

After Action Report: Brattonsville 2021

Thankfully, this year in a season of declining risk from COVID 19, the County of York, SC, allowed the annual Battle of Huck's Defeat to proceed.

Our unit members attended with eight horse and portrayed British Legion dragoons on both Saturday (for the Battle of Huck's Defeat) and Sunday for the Battle of Ford Plantation (Colleton Co – I think).

In attendance we had the following: Jesse Tarver (who portrayed Christian Houck) along with his son Jensen, Stacy Brogden, Darryl Brown, Edward Harrelson, Eric Harrelson, Nathan Poston, Dean Withers, Tom West and we welcomed back Austin Kirkland to our ranks. Horses included Buddy and "Dammit" Zack, (Rhap)Sody and old girl Katie, Sudie, Duke, and Stacy's horses Bo and Boomer. Stacy brought out a "new to him" horse which did really well. With the extra horse, we were able to get Tom West in the saddle. Tom did great for his first time on a horse in over 10 years. On Sunday, we were able to let Austin Kirkland take the saddle and fight with us. We did learn that the new horse can jump 3.5 feet from standing still, as the barnsour fellow broke through the paddock gate to be with its mate on the line. Thus, Stacy will likely only be bringing one horse unless we are sure of another rider.

We should remember in our thoughts some of our Dragoon family who have had unexpected tragedy in their lives. Joel Anderson lost his father Cary Anderson (age 73) a week before the event. Herb Puckett and Annie (Bert's father and step mother) are having some health concerns which caused Bert and Chris to have to drop everything and go to Georgetown SC. Please keep these members in your thoughts and let them know they have your support.

Luckily, Chris gave me some warning (around 11 am on Friday) that she would not be able to attend. Jesse and I worked up a menu and I was able to secure provisions for the weekend. Thank you to Ron Crawley who made his nesting cookpots available for use. Thank you as well to Tom and Dean and others who helped with the preparation of breakfast. I think it took us 2.5 hours Saturday morning to start a fire and cook everything. We really missed Chris Puckett and it shows just how valuable our distaff is to us. I know we always thank Chris for all the cooking and menu preparation she does, and we really do mean it!

The Brattonsville folks were their usual good hosts. In particular, Eli Coburn has made it clear that anytime we want to use the site, either for a full muster or just riding, to let him know and it is ours for the use. They put us in the slave cabin near the battlefield, where we have the nice walnut trees. We used the paddock at night. It was super nice, and for Brattonsville, it was actually pretty cool (at least it was breezy at times). We've all been there when it felt like a blast furnace, so, I'll take a breeze when I can get it.

We asked Eric Harrelson to lead us in drill on Saturday and be in charge of the battle leadership (since we knew Jesse would be getting shot in the head later). Eric, Jesse and I attended the officers meeting at 9 am. Then, during the battle, Jesse took his hit, I took the lead on his horse, and Eric's saddle slipped off of Katie. So, all of the leadership was down. Kind of sounds like a real battle!

On Sunday, we did a new scenario which included a Patriot colonel Lacey who was ably portrayed by Dean Withers. Lacey had been a prisoner for 1.5 years and somehow broke his parole. He then captured a "spy" named Williamson and held him. The British caught Lacey and his patriot force at Ford Plantation. They attacked, killed 14 patriots and re-captured the prisoner

and Lacey. Lacey was later hanged in Charleston. After the war, it appears Williamson might have even been a double agent, at least according to a letter to Congress from Nathanael Greene. The scenario design was good for the number of participants and the size of the field. We engaged the rebels along with British infantry and loyalist militia. We demonstrated on both flanks and eventually charged the patriots near the house in the corner of the battlefield. Lacey, portrayed by Dean, tried to get away. The story goes that Lacey tried to jump a fence, but his horse had grown too fat during his imprisonment and refused to jump the fence. So, he had to dismount and try to tear down the fence, that's when we caught him. We didn't reenact the hanging, much to Dean's relief. One particularly cool item that we added in conjunction with Luis Cruz of the 6th NC was to "capture" Williamson. Williamson was portrayed by Zack (of the Brattonsville staff). We met him at the end of a battlefield tour and captured him in front of his tour group. He was thrown on the back of a horse and carried away. Very fun and a nice added incident that Zack was not expecting. I'm sure it was very cool to the spectators as well. Kudos to Luis for having the idea.

The site provided pit cooked (in a real pit) barbecued pig for the evening meal. We made a cabbage/onion/potato and sausage stew in Jesse's Dutch oven to share. Saturday evening we enjoyed music by the Mecklenburg militia as well as Rumalade and I made a Jamaican Rum punch for our camp. We especially enjoyed the company of Addie and Colleen and Haley in our camp. We were all pretty tired and turned in early. As I mentioned before, we did get to spend some time with Austin Kirkland and we met his lovely wife. I've encouraged both of them to come out. Austin has a little soldier of about 1 year old, so we should have some fun with them when they can join us.

All in all, it was a great event. We put 8 riders on the field both days, which is pretty good considering how stretched our membership is with work and other responsibilities. Eric drove up from college, about a 6 hour trip. We were safe. Some of us came off, but that was mostly due to saddles slipping on very sweaty horses. No one was hurt, which I think we can all agree is a successful event. Loads of fun, and we missed those of you who could not attend for various reasons. Let's all plan to take Brattonsville up on its offer to provide a location for drill and rides on their lovely property --- though we might wait for somewhat cooler weather. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of such a good group of living historians.

Edward Harrelson
3d Light Dragoons
British Legion Dragoons