

Henry Hartley

Hunter Explorer Extraordinaire
(1815-1876)



Ian H Mackay

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Prelude

During our seemingly never-ending Covid-19 to Covid-22 global pandemic, I discovered and became intrigued with an English elephant hunter by the name of Henry Hartley (1815-1876).

Hartley was blessed with a superb intellect, developing multiple divergent skills and talents. Besides his southern African exploration ambitions, he was a pioneering tobacco, citrus and coffee farmer, and showed bravery as a hunter of very wild rhinos, elephants, buffalo and lions.

He was notorious for his keen sense of self-deprecating humour, his embellished campfire yarns, hunting stories and wildlife encounters.

It is known that Henry Hartley could easily converse with, and was trusted by the Zulu-related, Ndebele tribes up north near the Zambezi River, because there are many similarities with the Xhosa (Nguni) languages that he absorbed growing up as a child in Bathurst in the Eastern Cape in the 1820s. He became a trusted advisor and confidant to the Ndebele/Zulu Chief Mzilikazi in Matabeleland, and his son Chief Lobengula who succeeded him in 1870.

Hartley was the first white man to visit many significant parts of southern Africa that even Dr David Livingstone missed the same missionary-inspired era, and the same wild geographic locale. Hartley was not a missionary, nor an elected leader, but nevertheless a noble, well-liked, helpful fellow who met and interacted with many of the important political players of his time - who have themselves been written about *ad infinitum*. Hartley became a prolific professional elephant hunter.

Yet, there is no published, comprehensive biography on this English 1820 Settler and southern African Explorer pioneer - just lots of bits and pieces of interesting information, and "sidebars" scattered everywhere in the historic record.

I have perused hundreds of original documents and secondary articles from the period. The *Brenthurst Library* in Parktown, Johannesburg, was of great assistance in downloading digital copies of the easy-to-read, handwritten, copious Victorian script of fellow explorer Thomas Baines (using a constantly-sharpened graphite pencil) and more rarely of Henry Hartley (using a quill ink pen). These documents provide exceptional *insight* into the friendly, cooperative manner of Henry Hartley and his ambitious entrepreneurial *foresight*. (In