

**AN OUTSTANDING 50TH FOOT SUTLEJ TO A LIGHT COMPANY OFFICER WHO WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF ALIWAL, HAVING HIS ARMY AMPUTATED BUT CONTINUED TO SERVE, TAKING PART IN THE CRIMEAN WAR, HE WAS WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF INKERMANN AND FINALLY TAKEN PRISONER DURING A RUSSIAN SORTIE ON THE BRITISH TRENCHES BEFORE SEBASTOPOL. SPENDING THE REST OF THE WAR IN CAPTIVITY, HE WAS HONOURED BY FRANCE WITH THE KNIGHT OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR IN 1856**



**SUTLEJ 1845-6, FOR MOODKEE 1845, CLASPS, FEROZESHUHUR, ALIWAL 'LIEUT. H: J: FRAMPTON 50TH REGT.'**

Heathfield James Frampton a Gentleman Cadet of the Royal Military College was commissioned Ensign, 50th Foot on 4 August 1840. Promoted Lieutenant on 20 August 1841 and posted to India, he served in the Gwalior campaign of 1843 and was present at the battle of Punniar. At this battle, General Grey found a division of the Gwalior army entrenched at Punniar. The British assaulted the positions and drove the enemy from them. British casualties were 35 killed and 182 wounded, 42 of which were suffered by the 50th Regiment. Medals were made from bronze from the guns captured during the Gwalior campaign.

Two years later, Frampton, who was an Officer in the Light Company, took part in the Sutlej campaign including the battles of Moodkee, Ferozeshuhur and Aliwal. At the the bloodbath that was the battle of Ferozeshuhur, Frampton's company had been cut off from, the regiment and were taking heavy casualties and it was by his presence of mind in picking up a Sikh bugles and sounding the regimental call on it, that enabled the remnants of the company to rejoin the regiment. At the battle of Aliwal, Lieutenant Frampton was severely wounded, a wound that resulted in his arm being amputated. During the battle, the Light Company had

been engaged in attempting to take a Sikh gun and were driven back several times; it may have been here that Frampton was wounded.

The 50th were one of the few British Regiments to take part in all the major battles of the Sutlej War, the other being the 31<sup>st</sup> Foot. The regiment sustained 109 casualties at Moodkee, second highest of any Regiment and 124 at Ferozeshuhur. The latter as terrible a battle that has been fought and very almost a defeat. At Aliwal a further 121 casualties were sustained; again the second highest number of casualties of regiments present and at the final battle at Sobraon, the regiment was again in the thick of things, suffering a further 239 casualties, by far the highest casualties of any other regiment. So high were the Officer casualties, that it was a lieutenant of the 50<sup>th</sup> who commanded the Regiment when they left the field of battle. When one considers the regimental strength at the start of the campaign was around 800 and taking into account men wounded in more than one action, the amount of casualties they had over a period of less than two months; 593 killed and wounded, was staggering. 5 Officers were killed during the campaign and 32 were wounded, the latter includes several Officers wounded more than once

The 50th returned to England in 1848 and despite the loss of his arm, Lieutenant Frampton remained with the regiment and was promoted Captain on 19 September 1848. In 1854, the 50th embarked for the Gallipoli peninsula, before landing in the Crimea in September 1854. Captain Frampton took part in the battle of Alma and Inkermann, during which Captain Frampton was wounded for a second time. His wound cannot of been of a very severe nature for in December he was back with the Light Company in the trenches before Sebastopol. However on the evening of the 21 December 1854, Captain Frampton, Lieutenant Clarke and 8 men were taken prisoner when a large Russian force made a sortie on the British Trenches. An account by Lieutenant Clarke of this action and the two Officers subsequent captivity is copied in part below.

Captain Clarke was released from captivity at the end of the War, having been promoted Major on 29 December 1854 and on returning to England, he finally retired from the Army in December 1855. In 1856 for his services in the Crimean War, he was honoured by France with the Knight of the Legion of Honour

Frampton's Army List entry;

*"Major Frampton was present with the 50th Regt. in the battle of Punniar (Medal). Served the campaign on the Sutlej (Medal and two Clasps), including the battles of Moodkee, Ferozeshuhur, and Aliwal, in which last he was dangerously wounded, and had his arm amputated. Served the Eastern campaign until taken prisoner in the trenches before Sebastopol on the 22nd Dec. 1854, having been present at the battles of Alma and Inkermann (wounded),—Medal and Clasps, Knight of the Legion of Honour, and Turkish Medal"*

Frampton's bound manuscript notebook from 1846 is in the collection of the National Army Museum (1990-07-71)

#### **THE BATTLE OF FEROZESHUHUR FROM THE REGIMENTAL HISTORY:**

"..The 50th were the first entire regiment that succeeded in entering the enemy's works. They charged on through the camp ; and the right wing, accompanied by Sir H. Smith, charged through the village of Ferozeshah, the left wing passing outside. It took some time to drive the enemy out of the village, as they took advantage of the approaching darkness, and of the small houses and narrow streets. Here parties of the 9th Regiment, 1st Europeans, and several native regiments came up. Eventually the two wings of the regiment were united outside the village, and they formed a square for the night in a position selected by Sir H. Smith, on the eastern side of the camp. Parts of other regiments formed another large square a little distance



off irregular from its being formed from many regiments, but effective. These squares retained their position all through the night of the 21st, though harassed by the enemy's artillery and musketry, and by parties hovering round in the darkness, and firing into the squares whenever opportunity offered, while our men were hardly able to return a shot, not knowing the position of the rest of the army.



The light company of the 50th and a few parties from other regiments, were sent out a little distance in advance, but the Sikhs discovering their small number fired incessantly on them, and bringing up a gun in the darkness, fired a charge of grape into the light company, which had to retire, and eventually lost their way. Lieutenant Frampton, however, who was with them, having picked up one of the Sikh bugles, sounded the regimental call on it, which was answered from the regiment ; and thus they were able to make good their retreat.

The acting adjutant of the regiment (Lieutenant Bellars) in his diary thus writes of this night : "No one can imagine the dreadful uncertainty. A burning camp on one side of the village, mines and ammunition wagons exploding in every direction, the loud orders to extinguish the fires as the Sepoys lighted them, the volleys given should the Sikhs venture too near, the booming of the monster guns, the incessant firing of the smaller ones, the continued whistling noise of the shell, grape, and round shot, the bugles sounding, the drums beating, and the yelling of the enemy, together with the intense thirst, fatigue and cold and not knowing whether the rest of the army were the conquerors or conquered — all contributed to make this night awful in the extreme."

#### **THE BATTLE OF ALIWAL FROM THE REGIMENTAL HISTORY:**

*".. infantry made a brief halt under a heavy fire from the enemy about 10 a.m., after which the 1st Brigade, under Sir H. Smith himself, assisted by Brigadier Godby's Brigade, made a rapid advance, and captured the village of Aliwal and 2 guns ; and Brigadier. General Cureton followed this up by a dashing charge of cavalry, which drove back the enemy's cavalry; after which Brigadier Godby's Brigade changed front, taking the enemy's line of entrenchments and camp in reverse. Meantime the 50th Regiment, which was on the right of the 2nd Brigade, occupying the centre of the line (with heavy guns on each flank of the*

brigade) deployed and moved to their right, till they found themselves exactly opposite the centre of the enemy's position, which they at once advanced against.

The enemy's batteries being on a curve with the flanks thrown back, the 2nd Brigade in the centre were nearer and more exposed to the enemy's artillery than the other brigades. They were therefore twice ordered to lie down, to permit the brigades on each flank to advance in line with them. In this position the regiment was exposed to a very heavy artillery fire, as well as to that of the matchlock men ; but they advanced rapidly, and when within musket shot they fired a volley, which caused the retreat of the enemy opposed to them, the artillery alone remaining fast. The regiment then charged and took the guns opposite them, while the 16th Lancers on our left made gallant charges into the enemy's squares. These were soon in full retreat. The "Queen's Own" Regiment continued the pursuit until they came near the bed of the river, No. 6 and the light companies were sent to the bank, to prevent a gun from being taken away\*

\* One of these guns must have been the one opposite to No. 6 and the light company of the 50th, concerning which Lieutenant Bellars says : " No. 6 and the light company were sent to the bank to prevent a gun from being taken away from the opposite side. The Sikhs tried several times to take it, crawling on their hands and knees, but a volley always drove them away. The men were partially undressed to go over by the ford to bring it over, but Sir Harry would not allow them. They were relieved by a company of Sepoys who were left to prevent its being taken away, and in the morning it was gone..."

Sir H. Smith says in his despatch dated —

" Field of Battle, Aliwal, 30th January, 1846.

" I occasionally observed Brigadier Wheeler's Brigade, charging and carrying guns and everything before it, again connecting his line and moving on, in a manner which ably displayed the coolness of the brigadier, and the gallantry of his irresistible brigade — H.M. 50th Eoot, 48th Native Infantry, and the Sirmoor Battalion — although the loss was, I regret to say, severe in the 50th."

The enemy suffered very severely in this engagement, besides losing all their camp equipment, and all their numerous artillery except two guns, which alone escaped capture..."

An article the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, entitled 'Field Surgeon at the battle of Aliwal' (copy on research CD) add more details about the battle

## **RUSSIAN SORTIE ON THE BRITISH TRENCHES FROM THE REGIMENTAL HISTORY:**

"On the 21st December, the trenches of the left attack being held by the 50th Regiment, the Russians took advantage of the darkness of the night, to make a sortie in force. Moving silently, in dense masses, they overlapped our left of the advanced trench, which was held by Captain Frampton, Lieutenant Clarke, and 150 men. They first came in contact with the advanced sentries on the left of the third parallel; these at once gave the alarm by firing, and retired into the trench. The enemy then pressed boldly forward between the second and third parallels. The latter, being attacked both in front and rear by overwhelming masses, was taken ; and both the officers and 9 men were taken prisoners, after many of the men had been killed and wounded, Lieutenant Clarke being among the latter ; a few of the defenders making good their retreat to the second parallel, which was now furiously assailed. Here Major Moller was mortally wounded, dying that evening; and many of the 50th were killed and wounded. But the enemy were repulsed at all points.



*By this time the heavy firing had alarmed the camp, and reinforcements having been at once sent down, the advanced trench was retaken, and the Russians retired, leaving behind them 14 killed and 4 wounded. The loss of the 50th Regiment consisted of 14 killed, 12 wounded, and 2 officers and 9 men taken prisoners."*



The following, also from the Regimental history, is an account by Lieutenant Clarke of the above and also of his and Frampton's experience in captivity.

#### **PRISONERS OF WAR IN RUSSIA**

*"On the 22nd December, 1854, two officers, Captain Frampton and myself, with about 70 men, formed the guard of an unfinished parallel of attack against the wonderfully perfect defence of our foes. All the early part of the night an awful fire of round shot, shell, and grape had been hurtling over our heads, as we sheltered as best we could. A few men were on sentry in front, and a sergeant's party were stationed some way down the ravine which separated the left from the right attack. About 2 a.m. my attention was particularly drawn to what I thought, from the sound of musketry and vivid flashes of fire, was a sortie in force upon the right attack, and Frampton and self thought it best to get the men to stand to their arms, and be prepared in case a similar attack should be made on our part of the position. The men, at least many of them, had been lying asleep until now.*

*I passed along the rear of the line and was getting the party on the alert. When this was nearly done the outlying sentries fired, and immediately afterwards came tumbling in over the*

*parapet, and almost as they did so a dark line of men was dimly seen in the darkness, advancing over the crest of the rising ground, along which the trench was traced. Fire was opened on them and a momentary halt ensued, but when engaged in front a mass of the enemy appeared on our right rear, and between these and those in front we were doubled up. Many men were killed and disabled. Frampton and myself, after a hand-to-hand fight, were knocked down and taken prisoners, and borne off by parties of the enemy.*

*The remainder of that night was spent in a small house used apparently as an officers guard-room, within the Russian lines. In the mêlée I had got rather badly hurt, as well as much bruised, by the butt ends of firelocks. One ball went through my forage cap, another grazed my temple, and a third found a bullet in my head, and though at the time I hardly felt it, I was laid up in hospital for some months, and it was not extracted until about five years afterwards, when again on foreign service in Ceylon.*

*The day after our capture we were taken before a Russian general, Osten-Sachcn, and one or two other superior officers, and then conducted across the harbour to a fort on the north side called Severnaia, and lodged in the quarters of a Captain Kotzebue, a naval officer, who was most kind to us. He, I think, commanded in that fort. There we remained for ten days, and were then sent inland, passing through Baktchiserai, a town on the road to Simpheropol, which was our immediate destination. Baktchiserai was the Tartar capital of the Chersonese, before it was brought under the dominion of the Tsar. The military commander lived in the palace of the ancient Khans or rulers of the country. The palace was a handsome building. Two days' travel took us to Simpheropol, which is about seventy versts from Sevastopol.*

*We travelled in a springless covered cart, and as the roads were merely tracks across country, the jolting was very great, and by the time we reached Simpheropol, my wound was much inflamed, and giving me great pain. We arrived long after dark, were taken to the residence of the Governor, who had apparently an evening party, and then to the hospital for officers, where those English officers who had the misfortune to be captured were accommodated in a ward to themselves. There were in all five of us and an Italian officer. Captain L'Andriani, of the cavalry, who was desperately wounded in the thigh when charging with the English cavalry at Balaclava. We met with much kindness and civility from both military men and civilians, especially from a Russian, a professor in the Academy, and his English wife.*

*Most of the English officers had been wounded, but all were able to proceed into the interior long before I was, to a Government town, Baizan. Each nationality had a different town assigned. The English, Baizan, the French, Kalouga, and the Turks, Tambov. Non-commissioned officers and men had other places assigned, but I think in all some three hundred of all ranks would have covered the number of our prisoners, and some of these were seamen of transports that had been wrecked in the terrible gales, that occasionally swept the Black Sea.*

*Several American medical men were doing duty with the Russian troops. They had entered the service temporarily to study gun-shot wounds. One of these I succeeded in getting to attend me....."*

Another account by Sergeant John Callaghan can be found here:

<https://australiarussia.com/kallaganENFIN.htm>

Frampton's full set of medals were sold at DNW in 2004 but since then, the group has unfortunately been split up, the Crimea and Star were last seen on a London dealers website in 2020





Condition, some pitting from Punniar Star, otherwise VF. A very fine Sutlej medal to a Light Company Officer who saw a great deal of action. Sold with some research, including a copy of the regimental history on CD