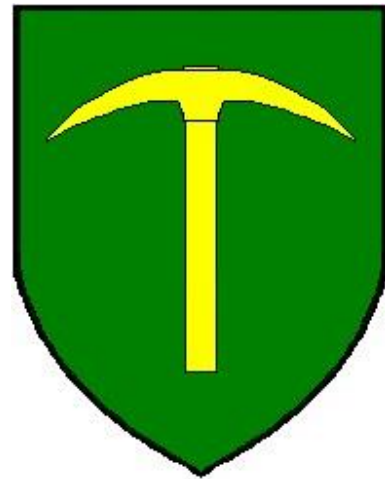




**March
2006**

Pioneer Trail



**Meeting
Mabukuwene Nature Reserve
Friday's 19:00 - 21:00 hrs**

**Scout Leader
Norman Scott
nclscott@netconnect.co.zw**

1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Group
www.angelfire.com/sc/matabeles/troops

Under the Pseudolachnostylis Maprouneifolia

This edition of Pioneer Trail commemorates the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the first, of only two, Victoria Crosses ever to have been awarded to people in this country. The recipient, Mr H.S. Henderson VC was an early settler in the new country of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

Like many young men, he had heard of this “El Dorado”, of the potential and opportunities that were waiting in the land bordered by the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers. And so he came. In his own words he tells of his journey by ox wagon from Johannesburg to Bulawayo of about eighteen weeks duration. Then follows his account of the turbulent years of 1896 – 1897, relating the hardships of the outbreak of hostilities and how, as fate would have it, he saved the life of his companion, an act that earned him the Victoria Cross.

His story is about an ordinary fellow, like you and me, and the difficulties prevalent at the time. Mr Henderson VC believed in what he was doing, he held to his dream of making a life for himself, his family and at the same time doing what he was able to do in developing his adopted country. Note the hardships, the cost of everyday items, all of which came into the country by ox wagon and then with the arrival of the railway in 1897, by train.

To me, his articles make fascinating reading and to realize the hardships men and women of all nationalities and colours had to endure, has a humbling effect to our relatively easy life we enjoy today. Yes, we are currently experiencing harsh economic conditions, but as time passes and with a combined resolve by us all to improve our lot, our country could once again provide us with a life to be envied from far and wide.

When I first read Mr Henderson’s articles earlier this month, (March) I decided there and then that the stories of our young country had to be published again. I am convinced that it was no accident that I should read this particular edition of “The Pioneer”, one of many books on my library shelf, a few weeks before the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the day that Mr Henderson saved his companion’s life.

Then another coincident, or was it? I went to have tea with a friend of our Troop, Mr Martin Sanderson, and I told him of my intention of bringing out this special edition of Pioneer Trail. To my surprise he took me into his house and showed me a photograph of “the Swiss Chalet”, Mr Henderson’s house mentioned in his second article. In the picture is a model ‘T’ Ford. But the surprises were not yet over; for Martin then took me into the garden and there amongst the bush trees and creepers was the rusting model ‘T’ Ford which had belonged to Mr Henderson.

Now what has all this got to do with me and you, our Scout Troop and all those who will read this special edition of Pioneer Trail? Give it some thought.

Wherever you are living in this jolly world of ours, there are going to be the good times as well as the not so good times. And that means that we must Be Prepared to Do Our Best to make the most of what is offered and to remain positive during the rough times. After all, it is your life and really, why not make the best of it? It is a strange human quirk that we perform the best when we are challenged the most. This is all too evident in our lives today. Is not the range of our Troop activities wide and varied, we have great fun, we achieve a good deal, yet our financial environment is harsh. Scouting is playing its role in our lives, for we have to use our imagination, our initiative and our talents and so we achieve. If you have any doubts of what I say, then you will only have to read the next Pioneer Trail, covering the period January – April 2006 to realise just how much the Troop has done. Take heart.

And now until the next time, it’s back to my hammock beneath my favourite Pseudolachnostylis Maprouneifolia with a floppy hat pulled over my eyes as I dream of our forth-coming hike in the Chimanimani Mountains.

N. Scott
Scout Leader

Rhodesia's First Victoria Cross – H.S. Henderson



H. S. Henderson was so widely known as "V. C. Henderson" that a great many people came to think that those were his initials, and sight was often lost of the fact that he had the highest possible award for valour. Yet he not only earned the Victoria Cross ¹, but earned it in circumstances of unusual distinction. It was the first VC earned in Rhodesia by a Rhodesian and one of only two.

More than this, it was earned by a continuous period of sustained courage. No one who does not realize how much tracking was part of the lives of the Matabele of the day can understand the greatness of the danger. Had one noticed the spoor of a laden horse with a man walking beside it, the end would have come very soon. There must have been a constant temptation to Henderson to ride off and leave his wounded comrade, on the specious excuse that this would be the best way to bring him succour. Courage sinks to low ebb where there is no food and very little water.

All this is told very modestly in the following papers and little imagination is needed to conjure up the suffering and the fortitude that the incident involved.

Mr H. S. Henderson was born at Glasgow, on 30th March, 1870.

In the following papers, first of all, he gives an entertaining account of his journey to Bulawayo by ox wagon in 1894, of the Bulawayo of the period, of life in one of the earliest mines and finally of his part in the Rebellion.

It is a great pity that he did not go on to give some account of the rest of a life that was full of incidents of interest, for he had an enterprising and original turn of mind.

After working in various other occupations he mined on his own account and was highly successful at the Farvic and other mines.

He was one of the pioneers of ranching in the lowveld and for many years the ordinance maps showed Doddieburn Ranch, on the Umzingwane River, standing out like an island in a vast unsurveyed sea.

¹ The pre-eminent decoration for valour, founded by Queen Victoria in 1856 as an award open to all ranks of the Army and Navy without distinction "who had performed some signal act of valour." The design is a type of cross pattée, but with straight sides to the arms, bearing the royal crest (a lion standing on a crown) above a scroll inscribed "For Valour." The ribbon is a dull crimson. The crosses are cast, originally from guns captured in the Crimean War, and are finished by hand.



A picture of the "Swiss Chalet" on Doddieburn Ranch in the West Nicholson area, with the model 'T' Ford outside. Taken sometime between 1924 and 1942.

In 1924, he married Helen Joan Spence Lochlin Davidson. Her family came from the Bedford district of the Cape. She was born in England on the 10th November 1890; was educated in South Africa and obtained a degree in Botany of the University of Stellenbosch. Later she lectured at the same University and served in the Department of Botany of the Government of South Africa, becoming Secretary to the renowned Dr. Pole Evans. For all her imposing qualifications, she was a vivid and delightful personality.

She proved herself capably in other ways and, after her husband's death; she ran the mines and ranches till her sons proved ready to take over.

A Swiss Chalet

It was characteristic of "V. C." that, when he married he should, using ordinary wagon jacks, jack up the wood and iron house in which he had previously lived and build underneath a ground floor of stone. Rather surprisingly, a pleasant Swiss Chalet effect was produced. The house is still there and in use.

Both "V. C." and Joan were much loved and, despite the remoteness of their dwelling, made a great impact upon the life of the country. They were notably public spirited, and a notable example of their generosity has already been related. (The assistance in the production of a journal, "The Pioneer," for the Rhodesian Pioneers' and Early Settlers' Society.)

Joan was awarded the M.B.E ² in 1953, a tribute to the family's public service.

"V. C." died in 1942 and Joan in 1953.



The model 'T' Ford and Mr. Sanderson, to whom it now belongs.

² Member of the Order of the British Empire. Instituted in 1917, and made up of two divisions, one for civilian dedication and the other for military war service. The badge is a cross pattée with centre medallion and circlet like a star and a gold imperial crown surmounting it.

Early Days, Matabeleland, 1894-1895

By H. S. Henderson, V.C.

When I came up to Rhodesia about the end of 1894 there were no trains and we trekked up by ox wagon from Johannesburg via Pretoria and Pietersburg, and crossed the Limpopo River at Rhodes Drift, which is several miles from the present Beitbridge.

The convoy consisted of four wagons, two of which belonged to our party, of which "Old Joe" was the owner and leader and he conducted the other two for a new settler and his wife.

Our route was as follows: Johannesburg, Pretoria, Warm Baths, Nylstroom, Potgieter's Rust, Pietersburg, and then on to Rhodes Drift. From here we entered Rhodesia, passed through Tuli and visited the "Bully Beef" Fort. From there we went through Riet's Spruit, Elephants' Pits, and then on to Gwanda, called in those days Johanda. From there we went to Bulawayo.

The journey from Johannesburg to Bulawayo took about eight weeks. We laid in our provisions at Johannesburg and replenished at Pietersburg.

Our party consisted of about 22 whites and 16 natives. "Old Joe" was an Irishman travelling with his wife and six children. We had a number of dogs with us, two ponies, one belonging to "Old Joe" and one to me, a few cats and of course, "Joe" being an Irishman, a lot of pigs. The pigs travelled strapped in boxes under the wagons.

We were a jolly cheerful friendly crowd. On the way up we found the old Boer farmers very hospitable when we called on them and in one case they allowed us, by paying 1/- each, to pick as many oranges as we wanted. The orange trees were huge and it was not long before about 22 human monkeys were clambering about the branches.

The places we passed through such as Warm Baths and Potgieter's Rust consisted of only a farmhouse and all these places have grown considerably since.

When we arrived at Pietersburg it was very cold and to keep ourselves warm we wrapped ourselves in blankets and came prancing into the Market Square like Red Indians. It was a very small market, a few wagons with chiefly oranges, rolled tobacco, biltong and fowls and eggs for sale. Pietersburg was a very small hamlet in those days. It consisted of about two stores and some dwelling houses.

Bush Country

We did not care for this part of the country as it was very bare and we had to rely on the humble ox for our fuel supply. The smoke from this did not improve the flavour of the tea.

After leaving Pietersburg we got into the bush country, which was very beautiful and began to encounter birds and buck.

The usual day's routine was as follows: A shout from "Old Joe" at about 3 a.m. roused us all. The "boys" began inspanning and the piccanin got us a cup of coffee with no milk in it. We then trekked on. "Old Joe" and I generally went ahead of the wagon of the wagon and took our guns and dogs in order to get something for the larder. As a general rule about 7 a.m. the oxen were outspanned. The leaders went off to graze the cattle, the wagon boys made fires, and again the inevitable coffee was made.

Later on, between 9 and 10 a.m. we had breakfast and lunch combined – and coffee. The fowls were let out of their crates, the pigs were not. When the wagon driver cracked his long whip, which sounded like a gun going off –to make the leaders bring in the cattle for inspanning –, there was great activity amongst the fowls. They came rushing in from all sides of the bush and jumped into their respective crates.

We inspanned again about 4 p.m. Previous to this coffee and rusks were doled out. The outspan time was spent in various ways: Some of us rested and read, others sketched, some went shooting and others tried to pick up wrinkles in cooking from Mrs. "Joe," while others played with the children.

We trekked on till about 8 p.m. As soon as the animals were outspanned, grazed and tied to the dissel-boom, we would go out and collect huge bundles of wood to make a great fire around which we clustered and told yarns until the evening meal was served. After this some played concertinas, flutes and mouth organs, and others sang, until "Old Joe" ordered us off to bed. We all slept round the campfire in our blankets and we made it a rule that if anyone woke during the night he put wood on the fire.

A Python

I remember on one occasion being wakened by a terrific shout uttered by "Old Joe's" son. He had wakened and in going to gather a piece of wood tramped on what he thought was a six-inch log. It turned out to be a huge python. I think his yell and high jump were a record for the trip. We soon got busy and killed the snake, which was about 20 feet long.

The weather so far was quite pleasant, cool at night and a little warm in the daytime. We had no rain. Game was plentiful and we saw koodoo, roan, sable and rietbuck, and we frequently heard lions roaring at night and also the weird call of the hyaenas.

I was very friendly with "Old Joe's" children: they were real little sports. On the wagon we carried Natal brown sugar for the Natives. We had run out of all sweets and the children were longing for them. I spotted under the buck-sail a sack of this brown sugar, which we called "black man." On the quiet I used to sneak this for the children and they prized it dearly, but no one else was let into the secret. "Old Joe" was very puzzled about stray remarks made by the children referring to "black man." Eventually he did discover what the "black man" was when the boys came to say their rations of brown sugar were finished.

He took a long whip and chased us all over the place. We clambered up the trees and he asked the children to deliver me up to him, as I was the culprit. Of course they would not "let down" their pal. At that moment someone came to say that the men in the wagons a few hundred yards ahead of us had killed a lion, so we all trekked off to see this. Apparently the old Boer had shot the lion the night before as it jumped on one of the oxen tied to the trek chain. It was a fine big beast and we took photographs of it.

The Limpopo

Eventually we came to the Limpopo, which had a considerable quantity of water in it, and was over a quarter-of-a-mile broad.

Here we hooked four spans of oxen to each wagon, each span consisting of 16 oxen. It was a fine sight, seeing these animals walking and swimming alternatively as they pulled the wagon. One of our wagons had the pigs strapped beneath it and in the excitement, "Old Joe" forgot his beloved pigs until I drew his attention to the poor things which were under the water by then. He leapt off the wagon and we all started yelling at the oxen, and with the four whips going, and all shouting, there was general pandemonium. The wagon was got through in record time. We disconnected the boxes, expecting to find drowned pigs, but they all recovered and they were beautifully clean.

On the Rhodesian side of the river we were held up as there was an outbreak of lung sickness, and all the cattle had to be inoculated. This is how we inoculated them at that time: –

In a bowl we took fluid from the lung of an ox which had died of lung sickness. Then we soaked small pieces of lint in this. When inoculating an ox, we took a knife and pushed it right under the skin, about nine inches from the root of the tail, till it came out at the other side. Then we inserted a piece of the soaked lint in the slot. This gave the animal a mild attack of lung sickness and on recovery, which took a few days, he was immune.

In many cases, however, the tail dropped off below the incision. We had no deaths resulting from the inoculation, but we had a good number of stump-tailed animals!

This inoculation delayed us about two weeks. While we were camped at the river we did a bit of fishing and got some nice tiger fish. A miner in the party went up to a kloof between the rocks and put off a couple of charges of dynamite. As a result the pool was covered with fish. We and all the

dogs dived in and collected the half-stunned fish, and we managed to get nearly a barrel-full of salted fish to take on with us.

In one pool when we were all bathing "Old Joe" came down to me and said "get all the people and kiddies out of that pool as quickly as you possibly can without alarming them, as a native woman was taken by a crocodile the previous day."

I managed to get them all out without any mishap, but I did not see any of them bathing in that pool again – especially the "black man" eaters.

More Game

After our enforced stop we trekked to Tuli, part of the way following the old Pioneer Road. The weather was warmer now, but still we had no rain. It was more bushy country and game was more plentiful. We could see tracks where the elephants had been and lions roared at night. Most of the water was brackish.

Tuli was the pioneers' old Police Camp and had a famous fort built of cases of bully beef. We obtained a supply from them to take with us. There were only a few policemen in the camp and they were pleased to see any wagons that came along, as they led a very lonely life.

On one occasion while trekking, to vary the monotony of camp life, Mrs "Joe" organized a bread-making competition. We used sour dough and coarse Boer meal flour. There were about 20 competitors and some of the productions were marvellous. We eliminated the worst of them by trying them on Kleinboy's head. If he did not squirm we let them pass. I managed to get the second prize and was told that if I had not burned the bottom of my loaf, I would have got first prize. I was much annoyed as the first prize was a pocketknife and I had lost mine. The second prize was a baby's rattle!

As game was plentiful we often went out shooting. On one occasion I went out with "Old Joe." We got into a lot of guinea fowl and in banging away at them we got separated and as I, foolishly, had not taken any notice how the sun was when I left the road, I felt I was lost. I climbed up a small kopje and let off two quick shots but got no reply. Then I waited a bit and let off two more and heard shots in reply. Eventually "Old Joe" turned up and shouted "Come down out of that kopje, you young devil." "No fear," I replied, "not until I see that ugly old face of yours."

When I did see it again I was so relieved I thought it was one of the nicest faces I had seen for some time. In this thick bushy country one had to be very careful and observant. One of our party, who was always bragging about finding his way, got lost for a day and there was not much "brag" in him when we found him.

From Tuli we trekked on through Elephant Pits to Gwanda. Here the water was very scanty and covered with green slime. The roads all along were only narrow wagon tracks and in very bad condition and the drifts were very difficult to get through.

"Johanda"

Gwanda at this time was called Johanda after a Native chief. It consisted of a store situated on the Manzinyama River. Here I met Major Heany and old Andy Nicholson – his prospector. I had brought a 5-stamp mill to put up at the Geelong Mine for Major Heany, but he had decided not to put the mill up on the Geelong at that time and asked me if I minded my services being transferred to Queen's Mine, belonging to Willoughbys Consolidated. To this I agreed. This meant that I had to proceed to Bulawayo, as Queen's Mine was 26 miles on the north side of Bulawayo in the Bembesi district.

There were a lot of old workings in the Gwanda district and a fair amount of prospecting was going on, but no mines of any account were crushing in this district, or in any of the other districts in Matabeleland.

"Old Joe" was getting near the farm he was making for. This farm was on the spot where the limestone was taken originally for the present Cement Works, and was about 15 miles from Bulawayo.

Habitations were very sparse and isolated and consisted of an occasional store at Zeederberg's mule-halt stations. At this time Selous was farming at what is now Essexvale.

I went right to Bulawayo with "Old Joe" and there we all separated.

Bulawayo at that time was a very scattered unpretentious looking place. Brick buildings were conspicuous by their absence. There were a few corrugated iron buildings – mere shacks – but most of the town consisted of tents, wagons and scotch carts scattered about. There were plenty of donkeys and dogs. There were no real streets although they had been mapped showing some sort of town planning, but the streets were tracks overgrown with grass. The hotels were very small and primitive. The catering was not too good except as far as thirst quenchers went.

Cowboy Style

No one ever wore a collar. We all dressed in khaki slacks and shirts and cowboy hats. Everyone took his dog – usually a pointer – to meals and very seldom did a meal pass without at least a couple of dogfights. There were very few women and children. Most tinned stuffs were obtainable but were rather expensive. Whiskey was plentiful and very cheap, only 3/6 a bottle and 30/- a case, as there was no duty. Fresh vegetables were scarce and eggs were not too plentiful. There was no fresh fruit.

The site of the market was the same as it is now. There was the Maxim Hotel (later the Savoy), Slaters Hotel, now the Selbourne, and Harry Lloyd's Central Hotel (The Chalet). These were all round the Market Square. The fashionable hotel was the Charter, situated where Cummings men's outfitting shop is, and which is still in Main Street/8th Avenue. There was a small club and one or two beer halls.

By this time Lobengula had trekked away to the lower Shangani and was reputed to be dead. We did not come across many Natives on the road up, and those we did see seemed to be very timid and wanted to avoid us.

I met Colonel Spreckley in Bulawayo and he asked me to go out to the Queen's Mine with the manager, Mr Pellet.

After saying goodbye to our merry party, I proceeded to the Queen's Mine. This property was a regular "one horse" show, consisting of about three huts, a boiler, head gear and pump. A small shaft had been sunk. This was all the work that had been done. Adjoining the property was a property known as the Barberton, run by Wilson and Miller. On the property there was a "Dolly." The motive power was supplied by two old Native women.

Here I worked till the time of the Rebellion in 1896.

Two Years Later – 1896-1897

By H. S. Henderson, V.C.

From the time I arrived at the Queen's Mine and until the outbreak of the Rebellion in 1896, I was occupied chiefly in developing properties. In these days things were very primitive and I had to be a sort of "jack of all trades." When I arrived Natives, especially women and children, seemed very scared of white people and we had great difficulty in getting sufficient labour to develop these properties. The Native Commissioners used to send us Natives but this was more or less forced labour and many of these Natives cleared off after a few days work and we never saw them again. There was really no reason for this as the natives were well treated in the mine, but the Natives simply did not want to work for the white men.

There had been little work done on the property previous to the arrival of Mr. Pellett, the manager, and myself, the engineer. Mr Pellett was a very tall man, thin, about 6ft. 3ins., and much to my amusement, wore a "billy cock" hat. He had a very dry sense of humour. In charge of the mine, when we arrived, was a young fellow called Clement Hamilton – now Sir Clement Hamilton – who had been sent out by Willoughbys as Caretaker. We introduced ourselves and proceeded to what was called the office. This consisted of a grass hut containing stools and chairs constructed out of dynamite boxes and a table, a couple of letter files, a pen and a bottle of ink. Squatting near the table in the office were two enormously fat Native women. Mr Pellett, with his hat on one side of his head, looked at them somewhat askance. Presently the women got up and went off.

We wandered round the property with Hamilton and after dinner turned in. The following morning I arrived at the office shortly after Mr Pellett. From what I could gather Mr Pellett had arrived at the office, which incidentally had no door, to discover the two fat Native women squatting on the floor. I presume he hoofed them out somewhat forcibly, for at that moment Mr Hamilton appeared exclaiming: "Mr Pellett, do you know you have been frightfully rude to two old Native Queens?"

He added: "We always treat these people quite differently from the other Natives."

The Queens

With this Mr Pellett leaned over and putting his hand on Mr Hamilton's shoulder said: "Damn it, man, do you think I have come out to manage this mine, or to entertain royalty" – and that ended the episode.

Birds and small game were very plentiful in the Bembesi district at this time and we practically lived on them.

About the end of February, 1896, my Zulu police boy came to me and said: "Boss, there is something funny going on among the Natives." We went round the kraals to investigate on the pretence that we were looking for cattle. On approaching a kraal quietly we found quite a large crowd of Natives in conclave. When we entered the kraal they had practically all disappeared. We saw grain had been gathered together and stored in skins. My Zulu boy said: "This looks very bad, boss." I reported the matter when I got back to the mine, but the report was not taken seriously.

We had about five white men, two white women, and about six children on the mine. Our nearest neighbours, Campbell's store and hotel, were about three miles away.

A little later rumours reached us that the Natives had risen in the Filabusi and Belingwe districts. The men on the mine took turns to take guard at night. Mr Pellett realised they could not work and still keep awake all night, so he told me to go into Bulawayo and find out what was happening. The people on the mine were very short of guns and ammunition. A young Irishman lent me a revolver with one cartridge – all he had – and I was given an old horse, standing nearly 17 hands high, called Sir John (Willoughby). When mounted they called me the "flea on the round of beef."

I left on my 30-mile ride to Bulawayo at sunrise. I saw nothing of note till I got close to the Kokwe River, where the road takes a sharp bend. I noticed a string of Native assegais standing a little way off the road in the bush. As soon as they noticed me they made a rush to cut me off at the

bend. I stuck my spurs into old Sir John and showed them a clean pair of heels. I realised by then that things were serious and I kept the horse going full out till I got to Bulawayo.

At Queen's Mine

On arrival in Bulawayo I found things were very serious and that several bodies of Volunteers had been sent out to bring in stranded families. I went to Willoughby's to see Colonel Spreckley, but he had gone out with one of the patrols. I asked "Daddy" Swanson to get me guns and ammunition and a few men, to escort the employees of the Queen's Mine to Bulawayo. He took me along to Sir John Willoughby, who said he had no guns or men to spare and asked if we could hold out. I told him we could not hold out.

I managed to get one Martini rifle and ten rounds of ammunition, and intended starting out right away, when a wagon-driver approached me and asked what he was to do with the wagon and oxen. I got him to inspan them at once and we trekked off to the mine about 5 p.m., with my horse tied behind the wagon. An old prospector insisted on going with me. He was not of much use, as evidently he had been celebrating and he slept on the wagon all the way.

A few miles out of Bulawayo, just when it was getting dark, we heard a lot of firing and the Native driver refused to go on until a good clip on the ear from me made him change his mind. I suppose he thought it preferable to be killed by the Matabele than by me.

We drove on until we were near the Kokwe River, where I intended to ride on and leave the wagon to follow. Just then the Native came to the back of the wagon and shouted: "Boss, here are the Matabele." The piccanin went on serenely leading the oxen. I was lying in the front of the wagon with my gun resting on the rolled-up buck-sail, just waiting to get a closer shot, when I was greeted with a "Hullo – some men from the Queen's mine." It turned out that after I had left the mine they decided to come in and had started right away. They were all out-spanned and the men came forward to greet me. They had all their possessions with them, fowls, pigs, etc., and there was a terrific din going on. I got them to inspan immediately and turning my wagon, we all went back to Bulawayo.

The Laager

A laager had been made on the market square in Bulawayo. The laager was made chiefly of Scotch carts and wagons, and the women and children were inside it. I did not sleep in the laager; I slept in a large iron store on the spot where there was a furniture depot opposite the "Chronicle" office.

The man who owned the store was called Perkins and he sold gin, whisky, etc. He asked me to make a laager inside the store with the cases of liquor. This I did. Then I found him altering the laager when I got back. He explained that I had placed some of the cases broadside to the line of fire so that if a bullet came through it might break half-a-dozen bottles while the end of a bullet would break only one bottle. Whisky was then about 30/- a bottle.

I was walking through the Market Square a day or two after we got in when I heard Colonel Spreckley calling for volunteers. I went up and asked what the trouble was. It turned out that the people at Campbell's store were surrounded. They had refused to come in with the Queen's Mine people. I volunteered to go out – one of my reasons being that I wanted to get my dogs, "Tappet," a Scotch terrier, and "Shot," a pointer which had been left on the mine. There was difficulty in getting me a mount. Eventually they got me a black pony with a long tail. He was a noted stumbler.

The patrol was in charge of Captain Macfarlane. They took the wrong road at the start, and Captain Macfarlane shouted out: "Does anyone know the road?" A man, Miller, said: "Henderson does;" so I had to lead the party to the Queen's Mine. Shortly before we got there it started to rain. We off-saddled and got some meal out of the store for the horses. I whistled for my dogs but only the pointer came, the other must have been killed by the Natives. Then an order was given to "saddle up," as the scouts had seen impis about.

Two abreast

From the Queen's Mine to Campbell's Store there was only a narrow path. A man, Celliers and I

were instructed to be the advance guard and we started off two abreast, with about 200 to 300 yards between Celliers and the main troop, which consisted of about 30 men. After proceeding about two miles, it was still raining, I noticed some "infi" or sweet root which had been left on a stool on the side of the path. I remarked to Celliers that the Native girls must have left in a hurry. Our horses heads were almost abreast of the sweet root, when we were greeted by a volley from our right flank.

Our horses bolted and we had to go through a line of fire for about 100 yards. Celliers was on a grey horse on the right flank, and in a very short time he out-distanced me. I nearly fell off as I did not have hold of my reins when the firing started. I managed, however, to retain my gun and eventually got hold of my reins and managed to get up to Celliers. A bullet flicked my hat but I was not hit. When I got up to Celliers he said: "I am wounded."

I said: "Nonsense man." I thought he had just got as big a fright as I had. I said: "Let's get back to the Column," and then I added: "Your horse is wounded." He said: "I am wounded too," and he pushed his finger into the hole in his knee.

I took him to a clump of bushes and got him off his horse. As soon as I got him off his horse it dropped dead. The horse had been shot in five places. I ripped his riding breeches, tore my under vest and made a tourniquet to stop the bleeding in his knee. It was then getting towards daylight. I tied my pony and took the bit out of his mouth. Celliers wanted me to kill my dog as he thought it might lead the Natives to us. I took out my knife but could not do it. In order to make him less conspicuous I rubbed him over with wet red soil and all the way on our trip into Bulawayo, when close to kraals I held the dog's mouth shut so he could not bark.

We did not know where the Column was. We found afterwards that they had gone back to Bulawayo. There were Natives all round us and in the bush. We had to get back over 30 miles into Bulawayo.

We kept in the bush in the daytime. The first day a string of Natives walking in single file passed very close to us. Celliers remarked that he would like to treat them like Baron Munchausen treated the ducks, but on second thoughts we decided to leave them alone.

We left for Bulawayo on a Sunday evening, 29th March. On the Monday evening I managed to get Celliers on my horse. He was a tall man, about 6ft. 2in. and it was a bit of a job as his knee was very painful and stiff. After trekking a few miles he would beg me to let him down. This I foolishly did and every time it was more difficult to get him on to the horse again.

After dodging the Native kraals we eventually got to the Kokwe River on Tuesday night. Here the horse, dog and ourselves had a good drink and we felt better. The only liquid we had with us was a little brandy, which we kept to strengthen Celliers. As daylight on Tuesday approached we again went into the bush. We then trekked again on Tuesday night to get into Bulawayo. By this time Celliers' leg was very painful and after I had let him off the horse a couple of times he refused to get on again and begged me to leave him and fetch assistance. I told him I had no intention of leaving him and I forced him to come. When we got on the sandy stretch near the Umgusa I and the horse were pretty well done up. I got hold of his long tail and a switch and he managed to pull me through the sand.

A Welcome Breakfast

We reached Bulawayo about 9 a.m. on the Wednesday morning. I took Celliers to the hospital and then I went down to my quarters. Mr Walker, a son of Johnnie Walker, of whisky fame, was in my rooms and he said: "What are you doing here, you are supposed to be dead." He gave me a whisky and said he would get me some breakfast. In the meantime the boy delivered his loaf of bread. I immediately seized the loaf and started to guzzle it. After breakfast I wandered down town. I must have been somewhat delirious – perhaps the unaccustomed whisky had affected me too. I think they took me back to my quarters and gave me a sleeping draught, and I slept the round of the clock and felt O.K., except I suffered from eye strain for some time afterwards.

We found out afterwards that the Natives who fired on us were trained Native Police who had deserted and they were using Government Synders.

Poor Celliers lived for six weeks but he would not let the doctor amputate his leg and it finally poisoned him and he died, much to my regret.

During this time food was very scarce in Bulawayo. I had some donkeys in milk, and I found I was most popular about afternoon teatime as my friends could get donkey's milk in their tea. What these poor donkeys lived on beat me as "Bulawayo Chronicles" were their chief diet, and we thought the juicy articles of the Editor (Mr Howard) must have done the trick. Mr Howard was a great optimist and in his leading articles he was always referring to "rifts in the clouds."

Patrols went out from day to day. The Volunteers were formed into Troops, the chief being: Grey's Scouts, Giffords, Afrikaners, Selous, Mannerings, and B.S.A. Police, etc., and the Artillery. All these Troops were originally known as the Rhodesian Horse, changed later to the Bulawayo Field Forces.

By this time there had been many murders and casualties amongst the white people. We heard Plumer's Column was coming up to our assistance. Of course it was a time of anxiety and the women and children had a rough time, what with having to eat rinderpest meat and the scarcity of vegetables, milk, fresh fruit, etc. In spite of all this we had many jokes.

Poor Jones

One day three troopers, who were out were attacked by Matabele. At the time they were surrounded they were dismounted. Two got on their horses and got into Bulawayo and reported to Capt. Sandy Butters, their O.C. They gave a vivid description of the event and described how poor Jones had been surrounded, cut up and killed. During the talk they heard heavy and hurried breathing outside. One of the troopers went out to investigate and exclaimed: "God's truth, here's Jones." He had evidently outrun the Matabele and the Matabele were more anxious to collar the horse than the man. Capt. Butters' remarks to the two troopers are not fit for publication.

An amusing tale was told too, of a certain Jewish store-keeper. A bell was rung as an alarm when Natives were supposed to be surrounding the town and everyone had to go into the laager. This man ran in with a cash box in one hand and a canary in a cage in the other, and as he got into the laager he thrust them at the sentry saying: "Please look after these, My God, I have forgotten my wife."

I was in the artillery and one time when I was going out to the Matopos in charge of a machine gun, Sgt./Major Ainslie said: "No, you stay here; you have been out enough. I want to go." He went and after doing a lot of damage to the Natives he was killed and his gun was captured.

Even after Plumer's Column arrived the Rebellion hung on with the Natives in the Matopos. Baden-Powell, later General Baden-Powell and Chief Scout, arrived with Plumer's Column and did his first scouting in the Matopos.

Famous Indaba

Then Rhodes arrived and the famous Indaba took place. His action in going unarmed into the stronghold of the Matabele and patiently listening to and talking to them for so long was one of the finest and bravest things man could do.

Peace came. The country was in a sad state, ravaged by rinderpest and rebellion. There was little Native labour and mining was at a standstill and food very expensive. Mealie meal was £3 8s. 0d. a bag; Boer meal £5 - £6 a bag; cabbages 5/- to 20/- each; eggs 4/- to 16/- a dozen, and so on. But Mr Rhodes was getting the railway pushed on so supplies could come in. Transport cattle were extremely expensive, £25 - £30 each and donkeys £8 - £10 each. Mr Rhodes was extremely generous and compensated storekeepers and farmers for their losses.

The Railway was opened by Sir Alfred Milner in 1897 and there were many distinguished visitors there. He presented me, after the opening of the railway, with my VC. I was in a bit of a flutter with all this publicity and climbed on to old "Sir John" to return to town with Kenny Armstrong, a Native Commissioner, when I exclaimed: "Oh, I have lost the Cross." In a minute there were about 300 Natives grovelling in the dust looking for it. They did not find it, however, Sir Alfred had pinned it on badly and it had dropped into my pocket. A friend of mine in a joke remarked: "V.C.

got drunk and lost the Cross.”

That evening I was sitting on the private verandah of the manager of the Maxim Hotel, later the Savoy Hotel. This adjoined the public verandah. A gentleman leaned over and asked me if I had been at the opening of the Railway. I told him I had. Then he remarked: “Wasn’t that a disgraceful incident when that young fellow Henderson could not keep sober even when he was being presented with such an honour and he lost it.” I agreed, inwardly amused, as in those days my strongest drink was limejuice. I really felt sorry for the man the next day. Someone had enlightened him as to my identity and he came up to apologise.

Mr Rhodes was always very kindly disposed to young men in the country and took trouble to help them. I somehow feel it may have been partly due to his influence that I received my decoration because in a letter of introduction I have, written by him to Major Sapte, he says he considered I deserved the VC. I greatly prize this letter.

Post-Rebellion Days

Rhodesia went through a hard time after the Rebellion. Mr Rhodes was marvellous as he had the shock of the Jameson Raid in addition to the Rebellion to depress him, but he heartened us all. He resigned his Premiership at the Cape. He was always ready to listen to troubles and to give assistance. To help the country, he started building the Matopos Dam and gave employment in various ways such as making an Avenue to Government House, stocking farms, etc.

I stayed with Mr Rhodes at that hut near the R.E.P. School. At that time I was tendering for the construction of the Matopo Dam. They accepted my tender but I did not take it on as they made some extra provisions, which I could not accept at the figure I had quoted.

At this time I lived in a two-roomed lean-to tin shanty in Main Street, where Harris and Osborn had their store on the corner opposite Gull and Kimpton’s garage. My horse’s stable adjoined my bedroom and the old horse used to put his head inside in the morning to get a piece of sugar. There were two windows opposite each other and many a time I had 10-15 to a meal. The clean plates were handed in at one window and the dirty plates were thrown out to a piccanin at the other window. He swirled them out in a bucket and handed them on as clean, sometimes wet, sometimes dry.

During this time I did odd jobs like laying the water pipes up Government House Avenue, making the B.A.C. grounds and tennis courts, and road and railway construction. This we did chiefly with a traction engine, which is supposed to be the oldest traction engine in Rhodesia, and is now among the mining antiquaeria at the National Museum.

Tin buildings in Bulawayo were gradually replaced by brick ones and the place began to get a civilized look. People began to move out from the town to Gwanda, Gwelo, Que Que, and other mining centres. Mines like the Geelong, Globe and Phoenix, Bonzo and Tebekwe, were opened up. Actually round Bulawayo there were only small mines, one of the first being the Christmas Reef now known as the Talisman.

The Government of the country was the Charter Company, to who we owe a deep debt of gratitude for the efficient way they governed us.

Railways were extended and the country opened up. Numbers of women began to come into the country, and everything became noticeably more civilized. To the horror of many, soft shirts were replaced by stiff shirts and collars. With the dawn of civilization in Rhodesia my tale must end...

The 1st Bulawayo (Pioneer) Scout Troop would like to mention with grateful thanks the assistance and example of the following in the publication of this edition of Pioneer Trail:

Mr H.S. Henderson VC, for living the life and setting the example.

The Rhodesian Pioneers’ and Early Settlers’ Society, for providing the articles.

Mr Sanderson, for his interest in History and the Troop in general, and the pictures he provided.

Mr Norman Scott, our Scout Leader, for his gifts of incentive, motivation, and opportunity.

A most sincere thank you to all these people. In times of hardship, let us all endure...