)



Teteleku's Mounted Natives (led by Chief Teteleku, European officer R.Beachcroft), contributing to the garrisons at Msinga, Helpmekaar, Fort Melvill and Fort Newdigate at various times. They also accompanied the patrols to Isandlwana to bury the dead from the battle of 22 January; and a detachment joined LtCol Baker Russell's column in north-west Zululand. There is no specific information concerning uniforms or weapons for these men, but it seems likely that they would have been equipped similarly to the other African mounted troops.

THE BORDER GUARD

Chelmsford's plans for the defence of Natal saw the colony divided into seven Defensive Districts, three of which bordered Zululand along the Mzinyathi and Thukela rivers. He hoped to raise 6,000 African auxiliaries in addition to the NNC for the defence of the border, but objections from the Natal government thwarted him. The local government, who would be responsible for meeting the costs of the force, argued that Natal had neither the desire nor the finances to keep such a force in the field. Instead each Border District was instructed to raise levies as a **Border Guard**, each of a few hundred men (they tended to number 300-350), to be posted under European levy leaders at strategic drifts (fords) on the rivers. Men living in homesteads close to the border formed an additional **Border Guard Reserve**, to be called forward to support the Border Guard when danger threatened. By allowing the two forces to relieve each other at regular intervals the government saved on the cost of providing rations, shelter and clothing, since the men lived at home much of the time. These levies received no uniform and carried their traditional weapons; if required they would fight in their traditional style, unlike the NNC. A number of Zulu-speakers in the ranks of the Royal Durban Rifles, one of the Natal Volunteer Corps, volunteered to serve with the Border Guard as interpreters. In April the Border Guard received a number of Enfield rifles and significantly swelled its ranks by absorbing many members of the previously disbanded 3rd Regiment NNC. Although under the authority of the Natal government for the defence of the colony the Border Guard and Reserve ambiguously took part in raids and patrols into Zululand under military orders.

JOHN DUNN'S FOOT SCOUTS

John Dunn, originally a trader and hunter, became an advisor to the Zulu king Cetshwayo, being rewarded with a chieftom in south-east Zululand adjacent to the Lower Drift of the Thukela. In December 1878, after much consideration, he abandoned Zululand and crossed to Natal. He raised a force of 150 of his Zulu retainers and, under a commandant named Moore, these took part in the Eshowe relief expedition in March; armed with Enfield percussion muskets, shields and spears they fought at

Gingindlovu. The men wore traditional Zulu dress, the only item of uniform being a red cloth tied around the head. On the return from Eshowe two of Dunn's Scouts were killed and seven wounded by the 3/60th Rifles during a false alarm. The Scouts served through the second invasion in Crealock's I Division.

WOOD'S IRREGULARS

While the Natal government prepared to recruit a Native Contingent from its African population Lord Chelmsford authorised Col Evelyn Wood, commanding No.4 Column, to raise 2,000 men from the south-eastern Transvaal. In late December 1878 the *landdrosts* (magistrates) of Utrecht and Wakkerstroom received an order calling men for service, and by early January the ranks of Wood's Irregulars began to swell as recruits arrived in batches at the camp at Balte Spruit. While many of the men of this region were of Swazi origin, those recruited were not hired Swazi mercenaries. Chelmsford allowed Wood more discretion in the organisation of his African auxiliaries, resulting in a less formalised structure than in the NNC.

Two battalions were formed, led by Cdts J.Henderson and R.Roberts, and by 14 January numbered about 800 men with European officers; although the strength reached 1,065 by 3 February, this was still far below the stated target. Early in February, deciding that the performance of the unit lacked discipline and overall organisation, Col Wood placed it under Army officers: overall command went to Maj W.K.Leet, 1/13th Regiment, with Lt C.Williams, 58th Regiment, as his staff officer. A week later Wood disbanded the Wakkerstroom contingent except for about 50 men. At the battle of Hlobane the reorganised 1st Battalion, now under Cdt T.L.White, numbered 240 men, and the 2nd Battalion, still commanded by Roberts, mustered 277 men; Maj Leet accompanied the 2nd Battalion. The defection to the British of Hamu kaNzibe, an important Zulu leader, with 1,300 of his adherents added 230 auxiliaries to Wood's Column. These men also took part in the battle at Hlobane, led by Capt C.Potter with Leet's staff officer Williams in overall command.

After the defeat at Hlobane most of Wood's Irregulars dispersed, only 58 being present at Khambula the following day. The unit did reassemble later and incorporated Hamu's Zulus. Major Leet resigned the command of Wood's Irregulars in May 1879, and it was under Cdt White that about 330 men fought at Ulundi.

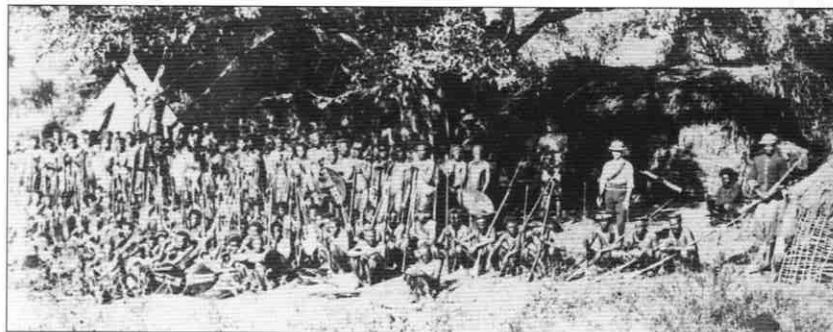
Uniforms, weapons and equipment

Many of the warriors assigned to Wood's Irregulars reported for duty wearing full Swazi regalia, including their impressive ostrich and *sakabuli* feather headdress and mantle of animal skin; they seem to have



This fine posed study of a young warrior in Swazi headdress may represent one of Wood's Irregulars; he wears a band of cloth around his left arm. Although coloured cloths were intended for the head, with elaborate headdresses space was limited and many warriors may have preferred to tie them around the arm. (Private collection)

The Border Guard at White Rock on the Thukela river. This group is typical of those that protected the vulnerable river crossings all along the border. Many of the men are carrying Enfield muskets with fixed bayonets, issued in April 1879. (S.Bourquin)





A rear view of one of Wood's Irregulars, sketched in the field; see Plate H1. He carries a gun as well as his shield and spears, and wears the traditional Swazi mantle of animal skin over his shoulders, as well as the impressive headdress. (Sherwood Foresters Museum, Nottingham)

retained these in battle. Like their traditional enemy, the Zulu, they carried large hide shields and spears. African officers and NCOs received percussion firearms on a scale of about ten to each company of 100 men; in addition these men received a belt, bullet pouch and cap pocket. Each man received a haversack and a blanket, worn around the shoulders like a cloak, while a cooking pot was supplied for every ten men. To differentiate the men of Wood's Irregulars from the enemy they wore strips of coloured cloth around the head, although there is a suggestion that some wore these around the upper arm. For the Wakkerstroom men the cloth was red and white, and for those from Utrecht blue and white; Hamu's men received cloths of red or yellow.

WOOD'S 'SCOUTS'

In November 1878, Col Wood recruited about 50 African scouts from the Luneberg district. He obtained old Dragoon Guard cavalry tunics for them from Pietermaritzburg, claiming these were 'the only ones into which they could squeeze their bodies, and in these it was only the top buttons that would meet'. He allocated six men to each company of the 90th Regiment. They do not appear to have had an official unit designation but served with the 90th until the end of the war. Wood considered them invaluable on outpost duty, as 'their powers of hearing were extraordinary; [and] they could see further than we could with field glasses'.

NATAL VOLUNTEER CORPS

The colony of Natal, only formally annexed to the Cape in 1844, did not begin to accept British immigrants until 1849. Five years later, as the threat of war with Russia in Europe escalated, fear grew amongst the colonists that the already small British garrison might be withdrawn for service in the Crimea at short notice. Recognising the need to accept responsibility for the defence of the colony, the Natal government rejected the idea of a militia and settled on a system of Volunteer Corps. At the time many colonists were still establishing themselves, and a militia law involving compulsory periods of service would have caused great hardship. Instead, the Natal government issued Ordinance No.8 of 1854, which provided for the establishment of Volunteer Corps for protection and defence of local districts. Each corps elected its own officers, drew up its own rules and bylaws and chose a headquarters. Once approved by the Lieutenant Governor of Natal the corps was available to serve the colony. Each man paid for his own uniform, and in mounted units provided his own horse and saddlery. The government supplied arms, ammunition and equipment, while retaining the right to disband any corps that fell below 20 active members. Volunteer Law required members to attend quarterly drill sessions, a total commitment of 20 days for which they would receive payment of six shillings (30p) a day. This rate of pay also applied if called out on active service; however, in 1879 this increased to 12 shillings (60p) in recognition that the Volunteers would lose income from civilian life.

In 1879, as Britain prepared for war in Zululand, 753 men served in the 15 separate corps (three infantry, one artillery and 11 mounted).

Lord Chelmsford looked to this source to boost his manpower, selecting eight of the mounted corps to join his invading columns while the others remained in Natal for local defence.

THE CENTRAL SECTOR: NATAL CARBINEERS

The Natal Carbineers formed in 1855 with headquarters at Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal. They saw service in the field in 1856, 1858, 1861, 1865 and 1873 prior to their involvement in the Zulu War of 1879. The most notable of these previous episodes was that in 1873, when the Carbineers took part in the campaign against the amaHlubi of Langalibalele kaMthimkhulu, and lost three men in a disastrous engagement at Bushman's River Pass.

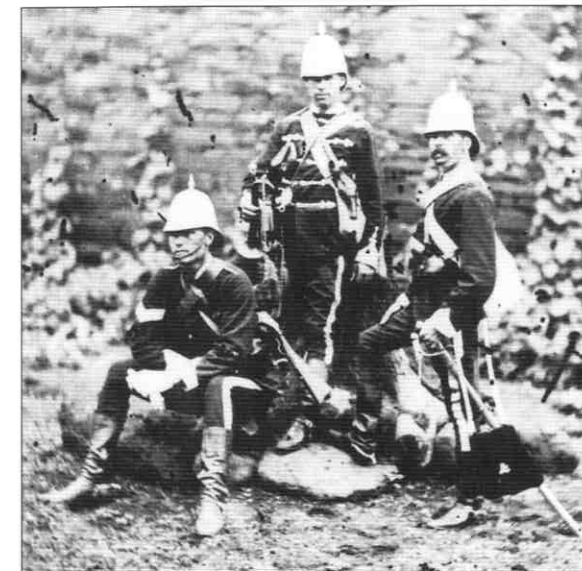
Captain Theophilus ('Offy') Shepstone Jr commanded the corps at the beginning of the Zulu War, but when he left in May to lead Shepstone's Horse command passed to Lt W.Royston. The Natal Carbineers mustered in Pietermaritzburg on 29 November 1878 with three officers and 57 NCOs and men; by the end of the war another 11 men had served with the unit. On 9 December the Carbineers arrived at Helpmekaar where No.3 Column formed prior to the commencement of the war. A month later the Natal Carbineers crossed into Zululand.

The Natal Carbineers wore a uniform of dark blue cloth, the plain tunic having a white collar and white pointed cuffs. Twisted white shoulder cords with white metal buttons held the equipment in place. The tunic fastened with five white metal buttons bearing the monogram 'NC'. The trousers were of the same dark blue material with a broad white stripe down the outside seam. Officers wore a dark blue tunic of the same material decorated with five rows of black mohair braid ending in trefoil knots and fastened by olivets; the bugler had a similar tunic but with white braid. All ranks wore a white helmet with white metal fittings of spike and badge. A blue pillbox cap with white brow band replaced this when off duty. Boots were of black leather, reaching up to mid calf. Officers carried a black leather sabretache bearing the regimental badge, slung on white leather straps.

BUFFALO BORDER GUARD

Based in the remote north-east of Natal, the Buffalo Border Guard (BBG) formed in October 1873 shortly after the Langalibalele rebellion. They drew members from an area centring on the small hamlet of Dundee, with headquarters at Fort Pine. From the sparse white population in this part of the colony 29 men enrolled in the corps, electing John S.Robson as their captain.

The BBG headed for Helpmekaar where they rendezvoused with the rest of No.3 Column. Due to demands on him through his position as Border Agent, Capt Robson was unable to lead his men in the coming campaign, and field command passed to Lt W.Smith. By the time the invasion commenced the BBG mustered 25 all ranks; another five or



The Natal Carbineers – a family portrait prior to departure for the Zulu War; see Plate A. (Left to right) SgtMaj D. Scott, Trumpeter C.Scott and Lt F.J.D.Scott; Lt Scott was killed at Isandlwana. The white braid on the trumpeter's tunic is clearly visible. (KZN Archives, Pietermaritzburg)

six declined to cross into Zululand and remained in Natal patrolling the border under Capt Robson's direction.

The uniform of the BBG was of black cloth. The front of the tunic, decorated with five rows of black braid ending in double drop loops, fastened by five white metal buttons bearing a buffalo's head surrounded by the words 'Buffalo Border Guard'. The collar and cuffs were of black velvet; black twisted shoulder cords fastened by white metal buttons secured the slung equipment. Trousers bore a black stripe down the outside seam. White helmets bore the white metal regimental badge and a spike; a black pillbox cap was worn for undress order. Black knee-length boots completed the uniform.

NEWCASTLE MOUNTED RIFLES

Although established in 1864, it was another 11 years before the town of Newcastle, the most northerly in Natal, contributed to the ranks of the Volunteers, forming the Newcastle Mounted Rifles (Newcastle MR) in October 1875. The creation of the unit proved popular and by the end of the year 46 men had enrolled. The local Resident Magistrate, Melmoth Osborn, received the vote to become captain.

The Newcastle MR joined the Natal Carbineers and Buffalo Border Guard at Helpmekaar early in December 1878 as No.3 Column concentrated for the Zulu War. Captain C. Bradstreet, formerly a lieutenant in the corps, now commanded, having succeeded Capt Osborn who resigned in 1877. The Newcastle MR mustered with 36 men, of whom four choose to stay on the border, based at Fort Pine under Capt Robson of the BBG.

The tunic of dark green cloth had a collar of black velvet edged with black braid, and a V-shaped black velvet cuff facing edged with black braid ending in a trefoil knot. The tunic, edged with black braid and decorated across the front with five rows of black braid ending in double drop loops, fastened with olivets. Shoulder cords were of twisted black braid, fastened with a button of unknown description. Dark green trousers bore a black stripe down the outside seam. A photograph of the Newcastle MR shows white helmets without spikes; there is no evidence of a regimental badge,



Officers of the Natal Carbineers and Durban Mounted Rifles, 1877 – note 'DMR' stencil on tent. The two officers sitting on chairs are Capt W. Shepstone, Durban MR (left) and Capt 'Offy' Shepstone, Natal Carbineers. The tunic worn by 'Offy' appears to have been unique to the commanding officer of the Carbineers, and is light blue with dark blue braiding. The three men standing are from the Durban MR, and the man seated centrally on the ground is a Carbineer. (KZN Archives, PMB)

The Buffalo Border Guard. Probably taken in 1877 or 1878, this photograph shows the standard field kit of the unit – see Plate B1. In the Zulu War bandoliers issued to the Volunteers may have replaced their ammunition pouch and belt. The men standing are wearing the forage cap while those on the ground have white helmets with spikes and badges. (S. Bourquin)



although all other Volunteer Corps possessed them. The design of the forage cap is also unknown. Black calf-high boots completed the uniform.

MOUNTED POLICE

The Natal Mounted Police (NMP), a full-time police force organised along military lines, were not part of the Natal volunteer defence force; but it is convenient to deal with them here, since they joined the Natal mounted troops attached to No.3 Column for the Zulu War.

Experience gained during the Langalibalele rebellion in 1873 convinced the Natal government of the need for a force of mobile semi-military policemen, and the following year Maj J. Dartnell accepted an appointment as commandant to raise the NMP. Dartnell, a former soldier with the 86th Regiment in the Indian Mutiny, later served in the 2/16th and 27th Regiments before subsequently settling in Natal. Many of the recruits joined from England, as there were few in Natal who found the service attractive.

Placed under military command from 2 November 1878, the NMP took up a position close to Helpmekaar, the beginnings of the military camp where No.3 Column assembled. Approximately 100 NMP crossed into Zululand with No.3 Column under Inspector G. Mansel; this number may have included 12 African constables. An attempt to bring in new recruits in February, after Isandlwana, failed to induce any response. Later, in June 1879, an influx of 60 recruits from England and 40 from Natal boosted the strength of the NMP.

At the time of the Zulu War the NMP wore tight-fitting uniforms of black cord (sometimes described as 'dark grey'). The tunic had pointed cuffs edged with black braid forming a trefoil knot, a black velvet collar edged with black braid, black twisted shoulder cords, and five brass buttons. Other ranks' trousers were plain black cord. A white helmet, with a dark band, had a brass spike and a brass badge formed by the monogram 'NMP'; this was also worn on the black pillbox undress cap. The black leather calf-high boots fastened down the outside by six buckled straps. In the period after Isandlwana when replacement kit was in short supply the NMP were permitted to wear British infantry trousers

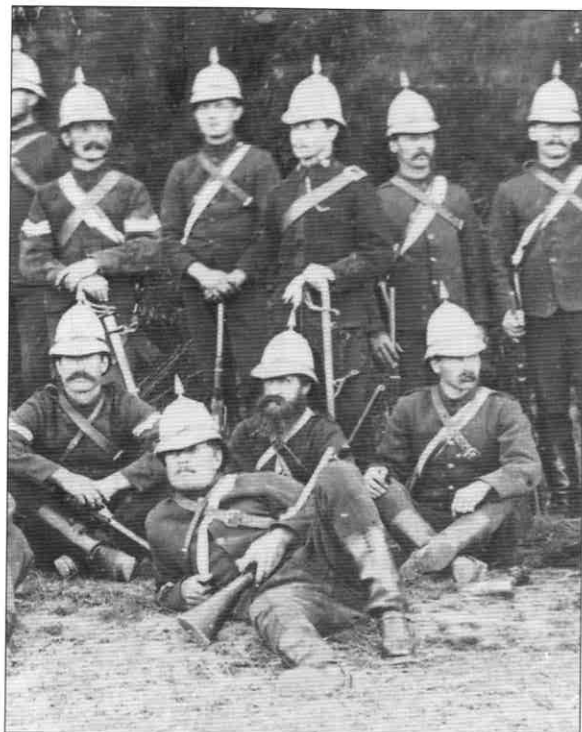
to replace their own worn-out clothing. The section of African constables were issued with greatcoats and probably also wore items of uniform discarded by their European colleagues.

Natal Volunteers and Police on campaign with No.3 Column

The Volunteers and Police took part in the assault against the adherents of Sihayo kaXongo at Ngedla on 12 January before moving on to Isandlwana. On 22 January a number of Natal Volunteers and NMP were left in the camp at Isandlwana by Lord

The green-uniformed Newcastle Mounted Rifles, 1879 – see Plate B2. This photograph may show the members of the unit who remained behind at Fort Pine to patrol the Natal/Zululand border. Bandoliers were only issued to the Natal Volunteer Corps when they mustered for the Zulu War. Helmets are worn without spike or badge; the 'NMR' has been crudely added by a later hand. (Talana Museum, Dundee)





Officer, NCOs and men of the Natal Mounted Police – detail from a group photograph taken at the time of the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877. The uniform is as it would have appeared in Zululand; see Plate B3. Sub-Inspector Philips, the officer in the centre, wears a black patrol jacket while his men's uniforms appear slightly lighter; general wear and tear has probably toned the original black cloth to a dark grey. Each man wears a haversack and revolver holster and carries a Snider carbine. (KZN Archives, PMB)

Table 1: War record of Volunteers and Police, 1879 (major actions only)

Unit	Action	Strength all ranks	Casualties dead/wounded
Natal Carbineers	Isandlwana	29	22/0
Newcastle MR	Isandlwana	17	7/0
Buffalo Border Guard	Isandlwana	8	3/0
Natal Mounted Police	Isandlwana	34	25/0
	Rorke's Drift	3	1/0
Victoria MR	Nyezane	47	–
Stanger MR	Nyezane	37	–
Natal Hussars	Nyezane	39	–
Natal Vol. Guides	Gingindlovu	50	–

Chelmsford, and lost heavily in the subsequent battle. Three of the NMP participated in the battle of Rorke's Drift. The Column returned to Natal after the defeat at Isandlwana; ten of the NMP remained at Rorke's Drift for patrol work, 20 escorted Lord Chelmsford as far as Ladysmith, while the rest rode to Helpmekaar with the Volunteers. Neither the NMP or Volunteers took part in the second invasion; instead they were

constantly involved in patrol work, raids, escort duty and despatch riding. They formed part of the patrols that returned to Isandlwana in May and June to bury the dead. At the end of July the Volunteers received orders that they could return to their homes after eight months' active service. The NMP continued to be involved in Zululand throughout August. A detachment of 39 men escorted Sir Garnet Wolseley from Rorke's Drift to Ulundi before forming two sections, one joining the hunt for Cetshwayo and the other accompanying Col Baker Russell's column involved in pacifying north-western Zululand. All returned to peacetime duties in September.

THE COASTAL SECTOR: VICTORIA MOUNTED RIFLES

Formed in 1862 in Victoria County north of Durban, the Victoria Mounted Rifles, although originally conceived as a section of the Royal D'Urban Rangers (disbanded 1869), joined the ranks of the Volunteers as a fully independent corps. In 1875 Charles Saner, an emigrant Yorkshireman, became captain of the Victoria MR and led them in the Zulu War.

The unit received orders to march on 2 December 1878 from their headquarters at Verulam to Pietermaritzburg, before proceeding to Thring's Post close to the Zululand border on 6 December. They mustered with three officers and 42 men, a few more coming on later, although two men who failed to show up were reported as deserters. A total of 50 officers and men served in the war.

The Victoria MR wore a uniform of dark blue cloth with the collar edged in red braid, and blue pointed cuffs edged in red braid ending in an Austrian knot. The tunic fastened by five white metal buttons

bearing the monogram 'VMR'. Similar buttons secured the blue shoulder straps, which possibly had an edging of narrow red piping. The trousers bore a broad red welt down the outside seam, and were worn with black boots reaching to mid-calf. A white helmet with a white metal spike appeared on campaign, and a photo believed to date from 1879 shows it worn without a badge. In undress it was replaced by a blue French-style képi with a red brow band and a small badge of the monogram 'VMR'.

STANGER MOUNTED RIFLES

In 1872 the magistracy of the Thukela Division of Victoria County was set up at kwaDukuza, the site of Shaka kaSenzangakhona's former principal homestead. The following year a town named Stanger developed around the magistracy. In late 1875 a volunteer corps formed, adopting the name Stanger Mounted Rifles, with headquarters in the town. F. Addison, whose parents brought him to Natal from England in 1849 when he was one year old, transferred from the Victoria MR to join the corps as second lieutenant; later, he led the Stanger MR in the Zulu War with the rank of captain.

The Stanger MR mobilised on 1 December 1878 at that town; three officers and 33 men reported for duty, latecomers boosting the total to 46. By the end of the war 51 officers and men served with the unit. Since many of the men lived close to the border with Zululand the corps was offered the option to stay behind to protect their homes, but they agreed to join the invasion, leaving ten men behind for defensive duties.

The uniform of dark blue cloth, fastened with hooks-and-eyes, had edging of black braid. This was also applied to the collar and the pointed cuffs, worked in trefoil knots above the latter. Yellow piping edged the blue cloth shoulder straps and the outside seams of the trousers. As with all other Volunteers at this time, the Stanger MR wore white helmets; published references to blue helmets actually refer to a change that occurred in the 1880s. The badge, of white metal, had the monogram 'SMR' surrounded by a laurel wreath and surmounted by a crown. The round, peaked, blue cloth forage cap had yellow piping and a version of the badge without the crown.

DURBAN MOUNTED RIFLES

Since the disbandment of the Royal D'Urban Rangers in 1869 the Durban district had been without a mounted volunteer corps. In 1873 the formation of the Durban Mounted Rifles filled this gap in the defence force. At the inaugural meeting 57 volunteers enrolled, with W. Shepstone elected first lieutenant before succeeding to command as captain in 1876.

The Durban MR mustered in Durban on 30 November 1878 with three officers and 63 other ranks, leaving for Pietermaritzburg the following day. Thence they marched with the Victoria MR as far as Potstruit, close to the Zululand border, on 6 December.

The uniform of the Durban MR was of dark blue cloth, the tunic having five rows of red braid across the chest ending in double drop



The Victoria Mounted Rifles in 1879, photographed at Stanger – see Plate D1. The trooper on the right is F. Rathbone. Both men have two bandoliers of .577/.450 ammunition, Swinburn-Henry carbines and spiked helmets; the bayonet lug can just be seen on the right side of the barrel of the carbine on the left. (Natal Museum, PMB)

loops. It fastened by hooks-and-eyes, had black braid edging, and held the equipment in position with twisted red shoulder cords. Collars and pointed cuffs of black velvet were both edged with red piping, that on the cuffs ending in an Austrian knot. The trousers bore a broad red stripe down the outseams with a narrow black stripe superimposed on top. A white helmet with white metal

spike and badge completed the campaign uniform, the badge being an eight-pointed star with the monogram 'DMR'. Officers, and probably other ranks, wore a forage cap of pillbox style, blue with a white brow band.

NATAL HUSSARS

In 1865 the 1st Administrative Corps of Natal Hussars (later shortened to Natal Hussars) formed with headquarters at Greytown. Early rivalry with the Greytown Mounted Rifles eventually ended when that unit disbanded in 1869, the Hussars absorbing a number of their strength. Captain P.Norton commanded the corps from 1878.

The Natal Hussars mustered at Greytown with two officers and 30 other ranks before marching on 3 December 1878 for Potspruit, where they formed camp with the Durban MR. Latecomers increased the numbers, a total of 40 serving with the Natal Hussars through the war.

There is little detailed information available on the uniform of this unit, but from a photograph taken in 1875 it has been possible to surmise the following. The tunic of dark green cloth had twisted black shoulder cords, and five rows of black braid across the chest ending in double drop loops; it fastened with hooks-and-eyes but had decorative olivets. The dark green collar and cuffs had black piping, the cuff decoration forming an Austrian knot. Dark green trousers had a double black stripe. The only record of the headgear which has been found states that a képi worn in 1875 had a white cover fitted in warm weather. However, by 1879 the Hussars would have worn white helmets along with the rest of the Natal Volunteer Corps, as these were ordered for all units in the mid-1870s.

ALEXANDRA MOUNTED RIFLES

In March 1864 the Umzinto troop of the Natal Carbineers, based south of Durban, amicably disbanded; but many of its members reformed as the Alexander Mounted Rifles in September 1865. W.Arbutnot, whose family emigrated from Scotland to Natal in 1850, became captain in 1878 and led the corps in the Zulu War.

The Alexandra MR assembled at Umzinto with three officers and 26 men and rode off to war on 2 December 1878 – with flowers fixed on their helmet spikes... They marched via Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Greytown before joining the Durban MR and Natal Hussars at Potspruit.



Officers of the Victoria Mounted Rifles and Stanger Mounted Rifles; see Plate C1. The three officers of the Victoria MR can be identified by their cap badge, the unwreathed letters 'VMR' in a straight line (standing left, sitting right, seated on ground at centre); the other five are officers or warrant officers of the Stanger MR. The officer lying at front left wears a Victoria MR cap with a Stanger MR badge; this is 2nd Lt F.Addison, who transferred from the Victoria MR in 1875. The photograph probably dates from late 1875 or 1876. (KZN Archives, PMB)



NCOs of the Victoria Mounted Rifles and Stanger Mounted Rifles; see Plates C2, D1. The Victoria MR have blue képi-style caps with a broad red band and small badge of the letters 'VMR' above. The lower-crowned Stanger MR forage cap, also blue, has yellow piping. The Victoria MR have a wide red stripe down the trouser seam while the Stanger MR have yellow piping – see man kneeling left; and note the soft riding boots worn well above the knee by the Victoria MR NCO – kneeling, third left. (KZN Archives, PMB)

'AMR' surmounted by a crown, completed the uniform; képis, presumably also khaki, were worn in undress order.

ISIPINGO MOUNTED RIFLES

Throughout 1878 the threat of war with the Zulu increased, and with it the likelihood that the Volunteer Corps would respond positively to a call to arms. The Isipingo Mounted Rifles formed in August, principally for local defence; Capt D.Stainbank became commander, with headquarters established at Coedmore about 12 miles south of Durban. Lord Chelmsford originally intended the Isipingo MR for service in Zululand, but due to their inexperience the Alexander MR took their place.

The tunic of blue cloth, fastened with hooks-and-eyes, had black braid edging, and a red collar possibly piped with black; the piping to the pointed cuffs ended in a trefoil knot. Officers appear to have favoured the British infantry officer's blue patrol jacket with the addition of twisted shoulder cords, possibly red in colour. Trousers bore a broad stripe down the outside seam for officers and men alike, but it is not clear whether this was red or black. A white helmet with a spike but no badge completed the uniform.

Natal Volunteers on campaign with No.1 Column

The Volunteer Corps assigned to No.1 Column in the coastal sector received orders to assemble at Fort Pearson on the Thukela, where they arrived on 11 January 1879. Brevet Maj P.Barrow, 19th Hussars, took command of all mounted men attached to the Column. On 18 January, No.1 Column commenced the advance towards Eshowe. The Victoria MR, Stanger MR and Natal Hussars took part in the battle at Nyezane on 22 January. Detailed as escort to a



OPPOSITE Members of the Durban Mounted Rifles; see Plate D3. The contrast of the black velvet collars and cuffs against the blue of the tunic is clear, as is the red frogging and the piping knots above the cuffs. The white helmet bears the eight-pointed star badge. (KZN Archives, PMB)

column of wagons, the Durban MR missed the battle, as did the Alexandra MR who remained at Fort Pearson waiting to escort a later wagon convoy. On 28 January the Volunteers rode from Eshowe back to Fort Pearson on receiving news of the disaster at Isandlwana. Eleven Volunteers (five Alexandra MR, three Durban MR, two Victoria MR and one Natal Hussar) remained with the garrison at Eshowe, being besieged until 3 April. Once back at the border the Volunteers kept open communications between Kranskop, Fort Pearson and Stanger, to which town the Isipingo MR moved with two officers and 36 men. In March 1879 Lord Chelmsford completed his plans for the relief of the besieged garrison of Eshowe; the relief column included a scratch unit of Natal Volunteers which joined the force under the title Natal Volunteer Guides. This unit numbered three officers and 59 men, the senior officer being Capt F. Addison of the Stanger MR.

Composition of Natal Volunteer Guides:

Unit	Officers	Other ranks
Stanger MR	1	20
Isipingo MR	1	20
Alexandra MR	1	1
Durban MR	0	10
Victoria MR	0	8

The Natal Volunteer Guides fought at Gingindlovu, and rode into Eshowe on 3 April. Another force of 37 mixed Volunteers under Capt W. Shepstone, Durban MR, formed part of a major raid across the Thukela north of the Middle Drift on 20 May; Shepstone's command consisted of 30 Durban MR, four Natal Hussars and three Alexandra MR. The Natal Volunteer Guides joined Crealock's I Division for the second invasion of Zululand, while the remainder of the Volunteers continued their patrolling of the border. In July 1879, following the final defeat of the Zulu army at Ulundi, the Natal Volunteer Guides withdrew to the border (except for seven men who joined Col Clarke's Column), and all corps returned to their homes by the end of the month.

Weapons and equipment

The standard issue firearm for all the mounted Natal Volunteer Corps was the Swinburn-Henry carbine which replaced the Snider carbine in 1877. This fired the same ammunition as the Martini-Henry, and Maj J. Dartnell, Commandant of Volunteers, considered the Swinburn a superior weapon. The bayonet issued with the carbine, similar in shape to a Bowie knife, was never popular with the Volunteers. The

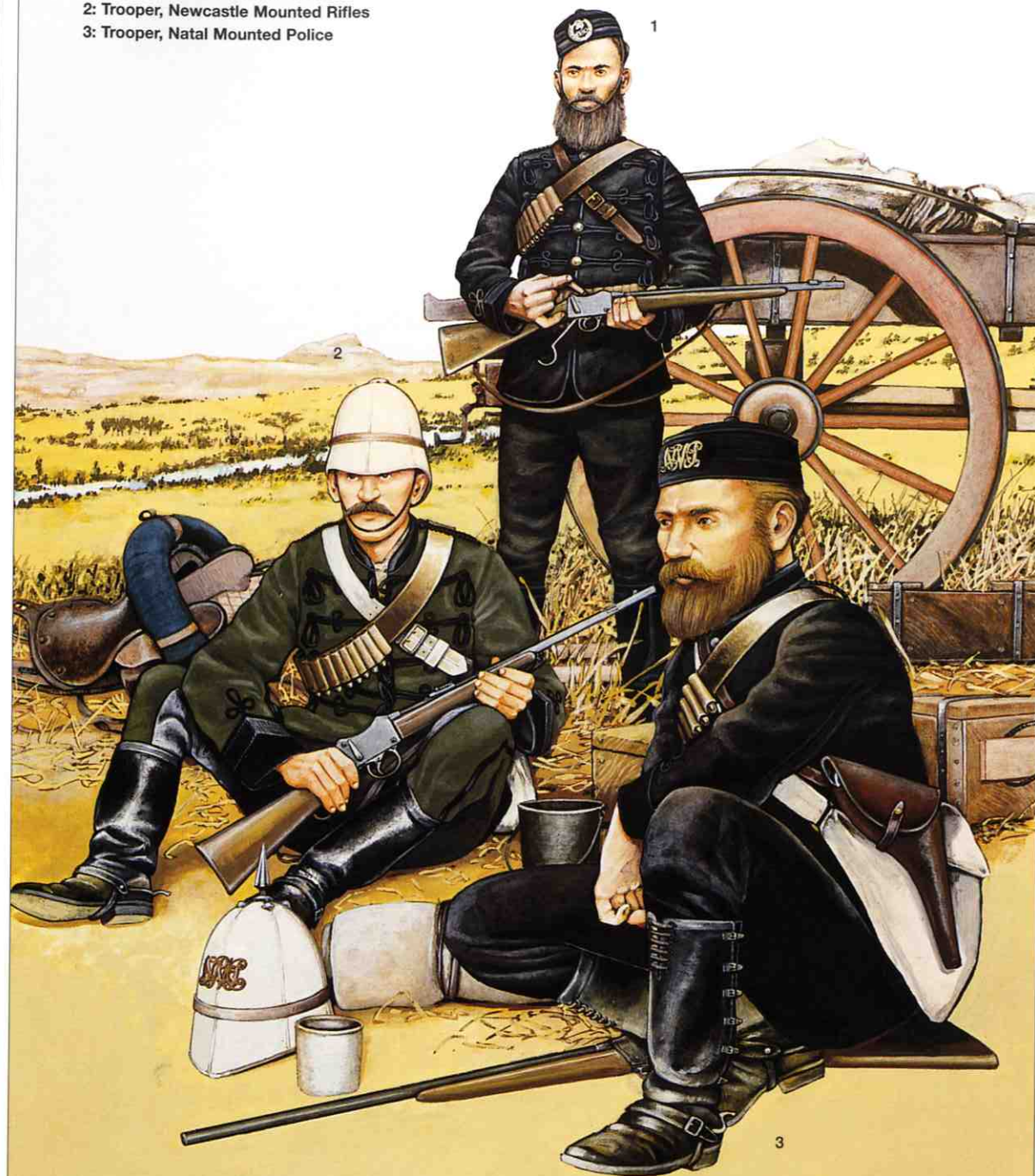
A fascinating illustration of the Natal Hussars, 1875. For many years it was taken at face value, suggesting that the Hussars wore busbies. However, a letter written in 1926 and now held in the Greytown Museum, KwaZulu/Natal, explains that the busbies were drawn onto the original photo with ink – and on closer inspection this is clearly the case. (KZN Archives, PMB)



1: Trooper, Natal Carbineers
2: Officer, Natal Carbineers



- 1: Trooper, Buffalo Border Guard
- 2: Trooper, Newcastle Mounted Rifles
- 3: Trooper, Natal Mounted Police



- 1: Officer, Stanger Mounted Rifles
- 2: Trooper, Stanger Mounted Rifles



- 1: Trooper, Natal Hussars
- 2: Trooper, Victoria Mounted Rifles
- 3: Trooper, Durban Mounted Rifles



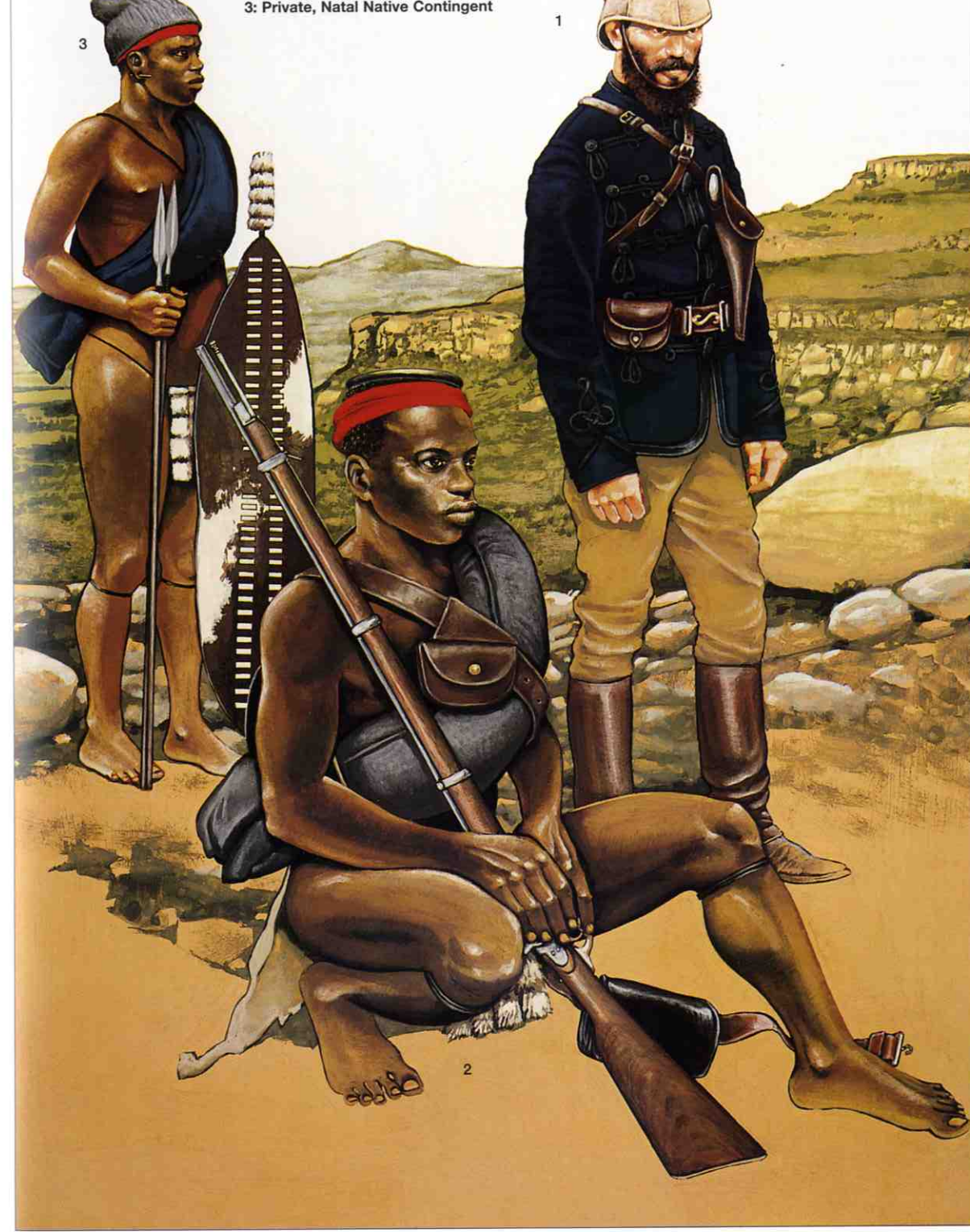
- 1: Trooper, Frontier Light Horse
- 2: Trooper, Frontier Light Horse



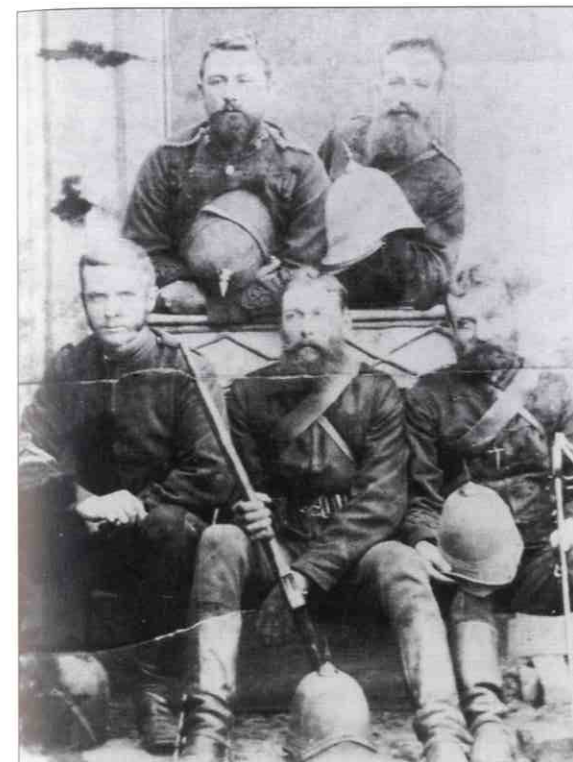
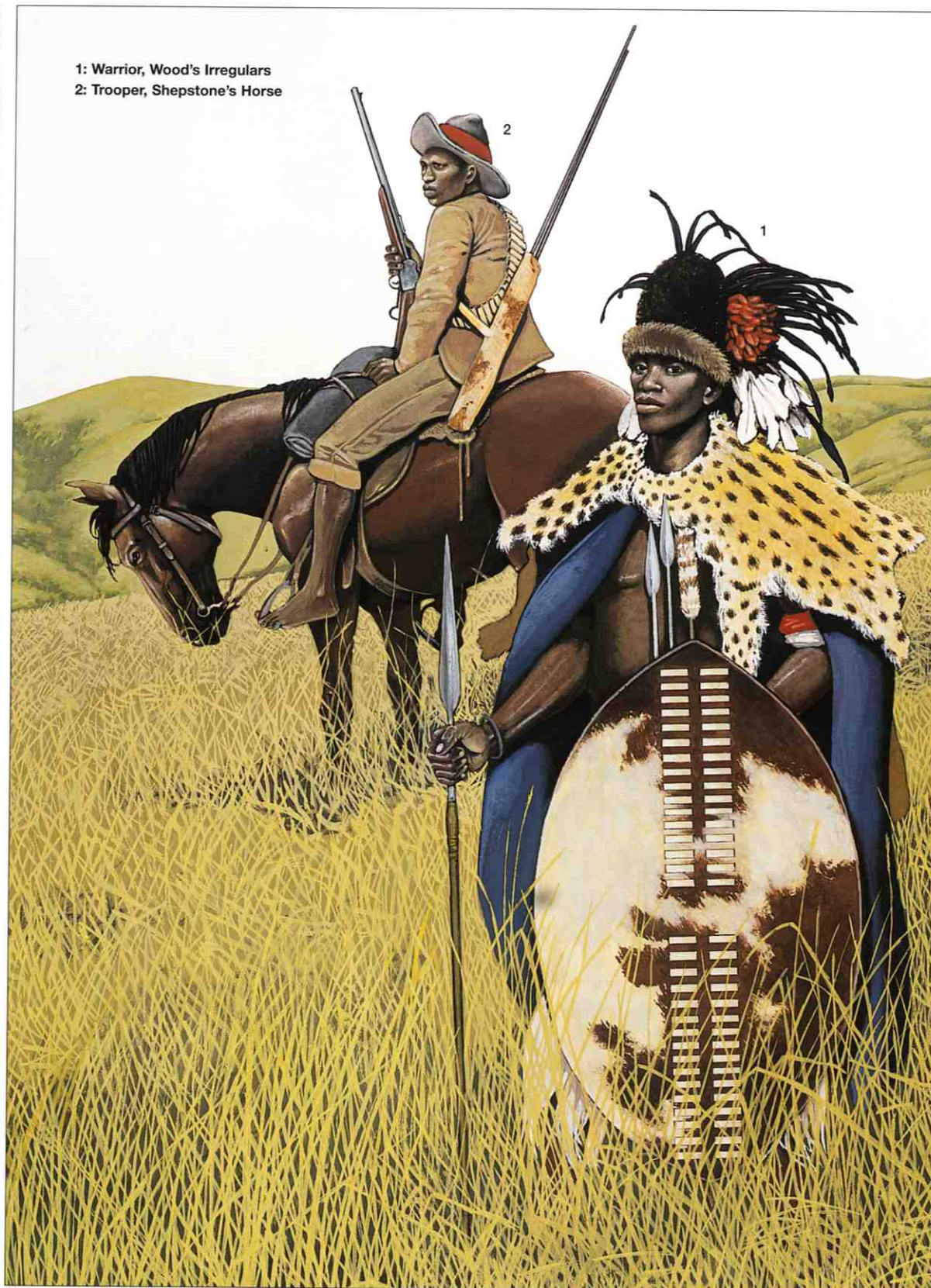
1: Volunteer, Transvaal Burgher Force
2: Trooper, Natal Horse
3: Natal Pioneer



1: Officer, Natal Native Contingent
2: NCO, Natal Native Contingent
3: Private, Natal Native Contingent



1: Warrior, Wood's Irregulars
2: Trooper, Shepstone's Horse



IRREGULAR CAVALRY

Members of the Isipingo Mounted Rifles, formed in 1878 in reaction to the threat of the Anglo-Zulu War. The men seated left and centre in the front row wear the plain tunic of NCOs and other ranks, fastened by hooks-and-eyes. The others wear the more elaborate officer's tunic. Helmets have spikes but no badge. (Natal Museum, PMB)

FRONTIER LIGHT HORSE

Raised in 1877 by Lt F.Carrington, 1/24th Regiment, for service in the Ninth Cape Frontier War, the FLH drew their recruits from the Kingwilliamstown district of the Eastern Cape. Rates of pay were good, a trooper receiving five shillings (25p) per day with no deductions, compared to the one shilling (5p) of the British soldier. This rate applied to all European mounted irregulars; however, it was considerably less than the Natal Volunteers received. Those volunteering for the FLH came from diverse and often wild backgrounds. As one correspondent reported, among the ranks could be found the human flotsam and jetsam typical of any colonial outpost, including 'discharged soldiers and 'varsity men, unfrocked clergyman and sailor, cockney and countryman, cashiered officers of army and navy'. Carrington did well to mould these men into a tough and efficient fighting force, and created a fine *esprit de corps* that prevailed throughout the life of the unit. In April 1878 command of the FLH passed to Maj Redvers Buller, 60th Rifles. Initially the FLH formed three troops, each consisting of one captain, two lieutenants, one troop sergeant-major, two sergeants, three corporals and 60 men, but during the Zulu War a fourth troop was formed.

At the conclusion of the war on the Cape Frontier the FLH received orders to march to the Transvaal via Kokstad and Pietermaritzburg, for service against the Pedi leader Sekhukhune. A number of new recruits signed on for six months' service before the march commenced, to replace those whose time had expired. Further recruits joined at Pietermaritzburg and a number of 'good-for-nothings' were discharged. With the campaign against Sekhukhune aborted in mid-December the FLH found themselves redirected to join Wood's No.4 Column at



An excellent photograph of an unidentified irregular horseman in a typical black corduroy uniform edged with braid; his wide-brimmed hat has a red cloth wound around the crown. The shortened forestock on the Martini-Henry carbine was a popular alteration among the Irregulars as it helped lighten the weapon – although one would think that every extra ounce would be welcome on a carbine which had to handle the .577/.450 cartridge. Note the buckled boots, and cf Plate B3.(Natal Museum, PMB)

Uniforms

The trooper's uniform worn on the Cape Frontier when the FLH formed was described by a lieutenant in 1878 as comprising black cotton cord suits with red facings, 'ammunition' boots with gaiters, and a wide-brimmed hat (known locally as a 'smasher') with a strip of red cloth wound around the crown. The same source, Lt T.E.Fenn, went on to list officers' uniform as being, 'a black patrol jacket, light, black Bedford cord pants, with double red stripe, and wore either helmet or "smasher" hat'.

The rush to uniform new recruits prior to the march north to the Transvaal severely tested the resources of the Kingwilliamstown tailors, and it seems likely that a number of recruits received various combinations of tunics and trousers in black or yellow/brown cord. From then on it is clear that there was not one specific FLH uniform. It is possible that yellow/brown cord uniforms decorated with braid and double-drop loops helped make up the shortages in the Cape. Later, when equipped in Natal, the FLH received complete uniforms of yellow/brown cord from government stocks – either plain double-breasted, single-breasted decorated with five rows of black braid across the chest, or single-breasted with black braid edging. These stocks also served as a source for replacement uniforms. For any recruit joining in the field the situation was more basic. Trooper G.Mossop, who enlisted on 6 January 1879, initially received no uniform, just a red cloth to wind around his hat.

An officer who saw the FLH in the field towards the end of the campaign described their dress as, 'Broad-leaved felt hats, with coloured puggarees [sic], brown cord breeches "baggy" to the last degree, and so patched with untanned leather that the original material had almost disappeared; a sort of patrol jacket, all over pockets, dyed mimosa colour [yellow], and also patched with leather of any colour on the

Utrecht in preparation for the invasion of Zululand. While based there the troops grouped their horses according to colour: A Troop had bays, B Troop chestnuts, and C Troop greys. There was constant fluctuation in the strength of the FLH throughout the war, with batches of men coming and going as time-expired troopers left and new recruits arrived.

The FLH fought at Hlobane and Khambula; although the unit mustered 219 in May this reduced when one troop left to provide the nucleus of a new unit, the Natal Light Horse. The FLH also took part in the final battle of the war at Ulundi. Buller took command of all the mounted men of No.4 Column in March 1879, handing leadership of the FLH to Capt R.Barton, Coldstream Guards. Following Barton's death at Hlobane later that month Capt C.D'Arcy took command of the unit. Both D'Arcy and Sgt E.O'Toole received the Victoria Cross for their actions during a reconnaissance patrol on the day before Ulundi.

shoulders, and wherever the gun was accustomed to rest, brown laced gaiters coming high up the leg, and even thighs, and rough coloured flannel shirt, entirely open at the neck: such was the most usual costume'.

Weapons and equipment

The government provided horses and saddles for the irregulars. Each man carried on his horse a valise, saddlebags, patrol tin and blanket. Those men of the FLH who rode to the Transvaal exchanged their mackintoshes for cloaks; whether later recruits received cloaks or greatcoats is unclear.

Each NCO and trooper carried a Martini-Henry carbine slung over the right shoulder to hang down on the left side. Inevitably it proved necessary at times to issue other firearms, such as Snider carbines, to recruits. An ammunition bandolier completed the trooper's kit. Officers carried revolvers and 1822 pattern light cavalry officers' swords.

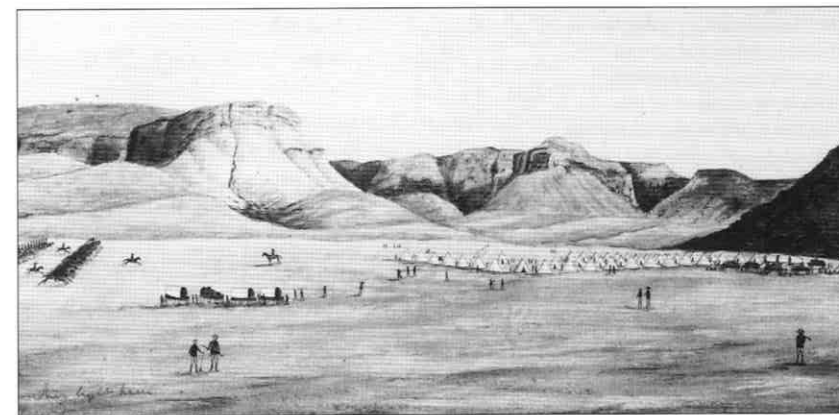
NATAL LIGHT HORSE

The Natal Light Horse did not take the field until May 1879, commanded by Capt W.Whalley, an officer with much military experience. His career spanned time as an officer in the 17th Lancers through service in India, China and Abyssinia, before fighting in the Franco-Prussian War and the Carlist War in Spain. He joined the Frontier Light Horse as a captain in 1877, serving with them on the Cape Frontier and against Sekhukhune before marching to join Wood and No.4 Column. In March 1879 Whalley transferred to Baker's Horse to help train that new unit as it was on its way to the front. On 12 May he left Baker's Horse to take up the command of the newly forming Natal Light Horse.

The core of the unit was drawn from the FLH and augmented by a batch of 30 recruits intended for the FLH who reached Utrecht on 12 April under Capt McDonald (also written MacDonald). Another body of 98 recruits from Durban under Capt Marshall, also originally detailed for the FLH, provided enough additional manpower to create a second troop of the Natal Light Horse; this party reached the front on 3 June.

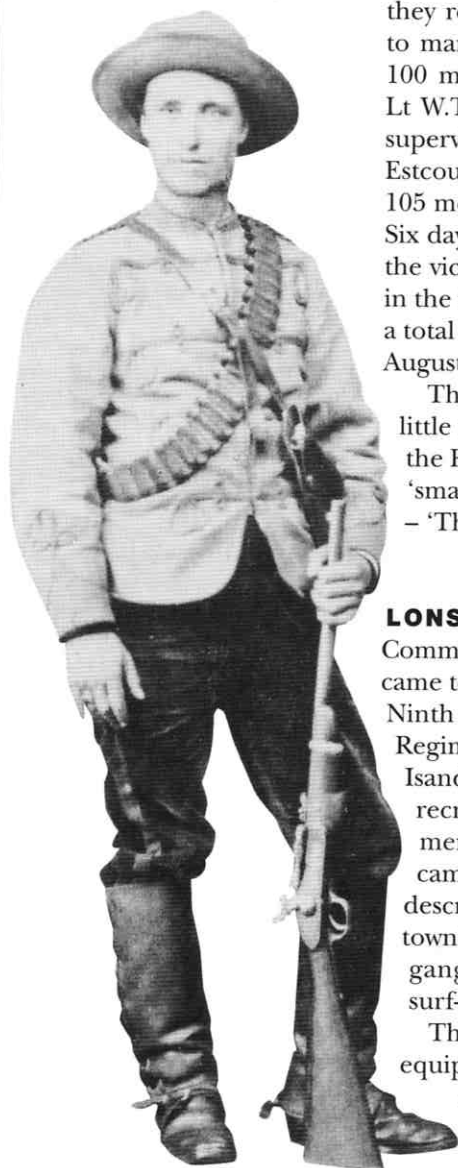
A total of 138 men served in the ranks of the Natal Light Horse, initially in Wood's Flying Column, some being present at Ulundi. After the battle the unit formed part of the garrisons at Fort Evelyn (Marshall's troop) and Fort Albert at KwaMagwaza (McDonald's Troop) until disbanded.

Due to its origins in the FLH it is most likely that uniforms and equipment of the Natal Light Horse were similar to those adopted by the FLH in the latter stages of the war. There is a comment in a book by a British soldier who served in the 1/13th Regiment to the effect that Marshall's troop carried sabres.



A painting of a camp of the Frontier Light Horse en route for the Zulu War. Although tiny, the figures of the guards are clearly wearing black tunics with yellow/brown cord trousers. (Africana Museum, Johannesburg)

This unidentified photograph shows another version of irregular uniform, possibly worn by a member of the Frontier Light Horse during the Ninth Cape Frontier War. The yellow/brown jacket seems to have shoulder cords, four rows of chest braiding with double drop loops, and trefoil knots above the cuffs, all in a medium shade. It is worn with black cord trousers bearing a broad (double?) red stripe down the seam, and heavy leather gaiters laced up the outside; he carries a Snider carbine and holstered revolver. (Private collection)



BAKER'S HORSE

J.F.Baker came out to Cape Colony in 1877. He had served in the Ceylon Rifles from 1860 before returning to Britain in the early 1870s. In 1873 he joined the Anglesey Militia, with which he served until he moved to South Africa. In 1878 he raised an irregular mounted unit named Baker's Horse for service in the Ninth Cape Frontier War; and later marched with them to Natal before returning to East London, Cape Colony, to disband in December 1878. However, shortly after receiving the news of the British defeat at Isandlwana, Baker telegraphed Lord Chelmsford offering to raise a new unit. Chelmsford gratefully accepted, and on 7 February the first batch of 50 men set sail for Durban from East London, with others following on 21 and 24 February. Baker uniformed the men in East London but intended arming and equipping them in Natal.

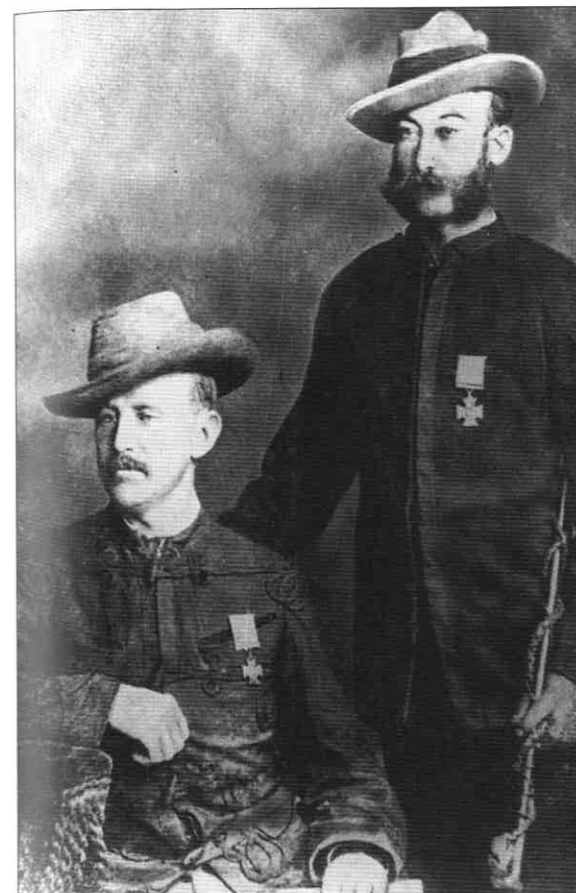
From Durban the new arrivals marched to Pietermaritzburg where they received their equipment and arms. From here they were forced to march to Estcourt before they could be mounted, a total of about 100 miles. The recruits were met at Estcourt by Capt W.Whalley and Lt W.Tomasson, both transferred from the Frontier Light Horse, who supervised the mounting and general organisation of the unit. Leaving Estcourt, Baker's Horse rode on to Utrecht, whence the first group of 105 men arrived at No.4 Column's Khambula Camp on 22 March 1879. Six days later the unit took part in the British defeat at Hlobane, and in the victory at Khambula the following day. Baker's Horse also took part in the final battle of the campaign at Ulundi. Throughout the campaign a total of 224 men served in the unit; it returned to Cape Colony in early August and disbanded.

There is no description of the uniform of Baker's Horse, but with little or no black corduroy now available it appears likely that they, like the FLH, wore the familiar yellow/brown cord tunic and trousers with 'smasher' hat and red band. A report giving Baker's Horse a nickname – 'The Canaries' – may confirm this.

LONSDALE'S HORSE

Commandant R.Lonsdale, formerly a lieutenant in the 74th Regiment, came to Chelmsford's attention as a commander of Mfengu levies in the Ninth Cape Frontier War. Chelmsford gave him command of the 3rd Regiment NNC for the coming Zulu War, but following the defeat at Isandlwana he ordered Lonsdale to Cape Colony with instructions to recruit volunteers for a unit of mounted irregulars. With most likely men already swept up by the FLH and Baker's Horse, those that came in were the real scrapings: the officer commanding in Durban described them as '...lawless banditti, a menace and a terror to the town'. One of their own officers added that they were '...an unruly gang, composed chiefly of runaway sailors and unrighteous surf-boatmen'.

The recruits proceeded from the Cape to Durban with uniform and equipment to follow. When these finally arrived much appeared to be of poor quality and shoddily made, but a troop was furnished as quickly as possible and sent to join Crealock's I Division preparing for the second invasion of Zululand. In all, four



Capt Cecil D'Arcy and Sgt Edmund O'Toole of the Frontier Light Horse, who were both awarded the VC for their actions on 3 July 1879. D'Arcy wears the officers' black patrol jacket. While O'Toole seems to wear a black corduroy tunic edged with black braid, this may be misleading; there is some evidence that under studio conditions at the time 'yellow' could appear 'black' in photographs. (Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban)

NATAL HORSE

With the disbanding of the 3rd Regiment NNC after Isandlwana, the officers of the regiment volunteered to ride out from Rorke's Drift on patrol or scouting missions. Those NCOs able to procure horses joined them, and they performed a valuable service at a very tense time on the border. Life became very dull and monotonous for many of the officers and NCOs of other NNC battalions stationed in remote forts, and the successful use of those of 3rd Regiment led to a plan to mount more of the underemployed white cadres of the NNC. As a result the Natal Horse joined the growing number of mounted irregulars in the field.

Troop	Commander	Strength	From
No.1 Tp (de Burgh's Horse)	Capt U.de Burgh (3/1st NNC)	48	1/1st & 3/1st NNC
No.2 Tp (Cooke's Horse)	Capt J.Cooke (2nd NNC)	50	2nd NNC
No.3 Tp (Bettington's Horse)	Capt R.Bettington (2/1st NNC)	60	2/1st & 3rd NNC

Cooke's troop saw action first, as 30 men fought at Gingindlovu on 2 April with the Eshowe relief force. De Burgh's troop left Fort Cherry on 22 April to proceed to the Lower Thukela where it joined Cooke's Horse, the two Natal Horse troops serving together in MajGen Crealock's I Division until it was broken up in July. Cooke's troop then

disbanded, but De Burgh's joined Col Clarke's Column and remained in the field until September. Bettington's troop left Rorke's Drift and marched to Landman's Drift, joining Newdigate's II Division on 21 April. On 1 June six troopers formed the escort to the Prince Imperial of France on his ill-fated reconnaissance patrol, during which the prince and two troopers were killed. The troop accompanied the advance to Ulundi but only 13 were present at the battle itself.

As the men of the Natal Horse were former NCOs of the Natal Native Contingent they continued to wear the uniforms and carry the equipment issued to them at the beginning of the campaign.

CARBUTT'S BORDER RANGERS

Thomas Carbutt, son of a Yorkshire farmer, sailed to Natal in 1857 to work a family farm, later buying a farm of his own near Ladysmith. Joining a local volunteer corps, the Natal Frontier Guard, he served in the campaign against Langalibalele kaMthimkhulu in 1873. The unit disbanded in 1876; but with the threat of a Zulu War becoming more real and the Ladysmith area lacking any recognised defence, Carbutt called together a number of former comrades from the NFG. He began recruiting volunteers for Carbutt's Border Rangers from amongst the local European community, and also raised a levy from African farm labourers. Carbutt had these men – 21 mounted Europeans and 22 Africans – in the field patrolling the approaches to Ladysmith before Isandlwana. In the first weeks after this disaster much of the mounted strength of the Centre Column was out of action. As a result Carbutt's force extended their patrols to cover the roads and tracks from Ladysmith to Dundee and on to Helpmekaar, Fort Pine, Rorke's Drift, Landman's Drift, Koppie Alleen, Balte Spruit and Utrecht.

Carbutt's rough, tough men lived – according to one witness – on a diet of unleavened bread and large quantities of rum, justifying their nickname of 'Blind Owls'. Each man reported for duty in his

own clothes and carrying his own weapons. The valuable service performed by the unit was officially recognised on 15 March when Carbutt's Border Rangers were added to the government payroll, with Carbutt gazetted captain and 100 Snider carbines issued for their use. By the end of March Carbutt's command increased to 30 mounted Europeans, a levy of 32 Africans and a newly raised mounted section of 31 Edendale Mission men from a black Christian farming community at Driefontein, north of Ladysmith.

The Frontier Light Horse on campaign in Zululand. This illustration shows an alternative uniform of yellow/brown corduroy, with black braiding; see Plate E2. It is possible that this uniform was issued to those recruited in or re-equipped from Natal. Note different boot types; those reaching above the knee are possibly laced gaiters.



Carbutt's unsympathetic handling of these Edendale men led to their later transfer to Shepstone's Horse (see above).

On 21 May the Rangers took part in the first large scale patrol to Isandlwana, which buried the remains of some of the men killed in the battle and returned with a number of wagons. In June they provided an escort for the body of the Prince Imperial of France between Landman's Drift and Ladysmith. Later that month the Rangers returned once more to Isandlwana with the party that buried the final remains of those killed on 22 January. After the battle at Ulundi, with their services no longer required, Carbutt's Border Rangers disbanded.

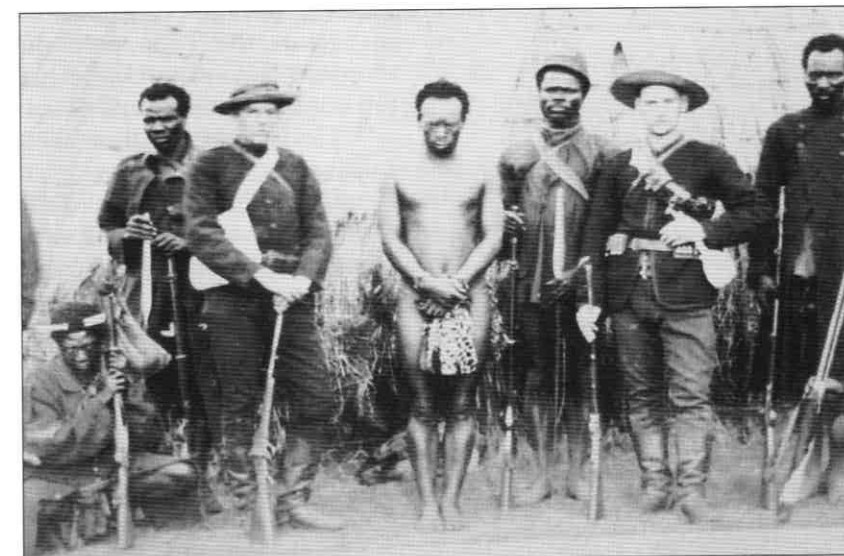
KAFFRARIAN RIFLEMEN (or VANGUARD)

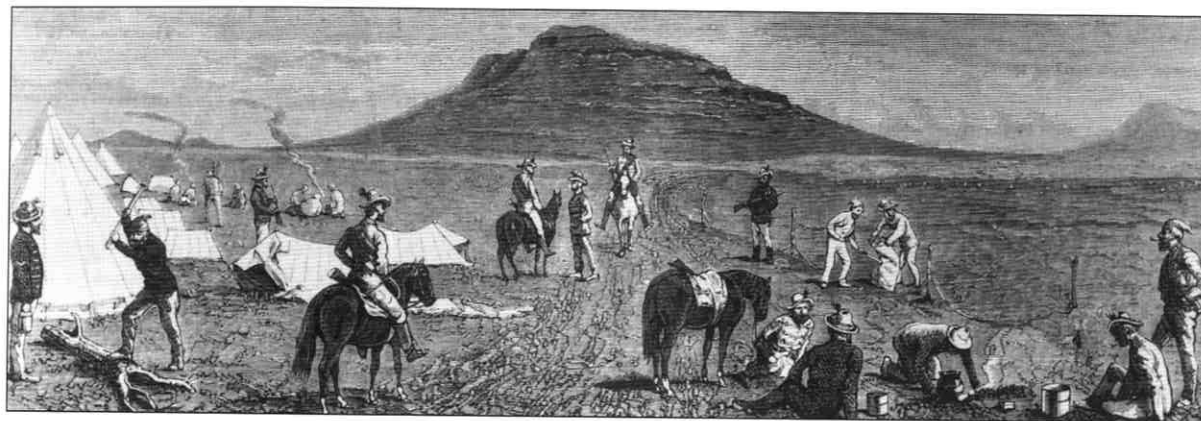
Commandant F.Schermsbrucker was another man who had greatly impressed Chelmsford as a leader of irregulars in the Ninth Cape Frontier War. He first came to Cape Colony in 1857 as part of the German Legion, recruited from Germans by Britain for service in the Crimean War and later offered the chance to emigrate to South Africa with their families as soldier/settlers. He eventually settled in Bloemfontein, where he founded and edited the *Bloemfontein Express*, but returned to Cape Colony in 1877 to lead a force of mainly German irregulars and African levies in the Frontier War.

In October 1878 Chelmsford asked Schermsbrucker to raise a force of infantry volunteers to serve in the coming war, principally to protect the isolated German settlement of Luneberg close to the Zulu border in the north. The response was positive and rapid: on 18 November the Kaffrarian Riflemen (also known as the Kaffrarian Vanguard) landed at Durban ready for six months' service with three officers, ten NCOs and 100 men, drawn from the Kingwilliamstown and East London districts. A newspaper correspondent reported that there were about 40 of British origin amongst their number, the rest being of German stock. After a long march they arrived at Utrecht, the base for Wood's No.4 Column, on 13 December. From there they continued to Luneberg (Durban/Luneberg is a march of approximately 260 miles), garrisoning the town laager and Fort Clery for the next two and a half months.

Late in February the shortage of mounted men led to a decision to mount the Kaffrarian Riflemen. The unit, 106 strong, marched back into Khambula camp on 2 March, the whole first section in bare feet as they awaited new boots. A few days later the unit received 110 horses. On 20 March, Schermsbrucker was ordered to Doorn Kop (now known as Doringberg) to establish a

Mehlokazulu kaSihayo escorted into captivity, late August 1879; having surrendered at Fort Evelyn he was taken first to Ulundi and then to Natal. The Natal Light Horse formed part of the garrison of Fort Evelyn at this time, so it is possible that the two Europeans are from this unit; most other irregular units had disbanded by this date. (Christies Images)





'Encampment of "Bettington's Horse", Conference Hill'. Bettington's No.3 Troop, Natal Horse, was formed from NCOs of the 2/1st and 3rd NNC. Most are shown wearing yellow/brown uniforms, although some have darker tunics that may be either blue or black. Under magnification all tunics appear to be braided across the chest, and most of the 'smasher' hats seem to have a hackle or feathers attached on the left; two men - e.g. extreme right - wear knitted 'night caps'.

post protecting the border along the Blood River, between Balte Spruit and Dundee. A part of the unit took part in the assault on Hlobane on 28 March, as well as in the fighting at Khambula the following day. On 30 April the six months' period of service for which the men had signed on expired, and the majority returned home. Remaining at the front, Schermbrucker received an independent command in the Luneberg district; about 25 of his men chose to re-enlist, and continued to serve with him until finally disbanded in September.

A newspaper report of the arrival of the Kaffrarian Riflemen at Durban observed that, 'their full dress is plain, but serviceable, being made of black corduroy, with soft black hats and white puggarees'. A picture of Schermbrucker shows him wearing a blue patrol jacket and a képi. As an infantry unit and one of the earliest to recruit, it is probable that they acquired Martini-Henry rifles with bayonets; they carried ammunition in two 50-round bandoliers. Officers carried 1822 pattern officers' swords and revolvers.

RAAFF'S TRANSVAAL RANGERS

Commandant P.Raaff was born in 1849 in the area of South Africa later known as the Orange Free State. In 1865 he fought for the Free State against the baSotho, and in 1876 he took part in the Transvaal's campaign against the Pedi. Following British annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 he took part in the campaign against the Pedi in 1878 at the head of his own unit, Raaff's Transvaal Rangers (nicknamed 'The Bull Dogs'). The Rangers lost three men killed and four wounded early in the campaign.

In November 1878, Raaff went to the Kimberley diamond fields - a fertile recruiting ground - to find new men for his unit, since many were approaching the end of their six months' service. While adding further recruits in Pretoria, Raaff received instructions to join Col Rowlands' Column forming for the Zulu War. In all he managed to raise his strength to 150, with about 100 Europeans and 50 of mixed race. Lieutenant Tomasson, who served with both the Frontier Light Horse and Baker's Horse - neither unit renowned for its angelic qualities - described the Transvaal Rangers in these terms: '... a more forbidding lot of mixed Hottentots and scum of the Diamond Fields was never collected together outside a prison wall.' On their departure from Kimberley a local newspaper dubbed them the 'Kimberley Riff-Raaff'.

The Rangers took part in the attack on Talaku Mountain on 15 February with 103 men. Rowlands was recalled to Pretoria at the end of the month, resulting in the amalgamation of his column with Wood's No.4 Column. The Transvaal Rangers rode into Wood's camp at Khambula on 24 February with ten officers and 142 men, and this valuable addition to Wood's mounted strength immediately found themselves on a regular round of exhausting patrols and reconnaissance missions. On 28 March Raaff led part of his unit in the assault against Hlobane Mountain, and the next day they took part in the crushing defeat of the Zulu army at Khambula.

The Transvaal Rangers accompanied the second invasion of Zululand in Wood's renamed Flying Column. A number of time-expired men left for Kimberley on 27 May, but a batch of 90 new recruits joined the Rangers on 15 June. Taking part in the reconnaissance in strength prior to Ulundi, Raaff lost two men wounded before fighting in the battle the next day. After the break-up of the invasion force the Transvaal Rangers continued to serve, allocated to Col Russell's Column charged with pacifying north-western Zululand. Early in September this column was broken up on the orders of Sir Garnet Wolseley, and Raaff's Transvaal Rangers disbanded.

A description of the Transvaal Rangers in a newspaper article briefly mentions that '...their uniform and outfit of accoutrements is well adapted for the work to be done. It is useful, if not elegant.' However, a document published late in 1879 under the title *Volunteer Forces of the Transvaal and Instructions for their Guidance* lists the following full suite of items issued to irregular corps raised in the Transvaal:

A coat, a pair of trousers, a hat and puggree (sic), two woollen shirts, a pair of boots, a greatcoat, two pairs of socks, a pair of leggings, a rifle sling, a bandolier (50 rounds), a haversack, a water bottle, a canteen or patrol tin, a plate, knife, fork and spoon, a saddle, a headstall with Pelham bit, two reins and a brush and curry comb.

It is safe to presume that the coat and trousers were of corduroy cloth, but whether of black or yellow/brown material is unclear. A photograph of Cdt Raaff and a group of officers and NCOs (who may or may not all belong to his unit) includes one NCO wearing a black cord uniform edged with black braid and brandishing a Martini-Henry carbine. This may suggest that Transvaal volunteers wore black corduroy but it is by no means indisputable. Raaff appears to prefer civilian clothes, while his officers wear a mixture of military patrol jackets and civilian items. Foreign Service helmets seem popular among these officers, stained to varying shades of brown and with puggarees of different colours. Armament consists of revolvers and 1822 pattern light cavalry officers' swords.

WEATHERLEY'S BORDER HORSE

Lieutenant-Colonel F.Weatherley, born in England in 1830, experienced a long and varied military career before travelling to South Africa in 1876 to look after a failing business interest. In November 1878 he began to recruit volunteers in Pretoria for a unit of mounted irregulars under the name Weatherley's Border Lances,

Cdt Schermbrucker, the able commander of the Kaffrarian Riflemen, in the uniform he wore during the Zulu War. The infantry pattern patrol jacket and peaked forage cap are both blue decorated with black mohair braid. (Natal Museum, PMB)



more commonly known as Weatherley's Border Horse. Two troops were formed, one of which joined Col Rowlands' No.5 Column assembling for the Zulu War. Weatherley's men rode into column headquarters at Derby early in February.

With Rowlands recalled to Pretoria towards the end of the month No.5 Column amalgamated with Wood's No.4 Column. The Border Horse marched to Khambula via Luneberg, arriving on 2 March with 61 men. On 28 March, Weatherley led his unit into action at Hlobane where a force of Zulus intercepted them, inflicting crushing casualties; Weatherley was one of those killed. At Khambula the following day 16 men were present, but shortly after the battle Capt C.Dennison, the only officer to survive Hlobane, led the remnants of the unit back to Pretoria.

Although originally named Weatherley's Border Lances they were not armed with the lance; in this instance the title derived from 'Free Lances', a name adopted by some informal mercenary groups in the Transvaal. (Another example is the Wakkerstroom Free Lances, formed by Cdt J.Henderson after his battalion of Wood's Irregulars was broken up.) Weatherley's men carried Martini-Henrys, presumably carbines although one source mentions rifles. A description of their uniform is a little confusing, giving 'a blue "jumper", cord breeches, red sash, riding boots and a white hat'. It seems unlikely that a woollen jumper would suffice in the extremes of the South African climate, and exactly what is meant by a 'white hat' is unclear. The *Instructions* which applied to Raaff's Transvaal Rangers were equally applicable to Weatherley's men, and so it seems logical to assume that there was a corduroy coat to wear over the 'jumper'.

Wood in the early part of the campaign.

Uys personally led 32 burghers at Hlobane, and died while saving the life of one of his sons on the retreat down Devil's Pass. With Uys dead and a victorious Zulu army in the vicinity the burghers asked to be allowed to leave the British camp at Khambula on the morning of 29 March to return to protect their homes. Wood agreed, although about six remained since their wagons were incorporated in the defensive position. The Zulu army was repulsed at Khambula with heavy casualties, and with the removal of this threat the Boers returned to Wood's camp on 2 April. On 5 April they elected Adriaan Rudolph as their new commandant.

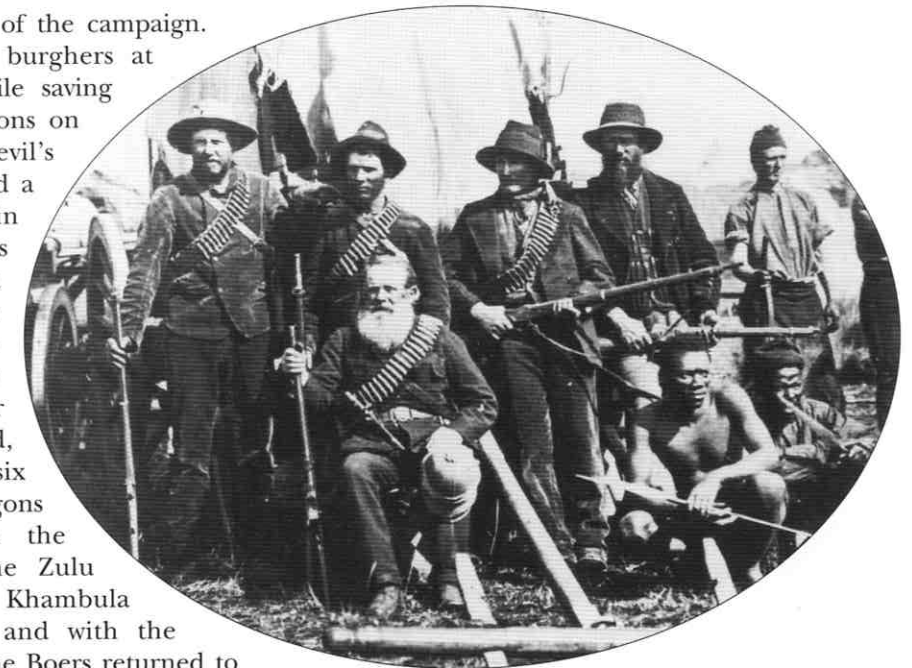
With plans progressing for the second invasion, Chelmsford asked Rudolph if the Burgher Force would remain behind to protect the border area between Balte Spruit and Luneberg. They agreed, and operated out of Fort Lawrence with the Kaffrarian Riflemen until early September 1879 when their services were no longer required.

Members of the Transvaal Burgher Force rode their own horses to war and received no uniforms from the government, wearing their civilian clothes. Martini-Henry rifles and carbines were issued, along with ammunition bandoliers.

* * *

Summary

There is no doubt that the service of Colonial troops in the Zulu War was invaluable to Lord Chelmsford's army. The Irregulars – white and black – and Natal Volunteers, along with the Imperial Mounted Infantry, provided the only viable mounted force in the field for much of the war. Without them the invasion could not have taken place; and their importance did not diminish later when two regiments of regular cavalry arrived. The European cavalry horses found conditions of climate and forage difficult, and were unable to undertake the constant and far ranging patrols and other exhausting duties carried out so effectively by these frontiersmen. The infantry of the NNC had a chequered campaign in Zululand, but much of this can be blamed on the limited training they received from officers and NCOs whom they had little time to get to know before finding themselves in battle. Even so, their usefulness for scouting, garrison duty and mopping-up operations should not be underestimated. Without this source of manpower the fighting strength of the British regulars would have been seriously diluted through the need to defend the border and lines of communication and other mundane but unavoidable tasks.



Piet Uys (seated, with white beard) and members of the Transvaal Burgher Force; all wear civilian clothes. Uys has a Martini-Henry carbine and rests a Foreign Service helmet on his knee. Three of his men have Martini-Henry rifles and one a carbine; one carries his cartridges in individual loop pockets on his waistcoat, the rest wear government issue bandoliers. (S.Bourquin)

Table 2:
War record of Irregulars, 1879
(major actions only)

Unit	Action	Strength all ranks	Casualties dead/wounded
Frontier Light Horse	Hlobane	156	29/3
	Khambula	165	2/2
	Ulundi	106	–
Natal Light Horse	Ulundi	57	–
Baker's Horse	Hlobane	79	8/1
	Khambula	99	0/1
	Ulundi	92	0/1
Natal Horse (No.2 Tp)	Gingindlovu	30	–
Natal Horse (No.3 Tp)	Ulundi	13	–
Kaffrarian Riflemen	Hlobane	40	–
	Khambula	40	0/1
	Ulundi	71	7/2
Raaff's Transvaal Rangers	Hlobane	135	1/1
	Khambula	67	–
	Ulundi	67	–
Weatherley's Border Horse	Hlobane	53	44/1
	Khambula	16	–
	Ulundi	32	1/0
Transvaal Burgher Force	Hlobane	6	0/1

(Note the high proportion of killed to wounded at Hlobane, which underlines the nature of the fighting in the Zulu War. Any wounded men who could not be rescued immediately were killed out of hand by the Zulu.)

TRANSCAAL BURGER FORCE

While Lord Chelmsford assembled his army for the invasion of Zululand he actively pursued the Boers of the Transvaal in an effort to induce them to join his forces. It was a difficult task, as many Boers naturally resented the British annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 and also the British settlement of the border dispute between Boers and Zulu in 1878. However, persistent efforts by Col Wood, who concentrated on the Boers of the Utrecht and Wakkerstroom districts closest to Zululand, persuaded a number of men to come forward. The principal leader among them was Piet Lafras Uys; most of the volunteers who responded came from the extended Uys family and their friends, or farmed lands vulnerable to Zulu raids. Uys, whose father and brother had both been killed by the Zulu in 1838, declined pay for himself, his sons and nephews to serve; he simply hoped that by taking up arms he could protect his farm. Piet Uys rode into Wood's camp at Bemba's Kop on 6 January with 15 men; but by 3 February the Burgher Force mustered 51 men, who excelled in scouting and skirmishing and whose local knowledge proved invaluable to



A group photograph identified as Cdt Raaff and officers of his Transvaal Rangers. The officer (seated, right) with white spiked helmet and civilian clothes is Raaff. Whether the others are all members of the Rangers is hard to say. Where tunic details are visible on the four standing men and the

man on the ground (left), no two tunics are the same. It is tempting, considering the description available, to ponder whether the man standing on the left is a Kaffrarian Rifleman – both units served under Evelyn Wood at Hlobane and Khambula. (S.Bourquin)

THE PLATES

A1: Trooper, Natal Carbineers

The Carbineers wore a plain dark blue uniform with white facings and a white stripe down the trouser seam. The white metal buttons and helmet badge bore the letters 'NC' surmounted by the Victorian crown. The standard firearm issued to all Natal Volunteer Corps, the .577in Swinburn-Henry carbine replaced the Snider carbine in 1877; all Natal Volunteers received two bandoliers of ammunition when mustering for the Zulu War. Members of Volunteer Corps rode their own horses and were required to provide all saddlery.



A2: Officer, Natal Carbineers

The officer's tunic was more ornate than that worn by other ranks, being decorated with five rows of black braid across the chest ending with trefoil knots, and fastened by olivets. The white cuffs also featured black braid worked in a trefoil knot. Officers and other ranks alike carried the Royal Irish Constabulary pattern Webley revolver, and the officers' armament also included the 1822 pattern light cavalry officers' sword, slung from an internal belt complete with sabretache.

B1: Trooper, Buffalo Border Guard

The black cloth uniform of the BBG bore five rows of black braid across the chest, ending in double drop loops; the facings were also black, the cuffs – as on Plate B2 – edged with both braid and with piping worked in a trefoil knot. This trooper wears the black pillbox forage cap, decorated with two bands of black braid and the white metal unit badge. On campaign the BBG wore the white Foreign Service helmet with a spike, but it is not known if the helmet badge was worn on campaign. Armament for all Natal Volunteers was the same as detailed for the Natal Carbineers (A1).

B2: Trooper, Newcastle Mounted Rifles

The only known photo of the NMR shows the green uniform to be of very similar style to that worn by the BBG, their

The white metal helmet badge of the Natal Carbineers – see Plate A. The badge measures 2.7ins (6.8cm) wide by 2.85ins (7.2cm).

A superbly detailed photo of the uniform of the Buffalo Border Guard – see Plate B1. The white metal badge of a buffalo head over the letters 'BBG', all surrounded by a laurel wreath, appeared on the helmet, forage cap and ammunition pouch belt. (Talana Museum, Dundee)

nearest neighbouring unit with whom they shared an annual Exercise Camp. The photo, possibly taken at Fort Pine during the war, shows that the NMR did not wear a helmet badge or spike when in the field, but like all Volunteer Corps received bandoliers for the campaign. No details of the forage cap are available but it seems possible that this too would have followed the BBG pattern.

B3: Trooper, Natal Mounted Police

The black cord uniform, sometimes described as dark grey, was thick, uncomfortable in hot weather, and cut tight. Again, the cuffs are edged with black braid rising to a trefoil. The boots worn by the NMP were distinctive in that they fastened by six buckles down the outside of the leg. The officer's tunic of black cloth, edged with black braid, had five rows of black braid across the chest ending in double drop loops; their pointed cuffs were decorated with black braid forming an Austrian knot. The badge of the ornate monogram 'NMP' in brass was worn on pillbox forage cap and on the white helmet in full dress, but it is not certain if the helmet badge was worn on campaign. The Swinburn-Henry carbine, like the Martini-Henry, took the same calibre ammunition – .577/.450in – as the infantry's Martini-Henry rifle. The forestock was sometimes shortened by individuals to lighten the weapon, as here.

C1: Officer, Stanger Mounted Rifles

The officer's tunic of dark blue cloth bore an unusual arrangement of five rows of black braid across the chest with hanging loops of flat braid attached half way along. The tunic and collar had black braid edging, as did the pointed cuffs, whose decoration was worked in single loops. Twisted yellow shoulder cords held equipment belts in place and the trousers bore a thin line of yellow piping down the outside seam. The officer's peaked forage cap bore the white metal badge and was of blue cloth with yellow piping along the upper and lower edges of the brow band; senior officers appear to have worn broader lines of yellow braid. White helmets were worn on campaign.

C2: Trooper, Stanger Mounted Rifles

The trooper's tunic was of plain dark blue, edged with black braid and fastened by hooks-and-eyes; a single loop of black braid decorated the pointed cuff, and equipment belts were secured by blue shoulder straps edged with yellow piping,

which also followed the outseams of the trousers. When on duty a white helmet replaced the peaked forage cap – note badge, and single line of yellow crown piping. The Swinburn-Henry carbine has a leather sight protector fitted.



D1: Trooper, Natal Hussars

The dark green uniform worn in the Zulu War was introduced in late 1874 or early 1875, having been made in England. The tunic had five rows of black braid ending with double drop loops and fastened by olivets. In undress order a képi was worn, with the addition of a white cover in hot weather. A Volunteer meeting in February 1874 approved the decision to acquire helmets from England for all mounted Volunteer Corps, although it appears these were not available for issue until 1877.

D2: Trooper, Victoria Mounted Rifles

Troopers of the VMR wore a plain dark blue tunic fastened by five white metal buttons and had dark blue shoulder straps, piped – like the collar and cuffs – in scarlet.

The trousers bore a wide red stripe, and the blue képi-style forage cap a broad red band; above this a small badge of the letters 'VMR' is pinned to the crown. When fitted to the helmet the badge featured these letters in monogram, surrounded by a laurel wreath on an eight-pointed star, surmounted by a Victorian crown. References to the VMR wearing dark blue or black helmets refer to later changes made in the 1880s. The lug on the right side of the carbine barrel engaged with the hilt of the Bowie-style bayonet, seldom seen in use.

D3: Trooper, Durban Mounted Rifles

The dark blue uniforms of the DMR worn during the Zulu War arrived from England in May 1874. At a meeting in July of that year a decision was taken to add the red braid and piping to the tunic. The officer's tunic had five rows of braid ending in trefoil knots and fastened by olivets, with smaller black velvet cuffs than the trooper's tunic. These had a line of braid tracing the shape of the cuff, leaving a small gap between the two, and forming a trefoil knot. Note that a narrow black line is superimposed on the broad scarlet trouser stripe. The trooper carries a Swinburn-Henry carbine with a full length forestock and a protective sight cover. On leaving Pietermaritzburg early in December 1878 each man received a 'soft Tyrolean hat', described as a soft brown felt hat with a broad brim, which they wore in camp since it gave better protection from the sun than their forage caps.

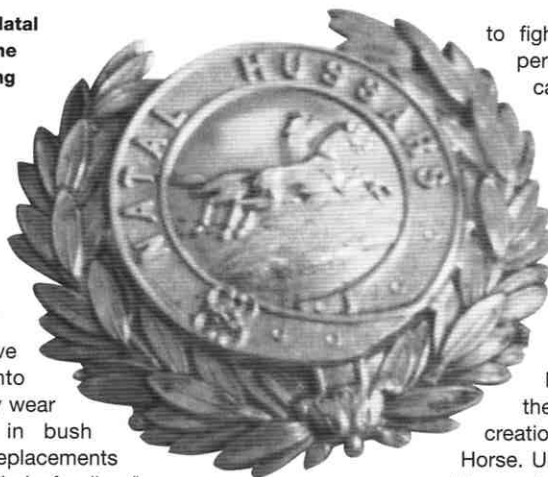
E1: Trooper, Frontier Light Horse

This figure represents the first uniform issued to the FLH when they were formed for service in the Ninth Cape Frontier War in 1877 – black cord edged with black braid, with red braid stripes above the cuffs and down the legs. A



.577/.450in Swinburn-Henry carbine. Like the Martini-Henry, the action of this carbine is opened, closed and cocked by pulling down the lever behind the trigger guard. However, unlike the Martini, the Swinburn had a secondary cocking lever on the right side of the action that could be used to cock the weapon without opening the breech. This was the standard weapon of the Natal Volunteer Corps. A reduced-load cartridge was supposed to be issued for the carbine, though how often it was available in the field is unclear; the full-load round gives a notoriously savage kick.

The helmet badge of the Natal Hussars – see Plate D2. The white metal badge, showing the galloping wildebeest from the Natal coat of arms, also appeared on the ammunition pouch belt, although this may have been discarded during the Zulu War.



number of men may have continued to wear it into 1879; but given the heavy wear and tear experienced in bush fighting, it appears that replacements were already being supplied of yellow/brown cord with braid decoration, possibly from existing Cape government stock, even before the FLH rode to Natal. Once there, the long distance from Cape Colony, where the unit originally equipped, meant that any replacement clothing had to be found in Natal. This led to combinations of original black cord tunics being worn with yellow/brown cord trousers, and (less commonly, as the trousers were usually the first to need replacement) yellow/brown cord tunics of different designs with black trousers.

E2: Trooper, Frontier Light Horse

As the Zulu War progressed, time-expired men returned home and new recruits joined, many from Natal. It seems likely that these men generally received uniforms of yellow/brown corduroy from Natal government supplies. However, even this source varied, and there is evidence that numerous styles of tunics were issued; that illustrated is single-breasted, edged with black braid and decorated with five rows of braid across the chest. During the war many variations would have been seen within each troop, even civilian dress being pressed into service. This man is armed with a Snider carbine with external hammer.

F1: Volunteer, Transvaal Burgher Force

The Transvaal Boers who overcame their natural reluctance

to fight alongside the British, thanks to the persistence of Col Evelyn Wood, mostly came from the Utrecht and Wakkerstroom areas close to the Zululand border. Each Boer who came forward received a Martini-Henry rifle and bandolier. There was no attempt to issue uniforms – to which the individualistic Boers would have objected strongly – and each man campaigned in his civilian clothes.

F2: Trooper, Natal Horse

The decision to mount a number of the underemployed European officers and NCOs of the Natal Native Contingent in the period following Isandlwana led to the creation of three separate troops of the Natal Horse. Uniforms remained unchanged from those worn while serving with the NNC, being mainly Natal government yellow/brown corduroy, including both plain and black-braided versions. Illustrations of No.3 Troop (Bettington's Horse) show both these styles in use simultaneously; in addition it is possible that some men wore darker tunics, but it is impossible to prove whether these were brown, black or blue.

F3: Natal Pioneer

The Natal Pioneers were the only infantry element of the NNC to receive uniform at the outset of the war. This comprised the early pattern British infantry five-button red serge 'frock' but with the collar removed, white knee-length canvas trousers, and a blue pillbox forage cap with a yellow brow band. African Pioneer NCOs received firearms while the rest of the men were allocated tools – pickaxe, shovel, axe or crowbar.

G1: Officer, Natal Native Contingent

Officers of the NNC did not receive any official uniform; many, as here, acquired British Army patrol jackets, others adopted hard-wearing civilian clothing. Photographs of the NNC show officers wearing either heavily stained white helmets or the soft broad-brimmed 'smasher' hat common in South Africa. All officers provided their own horses; they were issued with Martini-Henry rifles but most acquired revolvers too.

G2: NCO, Natal Native Contingent

Each NNC battalion drew on a number of different clans to provide its manpower. No uniforms were issued at the beginning of the war, although some items were issued later in an attempt to raise morale. In the meantime the NNC reported for duty in their traditional dress, occasionally with some European additions; red cloth strips were issued as a universal field sign to distinguish them from the Zulu – normally worn around the head, although one source says that men of the 1st Battalion/ 2nd Regiment wore it bandolier fashion over the right shoulder. Firearms were issued only to the ten African NCOs in each company; these were largely outdated Enfield percussion muskets, although according to one account the 1st Battalion/ 3rd Regiment NNC received 50 Martini-Henrys and 50 muskets for their NCOs.

G3: Private, Natal Native Contingent

The great majority of the NNC in the early stages of the war reported for service carrying their traditional weapons of spears and knobkerries. About the only items issued were cooking pots and, for each man, a blanket. These were colour-coded, 1st Battalions having blue as here, 2nd Battalions grey, and the 3rd Battalion/ 1st Regiment green.

H1: Warrior, Wood's Irregulars

The decision to organise a native contingent from the African population of south-eastern Transvaal resulted in many men of Swazi origin joining the ranks of Wood's Irregulars. These men went to war in full Swazi regalia; loin coverings were similar to those worn by the NNC, and each man received an Army blanket. Unlike the bandolier roll of the NNC, this seems to have been worn like a cloak; over the blanket the warrior wore a mantle of spotted cat skin, possibly serval and in some cases leopard. An elaborate headdress constructed of various types of feathers completed the impressive appearance of the Swazi warriors. As an identifying field sign, cloth strips in red and white

The open breech mechanism of the Snider carbine, converted to breech-loading from the Enfield percussion system. The Snider was issued to many of the irregular mounted units in the Zulu War to make good the shortage of Martini-Henry rifles and carbines.



The cocking action indicator of the Mark II Martini-Henry rifle; when cocked, the teardrop indicator would be in the '10 o'clock' position. This was the standard British firearm of the Zulu War period, and many of the irregular units received an allocation of these weapons, both rifles and carbines. The Martini and Swinburn fired the same ammunition.

(as here) or blue and white were worn around the brow or in some cases around the upper arm.

H2: Trooper, Shepstone's Horse

This unit, drawn from the three troops of Zikhali Horse and augmented by fresh recruits from the Edendale mission community, were fairly typical of the African mounted men who served with the British during the war. Unlike the infantry of the NNC all troopers received a complete uniform – usually a double-breasted tunic and trousers of yellow/brown cord, with a broad-brimmed soft felt hat wound with a strip of red cloth for identification. Boots were also issued, but generally only the Edendale men chose to wear them.

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