

THE NET – CAST IN MANY WATERS

1894

A letter from Bishop Carter tells of Mr Walters having arrived at Nongoma.

Eshowe, April the 9th, 1894

I returned here three days ago from seeing Mr Walters as far as Nongoma. It is rather a treat to have a few days amongst one's own surroundings. I have been here only about seven weeks since last August.

I was at Kwamagwaza and Melmoth for Good Friday and Easter. On Easter Tuesday Doctor Petrie and Miss Winterbotham were married. The School at Kwamagwaza is gradually growing; of course, at first, the numbers were likely to fluctuate. I am very anxious to try to start a small European school at Melmoth. The difficulty is not as to the scholars but rather where to find the right man, as in the beginning much must depend on the man.

When I was at Ulundi, on the way to Nongoma, I went to see a chief who had sent me a message that he wanted a teacher for his people. I am very anxious to manage to do this if possible, it will be entirely new ground as far as our work is concerned. It is a beautiful spot but very hot, a bad place for cattle. Mr Walters met me at Ulundi and we went on together to Nongoma. It is a longish ride of some 42 miles, and the greater part of the way is through thorn country. Fortunately it was a cloudy day and not very hot. At Nongoma we stayed with the magistrate. Both the Sunday and Monday were very wet; On Tuesday morning we chose a place for Mr Walters to settle in. The Nongoma hills are high and I should think very healthy, although there is low country all round. Last year there was a good deal of fever amongst the natives. There has not been much fever this year. I started back on Wednesday morning, and that evening met Mrs Walters at Emahlabatini. Mr Frere was personally conducting the party and seemed to be quite in his element. I was very glad that he was able to go with them. The Resident Commissioner has set sent up a couple of tents, and they will live in these and the wagon until they can put up something of a building. It was at first intended that Mrs Walters and the children should stay at Isandhlwana until some sort of house was provided, but afterwards it was thought better they should be together.

Nongoma, June 5th 1894:

The Reverend F. Walters sends an account of his new surroundings at Nongoma; his letter was written on June the 5th, and reached England on July the 9th so that postal communication with him is easy.

Nongoma, via Eshowe, Zululand -

You will see we have arrived at our new home, or, at least, at our new place of abode, for we have no home at present, but are dependent upon the hospitality of Mr Gibson (the R.M.)

for our shelter. He has kindly invited us to make use of his house, which is a substantial structure of burnt brick with trees all around. The other European residents here are Mr. Brown, the magistrates clerk, Captain Pearce, a sub-inspector of the Zululand Police - a kind of semi-military force like the Irish Constabulary. They have a camp here of 25 men and a fort of sods, to which we can all retire in case of need; Mr Glenn and his wife, a storekeeper and his assistant, Mr Fisher. Ten miles to the south there is another store kept by a Mr Cheeseman.

The Ndwandwe district is so little known to your readers that I daresay you will be glad to have some idea of the geographical situation of the place. It is in the north of Zululand, 12 miles west of the Transvaal border and Ngone range of hills, about 50 miles south of Swaziland and about 70 miles west of Saint Lucia Lake. North of us there is the Ulumbo magistracy of Lebombo while east is Hlubisa, both of which come under my medical supervision.

We are situated on the Nongoma range, the district being called after the name of a tribe, the Ndwandwe. It is lower than Isandhlwana, but we get a much grander view; and it is not so stony, in fact it is difficult to find a stone at all, if you happen to meet an unfriendly snake! We are 20 miles of the black Umfolozi, which is about 25 miles from Ulundi, a day's ride from Kwamagwaza. The place where Joseph and his people are situated, near the Isikwebezi River, is some 15 miles due south, but it is a long ride and a very rough track, and some difficult climbing to get through.

As you will remember, this place was the centre of the disturbances in 1888, but the people seem very quiet and peaceable enough now, and anxious to learn. Whether this means a change of religion as well as national habits I have not yet had time to discover, but just from what little I have seen here the desire for secular learning certainly seems combined with a wish for something higher. On all sides one hears of a desire for teachers to be settled among them. But how to do it is the difficulty. In the College we certainly have the beginnings of a recruiting ground for the supply of teachers, the demand for whom is coming in thick and fast; and it is a work that ought to be supported and pushed forward at all costs. The Bishop has sanctioned my bringing the two senior students with me, Ernest Batelezi and David Ntombela, both capital fellows and very zealous. I hope to keep Ernest here, and to place David amongst his own tribe, not far away, early next year. I hope our friends at home will buckle to and support us in this new venture. The mission funds are at too low an ebb to give us any help whatever; so we are left to our own resources. We cannot do everything, however, and building costs a lot of money; The move from Isandhlwana cost us £20.

I must get Mrs Walters to write you an account of her wagon trip, which lasted 12 days. We left Isandhlwana on Easter Tuesday, Miss Bliss travelling with Mrs Walters as far as Kwamagwaza. Having to begin my new duties here by April 1st, I had to travel by a different route. After seeing them all safely off, and leaving Mr. Johnson in charge of the place till Mr Davies' arrival, David and I rode away to Nondweni, our first halting place. Here there were many goodbyes to be said, but we managed to get off by 9.30 the following morning, with a long day's ride before us.

After leaving Crosby's store, where we spent the night, we very soon entered the Transvaal border, and our course lay nearly due west the whole day. We were bound for the Denny-

Dalton Gold fields, where we arrived at sunset. We had to cross the White Umfolozi twice, so winding is its course; the river was supposed to be low, but the water came up to the saddles, and we had to tuck up our legs behind us. The scenery was very wild and grand, especially near Mount Enhlozaty. The Denny-Dalton goldfields are six miles from this big mountain and in the Transvaal. We stayed two nights here as I expected to meet the Bishop. When he did not come I found a young Norwegian gold prospector to guide me part of the way to Ulundi, I should never have found it myself. We had to cross the White Umfolozi once more; if anything it was broader and deeper than before and very strong, with a strong current. In flood time it would be madness to attempt to cross. Ulundi was reached in about 3 hours and I was glad to find the Bishop there. We spent a quiet day, going over the battlefield and visiting the little cemetery, where the few soldiers killed in the battle were buried. It is very well kept in order by Mr. Moore, the storekeeper and our host. He also guided us to Panda's grave. Ulundi (or Ondini, the great place) is very desolate looking, a kind of amphitheatre surrounded by hills, with nothing but bush or thorn to be seen for miles. The site of Ketchwayo's old kraal can be seen for some distance by the great bare patches where the huts stood.

We made an early start the next morning and travelled due north the whole day. After riding for three hours we came to a store where we off-saddled and had some breakfast. Then we said Matins under the shade of a bush, and proceeded to our next halting place, Mr Cheeseman's store, a ride of two and a half hours. Here we were regaled hospitably with tea and bread and butter. Tea is *most* refreshing after a long hot dusty ride. It is not safe to drink at any of the spruits. Our final stage was only two hours of easy riding, chiefly uphill. The Bishop pointed out the ex-queens kraal, some two or three miles to the west of Cheeseman's store. Dinizulu's kraal is about half a mile further on. Then we parted company, the Bishop going by a shortcut, David and I by the road, but we arrived first!

The sun was just setting as we arrived at what is to be our new home and sphere of labour. Mr Gibson and Captain Pearce were on the look out for us, and we were soon off-saddled and resting in this nice house. Then for the next two days rain fell incessantly and we were literally up in the clouds: we could scarcely see a yard from the windows. The Bishop held service in Mr Gibson's sitting room. So we spent our low Sunday, not very cheerfully perhaps. On Tuesday April 3rd, we all walked around the place to choose a site for us to settle on. The place chosen commands a beautiful view; it is on the side of a hill, the Ndunu, and itself the battlefield between Dinizulu's people and Usibepu's in the disturbances. I pray God our settling there may be a happy omen of the inauguration of the reign of the King of Peace in this widely populated district. The R.M. computes there are some 14,000 Zulus living here, the pure stock. Mrs Walters & Co., arrived a week after we did, bringing with her the bulk of our belongings. The other wagonload came later. Unfortunately we have had rain twice lately, and as all things were on the open veldt without any cover, through some delay in the arrival of the tents lent us by Government, you may imagine they are not improved.

We are building round huts, 18 feet in diameter, of poles and reeds daubed over with mud and sand; the poles cost £3 a load of 30. The roof is of grass, 3 foot round; £26 has vanished already in grass and reeds, but I think we have about enough now. We hope to get one hut finished in a week or so. Levelling the ground took a long time; we had to burn off the long grass first. So you see we are beginning from the very beginning.

I must leave for another time the account of my visits to Ukamsweli's kraal and the Isekwebezi Christians, and also what we are doing here in a small way. I can only say it is very encouraging. We shall be glad when we can have a church and a school and some musical instrument. I wish some of our friends would send half a dozen bugles, good ones. They do capitally for summoning people to Service. With Joseph's help we have four preaching stations. The weather is lovely, very cold at night. I may add that Phillip Ngobezi is building for us, we have no white labour, it is too expensive. I have to turn to myself.



Here I am in the graveyard at St. Aidan's in Nongoma. With me – in the wheelchair - is my father, Cyril Ogden, Dorothy Walters' son. He had many memories of the childhood years he spent with his grandfather, Reverend Frederick Wilfrid Walters here in around 1927.

