

**A FINE AND SCARCE QUEEN'S SOUTH AFRICA 1899 TO AN IMPERIAL YEOMANRY OFFICER WHO AFTER SERVING WITH PAGET'S HORSE, TRANSFERRED TO 28TH COMPANY AND WAS KILLED IN ACTION BY A GUNSHOT THROUGH THE BRAIN AT HARDVILLE IN 22 OCTOBER 1901 AT THE AGE OF JUST 18**



QUEEN'S SOUTH AFRICA MEDAL 1899, CLASPS CAPE COLONY, ORANGE FREE STATE, TRANSVAAL, SOUTH AFRICA 1901 'LIEUT: H.W. BRYAN. 28 CO.IMP:YEO:'

Harold William Bryan was born on 2nd May 1883 in Rue Colet, Vevey, Vaud, Switzerland. His father was described as a 'Gentleman' and of independent means, his mother was born in Calcutta where her father was a Commander of Her Majesty's Bengal Pilot Service. On 25 January 1901 Bryan enlisted into Paget's Horse, as Private (No. 20345), at Marlborough Street Police Court. His trade or calling noted as an Art Student, aged 20 years and 8 months, which suggests he had lied about his age and was a couple of months off his 18th birthday when he enlisted

Raised by in early 1900 by George Thomas Cavendish Paget, the son of a British general, Paget's Horse was designated as 19th Battalion, Imperial Yeomanry, consisting 51st, 52nd, 68th and 73rd Companies. Recruited through gentleman's clubs, the men in this unit were public school educated and it was not uncommon to see titled young men serving in the ranks as Privates and even the odd MP. On the social scale, Paget's Horse was certainly one of the more exclusive Yeomanry units, wearing a badge made up of the letters 'PH' which provided a source of instant merriment for the wags on the streets of London, who suggested that it stood for 'Piccadilly Heroes' or more commonly for 'Perfectly Harmless'." Landing in South Africa in April 1900 and seeing their first action in May, Paget's Horse soon gained a

reputation for their good work and gallantry in action. Bryan, who was clearly the 'Class' of young man, this unit had recruited, joined Paget's Horse in South Africa on 22 February 1901 and was assigned to 68th Company.

Bryan's obituary in the '*Graphic*' notes that within four months of service in South Africa, he was promoted from the ranks and took his first troop into action (ie led it) on 27 June 1901. This suggests that although not gazetted with the temporary rank of Lieutenant until 1 August, he was actually serving with Paget's Horse as a Lieutenant before this. His Other Ranks service papers note no promotion to NCO, just straight to Commission from trooper. On being gazetted, he was officially transferred to the 28th (Bedfordshire) Company of the 4th Battalion, Imperial Yeomanry; though it is likely he had transferred shortly before this official notice. Also known as Compton's Horse, 28th Company, which were also one of the first Companies formed in 1900, were perpetuated on 19 September 1901 by Bedfordshire Imperial Yeomanry.



THE LATE LIEUTENANT H. W. BRYAN  
Killed at Hardeville

On 22nd October 1901 Lieutenant Bryan's company was in action at Hardeville, near Harrismith, where he and Private H. Sharpin were killed. By coincidence this was also the day that he was gazetted Lieutenant with the temporary rank of Captain. Clearly Bryan had been well suited to the military, for by the time of his death, he had advanced to the rank of Trooper to Captain in barely 9 months.

Interestingly, Private Sharpin's QSA medal was sold at DNW on 19 September 2003. His medal which is named to both the 28th Company and Paget's Horse, suggests some overlap

between these companies. The listing also sheds light on how exactly Lieutenant Bryan and Private Sharpin met their deaths:

*“Hugh Sharpin was born in Bombay, India, the 5th son of Frederick Lloyd Sharpin, the Archdeacon of Bombay. Employed as a bank clerk, he attested for the Imperial Yeomanry on 28 January 1901, aged 20 years. He was killed in action at Handeville on 22 October 1901 whilst serving with the 68th Company I.Y. Paget’s Horse. A report of his death reads, ‘The circumstances under which Trooper Hugh Sharpin of Paget’s Horse, met his death at Hardeville (sic), near Harrismith, on 22nd October last, are related in letters received last week by his father, Archdeacon Sharpin, Rector of Millbrook. His battalion, the 4th I.Y. with other troops were taking a convoy out to De Lisle’s column ... His squadron, the 28th, were in advance and after about a couple of hours hard riding, sighted De Lisle’s camp, but they could not see the tents as they were in a hollow. The Major told Lieut. Bryan to take a few men, and make certain, and he took Sharpin and a great friend of his, Trooper Mansfield, and one other. ... suddenly spotted two horses near a short piece of low wall grazing. They went straight for them as hard as they could to round them up- too late they realised the fact that the horses were owned by two Boers who were hidden behind the gateway, and opened fire upon them when five yards distant. In the charge the officer was killed right under the gate by a shot through the brain. Sharpin then dismounted, and taking what cover he could behind the stone fence post, started firing. A ricochet shot first broke his left hand and carried off three fingers, after which he was shot through the body. In spite of this he still fired two shots, though naturally without effect ...”*

Lieutenant Bryan’s obituary from the ‘Graphic’, November 23 1901

*“Lieutenant Harold William Bryan, of the 28th (Bedfordshire) Company of the 4th Battalion Imperial Yeomanry, who was killed at Hardville, near Harrismith, was barely twenty years of age. Joining Paget’s Horse as a trooper in January last, he left for the front in February. Within four months of his arrival in South Africa he was promoted from the ranks, and took his first troop into action on June 27. In August he was gazetted to the temporary rank of Lieutenant in the army, and on the very day of his death he was gazetted a lieutenant in the 4th Battalion, with the temporary rank of Captain in the army. Our portrait is by Wayland, Streatham”*

Harold William Bryan is buried in Harrismith Cemetery, Orange Free State.



Condition NEF, last bar loose on ribbon as is very common, this being issued separately to the medal. Sold with copy Imperial Yeomanry papers and other research on CD. A fine and scarce medal to a Yeomanry Officer who was killed in action during the Boer War.