

<b>Archaeological Site Report</b>	<b>SiteNo</b>	9/2/434/0001
	<b>Site Name</b>	Isandlwana Battlefield, Reserve 18 15840, Nqutu
	<b>Date</b>	03/11/2016 - 10:43
	<b>Project</b>	
	<b>CaseNID</b>	
	<b>Coords</b>	-28.354013, 30.652889

Page No: 1      **SiteAutoID:** 26200

Site Category: Battlefield

**Directions:**

From Babanango head north to Nqutu or from Nqutu south to Babanango. Turn left at the signpost about

**SiteComments:**

Archive Import;Significance: The Zulu victory at Isandlwana made the British Army far more cautious about their strategy: for example, they never again omitted to build defence works. History: Site of famous battle of the Anglo-Zulu War, the battle of Isandlwana was fought on 22nd January 1879, between British Central Column and various impi of Cetshwayo resulting in an important Zulu victory. The modern roads from the heart of Zululand still follow the original routes—north-westwards over the Isihungu Hills at Babanango, past the Isipezi Mountain and across the Buffalo River to Dundee. For many years the Buffalo or Blood River was regarded as the western boundary of Zululand and this was the area in which the bitterest conflicts between the Whites and the Zulus took place. The story of the Battle of Blood River east of Vegkop on 16th December, 1838, has become a legend. The Battle of Isandhlwana and the defence of Rorke's Drift are no less dramatic events. When the Zulu War broke out on 11th January, 1879, the British Commander-in-Chief, Lord Chelmsford, crossed the Buffalo River at Rorke's Drift and invaded Zululand. His force consisted of 4 659 officers and men of whom 2 566 were non-Whites and 320 were mounted. He also had seven seven-pounder guns, 220 wagons and 82 carts. It rained heavily and after the river had been crossed there was a period of inactivity while reconnaissance was carried out and the site of the next camp was chosen. The place selected lay just to the south of the Isandhlwana, a rocky hill shaped like a sphynx that dominates the area. This hill is connected on the northern side to the surrounding Nqutu Hills by a high ridge and on the southern side to a stony hill and the Nahiazaqazi Hills by a low nek which is crossed by the Rorke's Drift road. To the south-east a valley extended for nearly 13 km. Consequently visibility was good to the south east but restricted to the north and east by hills. On the 20th January Chelmsford's force moved to this site. In spite of warnings by people like Paul Kruger, Lord Chelmsford neglected to draw up a proper laager. Meanwhile a powerful Zulu force of 20 000 men under command of Dabulamanzi was also on the move and while Chelmsford's force was unsuspectingly outspanned at the foot of Isandhlwana, the Zulus were hidden in the Nqutu Hills barely eight km to the north of the camp. On 21st January Chelmsford sent a reconnaissance patrol under Major Dartnell down the valley. Dartnell made contact with a Zulu force, probably the extreme left wing of the main body. The Zulus kept on retreating, followed by Dartnell, who eventually decided to spend the night in the veld. The Zulu force increased to such an extent that Dartnell sent a message to the camp asking for help. Chelmsford responded by himself setting off early the next morning, 22nd January, with 800 men to join Dartnell, whom he reached 16 kilometres south-east of the camp. The Zulus adopted the same tactics as they had on the previous day and enticed Chelmsford further and further away from the camp. At Isandhlwana, Colonel Pulleine was left in command. All was quiet and no attempt was made to arrange the camp in a proper defensive laager. Amongst the Zulus behind the hills, too, all was quiet, for it was the time of a new moon, a season of ceremony, when Zulus sought the help of their ancestral spirits. Colonel Durnford with his mounted Basuto force arrived at Isandhlwana from Rorke's Drift at about half past ten. After he and Pulleine had posted guards on Isandhlwana and sent patrols scouting to the ridges to the north of the camp, Durnford left at once to defend Chelmsford against a possible attack from the rear. He followed a route somewhat more to the left and, without knowing it, he encountered the left wing of the main Zulu army. A fight ensued, and this set

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the whole of the mighty Zulu war machine in action. The Zulus bore down irresistibly on Isandhlwana in a formation resembling the head of a gigantic ox : the left horn threatened to surround Durnford, the forehead bore down directly on the camp from the north-east and east over the hills, and the right horn hastened round the northern side of Isandhlwana to cut off the camp from the north-west. The attack was a complete surprise. Pulleine organised his defence as quickly as he could. At one o'clock the full force of the attack hit the camp. The defenders fought bitterly and heroically, but in half an hour not a single White man was left alive in the camp. A few fled towards Rorke's Drift but were overtaken and killed on the way. The two courageous standard-bearers, Coghill and Melville, lost their lives in the river. The drift where they tried to cross and where others succeeded in escaping, has been known as 'Fugitive's Drift' ever since. While the Zulus were attacking the camp at Isandhlwana and annihilating the garrison, Lord Chelmsford with his force about 19 kilometres to the south was quite unaware of the disaster. At midday he learned from Zulu prisoners-of-war the shocking news that a strong Zulu force was planning to attack his camp behind his back. By half past one rumours reached him that the camp was under attack. Accompanied by his officers, he charged up a hill and observed the camp through binoculars, but saw nothing untoward. By this time, however, the action was over and the moving figures they saw were Zulus fossicking about amongst the tents and wrecked wagons. However, the reports he received became more and more ominous and at two o'clock he and his force, which consisted for the most part of infantry, started to return. The nearer they got to the camp, the more they were overtaken by a feeling of foreboding. When they reached the scene of the disaster it was already dark, the perceptible silence broken now and then only by the groans of a wounded man. Fearing another attack, Chelmsford forbade all movements and the troops had to spend the night amongst the dead, the ruined wagons, tents, weapons and supplies. Before dawn the next morning Chelmsford ordered the column to march to Rorke's Drift. They had heard the sound of heavy fire coming from that direction all night. When they reached the top of the nek at dawn, they saw clouds of thick smoke coming from the buildings at Rorke's Drift and the Zulus in full flight. It was just the moment when the Zulus gave up their long attack. on Rorke's Drift and fell back rapidly. Isandhlwana was one of the worst disasters suffered by the British army in Africa. Including their non-White allies, 1 500 soldiers were killed. Amongst the killed were Col. Henry Pulleine, Col. Anthony Durnford and Captain Younghusband. Bronze Plaque .1954" Visual Description: Historic Battlefield, with Isandhlwana "Mountain" the most prominent geographical feature "brooding, phinx like". Other site features include the following Memorials and Monuments: Gun position: 24th of Foot: Natal Carbineers: Zulu Monument: Pietermaritzburg Memorial: Durnford: Colonial Cemetery abd Resistance Memorial: Memorial to the Zulu Dead (Zulu bravery necklace) Colours: Site Features: Condition: Construction Date: Materials: Catalogue: , No: , Significance Category:

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**AdminComments:**

Bibliography archive: KMC Minutes

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Damage Types: