

## Mid-Month Visit – July 2023

We have just completed a 3-Day Tour of Mpumalanga and I am pleased to report that it was a huge success. I am starting to get responses to the Tour Feedback Questionnaire, and to the question 'Overall impression of the Tour', from the five received to date, four have rated the Tour 'Excellent', and one, 'Very Good'. One big disappointment was the accommodation on day two, and that will be corrected for the next tour.

Every Tour arranged by BattleToursZA has a title and I battled to find a title for this one as I didn't want to just call it a 3-Day Tour of Mpumalanga. I eventually titled it "... So what happened to Buller after Ladysmith?"

We started our trip in Johannesburg, went past Pretoria on our way to Balmoral, eventually arriving in Belfast. We all know that Buller was never in Johannesburg, Pretoria, or Balmoral, so I pulled it all together by relating what happened in the British (Roberts') advance on Belfast after Johannesburg and Pretoria, and Buller's advance from his position in the very south of the Transvaal, to Belfast. The tour then followed Buller's movements from Belfast, to when he returned to the U.K. in October 1900.

The Tour covered eight battles of the South African War (1899-1902), or the Boer War to most, one battle of the 1<sup>st</sup> Boer War (1880-81), seven Cemeteries, one Concentration Camp, and five places of interest relating to the South African War (1899-1902). One of the Cemeteries we visited was the Cemetery at Dalmanutha, which, if one didn't know where it is, would be almost impossible to find. It is about 10 km off the N4, unmarked, it's access covered by high grass, and yet, once one enters the cemetery, it is well kept. By whom? ... I have no idea.



There are nine British soldiers buried there as well as a grave and headstone to a servant of the family Kershaw, who were obviously farmers in the immediate vicinity. Of the nine soldiers buried here, seven were casualties of an engagement with the Boers on 13 October 1900, on the farm



Geluk, which had seen action during Buller's advance on Bergendal on 23 August 1900. After the Battle of Bergendal General French, with his column, had moved in the direction of Barberton, pursuing Boers who had retreated in that direction. Late in September, he was recalled from Barberton to Machadadorp to prepare for a march towards Heidelberg, to deal with Boers who were becoming a huge irritation to the British, east of Johannesburg.



Volume V of 'The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902' (pages 47 & 48) records the following to the force under French's command – *"For this purpose there were placed under his command Mahon's cavalry column and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigades under General Dickson and Gordon, with a total effective strength of 3 000 mounted men, 300 infantry, 16 guns and four pom-poms.*

*The full ration strength of the column, inclusive of transport amounted to 4 800 men, 3 950 horses and 3 100 mules. The length of the proposed march, from railway to railway, was 173 miles over a country destitute of supply depots. French, therefore, in addition to his regimental baggage of several hundred vehicles, was forced to march with a supply pack of 155 wagons drawn by 2 480 oxen and stretching over 4,5 miles of road."*

With the Boer tactic of 'hit and run', to get needed supplies, this column was really what the Boers were looking for. The Boers were mobile and knew the territory like the 'back of their hands'. French's progress was dictated by the speed of the oxen, who were often in need of food and water.

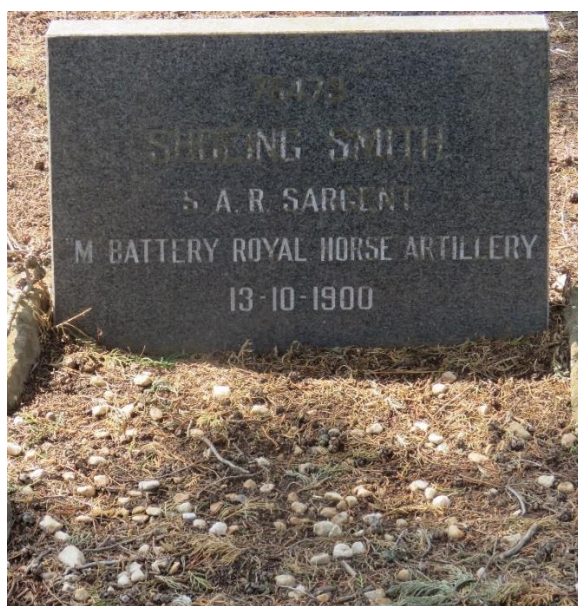
'The Times History' carries on – *"French's intention was to move on a broad front with the brigades of Mahon and Gordon in advance, and Dickson's brigade and the convoy in the rear. The movement began on October 12<sup>th</sup>, when Mahon on the right, reached Geluk, Gordon and Dickson marching on the following day towards the Komati River. That there was plenty of fight left in the Boers of the Eastern Transvaal was proved at the outset. Tobias Smuts, having mustered 1 000 men of the Ermelo and Carolina commandos, singled out Mahon for attack, and on the morning of*



*13<sup>th</sup> assailed him hotly, and drove him back on the railway. When Gordon came to Mahon's support, Smuts retired and the advance resumed slowly."*

Below is a table of those buried in the cemetery:

No.	Rank	Init	Surname	Regiment	How	Date
	Lieutenant	P.A.T.	Jones	8 <sup>th</sup> Lancers	KiA	13/10/1900
	Lieutenant	F.H.	Wylam	8 <sup>th</sup> Lancers	KiA	13/10/1900
4263	L/Corporal	C.J.	Moore	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancers	KiA	13/10/1900
76473	Shoe Smith	R.	Sergent	'M' Battery Royal Horse Art.	DoW	13/10/1900
4174	Private		Bagnall	16 <sup>th</sup> Lancers	KiA	13/10/1900
4975	Private	J.	Bayston	2 <sup>nd</sup> Royal Berkshire	KiA	08/01/1901
4413	Private	F.	Chubb	8 <sup>th</sup> Lancers	KiA	13/10/1900
2758	Private	A.	Langstone	8 <sup>th</sup> Lancers	KiA	13/10/1900
	Private	J.	Rixton	19 <sup>th</sup> Hussars	Died	16/09/1900



In the book 'The Last Post' by Mildred Dooner, there is a write up on Lieutenant Frederick Herbert Wylam. It records (page 435) – *"Lieutenant Frederick Herbert Wylam, 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars, was killed in action between Machadadorp and Heidelberg on October 13<sup>th</sup> 1900. He was the only son of Edward Wylam, of Runnymede Park, Staines, and was born in September 1876, and educated at Harrow. He entered the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars in February 1897, being promoted Lieutenant in March 1898.*



*Lieutenant Wylam accompanied his regiment to South Africa in February 1900 and served in the Orange River Colony, taking part in the advance on Pretoria, and the subsequent operations in the Transvaal."*

Also in the cemetery is a large headstone which states – *"In memory of Jackson who was the faithful servant of the Kershaws, who died on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1907."*

There is also a tablet which states – *"These tablets were erected by the National Monuments Council in 1991."*

Private J. Bayston – was killed in action at Dalmanutha. In the book 'British Regiments in South Africa (1899-1902)' by John Stirling, with reference to the Royal Berkshire Regiment, it is recorded (page 277) – *"When Dalmanutha was attacked early in January 1901 part of the Royal Berkshire Regiment were in the garrison. They lost 1 killed and 4 wounded in repelling the attack."*



Private J. Rixon – of the 19<sup>th</sup> Hussars, there is no mention of the regiment being based at Dalmanutha. However, in the Regimental History, by Stirling, mention is made of them being active in the Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga) at the time of his death. In the book 'In Memoriam' by Steve Watt, it is recorded that he died at Dalmanutha, and one can only assume that he died of disease.

And finally, in Stirling's Regimental History under the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars, it records (pages 434 & 435) – *"In the march from Machadadorp to Heidelberg the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Hussars and M Battery were under Colonel Mahon, who started on 12<sup>th</sup> October. On the 13<sup>th</sup> Mahon became heavily engaged near Geluk with a body of 1 100 men with four guns. Although hardly pressed Mahon succeeded in holding his own until French came to his assistance, when the Boers were driven back in a south-easterly direction, having sustained some loss. The enemy were on this occasion very daring and crept up through broken ground to within 100 yards. The 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars were for a time very hard pressed but held on well. They lost two officers, Lieutenants P.A.T. Jones and F.H. Wylam, and 7 men killed, and two officers and 8 men wounded."*

So, if we assume that the men recorded as having been with the 8<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Lancers, were in fact part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars, and there are only four buried at the cemetery at Dalmanutha, where are the other three buried? More research is needed here.

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**Allan Gordon**