

The Battle of Ulundi

By J. Laband (1988)

Review by Rob Morgan

I've acquired, once again through that most splendid of charity bookshops ó OXFAM -- and priced at only one pound sterling, a copy of *The Battle of Ulundi*, a paperback, 56-page volume, by one J. Laband, and published in 1988 by the Kwazulu Monuments Council.

This is a very useful book, booklet might be a better term, and one of tremendous value to the Colonial Wargamer. The author gives a description of the structure of both armies, and a splendidly accurate chronology of what was expected to be a very short war, and in fact lasted 10 months. There are several maps and a diagram of the composition of the British square at the battle.

He describes with several potential wargame scenarios, the march of the British to the White Mfolozi river, and the complexity of forming up for the battle in a remarkably obsolete military formation, one which Wellington's men would have recognised, and which came to have great strength in the face of more than one foe in the African continent. Indeed, it's hard to think of another form which would have guaranteed success against a powerful and rapid enemy force at speed. The Zulu could outrun most horses and could run great distances -- fast.

The account of the battle itself is very thorough, there's some debate over the amount of ammunition used by the British forces, and the turning of the tide.

There are more gaming possibilities in the presence of Zulu forces on surrounding hills, though the pursuit and destruction of the *impis* which undertook the main attack on the square was inevitable. It was the cavalry which finally won the day, and the destruction of the Zulu fortified kraals is also described in detail.

Laband ends with an assessment of the cost of the battle and of its long-term consequences: the prevention of the Zulu from reassembling, the (frankly defiant) refusal of some *impis* to fight again for Cetshawayo, and the late run of skirmishes in the north. This is a thorough account of a remarkable battle fought in the style of 80 years before!

Well worth reading.