

# HOW 93rd HELPED TO QUEL INDIAN MUTINY

## History's Tribute To Gallant Sutherland Highlanders

### COLOURS CEREMONY IN 1871

THE 93rd left the Crimea on June 16, 1856, and arrived at Portsmouth on July 15. Next day the regiment was inspected by the Queen, who walked down the line accompanied by Prince Albert. Again, on the 18th, Her Majesty, attended by the Princess Royal, visited the huts of the regiment.

#### MOST IMPORTANT EPISODE

The next episode in the history of the Sutherland Highlanders is the most important in its career, as they had, in the Indian Mutiny, an opportunity of showing what mettle they were made of such as they never had since their embodiment.

The regiment left Aldershot for Dover. On January 31, 1857, orders were received for the 93rd to hold itself in readiness for immediate embarkation for India. In March, however, orders were given again that the Sutherland Highlanders hold themselves in immediate readiness for embarkation for China.

Under Lt.-Col. Hope, three companies embarked on H.M.S. *Belleisle* at Portsmouth. Later, the remaining service companies, under Lt.-Col. Leith Hay, proceeded to Cospoort, where they received the Queen on her landing from the Isle of Wight. On June 16, several companies embarked on s.s. *Mauritius* for China.

#### CHIEF'S WELCOME

The strength of the regiment was 52 officers and 1069 other ranks. The *Mauritius* entered Simon's Bay, Cape of Good Hope, where she found the *Belleisle* at anchor. The startling intelligence of the mutiny of the Bengal native army was conveyed to the men. Orders were received that the 93rd were to proceed with all possible speed to Calcutta. The *Mauritius* anchored in the Hoogli, opposite Fort-William, on September 20, 1857, the anniversary of the battle of Alma. The 93rd was welcomed by its old brigadier, the newly-appointed commander-in-chief, Sir Colin Campbell.

No time was lost in sending the 93rd up river. By October 31 the main body had reached Cawnpore. They joined the force assembled at Oude for operations against Lucknow. One of the companies, under Captain Cornwall, formed part of a small force which had a severe but successful engagement with a considerable body of the rebels near Feteerpoor. This severely contested affair was fought with such spirit and gallantry as to excite the admiration of Captain Peel, R.N., who had command of the force.

#### LOYALTY AND DEVOTION

Drawn up in quarter distance column facing Lucknow, the 93rd stood in the centre of the brigade, and after passing in front of the other regiments Sir Colin Campbell approached the Sutherland Highlanders and addressed them thus—"93rd, we are about to advance to relieve our countrymen and countrywomen besieged in the Residence of Lucknow by the rebel army. It will be a duty of danger and difficulty, but I rely upon you."

This short and pointed address was received with such a burst of enthusiasm that the gallant old chieftain must have felt assured of its loyalty and devotion, and confident that, wherever he led, the 93rd would follow, and if need be, die with him to the last man.

On November 14, 1857, the flank march began and subsequent operations found the 93rd in the thick of the battle. The breach having been considered practicable, the assault was made by the 4th Punjab Rifles and the 93rd. It was a glorious and exciting rush. On west side by side in glorious rivalry, the Sikh and the Highlander, the 93rd straining every nerve in the race, led gallantly by their officers. The colours so lately confided to the regiment by the Duke of Cambridge were opened to the breeze, and carried proudly by Ensigns Robertson and Taylor.

#### BLOODY STRUGGLE

The greater part of the regiment dashed at the breach, and among the first to enter were Lt.-Col. Ewart and Captain Burroughs. At the same time three companies advanced on the left so as to keep down the artillery fire opened on the British flank. The opening in the wall of the Secunder Bagh was so small that only one man could enter it at a time; but a few having gained an entrance, they kept the enemy at bay until a considerable number of the Highlanders and Sikhs had pushed in, when in a body they emerged into the open square, where began what was probably the sternest and bloodiest struggle of the whole campaign.

#### DEAD PILED IN HEAPS

Shortly after the breach had been entered and while the men were

struggling hand to hand against unequal numbers one portion of the 93rd succeeded in blowing open the main gate. Pressing their way in, they rushed to the support of those who had passed through the breach.

There was no escape for the Sepoys, for the 93rd, roused to the highest pitch of excitement, and burning to avenge the butchery at Cawnpore, dashed furiously on, gave no quarter, and did not stay their hands while one single enemy stood to oppose them. No, not until, at the close of the day, the building formed one mighty charnel house, for upwards of 2000 dead Sepoys dressed in their old uniforms, lay piled in heaps. Everyone bore away with them bloody reminders of the dreadful affair.

#### COVETED HONOUR FOR VALOUR

A large number of officers and men were recommended for the Victoria Cross.

No regiment was more frequently employed against Lucknow than the 93rd, under the commander-in-chief, who entrusted to the trustworthy Highlanders some of the most difficult duties. After some severe fighting the 93rd, supported by the 4th Punjab Rifles, succeeded in expelling the enemy from several large mosques and enclosures and this terminated the fighting within the city, which was now in possession of the British.

Subsequently the regiment moved about a lot, marching and fighting, and thus ended the work of the Sutherland Highlanders in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, in which it won, for itself never-dying fame, but not, however, did it gain its glory cheaply. After its great exertions and sufferings the regiment stood much in need of rest and means of restoration for the jaded constitutions of officers and men.

The record book pays a high and well-merited tribute to the admirable conduct of the men during the terrible ordeals. There was never any approach to panic, no murmuring, or shrinking from duties of the most trying and irksome kind.

After an absence of 12½ years the 93rd boarded the troopship *Jumna* at Bombay on February 14, 1870. The regiment arrived at Portsmouth and sailed next day for Leith, subsequently going to Aberdeen by rail.

#### NEW COLOURS FROM DUCHESS

On August 4, 1871, while the regiment was stationed in Edinburgh, it was presented with new colours by the Duchess of Sutherland.

The ceremony in the Queen's Park was witnessed by 10,000 spectators. Accompanying the Duchess were the Duke of Sutherland and the Marquis of Stafford. After the old colours, worn and tattered by service in India, had been trooped, two ensigns were presented with the new colours by the Duchess. Her Grace accepted custody of the old colours, returning the Queen's colours to be placed over the memorial erected in St Giles' Cathedral to the officers and men who fell in the Crimea. Shortly after it was decided that they should be removed and sent to Dunrobin.

The Duke and Duchess and a large party were entertained to luncheon by the officers in the Picture Gallery of

Holyrood. Following this dancing was entered into enthusiastically. It was said that until that time no dancing had taken place in Holyrood since the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie. The Duke and Duchess afterwards visited the men, their wives and families, by all of whom they were enthusiastically received.

#### QUEEN'S GESTURE

It might be mentioned here that in the autumn of 1870 the Queen, having noticed that a detachment of the regiment as a guard of honour at Ballater wore kilts and plaids of hard tartan, and that after a march in wind and rain the men's knees were much scratched and cut by the sharp edge of the tartan, Her Majesty directed that in future soft tartans be supplied to all Highland regiments.

In concluding the short history of the gallant Sutherland Highlanders, it is worthy of note that the men maintained the esprit de corps right up until the time they were commanded by Colonel Philip Durham Trotter in 1890 and at that time they still deserved the high and honoured distinction conferred upon them in other days by that brave old warrior, Lord Clyde, as being "second to none."

On Monday, May 12, 1873, the 93rd left Edinburgh for Aldershot, and on that occasion the magistrates of the Scottish capital publicly bade farewell in name of the citizens.

#### REORGANISATION

A magnificent centre-piece was added to the plate belonging to the officers' mess during the period of home service. Intended as a memorial of the part taken by the Regiment in the Crimean War, and the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, it was specially designed with the object in view by one of the officers. The cost was nearly £500.

After being stationed at many places throughout the country the regiment, in June, 1879, embarked in H.M.S. *Tamar* for Gibraltar.

April 4, 1881, saw the 93rd home again, and on 1st July the old numerical designation of the regiment was dropped, and the 93rd Highlanders became, under the new territorial scheme of reorganisation, the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Louise's Sutherland and Argyll Highlanders.

Here we must conclude the historical records of a regiment which ever uphold the high character associated with Highlanders, and showed gallantry on the field of battle which earned for it many high commendations, including the highest honours of all—the Victoria Cross.

(Concluded).