

Archaeological Site Report	SiteNo	9/2/415/0008
	Site Name	Platrand Battlefield, Farm Fourie's Kraal 1183 (Riet
	Date	Kuil 1067), Klip River District
	Project	
	CaseNID	
	Coords	-28.592511, 29.759328

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Site Category: Battlefield

Directions:

From the centre of Ladysmith take the route to Colenso and Pietermaritzburg, but just before turning

SiteComments:

Archive Import History: Five kilometres southwest of Ladysmith there is a long, low hill, about five kilometres long and about 200 metres high. It played an important part in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. It was known to the Boers as Piatrand and to the British as Wagon Hill. As soon as war was declared on 11th October, 1899, Boer commandos from the Transvaal and Orange Free State invaded Natal. After several battles, Ladysmith was besieged. The siege lasted from 2nd November, 1899, to 27th February, 1900. The Boers took up certain strategic positions, including Bulwana, a flat-topped mountain due east of Ladysmith, while Wagon Hill or Platrand formed part of the British forward defensive lines. The eastern part of the hill was known as 'Caesar's Camp' and was within range of the Boers' 'Long Toms' on Bulwana. The western portion of the hill was the actual 'Wagon Hill' and the small plateau to the west of it was called Wagon Point by the British and Bospunt by the Boers. The whole ridge was strongly held by infantry and by artillery who had two batteries and one ship's gun on Wagon Hill. The Boer commanders realised that they would have to capture Platrand before Ladysmith could be taken. On 9th November, 1899, they attacked the hill but were easily repulsed. On 6th January, 1900, the Boers mounted full-scale with bitter attacks on the ridge from the east and west simultaneously. On the eastern side were the commandos from the Transvaal, while the western attack on Wagon Hill and Bospunt was made by the Orange Free State commandos from Harrismith, Heilbron, Vredefort and Kroonstad. The men from the Orange Free State attacked with determination and perseverance. The action started at 2.45 in the morning under the leadership of Comdt. Cornelis de Villiers of Harrismith and was maintained even when a heavy thunderstorm broke at four o'clock that afternoon. The attackers repeatedly drove the defenders back, but the British troops under Gen. Sir Ian Hamilton succeeded each time in recovering the lost ground. Comdt. de Villiers was killed when he penetrated almost into the British positions, but the men from the Orange Free State continued the action until sunset when they retired down the hill. Accompanying the Free State men was the Rev. J. D. Kestell, who attended the wounded throughout the battle. A large part of Wagon Hill has been proclaimed as a monument. Four monuments have been erected on it: two of them commemorate the Devonshires and Imperial Light Horse, who, together with men of the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders, Sappers, Rifle Brigade and Manchester Regiment, had to bear the brunt of the attacks; a third stands in honour of the Duke of Ava who lost his life in the battle, and the fourth was erected in memory of Comdt. Cornelis de Villiers. Visual Description: Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

Damage Types: