

ZULU VISITS UK

by Bill Cainan

Lidizwe Dalton Ngobese is currently employed as a tour guide at the Isandlwana Lodge in KwaZulu Natal. He is the great great grandson of Sihayo and the great grandson of Mehlokazulu. In June of 2010 he was able, due to a kind benefactor, to visit the UK for the first time. Dalton planned a five day itinerary, the main aim of which was to visit the SWB Museum at Brecon. Once the visit was confirmed the curator of the Museum, Martin Everett, rang me to ask if I would be willing to host Dalton while he was in UK. Having met Dalton a few times in KZN I was delighted to accept the offer. Dalton's visit coincided with the UK's Armed Forces Day which, in 2010, was being held in Cardiff with HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, taking the salute. The Prince was also scheduled to open "Firepower", the museum of the Welsh Soldier, which was located within Cardiff Castle. A plan quickly took shape involving Dalton in full Zulu regalia and myself in a uniform of a Corporal of the 24th to be in attendance at the entrance to the Museum. Dalton was also keen to visit some of the more famous Welsh castles on his visit.

The diary of his visit is as follows:

Wednesday 23rd June:

Dalton arrives at Cardiff airport having flown from Jo'burg via Schipol.



There were a few problems with the UK's Border Agency, but when Dalton produced the formal invite to the opening of "Firepower" in Cardiff (TO BE ATTENDED BY HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES), things seemed to get a bit easier! I then drove Dalton the 50 miles to Brecon and he was given a quick tour of the Museum by Martin Everett (the Curator) and Celia Green (the Customer Services Manager)..



That evening I gave a talk to a local history society on "The Redcoat of 1751". However, Dalton, who was in attendance, proved to be an equal attraction. "We don't get many Zulus in Crickhowell"!



Thursday 24th June:

Back to the Brecon Museum, Dalton and I gave an impromptu talk on the AZW to about a dozen visitors in the Museum. All of them found the Zulu perspective on the war to be most interesting.

Martin then took us both to Brecon Town hall for a meeting with the Mayor, Councillor David Meredith, and the Town Clerk, Gail Rofe. Dalton was presented with an historic map of the town.



Martin then took us to a butcher's shop to meet David East, the butcher, who is also a great grandson of Robert Jones (of RD fame) – unfortunately he wasn't in!

Around the corner from the butcher's was a new pub, recently opened, called "The Rorke's Drift" !!! We talked to the owner and he was overwhelmed to meet Dalton – a real Zulu! He presented Dalton with a golf shirt with the pub's motif on it.

Martin then took us to Brecon Cathedral to see the Queens Colour of the 24th. This was the actual Colour recovered from the Buffalo River in 1879.



Back at the Museum, Martin presented Dalton with the some AZW books and allowed Dalton to handle the actual VC presented to Lt Melvill. Celia gave Dalton a photocopy of the original last message signed and sent by Pulleine to Lord Chelmsford. We then drove to Cardiff.

Friday 25th June:

Dalton had expressed a desire to see some Welsh castles, so after breakfast I took him to see Castell Coch – a reconstructed castle from the 1870s.



After that we went to see Caerphilly Castle – the second biggest castle in Britain at 30 acres – built between 1268 and 1271. To look at the other end of the spectrum, I then took Dalton to see Morgraig Castle, built in 1232 – now an overgrown ruin on a hilltop over looking Cardiff.

Back in Cardiff, I decided to take Dalton for tea in a local pub – The Heath Hotel - but found it chock full of soldiers in town for the Armed Forces Day parade the following day. Plan B saw me take Dalton across the road to look at Maindy Barracks, the depot of the Welch Regiment (41/69th Foot) built around 1880. Fortunately I met a few former army colleagues and used my contacts to get a meal in the Barracks canteen!



Saturday 26th June

After loading the car with all the uniforms and weapons required for the 1879 period, we drove to Cardiff Castle and parked up. We changed into the uniforms and took up post in the Castle outside the “Firing Line” museum as the invited guests arrived.



At about 10am, HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, arrived to open the museum. He was inside for about 30 minutes. On exiting, he came straight over to Dalton and myself. I introduced Dalton to HRH. The Prince shook his hand and spoke to him for a few minutes. HRH said that he hoped there would be a

new Zulu gathering soon and that he would like to attend. He expressed his sorrow on the death of David Rattray who had been a close friend. A number of photographs of the occasion were taken by the press.



The Prince of Wales then left with the Duchess of Cornwall to take the salute of the Parade in Cardiff Bay. There were some 1200 troops marching and 80,000 people lined the route in Cardiff.

We were invited to the VIP lunchtime buffet in the Castle. Dalton tried out his best Welsh on one of the waitresses (the Welsh and Zulu languages have similar enunciation) with “Diolch yn Fawr” (Thank you very much) and she looked totally blank. She was from Poland!

We then changed and left the castle. The plan was to drive to West Wales where I live. We stopped en route at Llanelli to get a photo of Dalton in front of the town sign. For some time, while conducting his tours, Dalton has been asked where he’s from and invariably says “Llanelli”. Now he can prove it with the photograph!



On to Kidwelly Castle and, finally, to Lampeter (where I live) by tea time. Dalton seemed very impressed by my home and my collection of Zulu War books and weapons. His original perception had been that I lived in a farmhouse in the country!

Sunday 27th June

For a change we drove up to Aberystwyth, a typical British seaside town. We visited Aberystwyth Castle and walked along the Promenade then made our way up Constitutional Hill by cliff railway to take photos of the spectacular views.



By coincidence we met Paul Bryant-Quinn who is a regular contributor to this site and an expert on the Welsh language connections with the AZW. We had a long chat giving Paul the opportunity to practice his Zulu on Dalton.



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Back in Lampeter, after tea, we went for a tour of Lampeter town.

Monday 28th June

We drove to Cardigan, which is further down the coast of Cardigan Bay, to allow Dalton to get last minute presents (loads of things with "I've been to Wales" on it). On the way back we stopped at Cilgerran Castle. The afternoon was spent re-packing Dalton's suitcase to try and fit in all the books and presents he had accumulated during his visit!



Tuesday 29th June

We left Lampeter at 1.30am to get to Cardiff Airport by 4am for the 6am flight. Dalton got on the plane OK.

For all the time Dalton was in Wales, the average temperature was in the mid 20s with no rain. He left convinced that Britain has a similar climate to KZN !!!