

Hero of Rorke's Drift

I recently received this fascinating email and, having responded to it with some suggestions I'm printing it in full in the hope that someone in the village may be able to be of more help.

Hello

I am trying to gather information on a gentleman called William Wilcox who died aged 64 at Newbridge, Dolton, on May 29th 1925 (cause "valvular disease of the heart") and subsequently was buried in Dolton churchyard on June 1st. My main aim is to try and establish the precise location of his grave (which is unmarked), in the hope of providing it with a headstone, but I seem to be having major difficulties in obtaining any kind of burial records which would positively identify where about in the churchyard he was interred. Unfortunately it appears that the church itself isn't in possession of any records which date from that time, neither is the Devon Records Office.

The reason for my interest in this individual is that he was one of the men of "B" Company of the 2nd Battalion, 24th Regiment who took part (Ed.: *Aged 18!!*) in the renowned "Defence of Rorke's Drift" in South Africa in 1879 (later made famous by the film "Zulu"), and I would like to look into perhaps having some kind of memorial erected to his memory; if after further enquiries I am unable to ascertain his actual final resting place then perhaps a small memorial plaque situated somewhere within the churchyard may be deemed appropriate. I would welcome any local feedback with regard to achieving this, as well as any further local knowledge of William.

As well as being a serving member of HM Forces, I have a keen interest in the battle of Rorke's Drift and the men who took part, and have initiated the marking of three other Rorke's Drift graves in the West Country (most recently that of Private Thomas Dawe in Wellington on April 18th), as well as two others in Plymouth last year. William Wilcox is the region's only other known Rorke's Drift veteran without a memorial and I am keen to resolve this, hopefully with the support of Dolton and the local area. If anyone has any information or suggestions which may help, I would warmly welcome them to contact me either by email, post or telephone. My contact details are as follows:

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Very many thanks

Tim