

**INDIA GENERAL SERVICE 1895 TO A SERGEANT OF THE 2ND KING'S OWN
YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY WHO WAS PRESENT AT DURING DISASTEROUS
ACTION AT THE SHIN KAMAR 29 JANUARY 1898**



**INDIA GENERAL SERVICE 1895, 2 CLASPS, PUNJAB FRONTIER 1897-98, TIRAH 1897-98
'3481 SERGT. F. GINNS. 2D. BN. K.O. YORK. LT. INFY.'**

Frank Ginns was born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, in 1870 and attested for the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry at Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, on 11 August 1891, having previously served in the Northamptonshire Volunteers. He served with the 2nd battalion in India from 3 September 1892 to 16 February 1899, and saw active service with the Tirah Expeditionary Force on the Punjab Frontier 1897-98, his service papers noting him being present at the disastrous action at Shin Kamar, 29 January 1898. During the action, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry lost 3 Officers and 26 men were killed, 3 officers and 32 NCO's and men wounded.

THE ACTION AT SHINKAMAR FROM A PERIOD NEWSPAPER

‘.The 2nd Division had been enjoying a well-earned rest at Mamanai and Bara ; and it would not have been necessary to refer to its doings again but for a most unfortunate affair in which the 4th Brigade was involved on the 29th January. On that day an expedition was planned to surround, and capture if possible, the Afridi flocks and herds, with their attendant guards, which, it was reported, were brought down daily in large numbers to graze on the Kajurai plain, a locality due west of Bara, and enclosed on the north, west, and south by low spurs from the main range which separates the Bara and Bazar Valleys, To effect this four columns were ordered out simultaneously on the 29th January—one from Bara to strike across the plain due west ; one from Jamrud, and one from Ali Musjid, as " stops " on the northern boundary ; and one, to be furnished by the 4th Brigade at Mamanai, to ascend the Shin Kamar Pass and block escape in a westerly direction. Although the utmost secrecy was observed about this enterprise, it may be surmised that news of it was in some way conveyed to the Afridis, for after a weary tramp of many miles, the Ali Musjid, Jamrud, and Bara columns returned to camp without seeing anything or any one. The Mamanai column did not fare so well. It was commanded by Colonel Seppings, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, and consisted of Colonel Sepping's own battalion, 200 rifles 36th Sikhs under Colonel Haughton, and two guns of No. 5 (Bombay) Mountain Battery.

The advance of this force was, as usual, hardly opposed by the enemy ; but directly retirement commenced they assumed a vigorous offensive, and crowded to attack with great boldness. Owing to a mistake in transmitting, or in receiving an order by Colonel Seppings, a company of the 36th was prematurely withdrawn from a commanding knoll to the west of the pass. This vantage-ground was instantly seized by the Afridis, and as a part of the force with Colonel Haughton was at this time still down the far side of the pass, where it had been sent to explore some caves about a mile below the crest, it was imperative to reoccupy it. Two companies of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry attacked, therefore, at once, gallantly led by Lieutenants Dowdall and Walker, and driving the enemy back, established a footing on the knoll, but only to find themselves confronted by scores of tribesmen in a still stronger position about 150 yards farther back, and against the hot fire delivered by these men at this short range they could barely hold their ground. A third company of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, Captain Ottley's, held a small knoll on the east of the pass, and the whole were under the command of Major Barter, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.



In the meantime Colonel Haughton, with his Sikhs, had returned. Sending three of his companies down the pass, he remained on the crest himself with one company, and his adjutant, Lieutenant Turing, to support the retirement of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, who were now ordered to withdraw from the heights on the right and left. But the two companies on the left were now so encumbered by wounded, and so fiercely attacked by the enemy, that compliance with this order was almost impossible. Colonel Haughton's company, and Captain Ottley's, were, at this time, both engaged in keeping off a fresh body of tribesmen who were now assailing the pass itself by a direct attack from the north ; and an urgent message for help was therefore sent back to the main body below at the foot of the pass. A reinforcement under Major Earle, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, soon arrived, but in the meantime disastrous casualties had occurred. Lieutenants Walker and Dowdall, of the Yorkshire Light Infantry, had been killed ; also the gallant Haughton and Lieutenant Turing ; and many men of the Yorkshires had been struck down. Even after Major Earle's arrival the fighting was desperate, and at such close quarters that the officers repeatedly used their revolvers with effect. But the Yorkshires in this trying situation showed the utmost resolution and courage ; and though they had to abandon their dead, they eventually brought away their wounded, and held the savage foe successfully at bay until all had been safely sent to the rear. Before they were clear of the fatal pass many more casualties had occurred, Lieutenant Hughes, Yorkshire Light Infantry, being among the killed, and Major Earle, Captain Marrable, and Lieutenant Hall, all of the same regiment, wounded. The total casualties were twenty-seven killed and thirty-two wounded, a heavy list indeed. Two miles out of the pass the column was met by General Westmacott, with reinforcements from camp ; and under cover of these troops Colonel Sepping's exhausted force completed its homeward march in safety.

The death of the brave Colonel Haughton in this unfortunate affair, after he had successfully, and with such credit and fame to himself, survived the perils of the Samana fights in September, and the desperate actions on the 9th and 16th November, previously described, besides all the chances of an arduous campaign, was an event most deeply and universally lamented. . His courage was conspicuous always, and his coolness and judgment were never disturbed by the clash of arms and the scenes of bloody strife by which he was so often surrounded. His men, as brave as himself, simply idolised him, and for years to come, Harton Sahib, as they called him, will be a name to conjure with where the 36th Sikhs are concerned. An officer who was present writes to me - All fought well. Haughton and Turing died like heroes. Haughton, apparently, went forward with half-a-dozen men to see what was going on on the left, and how he could best help the Yorkshires. Turing followed with a couple of Sikhs. One of these was killed by his side, and as men were dropping fast, and the enemy getting quite close, Turing proposed a charge, but was almost immediately shot dead. Haughton was himself using a rifle at this time to keep the enemy in check. He evidently saw it was no use, for turning to a Yorkshireman near him, he said, " We will fire a few more shots, then charge, and die like men !" He fired five times, and then fell, shot through the head. A better and a braver man never lived. Turing was a splendid little fellow, and the loss of these two officers is a terrible blow to the 36th.

There is no doubt the Yorkshires were in one of the tightest corners in the campaign, and were very highly tried. But they came out of it well. They were kept together, and well handled by their officers, and fought like men. The grim work was all new to them, for they had only just come up to the front, and none of them had been in a fight before. They must have a rare lot of officers. The battalion is a better battalion now than it was a week ago. The Sikhs also did well, as usual. Young van Someren assumed command when the others were killed, and kept his men steady and well together. It was a great trial for him. His clothes were torn by bullets. There is little else to record. It was feared at one time that this Shin Kamar affair would break off abruptly all negotiations for a peaceful settlement, and necessitate perhaps a resumption of active operations. But happily this has been avoided.

Throughout January, February, and March there was outwardly little change in the attitude of the Afridi clans, but by slow degrees they were realising that they have been playing a losing game. The blow to their prestige, the material losses they have suffered, the hardships they and their people have endured, and above all, the determination and method and patience and judgment with which the

operations have been directed against them by Sir William Lockhart : these have all been powerful factors in convincing them that to prolong the struggle was only to prolong their own misery, to weaken themselves permanently, and to make their punishment in the end severer, and their abasement more complete.'

Ginns saw further service in Mauritius from 17 February to 9 June 1899, before transferring to the Army Reserve on 13 June 1899. He was discharged, medically unfit, on 16 March 1900, after 8 years and 218 days' service.



Condition VF, official correction to first couple of letters of rank. Sold with copied service papers.