

## *Sergeant Major Edward James*

This soldier had a rather varied and resplendent career that included action in a memorable charge at Balaklava on October 25, 1854: the successful one that is, the Heavy Brigade's rout of a large Russian cavalry force despite unfavourable odds of three or four to one. James was born in England in late 1831 or early 1832; his parentage is as yet unknown (1). He joined the 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Dragoons – better known as the Inniskilling Dragoons - in December 1850, almost certainly in Britain. The regiment went to the Crimea and added to its glory in the chaos of that one amazing combat (2).

Trooper Edward James had a 'good war' in that he came through without any recorded hurts and received, along with many of his comrades, several decorations: the Crimea Medal with clasps for Balaklava, Inkerman and Sebastopol and the Turkish Crimean Medal. He was promoted to sergeant some time after August of 1856. Edward received his discharge from the Inniskillings on April 8, 1857 (3).

He moved to India by the end of the year, in time to serve in the last stages of the Mutiny, but there is no mention of him being involved in our sources. He turns up as a private in the Bengal Artillery and then transferred to a newly formed East India Company regiment, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bengal European cavalry, in July 1858. Promotion to Troop Sergeant Major followed in December 1858 and

then he was caught up in the major reform movements of the Indian Army. The regiment was transferred to the Crown as the 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Hussars and Edward moved with it as a sergeant on May 3, 1861.

He rose ever upwards – to Troop Sergeant Major again (October 1863) and then to the glory of Regimental Sergeant Major (July 1868). Edward got injured at a riding school in 1861, suffering a rupture on the right side and eye damage. A Medical Board convened at Umballa on October 22, 1869 and decided he should be pensioned off. He had already received one fine reward – the Medal for Long and Meritorious Service, worth an annuity of 15 pounds to him over and above the pension he received. The Board hailed his fine record of service and noted that although Edward was no longer fit for active military service he could also '*contribute to his own support*' if he felt capable of it (4).

Sergeant Major James received his discharge on April 26, 1870 and settled down to raise a family with his wife, a widow named Emily Smith. Besides taking on board a stepson, Edward became the father of seven other youngsters, three of whom were born in Perth. According to Broomhall, Edward moved to WA as a member of the Enrolled Pensioner Force with pay of two shillings and half-pence *per diem*. The family arrived on the 'Naval Brigade' in February 1874 (5).

It reasonable to surmise that the current Chief of Police in the colony – Superintendent Matthew Skinner Smith, whose family had strong Indian

service traditions – eventually heard good things about the veteran and made him an offer. Edward James became a probationary constable in early 1877 and was sworn in as a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Constable in May 1877. Available data indicates he served in and around Perth. In June 1883 Edward received a land grant at Claisebrooke, at a time when he was doing well in the police. He was promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Class Constable and then to Lance Corporal in February and May of the same year.

Unfortunately, all was not well in the physical sense and he resigned for health reasons on October 17, 1883, receiving a gratuity of over 58 pounds from police funds for his years of service. By then the Enrolled Pensioned Force had been phased out, but Edward found a place in the Perth Volunteers as a Sergeant Major and Drill Instructor (6).

The WA Police still ‘hankered’ after his skills and experience. In 1886 the Acting Police Superintendent (George Phillips) was planning to provide a system of formal instruction for recruits. On December 16, 1886 he decided to create the post of Temporary Sergeant and Drill Instructor; Edward thus began his second term in the police. As is known from

Broomhall and the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriage, James was still a Sergeant Major – in the volunteers – at the time of the marriage of his daughter Florence Adale James in Perth on 23/12/1886. This confirms the impression he was ‘on loan’ from the colonial volunteers to the WA Police Force (7).

Whatever the circumstances of the brief second appointment, Edward James can take full credit for being the first training officer appointed by the WA Police in the critical establishment of a formalised system for the instruction of recruits. Sad to relate, James did not live long to enjoy these obvious signs of public recognition and respect. He died on January 5, 1887 and was replaced as Drill Instructor by Constable Alexander Howie, a veteran of a South African police establishment (8).

#### **Notes**

- (1)WA Police Record of service of Edward James, combined with the ***Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians***, Vol.2, D-J, p 1616,– the latter entry cited hence as *BD 2*. It says that Edward was born in India instead, which may reflect later family tradition as opposed to Edwards’s earlier claim about England
- (2)Fletcher, I. and Ishchenko, N. ***The Crimean war: a Clash of Empires*** (Spellmont 2004), pp171-175
- (3)Edward James:WO 100-24-6<sup>th</sup> Inniskilling Dragoons-folios 235, 244, 257 and 263
- (4)Proceedings of a Regimental Board for the Discharge of Sergeant Major Edward James of the 21<sup>st</sup> Hussars: James Edward\_WO 97\_1740\_227, Folios 1-5
- (5)Broomhall, F.H. ***The Veterans*** (Hesperian Press, WA, 1989) B147; *BD 2*
- (6)WA Police Record of Service of Edward James; *BD 2*
- (7)Police General Duties Book, 16/12/1886; Broomhall, B147; WA Marriage Certificate 6370 of 1886
- (8)*BD 2* and WA Police Record of Service of A.G.Howie

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