

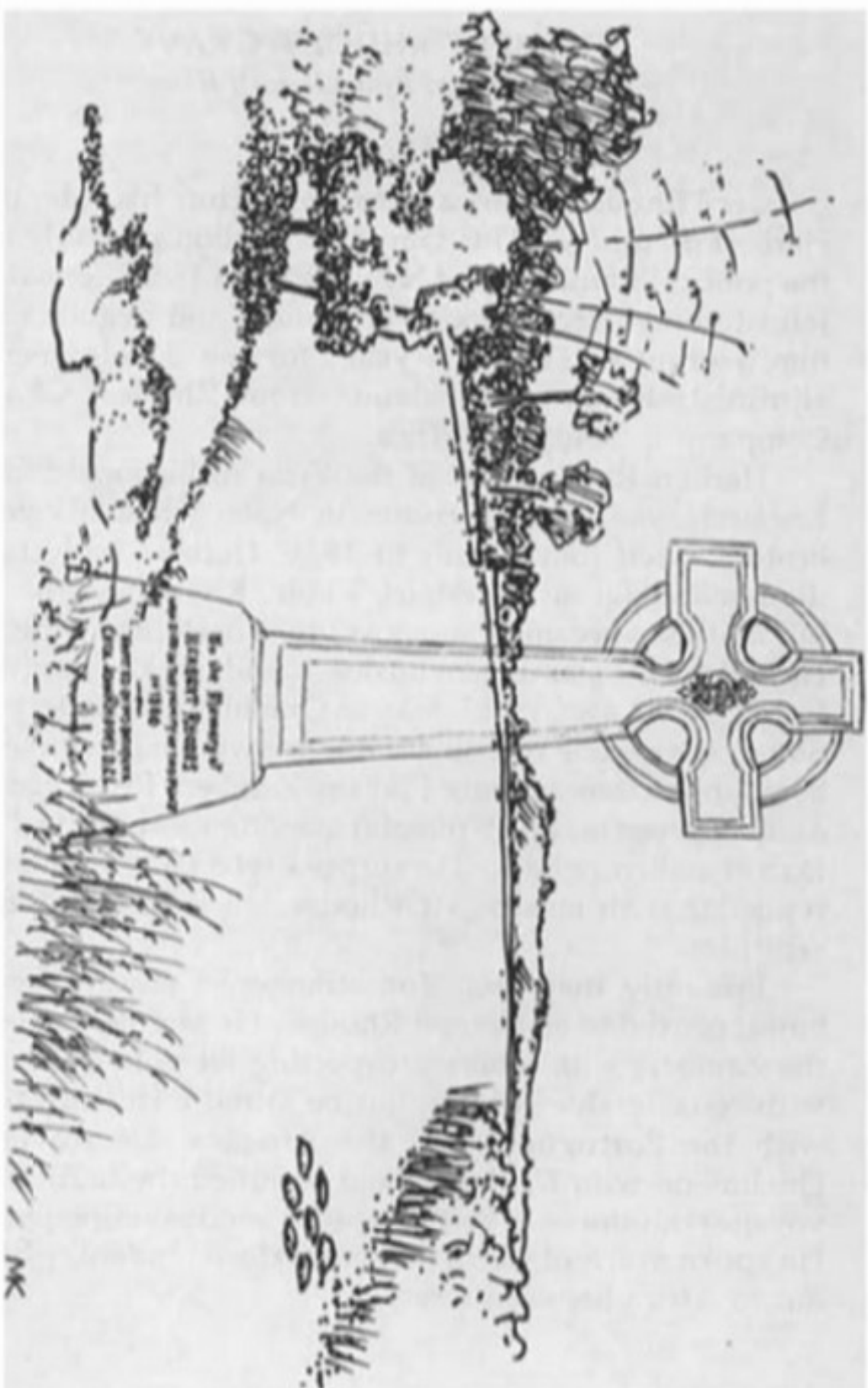
## HERBERT RHODES' GRAVE

*by Michael and Elspeth King*

Cecil Rhodes never came to Malawi but his elder brother Herbert died here. This family connection probably helped the political foundation of Nyasaland. In 1888, Consul Harry Johnston met Cecil Rhodes in London and negotiated with him a grant of £10,000 a year "for the development and administration of Nyasaland" from Rhodes' Chartered Company in Southern Africa.

Herbert Rhodes, son of the Vicar of Bishops' Stortford, England, was farming cotton in Natal when his younger brother Cecil joined him in 1871. Herbert had staked a diamond claim on Colesburg Kopje, Kimberley, the barren hill that soon became famous as the richest hole in the world. He had not the stamina for business, and trekked northwards. In 1877, Dr. Laws, on his way to Quelimane to collect stores, noted: "Early one morning while we were half awake in the boat, an African appeared on the Zambezi River bank with a cup of green tea and a plateful of mangoes and asked for the loan of a mirror. I asked in surprise who had sent these? He replied that his master, Mr. Rhodes, who was over there had sent him..."

Presently they met. The stranger, a man of powerful build, proved to be Herbert Rhodes. He said he had been up the Zambezi with others prospecting for gold and had met with considerable success, but he found it difficult to work with the Portuguese and the Africans. He travelled to Quelimane with Dr. Laws, and beguiled the tedium of the voyage with stories of his College days and roving experiences. He spoke much of Cecil, then an Oxford student, who came out to Africa between terms.



Drawing of grave-stone (from photograph by V. L. Bosazzo) superimposed on a sketch of the place where it had stood for over a century.

Herbert Rhodes joined Consul Elton on an expedition to report on the slave trade on Lake Nyassa. They travelled up the Shire River, and stayed in a house built by Captain Young in Ramokukan's Village at the foot of the Cataracts. Then they started off with a local hunter to trek up the east bank of the Shire. On August 17 the *Ilala* came in view, moored to the bank at Pemba with the awning spread as a tent. Here they joined James Stewart who noted "Mr. Downie goes on pleasure only, Mr. Rhodes as a man of business etc. and Mr. Hoste who is second officer of S. S. Kafir goes as surveyor".

They stayed at Cape Maclear Mission, for three weeks. Herbert Rhodes, went out in a small dinghy at Otter's Point and had an encounter with an inquisitive crocodile which followed him back to the beach, and was finally driven off with a shot from Elton's rifle.

On 17 September, 1877, Rhodes set off on the *Ilala* with James Stewart, Elton, Dr. Laws, and 28 people on board to make the second circumnavigation of Lake Nyassa. At night some had to sleep on land. In storms, they steamed to Kota Kota, to Likoma Island and then along the west coast to discover the Romashe River at the north end of the Lake. Here Elton's party disembarked to travel overland to Zanzibar.

The local people said they were warriors and not porters, and refused to carry the expedition's baggage. So Elton sent back to the *Ilala* several boat loads of biscuits, coffee, sugar, flour, candles, oatmeal, pots, pans, water buckets, guns, and ammunition. James Stewart wrote: "17 October 1877, Elton's expedition start for Zanzibar. We pointed out the danger, and saw them depart with gloomiest foreboding". (Elton died on this journey).

Herbert Rhodes then travelled south. A year later, Dr. Laws and James Stewart made a third journey on Lake Nyassa and met Herbert Rhodes: "8 September 1878. On the previous morning Mr. Rhodes' boat passed by Kota Kota.

Hearing from some fishermen of us being there, he returned, landed, and came to see us, bringing a lump of coal he had found at Florence Bay in a stream 5 miles south of Mount Waller. We could not get it to burn. Sent off a few letters with him."

Harry Johnston stated that Herbert Rhodes returned to the Upper Shire where he established himself for some time shooting elephants. He gained a great reputation among the Africans for bravery and fair dealing and was still spoken of by older men of the 1980's under the name "Roza".

Dr. Laws heard of his tragic death close to the lower Shire River in 1880. He had brought up a quantity of rum and other articles for trading purposes, and while sitting with Chief Ramokukan in a hut, a keg of rum exploded and caught fire. Rhodes was enveloped in the flames and severely burned, dying some hours later.

Herbert Rhodes was buried on the East Bank of the Shire River about 5 miles north of Chikwawa and below the Cataracts. A white marble cross was made in Durban and despatched to the Shire River by order of his brother Cecil and inscribed "To the memory of Herbert Rhodes who died in the vicinity of this place in 1880. Erected by His brother Cecil John Rhodes DCL".

In 1968 this grave was photographed by Bosazzo and Cole-King on the edge of a field near the riverside protected by an iron fence. It was downstream and on the opposite side of the river from Richard Thornton's grave.

Having found Bosazzo's report in Rhodes House, Oxford, we decided to look for Herbert Rhodes grave. On 17 May 1992, leaving our car on the main road, we set off on our bicycles along footpaths up the east bank of the shire River. We cycled through several poor villages where women and children were sorting their cotton in the mid-day heat. Our tyres were punctured by the spiky *seselesya* seeds, and we

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had to stop continually to pump them as they deflated. A few people pointed us on upstream to "the Grave". Eventually after pedalling for five dusty miles along bumpy paths and fording streams, we found the place. Near Kavalo village, an old man told us that this grave-stone fell into the water as the river bank was eroded by flooding about six years previously. Herbert Rhodes grave was last seen close to two mango trees and beside an eroded gulley there in 1985. The gravestone must now lie buried there in the mud under the waters of the Shire River.

#### References

1. Bosazzo, V. L. *The Grave of Herbert Rhodes* 1969. Typewritten document in Society of Malawi Library.
2. Johnston, Sir Harry *British Central Africa* Methuen, London, 1897.
3. Livingstone, W. P. *Laws of Livingstonia* Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1921.
4. Stewart, James *From Nyassa to Tanganyika* Blantyre, Central Africana, 1989.

THE GRAVE OF HERBERT RHODES ON THE SHIRE RIVER, MALAWI

by

V.L.Bosazza. F.R.G.S., Member Roy. Inst. Navigation

On the banks of the River Shire between Chikawa (Chibisas) and the limit of navigation on the Shire River, lie the remains of four men three of them of the Livingstone Zambesi Expedition 1858-63. The fourth is that of Herbert Rhodes, the little known brother of Cecil John Rhodes, The positions are as follows:-

Name	Lat. S	Long. E.	Notes
Herbert Rhodes	15° 58.8'	34° 47.8'	Marble tombstone made in Durban. firm extinct. Left bank of Shire (East).
Richard Thornton	15° 49.1	34 44.1	Cross and iron spike in baobab tree. Confluence of <del>Makurumadze</del> <sup>MWAMBEDI</sup> and Shire Rivers. (WEST BANK)
Dr. John Dickinson Rev. G.C. Scuddamore	16 01.6	34 48.3	Two graves on terrace above Shire River, west bank.

This note has been inspired by a private communication from Prof. G.S. Shepperson dated 24th. April 1978 in which he wrote

I am enclosing a section concerning Herbert Rhodes from a much longer <sup>still</sup> article which I wrote many years ago.

I am surprised that no one has yet done a substantive study of Herbert Rhodes or have they?

I know you have seen his grave on the Zambesi and I would be grateful for any comments on this little piece of mine and for any sources of further information about him. For example there are three articles on him in the Natal Witness, under the title "The Man who gave Rhodes to Africa, Cecil's Brother, Herbert Rhodes's remarkable career and Tragic End." in the same issues for 26 April, 27 April and 28 April 1921. They are written from information supplied by one Robert Ely of Maritzburg who seems to have known Herbert Rhodes well and gives a highly colourful account of his end. Would you know anything about Robert Ely and his connections with Herbert Rhodes?

As my interests are mainly concerned with the scientific and technical history of South East Asia, I shall confine myself purely to a description of the location of the grave. However in order to assemble what is known of Herbert Rhodes I attach as appendices various copies of documents I have been able to locate.

Mrs. J.I. Lautenson the University Librarian at the University of Cape Town in a private communication dated 11th. May 1978 wrote as



Herbert Rhodes's Grave on the edge of field near the Shire River's east bank. The Chikwawa (Nwanza fault) foothills are in the background. Up this escarpment the members of the Zambesi Expedition toiled.



The grave protected by an iron fence lies at the very edge of the cultivated land

Photographs by V. B. Bosazza  
Sept. 1968.



To the Memory of  
HERBERT RHODES

WHO DIED IN THE VICINITY OF THIS PLACE  
IN 1880.

ERECTED BY HIS BROTHER  
CECIL JOHN RHODES D.C.L.







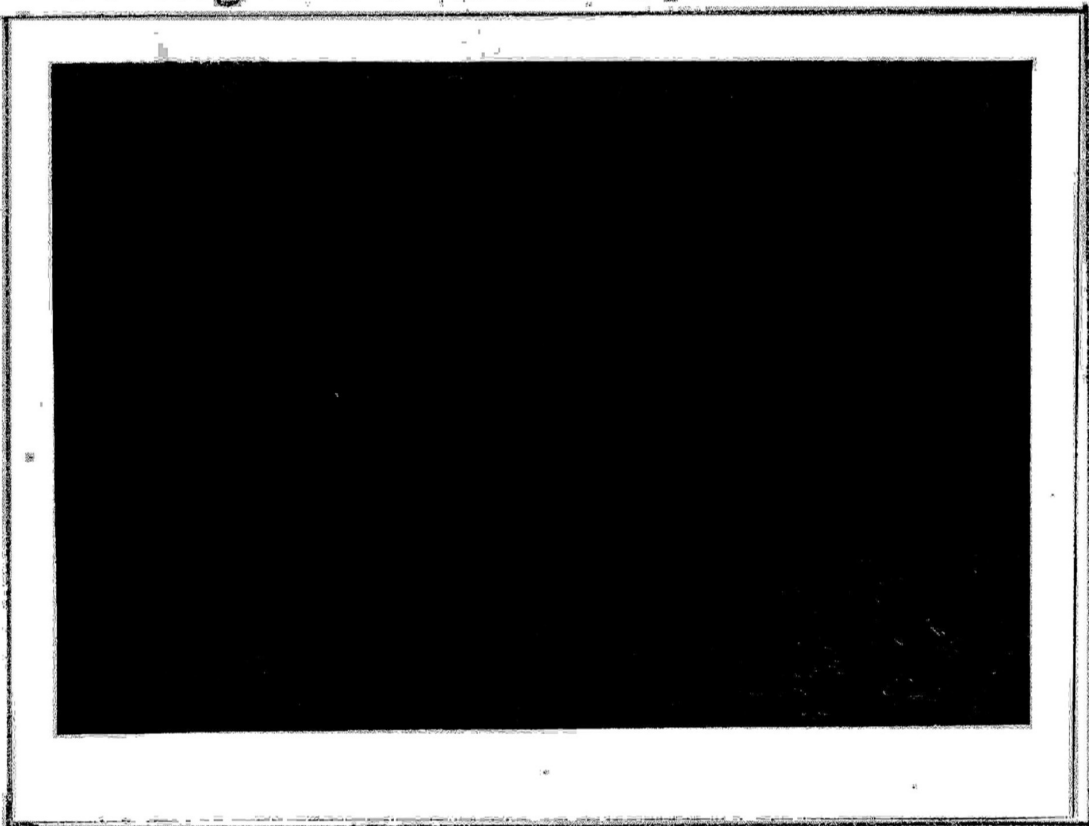


To the Memory of  
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Herbert Rhodes's Grave on the edge of field near the Shire River's east bank. The Chikwawa (Mwanza fault) foothills are in the background. Up this escarpment the members of the Zambesi Expedition toiled.



The grave protected by an iron fence lies at the very edge of the cultivated land  
Photographs by V.L. Bosazza  
Sept. 1969.

With regard to manuscript material, the only references which have come to light are in the Sibbett collection (of letters housed in the Natal Archives). ~~Two~~ Two of C.J. Rhodes's letters refer to "my brother", presumably Herbert. The reference numbers are:

1. Natal Archives CSO 2259, g.535, 3.8. 1871
- 2, No reference, letter to Carl Behrens, dated 4.12.1871.

Mrs. Aurenson also referred to information in two works

Burman, J. (1964) Personalities of the past; guns and diamonds in Personality 53 9th. July 1964).

Scully, William (1913) Reminiscences of a South African Pioneer.  
. London. Fisher, Unwin.

The Chief of the Natal Archives very kindly supplied, photocopies of two of the documents, and made a verbatim copy of a letter because it was too inconvenient to photocopy owing to the position in the volume. These are attached as appendices,

The National Archives of Rhodesia wrote 27th. June 1978, that there was very little recorded of Herbert Rhodes and referred to the fullest account written by Professor Shepperson in the Rhodes-Livingstone Journal No, 23, June 1978. This latter date is incorrect and should be 1958. The Librarian Rhodes House Library, University of Oxford on 25th. May 1978, reported that there was no manuscript material there, but that amongst a large collection of photographs connected with Cecil Rhodes, (not catalogued) there may well be a photograph of Herbert Rhodes. However, this would require special research.

The Librarian the Cory Librarian, Rhodes University, Grahamstown in a communication dated 18th. May 1958

We have a large collection on C.J., E.F. and F.W. Rhodes, particularly in the Collection of material we received from Gold Fields of South Africa but I have not been able to trace anything on Herbert Rhodes.

The Chief of the Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town on the 16th. May 1978 that no references to B Herbert Rhodes could be traced.

The ~~national~~ Dictionary of National Biography Vol. :181-191 simply states p.181

The eldest son, Herbert, was killed in Central Africa in 1879. As will be seen from the inscription on the tombstone he was reported to have died in 1880 in the "vicinity of this place." The stone was erected or rather made by order of Cecil John Rhodes, for there is no record of C.J. Rhodes having visited this part of South East Africa.

#### The Location of the Grave.

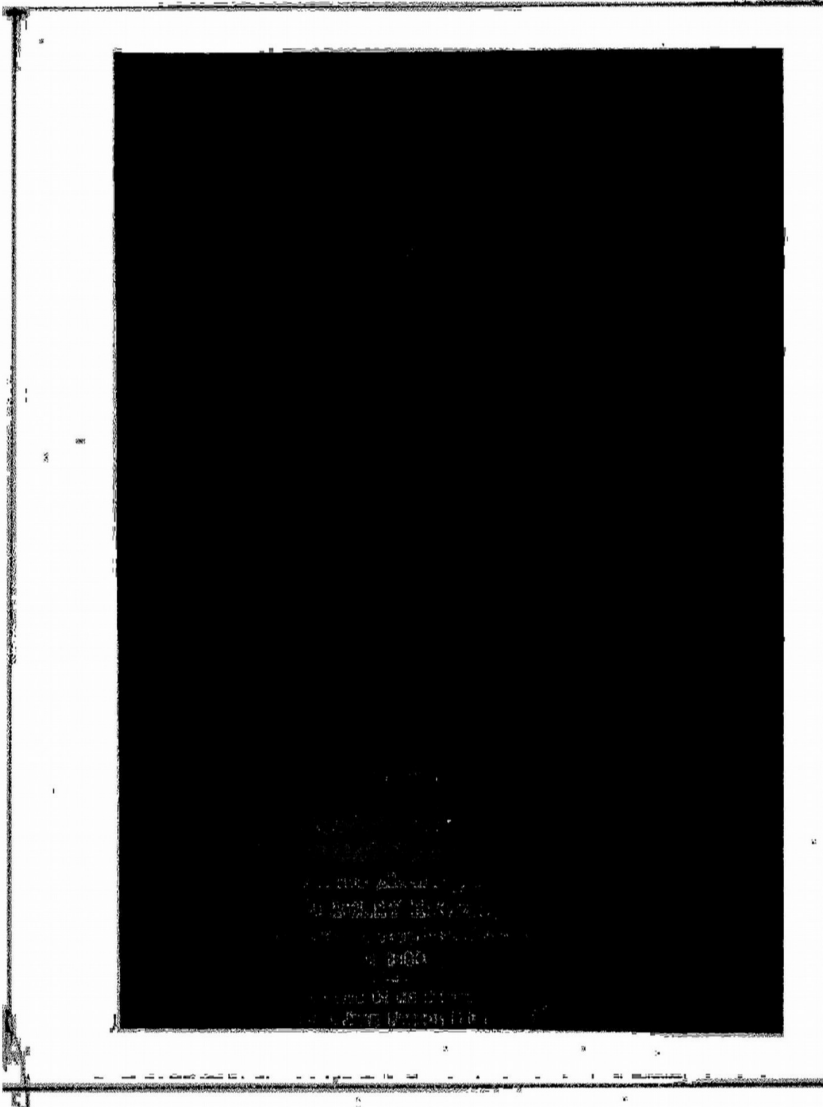
The "grave" lies near some large trees in a field 30 or 400 meters from the east bank of the Shire River. The hills in the background

\* Nov 1879, according to Shepperson ch at. p. 38.



The marble cross on the grave  
erected by Cecil John Rhodes.

Photograph by V. J. Secazza,  
Sept. 1969.



The marble cross on the grave  
erected by Cecil John Rhodes.  
Photograph by V.L. Bosazza,  
Sept. 1969.

3.

are the foothills of the Chikwawa escarpment, up which the members of the Zambesi Expedition toiled to go to Magomero and Zomba. I visited the grave in the company of my daughter Mrs. A. McLachlan, and we were guided there by Mr. Paul Cole-King of the Malawi ~~Dept~~ Department of Archives <sup>& ANTIQUITIES</sup>. Without his help, I would never have found it, nor even in fact known about it. While we visited the site on a cruise by dinghy from Thornton's grave to those of Dickinson and Scuddamore, it can be approached by road as well.

According to Shepperson, Herbert went to the Zambesi to prospect for gold in 1876, accompanied by three practised Australian diggers. Alluvial gold was and is still to be found in the tributaries of the Zambesi, in the Tete area <sup>(THE MASE eq.)</sup>, although not in the sands of the Zambesi. However, it was some years later when Herbert returned to the Nyssa area, that he died. No alluvial gold has ever been found in Malawi nor indeed any reef gold, to the best of my knowledge. I spent 6 months in 1956 and 8 months in 1957, <sup>mainly</sup> mainly in the area west of the Shire River, and the party found uranium, niobium-tantalum minerals and molybdenum but none of the associated minerals favouring gold such as pyrite, copper secondary or sulphide minerals. These occur in the Lower Shire in the Port Herald Hills but not in this area.

It is possible that in his second expedition Herbert Rhodes had other objectives than gold.

#### Acknowledgements.

I am grateful to the various librarians and archivists whom I have quoted for help and to Mr. Cole-King for taking me to the site. Prof. G. S. Shepperson inspired this brief note.

  
V.L. Bosazza

25th. October 1978

Johannesburg.



Section on Herbert Rhodes from GEORGE SHEPPERSON  
 "The Literature of British Central Africa," *Human  
 Problems in British Central Africa: The Rhodes -  
 Livingstone Journal*, No. 23, 1958 (Manchester University  
 Press)

(1) Herbert Rhodes. When one considers the increasing interest in the life and legend of Cecil Rhodes for over half a century, it is strange that more attention has not been paid to his elder brother, Herbert, who went out to South Africa before him, and on whose cotton farm Cecil Rhodes stayed for a year after his landing at Natal in 1870. By piecing together scraps of information,<sup>1</sup> the following tentative picture of Herbert Rhodes is obtained.

In addition to cotton farming in South Africa, he had done well in the gold and diamond business there. In 1876, he went up the Zambezi with three practised Australian diggers in search of gold. It seems that Herbert Rhodes hoped then to extend his prospecting

<sup>1</sup> As well as references on pp. 37-8, the following sources may be noted: F.O. 84/1448: Slave Trade, No. 17, Mozambique, 18th July, 1876; F.O. 84/1479: Slave Trade, No. 4, 3rd February, 1877 and No. 40, 17th September, 1877, etc.; Waller Papers (Rhodes House), III, 128, 30th April, 1877, and 129, 16th June, 1877; J. Frederick Elton, *Travels and Researches among the Lakes and Mountains of Central Africa* (London, 1879), *passim*, and pp. 247-9, 269-71, 311-15, 391-3; W. P. Livingstone, *Laws of Livingstonia* (London, 1921), pp. 109, 125. Amongst standard Rhodes lives, see Sir Lewis Michell (London, 1912), pp. 10, 12-15, 18-19; Gordon de Suer (London, 1914), pp. 7-8; J. G. McDonald (London, 1927), pp. 3-5, 12-13, 23, 27, 48-9; Basil Williams (London, 1933), 7-8, 10-13, 27, 29-31, 35-6, 70, 107, 146, 204; such biographies give little detailed attention to Herbert Rhodes' British Central African experiences.

directly into the Lake Nyasa regions; but fever and a hostile reception from some Zambezi tribes drove him back to the coast after fifteen months. Nevertheless, Rhodes and his men had discovered payable alluvial diggings in the sand of the Mazoe river about a hundred miles south-west of Tete and had reported on the prospects of gold in other parts of the Portuguese Zambezi sphere. His experiences appear to have taught Herbert Rhodes two things: first, that, because of the hostility of the tribes 'in the country of Situngu, a Maviti chief, [and elsewhere] . . . it [gold working] would be impossible for any but a strongly armed body of men prepared to fight their way and settle down and work for gold in the country';<sup>1</sup> and, secondly, that, though the Portuguese had no firm control up-country, it was necessary to keep on good terms with them, even if this meant turning a blind eye to their slaving activities which he himself had witnessed.

For part of the way back to the coast, Rhodes travelled with Robert Laws from Livingstonia who was then on his way to Quilimane. 'Amid the stories of college and later roving years he gave some account of his brother Cecil, a university student in not very robust health . . . who saw opportunities for money-making in many ways by means of combining rival parties into great undertakings'.<sup>2</sup> Back at the coast in the early months of 1877, Herbert Rhodes made trips to Natal and Zanzibar; and then by June he was ready to accompany the British consul at Mozambique, Frederick Elton, on his Nyasa expedition.

As a member of this expedition, Rhodes took some part in the delimitation of the north end of Lake Nyasa. But his eye was more on business prospects than pure geography. In July, he inspected with Elton the experimental cultivation of opium at Mazaro on their way up the Zambezi. He may have shared Elton's view that this new Portuguese enterprise threatened an 'important source of Imperial Indian revenue'; he certainly believed that it 'would apparently lead to the extensive cultivation of opium on the Zambesi'.<sup>3</sup> Elephant hunting and an interest in ivory occupied him continually—and on one occasion nearly cost him his eyes when a round exploded in the chamber of his gun. Later, in 1878, Rhodes discovered coal in a small stream a few miles to the south of Mount Waller.<sup>4</sup> This discovery may have been incidental to the search for gold which he carried on throughout the expedition: ' . . . the natives wondered at Mr. Rhodes. They said he spent all his time looking at stones. He would break off a piece of rock

Local discovery of

<sup>1</sup> F.O. 84/1479: No. 8, General slave trade report, 6th April, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> *Aurora*, 1st April, 1902, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> F.O. 84/1479: No. 38, Morumbala Mountain, 16th July, 1877.

<sup>4</sup> *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* (London), I, Robert Laws, 'Journey along Part of the Western Side of Lake Nyassa, 1878', pp. 311-12; III, James Stewart, 'Lake Nyassa, and the Water Route to the Lake Regions of Africa', pp. 264-5; Henry Drummond, *Tropical Africa* (London, 1889), pp. 186-8; W. P. Livingstone, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-4.

and look at it and then raise his eyes to heaven. They thought him crazy.<sup>1</sup>

The effective end of the expedition came with Elton's death on 19th December; and Rhodes officiated at his funeral. Two years later, in November, 1879, Herbert Rhodes also died. It seems that he had gone back into the Nyasa regions with a load of trade goods on a private venture. This load included a consignment of spirits, and while Rhodes was sitting in a hut with Ramakukan, a Makololo chief, a demi-john of it by some means exploded, Rhodes was caught in the flames and died of burns.<sup>2</sup> The episode has led to some speculation by both Europeans and Africans that the death was not altogether accidental; yet 'Roza', as Africans called him, had a reputation for popularity among the local peoples, and Elton himself noted that he maintained 'the best relations with the natives'.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, when the brief but exciting period that Herbert Rhodes was connected with British Central Africa is considered, the comment that was made by a Blantyre missionary on Cecil Rhodes does not seem altogether out of order: 'Some say that the memory of his brother who lies buried by the Shire River drew his thoughts in our direction.'<sup>4</sup> Cecil Rhodes, indeed, had a personal as well as a political connection with Central Africa; and this link deserves more attention and exploration than it has yet had from writers on these regions.

(2) *Katanga and the British Central Africa dream.* Neither Dr. Hanna nor Mr. Gann altogether neglect Congo issues which bear on early British Central Africa. If Dr. Hanna is sometimes misleading on them—his statement, for example, that the United States 'adopted' the 1885 Berlin Act (p. 224),<sup>5</sup> and his neglect of the deep interest which Nyasaland Scottish interests took in the Berlin and Brussels Conference<sup>6</sup>—he shows briefly the general way in which

<sup>1</sup> Kerr-Cross, 'Reminiscences of Karonga', *Central African Times*, 26th August, 1899, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> F.O. 84/1564: Slave Trade, No. 4, 1st January, 1880. Accounts of the means of Herbert Rhodes' death by burning differ: W. P. Livingstone, *op. cit.*, p. 176, 'rum'; S. G. Millin, *Rhodes* (London, 1933), p. 5, 'gin'; J. G. McDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9 and Johnston, *British Central Africa*, (London, 1898), p. 67, have no mention of spirits. The date of Herbert Rhodes' death seems most exact in Basil Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 36. Sir Harry Johnston gives two conflicting dates: 1880 in *British Central Africa*, p. 67; 1877 in ed. Leo Weinthal *The Story of the Cape to Cairo Railway* (London, 1923), I, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> F.O. 84/1479: No. 41, 13th October, 1877; Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> *L.W.B.C.A.*, February, 1900, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Flagg Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York, 1947), p. 578: 'The United States had never ratified the Berlin Act ... although it continued in treaty relations with the Congo Free State until its absorption by Belgium.'

<sup>6</sup> E.g. F.O. 84/1809: to W. MacKinnon, 4th January, 1884; at end, James Stevenson, note on Congo treaty and correspondence, and other Nyasa materials. F.O. 84/1810: to James Stevenson, 25th March, 1884; Glasgow Chamber of

C.S.O. 2259 - G.535.

u

Lions Kloof Aug. 3/71.

The Hon<sup>ble</sup>. Col. Secretary,

Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 5<sup>th</sup> instant.


I have the honor to inform you that it is not my intention to take up the land abandoned by MR Scott as I purpose under all the circumstances to take up the land adjoining my brothers' land upon which I entered at the end of September last and have continuously occupied up to the present time.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

yr obedient servant,

C. F. Rhodes

[Verbatim copy of letter - Too inconvenient to photocopy  
owing to position in volume.] 

12/3/34  
GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES,  
PIETERMARITZBURG.  
20th May, 1943.

Miss K. Campbell,  
220 Marriott Road,  
DUEBAN.

Dear Miss Campbell,

I wish to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst., and to forward the following information: Rhode's Farm.

I have succeeded in finding an application from Herbert Rhodes, d.d. 20/4/1869, which read as follows:

Sir,

I beg to make application for a certain plot of land on the Umcomanzi River facing Victims Hoek. I am entitled to a government grant of two hundred acres and should wish to take it up in the locality mentioned."

There is a note at the bottom of the application by the Surveyor General which is illegible. (S.G.O. 111.1/37.)

Furthermore, I found a rough sketch of the locality in connection with the making of a road into the "Valley of the Umkomaas". I enclose a rough tracing of the sketch, but would advise you to <sup>have</sup> look at the original. I have not been able to decipher the name of the road which I have marked with a cross and it was very difficult to trace it. I have traced the name separately at the foot of the sketch. (C.S.O. 353, No. 573). The Deeds Office will be able to give you the name of the present owner of Rhode's farm.

PANDA STONES.

The Panda Stones were erected in front of the Voortrekker Museum.

Voortrekker Museum Exhibits.

The Museum does not sell photographs of exhibits, but I understand that Mr. Lindly, a local photographer, has certain negatives and that he can sell photographs with the Committee's permission. I believe Mr. Lindley is retiring at the end of the month. If he is not in a position to help you, I am sure the Museum Committee will place no obstacles in the way of a photographer who wants to make a photograph of the waggon for you.

There is at present nothing I would like to submit to the historical Monuments Commission, but appreciate your kind offer very much. I should also be delighted to avail myself of your kind invitation to come and see your Africana collection, and will certainly let you know when I am in Durban.

The paper I read before the Museums Association will be published in S.A.M.A.B., and I shall endeavour to send you a copy, or draw your attention to the number in which it is published.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX 4

a few dates.

~~Bad paper~~ Bad paper  
vol 6 p. 40

- 1858  
May 11. Chat Green came to Fortin  
Trope. 1<sup>st</sup> wh. letter
- May 20<sup>th</sup> Dr. Calloway  
1859  
July 17. Tom Stuart came to  
Hlatten Rungas by High Flatts.
- April Hancock came to Trope  
Wing encircled
- 1860  
Dec 22 First ship that came  
across Uncomas was  
1859  
June 14 J. F. Hawkins & Armstrong  
came to Murchison
- July 30 J. J. Jackson "German Jackson"  
"The little General"  
Came across Uncomas with  
the Strachans under his  
protection & in his employ  
& crossed Wing encircled
- 1860  
July Cpt & Dr. Help came to  
Trope
- 1863  
Guguan came to Fortin
- 1862  
Brooks & Billy Glover came
- 1865  
June 19 Walter Baker came to Down Point  
J. G. Smith bot. Pluck her it  
Tro Ogle built house at  
Trope "now Houston"
- 1868  
Oct. H. Rhodes came to Fortin
- November James Walker m.c. came to Kinnarada
- 1869  
Feb. St. Clair found Gold. Unites alumin.
- May 1. Australia in prospectors found color  
in all streams, but gave bad report  
as so different to what they knew abt.
- May 30 Fight Boca under Taba Amryachis  
& Masuan at Fido's

WINDGW ON

THE PAST

# The brother of Cecil Rhodes

CECIL JOHN RHODES was one of 12 brothers and sisters, only two of whom ever married. Although most members of the family sooner or later came to Southern Africa, the empire builder appears to have had little in common with any of them.

When Cecil Rhodes was found to be tubercular he was sent at the age of 17 to join his eldest brother, Herbert, who was cotton farming in Natal. The date of his arrival was September 1, 1870.

A contemporary has left a description of Herbert who, throughout his life, found it difficult to remain in one place for any length of time. Herbert Rhodes was described as a tall, lean, hatched-faced man of considerable strength. It is further recorded that he was a splendid boxer.

Like several of his brothers Herbert proved to be a source of embarrassment to Cecil on more than one occasion. William Scully, the author who was a well-known magistrate in South Africa, and who shared a tent with Cecil, Herbert and Frank Rhodes in the early days of Kimberley, recorded an incident which could not have pleased Cecil overmuch.

It was known that Bapedi tribesmen working on the Kimberley diggings regularly stole diamonds which were sent as a form of tribute to their chief, Sekukuni, who very soon had many of the precious stones. The chief, who had been a thorn in the flesh of the Transvaal government, sought to strengthen his mountain stronghold and allowed the word to get round that he was prepared to give a pint measure of diamonds to the person who would furnish him with a cannon.

Herbert Rhodes heard of the offer and decided to obtain a cannon so obsolete that it would be of no use to anybody. In this way he hoped to evade the serious charge of gun-running while still being eligible for the pint of diamonds which

would make him a wealthy man. The gun was bought and Herbert loaded it on a barque and set sail up the Maputa river for a rendezvous where the mutually satisfactory exchange was scheduled to take place.

Unfortunately for his scheme Herbert not only possessed boxing skill, he also possessed a quarrelsome nature and hardly had the gun been loaded than he had a fight with one of the crew who was fully aware of what was going on. This man managed to get ashore and reported the presence of the gun on board to the Portuguese authorities who immediately set out in pursuit of the boat.

A friend of Herbert's, a resident of Lourenco Marques, heard of the intentions of the authorities and sent a swift native runner to advise him of the danger. On receiving the message Herbert ordered his crew to cast anchor and hit upon a simple way of concealing the offending cannon. He tied the one end of a length of string to the gun and the other end to a small piece of wood and then threw the lot overboard. The cannon sank to the bottom of the river while the piece of wood floated on the surface—so marking the position. A short while later the Portuguese officials arrived and Rhodes and his companions were arrested. He protested vociferously and demanded that his boat be searched. This was done and not a trace of a gun was found.

The officer in charge of the Portuguese didn't quite know how to get out of the difficult position of having accused the brother of so famous a man as Cecil Rhodes of gun-running and tried to get out of the embarrassing predicament by apologising profusely and offering Herbert glass after glass of wine. Unfortunately liquor, which featured prominently in the life of this particular Rhodes, was, as on many other occasions, to let him down badly on this day.

Not realising that he was anchored in a tidal river, Herbert enjoyed the Portuguese hospitality so long and so much that he did not see that the river level was falling rapidly until a watchful soldier noticed the mouth of the cannon appearing above the water. Rhodes and his companions were marched back to Lourenco Marques where he was imprisoned in the fortress. However, Rhodes' incarceration did not last long as the combination of powerful relatives and friends as well as some timely palm-greasing soon soothed Portuguese susceptibilities.

As in life so in death liquor played an important role in the destiny of Herbert Rhodes. Returning one night with a friend to the hut in which he was then living on the shores of Lake Nyasa, Rhodes felt like indulging in some alcoholic refreshment. The only liquor in the hut was an unopened keg of Johanna rum, a powerful and highly inflammable spirit. As he knocked in the bung some of the contents spilled and became ignited, and within a second the keg burst and the flaming liquor enveloped the unfortunate Rhodes.

His friend finally managed to quench the flames and dispatched a messenger to Blantyre, forty miles away, to summon help while he tried to make the badly burnt man as comfortable as was humanly possible. The call for help was answered by Dr. Jane Waterston who died at her home in Parliament Street, Cape Town, in 1932. But there was nothing that the missionary doctor could do: Herbert Rhodes was too extensively burnt and shortly after her arrival he died.

Herbert Rhodes never achieved much in Africa, but in many ways his was typical of the adventurous spirit of those pioneers who opened up the closed oyster which was Africa.

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