

A 24TH FOOT INDIAN MUTINY TO A PRIVATE WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE BATTLE OF JHELM WHERE THREE COMPANIES OF THE 24TH FOOT SUFFERED VERY HEAVY CASUALTIES ATTEMPTING TO DISARM MUTINEERS OF THE 14TH NI. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SERVED IN THE GWALIOR AND PUNJAB CAMPAIGNS.



INDIAN MUTINY 1857-9, NO CLASP 'A. CHRISTIAN. 1ST BATN, 24TH REGT.'

Alfred Christian, a 21 year old labourer from St Mary, Canterbury, enlisted into the 3rd Foot on 30 November 1839. Volunteering for service with the 39th Foot on 15 October 1844, he volunteered for service with the 24th Foot on 1 November 1846 (Regt number 2731). After extensive service in India, he was finally discharged from the army on 30 November 1860. Regarding his conduct and service, his service papers note:

"His conduct has been very good and he is in possession of 4 Good Conduct Badges. Has never been tried by Court Martial. Served in the campaign against Gwalior and in action at Punniar 29 December 1843. Served with the Army of the Punjab in 1848/9. Was present at the action at Sadoolapore 3 Dec 1848, Chilianwallah 13 January 1849 and Goojerat 21 Feb 1848. In action against the mutineers of 14 Regt N.I. at Jehlum on 7 July 1857. I possession of a Star for service at Gwalior, Punjab medal with 2 clasps and is entitled to the Indian Mutiny medal. In possession of Good Conduct medal with gratuity of £5."

Alfred Christian is confirmed on the medal roll for a no clasp medal and is listed as present at Jhelum, 7 July 1857

THE 24TH AT JHELM FROM THE REGIMENTAL HISTORY

'On 1st July, 1857, three companies 24th (Nos. 1, 2, and 3), under Brevet-Colonel and Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Ellice, were ordered from Rawul Pindi to Lahore, and on 4th July, Colonel Ellice received instructions to march with these companies, numbering two hundred and eighty-five of all ranks, three horse artillery guns, and a detachment of Native Cavalry, to Jhelum, to disarm the 14th Bengal Native Infantry and detachments of the 39th Native Infantry, who were known to be ripe for revolt.

On nearing the cantonments, on the morning of 7th July, after a night march of twelve and three-quarter miles from Deenah, Colonel Ellice heard these regiments had mutinied. He pressed on with the guns and cavalry, and was met by the officers, who were making their escape, pursued by the fire of their own mutinous Sepoys. The latter retired on perceiving his force and took refuge in their lines, previously loopholed, occupying strongly the fortified keep, or guard room, which commanded the whole position. The Sepoys numbered over a thousand, all armed and well provided with ammunition; Colonel Ellice had with him under three hundred infantry and three guns available for the task of assaulting a well-posted enemy from an open plain. He attacked from a flank, and drove the mutineers from line to line of huts, till he reached a position from which to make an assault on the keep, which was carried by the men of the 24th Regiment with the greatest gallantry. The Sepoys had lost heavily, and what remained of them were now retreating hastily across the plain. The affair up to this point had been absolutely and entirely successful, and the position brilliantly carried with small loss. At this moment, unfortunately, Colonel Ellice was desperately wounded (shot through neck, leg, and right shoulder, and horse killed,) and had to be carried off the field, the command devolving on the next senior officer, Colonel Gerrard, 14th Bengal Native Infantry. The fugitive mutineers retired to a walled village, some distance from the cantonments, and made a fresh stand. The infantry and guns followed them up and recommenced the attack. Unfortunately one of the guns was unlimbered within musket shot of the village, and fell short of ammunition. The horses were killed, and in the endeavour to drag the gun further back several lives were sacrificed.



It was now 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the men had been marching since 12 the previous night, and since 4 o'clock a.m. had been fighting under the scorching sun of the Punjab in July. They were utterly exhausted from the excessive heat and want of food, the rations having failed to come up. It was therefore determined to hold the position already gained and not resume the attack till next morning. In the night the Sepoys retreated from the village, but the pursuit being vigorously pushed, on the morning of 8th July, the result was the entire destruction of the Jhelum mutineers. This engagement was highly creditable to the weak force engaged, and more particularly to the 24th Regiment, which on this occasion, though in great numerical inferiority, drove a vastly superior force with heavy loss from a singularly advantageous position.

It was a day of great responsibility, as not only had Colonel Ellice to attack the mutineers at once, after a long, fatiguing march in the month of July — for in the days of the mutiny, no matter the odds,

one was bound " to go at them " — but he had to tell off a party to watch the town and a wing of irregular cavalry (Liptrot's Irregulars in garrison at Jhelum) who were suspected of wavering, and actually in the end did mutiny, thus greatly weakening the force at his disposal for the attack on the lines.

The regimental casualties were : Captain F. Spring, killed ; * Colonel Ellice and Lieutenant R. C. Streatfield dangerously wounded ; Lieutenant E. P. Chichester, J: severely wounded; two sergeants, one corporal, and nineteen privates, killed ; forty-eight privates, wounded.

One hundred and fifty of the mutineers were killed in their lines ; the remainder (excepting one hundred and fifty who escaped to the territories of the Maharajah Ghoolab Singh), were taken prisoners and executed summarily. ‘



Condition VF. A good 24th Mutiny medal so a soldier with a fine service