

AN IMPORTANT CRIMEA AND INDIAN MUTINY GROUP OF FOUR AWARDED TO A MAJOR 42ND ROYAL HIGHLANDERS, MUCH OF WHOSE 'ACTIVE SERVICE CORRESPONDENCE' SURVIVES IN THE REGIMENTAL MUSEUM: IT WAS HE WHO SUPPORTED THE MORTALLY WOUNDED BRIGADIER ADRIAN HOPE IN HIS ARMS DURING THE DISASTROUS ATTACK AGAINST FORT ROOYAH IN APRIL 1858, A SELFLESS ACT THAT NEARLY RESULTED IN HIS OWN DEMISE, WITH BOTH HIS BONNET AND KILT BEING SHOT THROUGH



CRIMEA 1854, 3 CLASPS, ALMA, BALAKLAVA, SEBASTOPOL, the reverse of each privately engraved '20TH. SEPTEMBER 1854', '25TH OCTOBER 1854', and '8TH SEPTEMBER 1855' RESPECTIVELY 'CAPT. J. C. ROSS GROVE, 42D ROYAL HIGHLANDERS', contemporary engraved naming, INDIAN MUTINY 1857, CLASP, LUCKNOW, the reverse privately engraved '14TH MARCH 1858' 'CAPT. J. C. ROSS GROVE, 42ND ROYAL HIGHLANDERS' 'C. ROSS' privately corrected; OTTOMAN EMPIRE, ORDER OF THE MEDJIDIE, FIFTH CLASS BREAST BADGE, SILVER, GOLD AND ENAMEL, the reverse with contemporary and privately engraved inscription, 'CAPTAIN J. C. ROSS GROVE, 42ND ROYAL HIGHLANDERS', ENAMEL DAMAGE TO CRESCENT SUSPENSION; TURKISH CRIMEA 1855, SARDINIAN DIE, A CONTEMPORARY TAILOR'S COPY BY 'J.B.' 'CAPTAIN J. C. ROSS GROVE, 42ND ROYAL HIGHLANDERS' contemporary engraved naming, all fitted with contemporary top silver riband bars or buckles and housed in a fitted leather case

Joseph Charles Ross Grove was commissioned into the Black Watch as an Ensign in September 1851, and was advanced to Lieutenant in May 1854. As verified by relevant sources, and his own surviving correspondence, he served throughout the Eastern Campaign of 1854-55, and participated in the Kertch and Yenikale expeditions, in addition to the battles of Alma and Balaklava. The following account, taken from a letter home, describes his experiences at Alma on 20 September 1854:

'Meanwhile, the First Division (our own), deployed on our side of the river and were ordered to lie down to avoid the shell and shot which came like hail amongst us. Many of us had narrow escapes but only three men were knocked over then. In half an hour after we deployed we got the order to advance. We crossed the river and got into a vineyard. The whistling of the bullets was perfectly astonishing. The thickness of the foliage, the river, half a dozen dykes to cross and five or six houses broke us completely. I am now speaking of my cause. We formed line as quickly as possible under a most fearful fire of shot, shell, grape and canister, and musketry. How we escaped I know not. Immediately we got into order we opened fire and continued advancing up a tremendous steep brae so rapidly that their artillery could not get our range - we were only two hundred yards from full regiments and a battery of seven guns! So the heavy shot now went over our heads ... We now came up with the 79th which were, I am sorry to say, wavering. We broke through them - cheering, they gave way to us, saying "Let them go they are mad." We were now with fixed bayonets and were ordered to cease firing. The Duke and Sir Colin Campbell were with our Colonel riding in front, waving their swords. Oh it was splendidly exciting and we cheered again and again, and then went laterally and determinedly up the hill as quick as we could march. It was too steep to double. The fire was as heavy as ever. When we came within 50 yards of the top of the hill we cheered. They gave us a parting volley and scuttled down the other side. We then got to the top of the heights. We were the first regiment of the Army who gained the position!'



THE 42ND AT THE BATTLE OF ALMA

It would seem Ross Grove's obvious enthusiasm added to his reputation in the ranks, a contention supported by the following extract from the memoirs of a fellow Black Watch veteran:

'There was another duty to perform, which was no joke. That was to take down the shot and shell to the batteries through the open ground, exposed to all the fire that came out of Sebastopol, as we could not drag the waggon in the trenches. I was twice on that duty - once under Captain M'Leod, now Sir John, and once under Captain Ross Grove. I will say there could not have been better officers for that duty. They were cool and collected, and both nights there was a tremendous fire kept up, and the Russians were firing what was called "happy family" - that was a cluster of small shell that were sent in one gun together.'

Ross Grove himself refers to at least one near squeak in the trenches before Sebastopol in a letter home dated 31 July 1855:

'On Thursday afternoon a shell burst in the air almost 100 yards from me. I saw a fragment coming straight at me. I considered for a moment and determined not to move. If I had done so I would have lost my left arm. The piece in descending smacked a man's thigh and I calculate would have caught me about the elbow. We are too much used to these things now for them to affect us. It was amputated next day and he is doing well ... after a beef broth pudding and a glass of port and some brandy and water I enjoyed bed tremendously.'



Again before Sebastopol, in the final operations against the Redan, we find Ross Grove experiencing further close shaves:

'The minute after we got to our ground I had my men posted. We were so close we had to crawl on our bellies and speak in a whisper without daring to lift a head or move a joint, for about 200 of the enemy's riflemen discovered us and kept up a fearful fire of musketry on us. I can only attribute my preservation to the Almighty. I got up for one moment and immediately a ball struck where I had been. This continued up to lunch, when all of a sudden the firing ceased and we came to the conclusion that something was going to be done. A thought came over me that the enemy had evacuated the place and it might be a grand thing to enter the Redan by oneself and return to Sir Colin and say it was ours. It had hardly entered my brain before there was a rumbling in the earth and then a fearful explosion followed by others in

quick succession. We were all nearly killed. The stones from the batteries falling round us like hail. The enemy at midday saved us the trouble of storming her. The bitter cold that night I shall never forget ...'

For his services in the Crimea Ross Grove was awarded the Fifth Class of the Ottoman Order of Medjidie, one three 42nd Officers to be so honoured. He was also advanced to Captain.



Seeing further service during the Great Sepoy Mutiny he witnessed extensive active service, not just in the engagements at Cawnpore and elsewhere which led to the fall of Lucknow - when he was present at the assault on the Martiniere and on "Bank's Bungalow" - but afterwards in several of the "mopping up" operations fought by the Highland Brigade under Brigadier Adrian Hope, not least the attack on Fort Rooyah in April 1858. During this attack, which was disastrously mismanaged; General Walpole even failing to order a recognisance before sending in his men to attack, Captain Ross Grove would play a key role. The attack, in which only four companies were heavily engaged, resulted in a large proportion of casualties, including Brigadier Adrian Hope and the award of no less than four Victoria Crosses.

Ross Grove's part in this action is mentioned in several relevant accounts, the unenviable task of commanding the storming party largely falling on his shoulders, in his capacity as C.O. of No. 8 Company:

'The rebels were prepared to evacuate the fort, and they had intended to fire a few rounds and retreat. But, when they saw the British general sending his infantry in skirmishing order against the face which could be defended, they changed their minds and determined to show fight. Meanwhile, Walpole had ridden up to a company of the 42nd that was in advance, commanded by Captain Ross Grove, and had directed that officer to extend and pass through the wooded ground in his front; then to close on the fort, hold the gate, and prevent the enemy from escaping. Another company of the same regiment, led by Captain Green, was to move in support.

Pushing through the forest before them, the 42nd dashed across the open space between the trees and the fort, and lay down on the edge of the counterscarp of the ditch, which till then

had been invisible. During the advance the enemy had poured into them a continuous fire. That fire now became increasingly hot, and, as the men had no cover, many of them were shot down, killed or wounded. After waiting here for some time, Ross Grove sent a bugler to the general to tell him that there was no gate, but that if he would send scaling ladders he would escalate the place. It was evident by this time to Ross Grove that no other attack was being made. To his message to Walpole Ross Grove received no answer. Then, as the casualties were becoming serious - there being only a few paces between his men and the enemy - he sent another message asking for a reinforcement as well as ladders, and pointing out that it was impossible to cross the ditch without the latter.

Presently, Captain Cafe came down with his Sikhs, the 4th Punjab Rifles. Without communicating with Captain Ross Grove, Cafe dashed into the ditch a little to the left of the 42nd. There his men, having no ladders, were shot down like dogs. It was marvellous that any escaped. Amongst the officers killed was Edward Willoughby, a young officer of the 10th Bombay Native Infantry, who, though on the sick-list, had left his dooly to join in the fight. Of the hundred and twenty men Cafe had brought with him, forty-six men were killed and two wounded. Finding it useless to persevere, Cafe drew back the remnant of his men, and asked the 42nd to help him recover Willoughby's body. Ross Grove, unable to go himself, being in command, gave him two Privates, Thomson and Spence. With these men Cafe returned to the ditch and brought back the body, Cafe being wounded. He received the Victoria Cross for his gallantry; so, likewise, did Thomson. Spence died two days later from a wound he received in carrying out his splendid deed.



No orders had reached Ross Grove, who, with his men, remained still exposed to the enemy's fire, when, a short time afterwards, Adrian Hope came up, accompanied only by his aide-de-camp, Butler. It would seem that, whilst the troops I have mentioned were acting in the manner described on one face of the fort, Walpole, alarmed at the consequence of his

rashness, had caused the heavy guns to open on the walls from the side opposite to that on which the skirmishers still were. Soon after they had opened fire, a report was made to Adrian Hope that the balls from the heavy guns were going over the fort and dropping amongst the skirmishers. He at once rode up to Walpole. What passed between them cannot with certainty be known, but it seems probable that Walpole doubted the truth of the report, for, on his return from the conversation, Hope declared to Butler that he would go and see for himself. The moment Ross Grove saw him he sprang to his feet, and, rushing to him, said, "Good God, General! this is no place for you; you must lie down." But it was too late. Even at that moment his immense frame had become a target to the enemy, not to be missed. He was shot through the chest, and died almost immediately in Ross Grove's arms. Whilst holding him, Ross Grove's own bonnet and kilt were shot through.

Ross Grove then told Butler that he could not and would not retire without orders, and that scaling-ladders were the things he wanted. Butler went back to report to Walpole. Meanwhile, in the hope of finding some means of entering the fort, Ross Grove crawled round the edge of the ditch, followed by two men, to keep down, as far as they could, the enemy's fire. He persevered till one of the two men was killed by a round shot from the British guns discharged from the other side, when, finding his effort fruitless of results, he returned. A few minutes later, Brigadier Cox came up with orders to retire. This order the two companies of the 42nd obeyed in as strict order and steadiness, by alternate files, as if they were on a parade ground.

Their losses had been heavy. Lieutenants Douglas and Bramley and fifty-five of their followers were killed; two other officers were wounded. The bodies of the dead officers were not allowed to remain where they fell. Quartermaster Sergeant Simpson, Privates Douglas and Davis, especially distinguished themselves in the dangerous and heroic work of recovering them - they all received the Victoria Cross.'

ANOTHER ACCOUNT OF THE ATTACK ON FORT ROOYAH FROM THE HIGHLAND MONTHLY, 1892:

".....He threw out skirmishers from the 42nd and 4th Punjab Rifles: a company of the 42nd under Captain Ross-Grove being in advance, a company under Captain Green in support, the Punjabees under the command of Capt Cafe and Lieut. Willoughby to the left of the 42nd. The light companies of the 42nd, 79th, and 93rd, formed the reserve. It has been said that Walpole's intention was that the skirmishers should advance for the purpose of enabling the place to be reconnoitred but Ross-Grove evidently understood his orders to be that he was to extend and pass through the trees, press on to the fort, seize and hold a supposed gate, and try to prevent the enemy's escape.

Accordingly, Ross-Grove's company, after skirmishing through the trees, dashed across the open space which lay between the trees and the fort, under a vigorous and continuous fire from the walls of the fort; then, finding a broad ditch in front of them, they lay down on the edge of the counterscarp, exposed without any cover to an incessant fire. Cafe with his Punjabees advanced in a similar manner on the left right up to the ditch. Ross-Grove, finding that there was no gate, sent a bugler to the General to ask for scaling ladders: Cafe's men scrambled into the ditch and attempted to scale the scarp.

The casualties on our side were of course heavy, and increasing fast: the supports reinforced the skirmishers, and Ross-Grove sent a second message asking for ladders and reinforcements. Meantime, it is said, though it seems hardly credible, that Walpole had sent round to the opposite side of the fort his heavy guns, which had opened fire: and that a report had been made to Brigadier Adrian Hope that the

shot were passing over it and falling among , our skirmishers. It is more probable that these shot came from the enemy's guns. Hope rode up to Walpole — what passed is not recorded — but immediately afterwards Hope told Butter of the 93rd, his orderly officer, that he would go and judge for himself. On seeing them come up, Ross-Grove sprang to his feet, saying, Good God, General! this is no place for you; you must lie down." But it was too late. Hope fell shot through the chest," and died almost immediately in Ross-Grove's arms.



On the latter's refusal to retire without orders, Butler managed to get back to report to Walpole, and a few minutes later the Brigade Major, Cox, came up with the necessary order. Ross-Grove then withdrew his two companies of the 42nd, or rather the remains of them, and Cafe having previously retired with the remnant of his men, they rejoined their brigade. The British guns continued their fire for some time, but Walpole decided to defer an assault till the following morning.

The loss on our side in this unfortunate affair, whether it be regarded as a reconnaissance or an attempted assault was extremely heavy; about 130 killed and wounded. The killed included Brigadier Hope, a universal favourite, who had shared in many a previous assault with the men of the 42nd and 93rd; Lieutenant Willoughby of the 10th Bombay Native Infantry, doing duty with the 4th Punjabees — poor fellow, he was on the sick list, but insisted on going into action with his men — and Lieutenant Harrington of the Artillery. Lieutenants Bramley and Douglas of the 42nd were mortally wounded, and died, one on the 16th, and the other on the 17th. Captain Cafe and Lieutenant Cockbum (42nd) were also wounded.

Out of 120 Punjabees, 46 were killed and 2 wounded, a large proportion of them while in the ditch. The 42nd had a larger total of casualties, but a comparatively small number killed outright. Captain Ross-Grove came out unhurt, but he had both his kilt and bonnet shot through while holding the Brigadier in his arms.

Before retiring. Cafe, with two volunteers of the 42nd, Privates Spence and Thomson, recovered Willoughby's body from the ditch. In doing this Cafe was severely, and Spence mortally wounded. Cafe and Thomson got the Victoria Cross. Quartermaster-Sergeant Simpson, Privates Douglas and Davis also distinguished themselves in carrying off their dead and wounded comrades, both officers and men, and got the Victoria Cross."

Ross Grove, whose gallant deeds remained unrecognized, went on to see further action at Bareilly and in the Oude, and reverted to half-pay in June 1864. He was finally placed on the Retired List as a Major on 16 October 1866. Interestingly Ross Grove anonymously authored a three volume novel entitled 'Amat' published in 1881, which has much to do with the Indian Mutiny and Ross Grove certainly seems to have used his own experiences as a basis to parts. Of particular note being the assault on Fort Rooyah.

He died at Lyndhurst, Hampshire in May 1889, aged 54 years, having dropped the Grove part of his surname. His Estate passed to his spinster daughter, Miss Ethel Margaret Ross, and on her death in February 1917, her Will stipulated that her late father's correspondence from the Crimea War be bequeathed to his regiment, the Black Watch. Containing a series of vivid and fascinating observations pertinent to numerous engagements in the Crimea, the whole correspondence constitutes an important and exceedingly rare record of a bloody conflict seen through the eyes of a young - and very gallant - Infantry Officer.



Condition, Generally VF or better, some contact marks and minor EK's form wear.
Sold with copied research including various photographic images of the recipient. Ex Noonans June 2022





