

AN OUTSTANDING AND RARE SECOND AFGHAN WAR 9TH LANCERS D.C.M. GROUP AWARDED FOR GALLANTRY DURING THE FAMED CAVALRY CHARGE AT KILLA KAZI AND HIS SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS COVERING THE RETREAT OF THE GUNS ON 11 DECEMBER 1879. THE CAVALRY ACTION AT KILLA KAZI WAS A DISASTER FOR THE BRITISH, THE CAVALRY LOOSING HEAVILY AND THE ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY LOOSING TWO OF THEIR FOUR GUNS



DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL, V.R. 'TROOP SERGT. MAJOR. H. ENGLAND, 9TH. LANCERS.', AFGHANISTAN 1878-80, 2 CLASPS, KABUL, KANDAHAR '548. TP: SGT. MAJ: H. ENGLAND. 9TH. LANCERS.', KABUL TO KANDAHAR STAR 1880 (548 TROOP SERGT. MAJOR H. ENGLAND 9TH. LANCERS', ARMY L.S. & G.C., V.R., 3RD ISSUE, SMALL LETTER REVERSE '548 TP. SGT. MAJ: H. ENGLAND, 9TH. LANCERS'

D.C.M. submitted to the Queen 5 April 1880; *'For his gallant conduct when charging with Captain Gough's Troop, and afterwards in covering the retreat.'*

Henry England, a 20 year old Groom from Salisbury, Wiltshire, attested for the 9th Lancers at Aldershot on 3 January 1862. Promoted Corporal on 21 February 1866 and Sergeant on 10 September 1868, he was appointed Troop Sergeant Major on 9 February 1874. Serving with the 9th Lancers in India and Afghanistan from 9 January 1875 to 6 December 1882, including service during the Second Afghan War, 1879-80. During the latter, he served as Troop Sergeant Major of 'E' Troop, under Captain Gough and *'distinguished himself in the Field at Killa Kazi in front of Kabul on 11 December 1879'* (the recipient's service record refers), and it was for this action that he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Taking part in the subsequent actions leading up to the battle of Kabul, during which the 9th Lancers were again heavily engaged, he also took a part in the epic march to Kandahar the following year. Returning for home service on 7 December 1882, England was awarded his Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in January 1883, and was discharged on 1 September 1885, after 23 years and 239 days' service.

THE 9TH LANCERS AT KILA KAZI 11 DECEMBER 1879

On 11 December 1879, four Royal Horse Artillery guns under Major Smith Windham were ordered to join the Infantry at Argandeh on the outskirts of Kabul. These escorted by a mixed force of 214 9th Lancers and 14th Bengal Lancers, under Lt Colonel Cleland of the 9th Lancers. On reaching Kila Kazi, Captain Gough's 'E' Troop, which was acting as advanced guard, reported seeing enemy in the hills in front, these moving to cut off the Argandeh road. As the enemy appeared to be 2-3,000 in number, General Massey ordered the artillery forward and into action. However after a few shots had been fired, the enemy started to advance in skirmish order, their full force now showing itself to be nearer 10,000 in number! With no infantry to support them, the guns retired and re-opened fire at 1700 yards but little effect was made on the advancing Afghans. A troop of 9th Lancers, dismounted and opened fire but such a small number of men, armed with only carbines, again made little effect. With bullets now dropping amongst the Artillery and cavalry, and with the enemy advancing unchecked, General Roberts, who had just arrived on the scene, sent instructions to General Massey to order the cavalry to charge and protect the retirement of the guns.



On receiving the order, 126 of the 9th Lancers, and 44 of the Bengal Lancers, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Cleland, charged into the centre of the mass of the Afghans. Captain Gough, seeing his Colonel charging, led his troop, 44 strong, in a charge on the enemies left flank. Hensman in 'The Afghan War of 1879', takes up the story:

*"..Some 220 men against 10,000 were odds that could scarcely be expected to turn in our favour; but the Lancers had to risk a heavy loss in the hope of saving the guns. The three bodies of men disappeared in a cloud of dust as they headed for the masses of the enemy, and nothing could be seen for a few moments of the fight. Then riderless horses came galloping back, followed by scattered parties of troopers, evidently quite out of hand. They had been received with a terrific fire, which had killed many horses and men, and, upon trying to force their way through the enemy, had been surrounded and their progress blocked by sheer weight of numbers. Men and horses went down in the *mêlée*, and, once down, there was but a faint chance of being rescued. In one or two instances, however, men were dragged from under their dead horses, mounted on others, and got well away out of the ruck. Even among Sir F. Roberts's party watching the fight, bullets fell thickly, killing three or four horses under their riders and wounding others. When the dust cleared away, it was seen that the cavalry*

charge had made no impression upon the enemy, who were still advancing steadily across the fields, waving their knives and tulwars and carrying their banners more proudly than ever. Mounted men were galloping about from end to end of their line, directing their movements and keeping them well together. The fire from their Sniders and Enfields was deliberate and well-directed; and though any of our English regiments would with their Martinis have checked them in a few minutes, the broken ranks of the cavalry could not hope to stand against them.

The 9th Lancers had suffered terribly in the charge: sixteen of their troopers, with two officers (Lieutenants Hearsey and Ricardo), had been left on the ground, dead; their colonel had come out badly wounded by a sword-cut, and a shot through the side; Lieutenant Stewart Mackenzie had been disabled by his horse rolling over him; and seven troopers had received wounds more or less severe. It was Colonel Cleland's squadron which was so shattered in this charge. This squadron having lost its officers, and being broken up by the bad ground, got out of hand; but Captain Gough's troop, being more fortunate, served as a rallying point; while the 14th Bengal Lancers, not getting well into the enemy, as a nullah checked them, were kept compactly together. The rally was sounded, and Colonel Macgregor and other officers of the General's party collected the Lancers together, while the guns advanced 400 or 500 yards, and re-opened fire. The squadron of the 14th Bengal Lancers had lost but one officer, Lieutenant Forbes (whose body is still missing), and with Captain Gough's troop of the 9th were able still to keep between the guns and the enemy, now only 1,000 yards off. A second charge of these two troops, together with all the troopers who had been collected, was ordered, but it was made in a half-hearted way, the country being of extraordinary difficulty for horses, and the enemy swarming behind every tree and the banks of the higher water-channels.

As Major Smith-Windham was retiring with his two guns, which had been advanced after the first charge, he found one of the other two guns stuck firmly in a watercourse, Lieutenant Hardy trying vainly to drag it out with such horses as had got over. This was found to be beyond the strength of the horses, already worn out by the severe work of the morning; and as the enemy were closing around on both sides the gun was spiked and abandoned. Lieutenant Hardy was killed by a shot through the head while near this gun. The other three guns had been got 400 or 500 yards further on to the village of Baghwana, but were stopped by a channel deeper and steeper than any yet crossed. Guns, men, and horses floundered into this, and the guns at least would not come out again; they, also, were spiked and left in the water and mud, and drivers and gunners moved off with the cavalry, the villagers firing rapidly upon them. The long line of the enemy came straight on, passed through the village, shrieking and waving their knives, and put their faces towards the Nanuchi Kotal, which leads from the Chardeh Valley to the Western gate of our cantonments. Sir F. Roberts, with a small escort, had gone across country towards the village of Dehmazung, commanding the western entrance to the Cabul gorge. He had sent urgent messages to General Macpherson to hasten down the valley, and the Brigadier was soon engaged with 2,000 men, left behind by Mahomed Jan to keep him in play.

The cavalry fight had been watched through telescopes by several officers with General Macpherson, who had heard the artillery fire. Sending his baggage under a strong guard of infantry, and a squadron of the 14th Bengal Lancers, under Colonel Ross, by way of the upper road nearest Kohistan, General Macpherson marched through a break in the hills and debouched into the Chardeh Valley. The appearance of his troops away in their rear seems to have influenced the movements of the enemy, who turned off from the road to Sherpur, and, swinging their left flank round, made direct for Dehmazung, with the evident intention of getting into the city, and occupying the Bala Hissar Heights above it. General Roberts, upon seeing the new movement, sent off a message by his aide-de-camp, Captain Pole-Carew, to Brigadier Hugh Gough, commanding at Sherpur, ordering 200 men of the 72nd Highlanders to double out to the gorge.



After the second charge, in which the 9th Lancers lost several men shot down, Captain Gough's troop did rear-guard work, dismounting and firing, so as to hold the enemy a little in check. Only such Lancers as were wounded, or had their horses disabled, were sent back to Sherpur, by way of the Nanuchi Kotal, the rest escorting General Roberts to Dehmazung. Once the broken squadron of the 9th were got together, they settled down resolutely to their work of keeping the enemy in play, and their carbines were used with good effect until Dehmazung was reached. Here they got cover, and, with the sowars of the 14th, opened a smart fire upon Mahomed Jan's force as it streamed up towards Cabul. Alone and unaided they could not have hoped to stem the rush, and matters were at a crisis when Colonel Brownlow, with the 200 rifles of the 72nd Highlanders, arrived. The Highlanders were in the nick of time: Colonel Brownlow doubled out a company to occupy Dehmazung, the 9th cheering them lustily as they saw the welcome relief, and soon from the roofs and walls of the village rapid volleys were being poured into the Afghan ranks. The enemy streamed down upon the village "like ants on a hill," as a Highlander described it, but Colonel Brownlow's admirable disposition of his handful of Highlanders soon checked the rush. The men were told not to throw away a shot; the Martinis soon blazed out in one persistent line of fire—and such a fire, that even Ghazis shrank from encountering it. In less than half an hour the enemy were forced back, and they then split up into two parts—one going on to the south, to Indikee village, and thence scaling the Takht-i-Shah Peak and the heights to the south of the Bala Hissar fortified ridge, the other facing round to the west, as if to get upon the hills south of Kila Kazi. Their entrance into Cabul had been frustrated, and all that was left to them was to raise their standards on the hills they had occupied and flourish their knives in defiance at distant Sherpur. This they did, as we could see plainly enough through our binoculars..."

THE COST

The Royal Horse Artillery lost 2 of their 4 guns and one of their Officers killed during the retreat from the field of battle. Lieutenants Forbes of the 14th Lancers, and Hersey and Ricardo of the 9th Lancers were killed in action, in addition to 22 other ranks also killed. A further 12 officers and men were wounded, 46 horses also being lost, the 14th Bengal Lancers lost 10 Officers and Men killed and wounded. The Reverend James Adams was awarded the Victoria Cross for rescuing some men of the 9th Lancers who had fallen, with their horses, into a deep nullah, being at the time closely pursued by the Afghans. 8 Distinguished Conduct Medals were awarded to men of the 9th Lancers and two Indian Orders of Merit were awarded to men of the 14th Bengal Lancers.



SERGEANTS OF THE 9TH LANCERS IN AFGHANISTAN NO DOUBT INCLUDING TRP SGT MAY ENGLAND

Captain Gough's 'E' troop played a particularly active part in the action at Kila Kazi. Not only were they involved in the initial charge against the massed Afghan's forces, but with the troop of the 14th Bengal Lancers, made a second charge. After which, having kept together as an effective body, they were able to get between their guns and the advancing enemy, providing a rearguard that briefly helped keep the Afghan's in Check. As Troop Sergeant Major of this troop, Sergeant Major England's command skills and courage would certainly have been a factor in the part 'E' troop played at Kila Kazi, a factor that led to the award of his D.C.M. Just 61 D.C.M.'s were awarded for the Afghan War 1878-80, Troop Sergeant Major England's being the first 9th Lancers D.C.M. to come up for sale in many years





Condition VF, light contact marks. Sold with copied record of service, 1901 War Office letter giving citation for D.C.M., 'The Afghan War of 1879' by Hensman and other research on CD.

An outstanding and rare Afghan war D.C.M. group to one of the most celebrated Cavalry charges of the Victorian era; the others being the 16th Lancers at Aliwal, The Light and Heavy Brigades at Balaclava and the 21st Lancers at Omdurman.