

THE LOWER SUNBURY LENDY MEMORIAL

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What follows is the background to the two brothers – Charles and Edward Lendy – memorialised on the plinth, surmounted by a lion, in the Walled Garden in Lower Sunbury.



The Lendy Memorial in the Sunbury Walled Garden

Summary

The people behind the Topple the Racists website, who wish to remove the Lendy Memorial in the Sunbury Walled Garden, have made the following specific charges against the two brothers:

“Memorial statue to remember two colonising brothers, Captain Edward August Lendy & Captain Charles Frederick Lendy, both responsible for murdering African tribes with machine gun fire.”

They then include a link to a website – rhodesiansoldier.com - containing an article written by the administrator of that website.

Taking the particular accusations against the Lendy Memorial in turn:

1. There is no evidence that Edward August William Lendy was ever involved in “murdering African tribes with machine gun fire”. In fact, he was decorated for his bravery in rescuing four of the black soldiers under his command from imminent drowning in a Sierra Leonean river, and he was awarded the DSO – second only to the VC - for his actions against slave traders in West Africa and the freeing of upwards of 250 slaves.
2. The use by Charles Frederick Lendy of machine guns in battle did not amount to “murder” under any definition. Most people would agree, not least former soldiers, that war is deeply unpleasant, and to be avoided if at all possible, but it is not murder. The background to two incidents for which Lendy has been blamed – only one of which involved a Maxim gun - is explained below

3. That article on the rhodesiansoldier.com website is dated, superficial and omits much information.¹
4. Topple the Racists, the website which has made these accusations against the Lendy brothers, say that they want to “shine a light on the continued adoration of colonial icons and symbols.” To make that claim is to insult the intelligence of the public. It is entirely possible to appreciate the historical value of the Lendy Memorial without “adoration” of colonialism, just as a visit to Hampton Court does not imply “adoration” of Henry VIII’s methods of dealing with inconvenient clerics or wives.
5. Topple the Racists say they want to promote debate. But they also say they are “inspired by the direct action taken by Bristolians”. And they call themselves “Topple the Racists”. It doesn’t sound as if they aim to indulge in any discussion.
6. Memorials such as the Lendy Memorial are vital historical documents. Without them it is much more difficult to properly research history, and evaluate other historical evidence. There is certainly some over-lap between toppling statues and burning books.
7. In any case, it is a huge mistake to rush to summary judgement of people who lived in very different times to our own. Our understanding of history is constantly being revised, and not necessarily in the direction we might expect. Those claiming the right to settle the matter by toppling statues will find that their views are not the ultimate truth they think they are.
8. Topple the Racists do, however, make two valid points:
 - a. History is – indeed – complicated. The complications are explained below.
 - b. It is indeed “up to local communities to decide what statues they want in their local areas”. We should learn from the example of Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. See below.

The Lendy Family

Charles and Edward Lendy were the two sons of Major Auguste Frederic Lendy and his wife Sophia, who married in Brighton in 1848. Charles and Edward were born in Lower Sunbury in January 1863 and February 1868 respectively. They had two older sisters – Violet and Alice – and one younger sister, Julia. The Lendys lived successively in two houses along the river road when they moved to England (Major Lendy was French) in 1850.

Major Lendy ran a military college in Lower Sunbury, preparing students for the exams for entry into the army colleges at Sandhurst and Woolwich. Perhaps under their father’s influence and tuition, both brothers passed these exams. Charles went to Woolwich, where he trained as an artillery officer and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery. Edward went to Sandhurst and was commissioned as an infantry officer into the Derbyshire Regiment (the Sherwood Foresters).

Charles Frederick Lendy RA

Charles Lendy spent seven years with the Royal Artillery in various postings in Gibraltar, Bermuda and Shoeburyness, before he was seconded to the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1890.

The BSAC, established by Cecil Rhodes, had been granted a Royal Charter in 1889 to colonise and exploit the land and resources of south-central Africa. Further to that aim the BSAC had secured, in controversial circumstances, the Rudd Concession from Lobengula, the second King of the Matabele, which granted the Company mining and other rights in Mashonaland. In return, Lobengula was paid a lump sum of money, monthly payments of smaller sums, and, crucially for this story, 1000 Martini-Henry rifles, of the same model issued to the British Army at the time, and 100 000 rounds of

¹ It was written in 2012 and much further information has subsequently come to light.

ammunition. It was the offer of these rifles which clinched the Rudd Concession deal, as Lobengula and his impis had only between 600 and 800 rifles amongst them, without sufficient ammunition.²

Mashonaland lay to the north and east of the Matabele kingdom, and Lobengula and the Matabele claimed it as a vassal territory. Lendy was by then the resident magistrate (then an administrative rather than a judicial position) at Fort Victoria (now Masvingo) in Mashonaland. There were growing tensions between the BSAC and Lobengula as to who exactly exercised power in Mashonaland.

The men of a local Shona chief living near Fort Victoria, had stolen cattle from other Shona who were tributaries of Lobengula. On 11 Jun 1893, Lobengula sent a “small impi” (regiment) – some 70 men – from Bulawayo to recover these cattle. This impi was reported to be raiding about ten miles from the town. Lendy rode out to meet them, allowed the cattle to be taken back to Bulawayo, and sent a letter with the impi for Lobengula, warning in polite language about sending his impis into Mashonaland.

Some weeks later a local newspaper reported that Lobengula was intent on sending a much larger impi to punish the Shona cattle thieves. The cattle rustlers, however, continued to rustle cattle. On 9 July, two men from Fort Victoria were out riding when they came across, a few miles from the town, a number of panicked Shona heading for the town. The two riders saw 3500 Matabele warriors advancing behind this crowd of frightened Shona. The Matabele eventually entered the town, and 20 Shona were murdered in the streets.

Manyao, the Induna (indunas were military commanders and senior advisors to King Lobengula) in command of the impi approached the Fort bearing a letter to Lendy from Lobengula. He and his twelve bodyguards saw Shona sheltering inside the Fort and demanded they be handed over. Lendy refused. The impi retired from the town but remained in the district pillaging and murdering at will. On 19 July a meeting took place between Manyao and his subordinates, and Leander Starr Jameson of the BSAC and others, which was marked by intransigence on both sides, and ended in stalemate. That evening Lendy assembled a party of 40 men who rode out the next morning, with the purpose of encouraging the impi to return to Matabeleland. Lendy’s men were under orders not to fire unless fired upon, supposedly on the orders of Jameson.

They came across some 300 Matabele who were the advance guard of the larger Matabele force. Immediately Lendy’s force were seen the Matabele opened fire. Or Lendy’s men opened fire on the

² “Part of the purchase price given by the BSA Company to Lobengula for the [Rudd] mineral concession was one thousand Martini rifles and one hundred thousand rounds of ammunition. As Lobengula repudiated the concession almost immediately after signing it, he refused to take delivery of these guns and ammunition and on my arrival in the country they were lying at Dawson’s store. Just before the outbreak of the war in 1893 I happened to be alone at the store for a few days. One morning I was awakened very early by the head Induna of Bulawayo, Magwekwe, [Magwekwe Fuyana] who said he was sent by the King to fetch the guns. He had a small army with him. I set to work and opened up the cases and found that there was a bayonet for each gun. I had to show them how to fix these...one warrior got a pretty severe stab from one of his pals who was a bit clumsy.

Not long after the guns had been taken I got a message from the King to say that the number [of rifles] was not correct. This was a rather serious matter for me, so I rode over to Umvutjwa [Umvutcha] where the King then was. I told the King that I had counted the guns myself and that the number was correct. He replied that they were not all there; they have been counted and some are short. I then asked where they were, and he replied in the cattle kraal. I went there and found the rifles strewn about all over the place. I got hold of some of the Indunas and had the rifles placed in piles of ten and again reported to the King that they were correct. He then sent Mtjan [Mjaan] Induna of his Imbezu regiment to count them and I was very much relieved when I heard him report to the King that the number was correct.” From the hand-written reminiscences of Percy Durban Crewe, Bulawayo Public Library.

Matabele. There is controversy about this.³ By the end of the day, some 30 Matabele are thought to have been killed – nine by Lendy's party, and the remainder by vengeful Shona who had ambushed the Matabele in a defile. No Maxims were present at this incident.

Two months later, in October that year, the BSAC invaded Matabeleland. Two columns set out, one each from Forts Salisbury and Victoria, towards Bulawayo. They joined together, with a combined strength of 690 mounted men, about 400 Shona tribesmen on foot, two seven-pounder field guns and eight machine guns, of which five were Maxims. The Fort Victoria column was commanded by Major Allan Wilson. The Fort Salisbury contingent was commanded by Major Patrick Forbes, who was also in overall command of the combined force once they merged.

Lendy would have been one of very few professional soldiers in this combined column. The vast majority of the mounted men were prospectors, shopkeepers and farmers, riding their own horses and carrying their own hunting rifles. The column was described as comprising "one commander-in-chief, three other commanders-in chief, forty-seven Major Generals (in gaiters), fifty-three Lieutenant Colonels (in spats), eighteen Captains, twenty-two Lieutenants and six full privates".

Such was the reputation of Lobengula's impis, they were not expected to be seen again. A Matabele impi, like that of its Zulu cousins, was a formidable body of shock troops, who had completely dominated and subdued the entire region of Matabeleland and Mashonaland for the previous fifty years using military tactics, as the British Army in Zululand (that was overwhelmed and massacred at Ishlandwana), Rorke's Drift, and others elsewhere, found out to their peril. And the Matabele had 1000 modern Martini Henry rifles and much ammunition at their disposal.

On 1 November the combined force was laagered at Bembesi in two small encampments separated by a small kraal (village) of eight huts which restricted their fields of fire. There was also thick thorn bush and dead ground nearby, which enabled two of the Matabele impis to get very close, undetected. The oxen and horses of the columns were nearly two kilometres away where there were pools of water in the Ncema River headstream. The troopers were scattered making lunch and the thorn fences to join the two laagers were not completed.

At midday eight impis of riflemen and warriors totalling 6000 men mounted a surprise attack on the laager, after overwhelming a mounted picket. Those in the combined columns armed with firearms were thus outnumbered almost nine to one. The Matabele riflemen fired with concentrated accuracy.

"The Salisbury and Victoria Columns (British South Africa Company's forces) formed laager about midday on 1st November 1893. During the halt they were heavily attacked by a large force of Matabele ... The battle was hard and the Matabele charged with the greatest courage three times in the face of machine gun fire, but after suffering very many casualties were compelled to withdraw."⁴

³ This is a contentious point. The official investigation into the Fort Victoria clash found that Lendy's men fired first. Lendy maintained otherwise. There is certainly reason to think that if Lendy's men did fire first, it was because Jameson had told them to do so. Jameson said he never told them to do so. Either Jameson or Lendy was lying. Jameson was given the benefit of the doubt. Given Jameson's Machiavellian subterfuge in his planning of the Jameson Raid into the Transvaal in 1895, perhaps he should not have been. Discussed at p 56 and following in *Own Goals* by Roger Marston (2009) ISBN 978 1 899820 81 8 .

⁴ From the inscription on the cairn on the site of the Battle of Bembesi.

“The Im'Bizo Regiment set fire to their big kraal then retreated quite out of sight and in no particular hurry. They gathered up a number of Martini Henry rifles, part of Rhodes payment to Lobengula for the concession.”⁵

500 Matabele were killed and wounded. Lendy was commander of the artillery troop, but in practice the tactical use of the weapons was exercised by Major Wilson⁶, and above him, by Major Forbes. It is therefore incorrect to blame Lendy, as many do, for the use of the Maxims at Bembesi. Had they not been used the outcome would have been very different. Even as it was, however, it was a close-run thing. The two columns were very lucky.

The Battle of Bembesi, or Egodade as it is known to the Matabele, was the turning point in the Matabele War. Within a week, Lobengula's capital had been razed to the ground, and the Matabele impis put to flight. Another patrol under Major Allan Wilson set out after the King and his army, and were wiped out at Shangani in the final action of the Matabele War. But that Matabele victory was to no avail. The military power of the Matabele had, for the time being, been defeated, although the Matabele and the Shona rose again in 1896. A large stone cairn with a bronze plaque inscribed in both English and SiNdebele still marks the place of the battle.

Lendy died in Bulawayo on 13 January 1894, it is thought from an internal injury he suffered throwing the heavy shot in an athletic competition.

Lendy is often accused of being part of a colonial expedition which seized a country from the hands of those who fought to keep it as theirs. However, it should be remembered that the Matabele themselves, under King Mzilikazi⁷, had invaded the area from the south in the 1820s, displacing the Shona who had previously occupied the area, and treating the Shona in the surrounding areas of Mashonaland as vassals, forced to give tribute to the Matabele at the point of a rifle or assegai.

The Shona themselves were part of an earlier migration from the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, who invaded the land between the Zambezi and the Limpopo (present day Zimbabwe) from the north, pushing its previous inhabitants to the periphery, including the San people who were forced into the Kalahari. The Matabele completed the job the Shona left unfinished. The tribal conflict between Matabele and Shona continues to this day, with the Shona wreaking revenge within very recent living memory on the Matabele for what their forbears did 150 years ago. Look up Gukurahundi⁸ to read about that.

⁵ From the notebooks of Jack Carruthers, present at the Battle of Bembesi. In the possession of Carruthers' descendants.

⁶ “Lendy had been appointed senior artillery officer to the force and had general superintendence over the guns, their maintenance and the training of the crews; the deployment and firing of the individual artillery pieces was left to individual commanders [i.e. Wilson and Forbes; my comment]. There was some difficulty over the command structure. The gunners owed allegiance to Lendy rather than Wilson because he had formed them as an individual troop. Forbes gave them a simple choice: serve under Wilson or return to Fort Victoria. They decided to stay and fight.” [i.e. under Wilson's command; my comment] *Own Goals*, p 66.

⁷ Oral History Statement of Ntabeni Khumalo, son of Mhwebi, who was a son of Mzilikazi, National Archives of Zimbabwe.

⁸ Gukurahundi, in Shona, means, rather chillingly in this context, the “first rains which wash away the chaff”.

Edward August William Lendy DSO

Despite the Sherwood Foresters being his parent regiment, Edward Lendy was immediately seconded to the regular West India regiment, whose ranks were composed of black Caribbean volunteers. The West India Regiment were often deployed to West Africa, and they were in Sierra Leone when Lendy joined them.

In August 1890 he was invested with the Distinguished Service Order – a decoration for gallantry second only to the VC - by Queen Victoria herself at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight.

“for services at Foulah Town and its vicinity on the West Coast of Africa, in breaking up a combination of slave dealers and rescuing upwards of 250 slaves.”⁹

By September 1893 Lendy was with the Sierra Leone Border Police, involved in an ongoing war with the Sofas¹⁰, slave-soldiers of the Wassoulou or Mandinka empire of Samori Ture which was based in Mali and Guinea, and with patrolling Sierra Leone's borders with the neighbouring French and German colonies of Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea.

On 4 November 1893, Lendy and forty Police were at the Sell River on their way to open a road which had been closed by the war with the Sofas. There was no bridge – only a rope made from creepers tied from bank to bank. The river had to be traversed, the force's rations were on the opposite bank – and the men began to cross. Suddenly four men were in trouble, in imminent risk of drowning. Lendy dived into the water to save them. He was awarded the Silver Medal of the Royal Geographical Society for his courage.

Less than two months later, on 23 December, Lendy was at Waiima near the eastern border of Sierra Leone (alternative spellings Waima and Warina). Early that morning, in thick mist, they were attacked by a French force of more than 1200 men under a Lieutenant Maritz. The French had mistaken the British for Sofas, and by the time the shooting stopped, the British troops had lost seventeen officers and men killed and fifteen wounded. Lendy and two of his Police were among those killed. Maritz died later of his wounds. Ten of his force of 42 had been killed, five wounded.

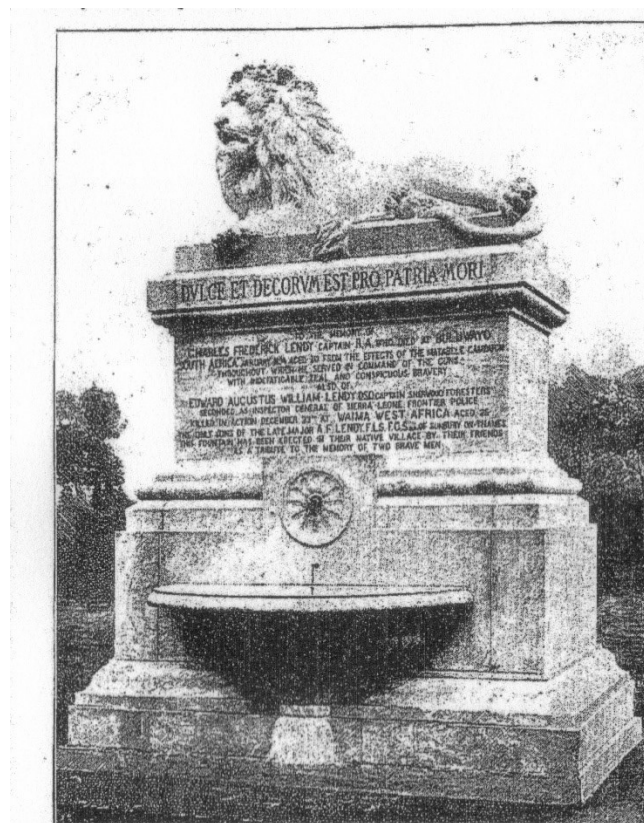
⁹ London Gazette 25 February 1890, Issue 26026, p 1044.

¹⁰ **TURE, SAMORI** (C. 1830-1900). Samori Ture was a state builder in late 19th century Guinea and the most effective opponent of colonial conquest in West Africa. Born in a trader family, he early took military service in order to free his mother, who had been taken as a slave. He proved himself a brilliant military leader and in the 1870s began building his own state, tying together many small Mandinka polities. He first clashed with the French in 1883 and realised from the first the importance of French weapons. He was able to use trade routes and commercial contacts to acquire modern rifles from Sierra Leone traders and horses from areas further north. He was operating in an area where there were few commodities he could exchange for his military purchases. Though he had a vision of an economically dynamic state, slaving provided him the guns he needed, many of his soldiers, and the farmers who produced the food his army and court needed. As a result, he was forced to increase his slaving activities. This in turn limited the areas that were loyal to him. He was nevertheless able to fend off the French for 15 years but was finally defeated and captured in 1898. From Klein, Martin A. and Woronoff, Jon (2002). Historical Dictionary of Slavery and Abolition. Scarecrow Press. ISBN 9780 8 108410 2 4

Edward Lendy was an officer in the British Army of the time, like thousands of others. But it is quite clear that he behaved in a much more praiseworthy manner than most of his contemporaries, in the light of his leading of his men against slavers, freeing hundreds of slaves in the single incident - amongst many other anti-slavery actions - for which he was decorated. Even when viewed by the not-so-perfect hindsight of modern eyes.

The Sunbury Memorial

Some weeks after the deaths of both brothers, the wars they fought in were still in the news. On 24 Feb 1894, in the Leeds Mercury, there were two separate articles in a single column on the fate of Allan Wilson's Patrol at the Shangani River, and Anglo-French tensions in Sierra Leone in the wake of the Waiima incident in which Edward had died. This controversial and sustained publicity prompted a public reaction, an appeal for funds, and the construction of the memorial to the two brothers at Sunbury in 1895.



The Sunbury Memorial in its original position on the riverside

The memorial originally stood at the side of the road along the river almost in front of the Lendys' residence at Riverside House. It incorporated a drinking trough in its base for passing cattle and horses. It was damaged by bombs in the Second World War, and then spent some time in storage until it was placed at the centre of the much loved Walled Garden in Lower Sunbury.

Memorials in Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe

Sierra Leone

Edward Lendy was buried where he died at Waiima in Sierra Leone, his grave marked with a stone cross. This cross was later incorporated into a larger memorial together with a stone cairn commemorating the deaths of the men of the Sierra Leone Frontier Police and the West India Regiment, and the French soldiers, who died in the same incident. The monuments and graves are well maintained, I understand.¹¹



The EAW Lendy Memorial at Waiima in Sierra Leone

Zimbabwe

It should be remembered that an increasingly bitter war was fought over the period 1960 to 1980, which resulted in the end of white government in Zimbabwe. After Independence, most, but not all, street names were changed, but there has been no attempt to remove other evidence - even celebrations - of colonial rule.

There is – still - a very large memorial to Charles Lendy on Leopold Takawira Avenue, the main boulevard leading out of central Bulawayo to the Johannesburg Road. It was erected on that spot in 1894. It lies in Centenary Park, between the Bulawayo Theatre and the Natural History Museum of Zimbabwe.

Charles Lendy is buried in the municipal cemetery in Sauerstown in Bulawayo, his grave marked by a simple stone cross. Neither his grave nor his memorial has ever been moved, desecrated or harmed in any way in the forty years since Independence in 1980, despite the people of Matabeleland and Bulawayo having every reason to resent him and other colonists.¹²

¹¹ <http://www.sierraleoneheritage.org/sites/monuments/captainlendy>

¹² I am most grateful to Susan Herbert and Barry Knight of Bulawayo for pictures of the Lendy Memorial there.



The Lendy Memorial in Centenary Park, Bulawayo

Cecil Rhodes is, of course, buried on a very imposing granite hill in the Matopos Hills just outside Bulawayo. His grave is marked with a large bronze slab set into the rock. The graves of the first white prime minister, Charles Coghlan; Rhodes' friend and business associate Leander Starr Jameson; and the memorial to Allan Wilson and the Shangani Patrol share the site. Despite Rhodes being the architect of British expansion into Mashonaland and Matabeleland in present day Zimbabwe, and being the arch-villain alongside Ian Smith in the eyes of the post-Independence government, neither that slab, nor any of the other memorials and graves on the same site have ever been desecrated or harmed. Indeed, there is a visitors' centre at the foot of the hill explaining, at some length on a number of large mounted posters, the background to the site and the memorials there. Neither the ex-President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, nor the current President Emmerson Mnangagwa, nor the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, have ever argued for the removal of his grave.

A statue of Rhodes used to stand in the centre of one of the major intersections in central Bulawayo. After Independence it was moved a few hundred metres down the Avenue to a spot in the gardens outside the Natural History Museum in Centenary Park, not far from the Lendy Memorial, where it can be easily seen by people enjoying the tranquillity of the park.

In the Bulawayo City Hall, there is still an extremely large Victorian painting of the last moments of the Shangani Patrol in a prominent position between the Mayor's Office and the Council Chamber, at the top of the grand entrance staircase. On the walls of that staircase are lined the portraits of the Mayors of Bulawayo from the first one in 1893 right through to the present incumbent. A bas relief in bronze of the Great Indaba in 1896 between Rhodes and the Matabele Indunas stands prominently above the main entrance to the City Hall.

My point is that even in these places and amongst these people upon which colonialism was imposed, in two very different parts of Africa, there is no general appetite for the "toppling of statues" or the erasing of an uncomfortable history, even after bitter conflict over decades. We could learn a thing or two from them.

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