

Relief of Lucknow 1857

In the last issue we left the defenders of the Residency in dire circumstances with little hope of surviving the constant pressure from the sepoys.

First Relief of Lucknow (Reinforcement)

Sir Henry Havelock (1795-1857) had command of about **1000 European** troops when he planned his relief operation for Lucknow. He left about 300 troops under command Colonel Neil to defend a fortified position near the Ganges River and on the 25th July 1857 set forth towards Lucknow. However, he met strong resistance and his force was reduced by disease and he had to return on the 13th August to Cawnpore when the sepoys again threatened the city. The pressure was somewhat relieved when reinforcements started to arrive under the command of Major General Sir James Outram (1803-1863). Outram was supposed to relieve Havelock however; Outram consented for Havelock to continue to command the relief force. **On the 18th and 19th September**, Havelock and Outram set forth to Lucknow with a significantly larger

force made up from the 5th, 64th, 78th (The Highlanders) 84th and the 90th Regiments of Foot, a Sikh Battalion, three artillery batteries and 168 volunteer cavalry. The relief force strength was 3179 troops. Resistance was still strong and the column had to fight many battles before entering the city on the 25th September. Tough fighting continued in **the city as the British** advance inched towards the Residency **which was entered by nightfall**. The lead troops were the 78th (Highlanders) and in the furious push to enter the Residency bayoneted a few loyal sepoys. The advance contingent of the relief force consisting of 2000 men suffered enormous casualties during the advance to the Residency including 535 killed and wounded on the 25th September. As a result the relief force became a battle weary reinforcement group not capable of removing the invalids and non-combatants **from the Residency**. The situation was relieved a little when a large stock of supplies were found under the Residency however; the Residency remained **under siege**.

Regiments of the Line (1st Relief)

The 5th (Northumberland Fusiliers) Regiment of Foot was in Mauritius in 1847 and moved to India in 1857. After its deployment to Lucknow it remained in India until 1860 when it was redeployed to St Helena. The 64th (2nd Staffordshire) Regiment of Foot was in India in 1848 and deployed to Persia in 1856 only to return to India in 1857. The 78th (Highland) Regiment of Foot was stationed in Burnley, England in 1841 and moved to Bombay and Poona the same year. The unit was then at Scinde, India in 1842 and Karachi 1843, Kirkee and Poona in 1844-1845, Belgaum 1847-1849 then Poona in 1853. The unit saw service in Persia in 1857 but also returned to Bengal, India before joining Havelock's force. It remained in India until 1859 when it returned to Scotland. The 90th (Perthshire Volunteers) Regiment of Foot was en route to China in the spring of 1857 but was diverted to Berhampore, Bengal in India. Detachments of the 90th quickly joined Havelock's relief force for Lucknow. After the capture of Lucknow in 1858 the 90th stayed long in India returning to England in 1869.

2nd Relief of Lucknow

Sir Colin Campbell, the new Commander in Chief arrived at Cawnpore on the 3rd November 1857 to take personal command of the second relief force. Campbell organized 5000 men structured as three infantry brigades, (5th, 8th, 23rd, 64th, 75th, 78th, 82nd, 84th, 90th and 93rd) one cavalry brigade (7th Queens own Hussars), (9th Queens Royal Lancers) and one artillery brigade including eight heavy guns from the Naval Brigade making a total of 49 guns.

The Naval brigade was under command Captain William Peel, the son of the former Prime Minister. Some of the force was made up from unit detachments/reinforcements that did not join Havelock's relief force. This explains why in some references it appears that some units were in two places at the same time. By now the total rebel force numbered over 30,000 but they were still uncoordinated and mostly occupied the city of Lucknow.

Campbell planned to avoid the city by approaching the Residency through Dilusha Park and the School of Martiniere. After these positions were secured, Campbell's force attacked the position of Secundrabagh where the artillery fire from the Naval Brigade guns allowed the 93rd Highlanders, part of the 53rd, the 4th Punjab Infantry and various other detachments to storm the walls. The result was a horrific defeat for the rebels with up to 2000 being killed in this battle alone. Twenty-four Victoria Crosses were awarded for this single action of the 16th November 1857. On the 17th November the heavy guns of the Naval Brigade bombarded further positions allowing the infantry to progress forward to the Residency. Havelock and Outram with six other officers dashed across the open space from the Residency under enemy fire to meet Campbell. When the three generals met surrounded by soldiers, Havelock announced in a singularly unembellished sentence, "Soldiers, I am glad to see you." Campbell decided that the city was to be abandoned. The relief force made no attempt to enter the Residency, instead it pacified the city long enough for the inhabitants to be withdrawn. The withdrawal commenced on the 18th 19th November much of which was made under enemy fire. During the withdrawal, Havelock died of a sudden onset of dysentery on the 23rd November 1857. The entire army force and convoy moved firstly to Alambagh and then on to Cawnpore. The first siege had lasted 87 days and the second a further 61 days. Lucknow was given up to the rebels and they held control during the winter until Campbell returned and the city was retaken on the 21st March 1858.

Regiments of the Line (2nd Relief)

7th Queens own Hussars The unit was in India in 1841 and served at the Gwalior Campaign in 1843 and the Sikh War in 1845. After the Sepoy Rebellion it returned to England in 1859. **9th Queens Royal Lancers.** Deployed to India for the rebellion and returned to England in 1870. **8th**

Regiment of Foot In England 1843 then to India 1846. The unit was at Delhi at the start of the rebellion with the capture of Ludlow Castles in September 1857. After the relief of Lucknow, the unit was part of the force for the capture of Cawnpore in December 1857. In July 1857 renamed **8th (the Kings) Regiment of Foot.** The 8th moved to Malta in 1860 only to return to India later in the year and remained until 1878. **23rd (Royal Welsh Fusiliers) Regiment of Foot** Was in China in 1857 and deployed to India specifically for the Sepoy Rebellion. Returned to England in 1869. **53rd (the Shropshire) Regiment of Foot** In Ireland in 1843 then to India in 1844. The unit was deployed to the Sikh Wars, at the Peshawar Frontier 1851-53 and Calcutta at the start of the rebellion. After the relief of Lucknow the unit returned for the capture of the city in March 1858. Five Victoria Crosses were awarded for the Indian Mutiny. Returned to Devonport, England in 1860 and then to Ireland 1864. **75th Regiment of Foot.** In Ireland 1845 and India 1849. At Delhi at start of the rebellion. After the relief of Lucknow the unit returned for the capture of the city in March 1858. The 75th returned to England in 1862. **82nd (Prince of Wales Volunteers) Regiment of Foot.** In Canada at Fort York 1844-46. In England in 1856 and deployed to India through Singapore in July 1857. After Sepoy Rebellion deployed to Aden in 1869 and England 1870. **93rd (Highlanders) Regiment of Foot.** Deployed to India in 1857 specifically for the Sepoy Rebellion. Served at Peshawar 1861, Umbeyla Campaign 1863, Peshawar 1864 and Central India 1867. The 93rd returned to Scotland in 1870.

Medals

The combatants at the Defence of Lucknow 1857, the Relief of Lucknow 1857 and the subsequent routing of the rebels from Lucknow in 1858 were entitled to the Indian Mutiny Medal 1857-59. Three clasps were issued, "DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW", "RELIEF OF LUCKNOW" AND "LUCKNOW".

Bibliography

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