

INDIAN MUTINY CLASP LUCKNOW TO A CAPTAIN OF THE 84TH FOOT WHO AS AN ENSIGN OF THE 50TH FOOT HAD BEEN SHIPWRECKED IN 1844, SUFFERING 54 DAYS OF GREAT HARDSHIP AND PRIVATIONS BEFORE BEING SAVED AND WAS WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF ALIWAL DURING THE SUTLEJ WAR OF 1845-6



INDIAN MUTINY 1857-9. CLASP, LUCKNOW 'CAPT. WM. DU VERNET, 84TH REGT.'

William Du Vernet was born in Colombo, Ceylon on 8 September 1825, the son of Major Frederick Du Vernet of the Royal Staff Corps, who had served in the Peninsular War. Commissioned an Ensign without purchase in the 50th Regiment on 22 March 1844. Ensign Du Vernet was on the ill-fated ship *Runnymede*, when she was caught in a hurricane and was wrecked on the Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, in November 1844, with detachments of the 10th and 50th Regiments on board. The survivors suffered 54 days of great hardship and privations, whilst surrounded by savage cannibals who inhabited the islands.

Surviving the ordeal, Du Veret then served with the 50th Regiment in the First Sikh War, seeing action at Buddiwal and Aliwal. In the latter battle he was severely wounded in the right knee by grapeshot and in the left foot by the bursting of a shell. The next day he was advanced to Lieutenant without purchase.

In December 1846 he exchanged to the 67th Regiment and gained the rank of Captain by purchase in April 1852. He exchanged to the 43rd Regiment in September 1853 and the 84th Regiment in December 1854. During the suppression of the Indian Mutiny he was present at the camp at Alumbagh and the siege and capture of Lucknow; and with the Azimghur Field Force in various minor actions and at the repulse of the rebels at Jugdespore. Captain Du Venet retired by sale of his commission on 23 July 1858.

SHIPWRECKED ON PASSAGE FROM SYDNEY TO CALCUTTA

Shortly after being appointed Ensign in the 50th Foot, Du Vernet was with a detachment of his Regiment that was ordered to India. Embarking aboard the 'Runnymede' at Gravesend in June 1844, the 109 Officers and men of the Regiment aboard this ship were shipwrecked while on passage to Calcutta; this would turn out to be what was one of the remarkable shipwrecks which have ever happened. During a storm on the morning of the 12 of November, 1844, the troop-ships *Briton* and *Runnymede* were both run upon one of the Andaman Islands. This is not really so unusual but for the fact that both ships were sailing independently from one another from other parts of the globe. Both were caught in the same storm and wrecked upon the same island, only to find both were carrying British soldiers! On grounding on the island, the Captain of the 'Runnymede' would write:

"The ship being nearly dry aft, on the weather clearing, her crew, to their great astonishment, beheld, about a quarter of a mile inside of them, high amongst the trees, in a swamp of mangroves, whither she had forced herself a passage, a large barque, with troops on board. In consequence of this discovery, Ensign Du Vernett was, as soon as possible, lowered with ropes from the Runnymede's stern, with twelve soldiers, to communicate with the barque. At 7 A. M., the tide rising, orders were given to the men to prepare to land at next low water, and, if possible, get something cooked, as, during the hurricane, no fires could be kept in the ship, and, consequently, the crew and troops had not had anything but biscuit and a glass of spirits during the storm. At half-past 3 o'clock P. M. the tide having fallen sufficiently to enable the people to wade on shore, Ensign Du Vernett returned on board and reported the vessel he had visited to be "The Briton" from Sydney, bound to Calcutta.."

The crews/passengers of both remained on that island 51 days suffering very severe privations, the survivors of the shipwrecks were finally picked up by relieving transports on December 29 1844 and transported to Calcutta. In addition to the privations they had endured, the survivors had lost all their accoutrements and possessions, these not being replaced until they rejoined their Regiment in January 1845. A 20 page narrative of the above (on CD) , published in 1845, is included with Du Vernet's medal.

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. 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..."



Condition, claw refitted, minor edge nicks, good very fine. Ex Spink 1989 and DNW 2015.
Sold with a large file of comprehensive copied research, including service records, recommendations, extracts from Regimental histories and narratives of the shipwreck, etc etc