



The Parish Church of St Giles', Pontefract

The Story behind the
Memorial of Lieutenant
Colonel Henry Latham
Brownrigg (1831-1879)



During the recent spring cleaning, prior to the building work, a memorial plaque was found behind the Lady Chapel curtains. Apparently it had been displayed some years ago but has not seen the light of day for many years. I lived and spent my youth near Dover, so as a recent Pomfretian of only 42 years; I

was inspired to find something about the commander of the 84th Foot Regiment whose home base was Pontefract Barracks.

He was born in Dublin 6th July 1831, to parents Reverend Henry and Mrs Anne Brownrigg (nee Coddington). His father was the vicar of a parish in County Wicklow, Ireland, which was at that time part of the Union.

The London Gazette records that Henry Latham Brownrigg, Gent, enlisted in the 89th foot regiment as an Ensign, without purchase on 25th May 1855, aged 24, He Served in Malta 7th February to 4th June 1856; Gibraltar 5th June to 6th August 1856; Cape of Good Hope 10th May to 10th September 1857. The regiment was posted to the East Indies from 11th September 1857 to 2nd September 1859.

His service in India between 1857 to 1858, corresponded with the period they were heavily engaged in action against the Indian Mutiny at Cawnpore and Lucknow. The Indians consider this as their first war of independence. Promoted to Lieutenant



without purchase on 17th November 1857 at the age of 26, he then transferred to 84th Foot on 13th April 1858. Detachments were scattered throughout the various forts that were soon besieged; the Regiment received great acclaim for their actions during this period. General Outram commander at Lucknow, wrote of the 84th *“A private letter is hardly a proper medium for giving expression to the strong feelings I bear to the glorious old 84th, but the feelings I do bear it, are very strong, and every officer, non-commissioned officer and private of the Corps is, and ever shall be, my comrade and my friend.”*



Lt. Brownrigg was involved in the relief of Lucknow and was, along with thousands of others, awarded the Indian Mutiny medal with the Lucknow bar. (Six Victoria Crosses were also awarded in these actions.) During the siege and relief of Lucknow 8,000 British troops were involved and they sustained 2,500 casualties. Brownrigg served in the Shahabad District under Brigadier J. Douglas C.B. until the suppression of the Rebellion in that District. Both side were responsible for numerous horrific atrocities during the conflict. The 84th Regiment left India in 1859 for England and then began another tour of the empire.

The 1861 census shows that Lieutenant Henry Latham Brownrigg lived in barracks at Salford on the appropriate date. He married Charlotte Dugdale, also the daughter of a vicar, during May 1863 in Burnley.

His career continued as Captain by purchase 5th April 1864, stationed in Malta 3rd April 1865 to 27th February 1867; Jamaica 28th February 1867 to 31st December 1869; Halifax Nova Scotia February 1870 to 11th January 1871.

He became a Major by purchase 5th May 1869 and then was made a Lieutenant Colonel on 1st October 1877. By 1879 he was the commanding officer of 84th Foot, but unfortunately died in service, aged 48, on 23rd June 1879 at Dover. It is not recorded whether he was stationed there or passing through at the time. Apparently it was not unusual for someone who had spent a lot of time in the tropics to die that young. Probate records show that his estate, approximately £3,000 (£300 K at today's prices) was left to his wife Anne, of Weymouth Dorset, there being no offspring.

I wonder if Henry Latham Brownrigg ever sat on the pews designated for "officers of the garrison", as Pontefract was the main depot for the Regiment in those days. However, although there is no actual evidence that he was stationed here, there are some gaps in the records of his extensive foreign service,



when on a home posting, he may have been at Pontefract. After his death the 84th Foot was sent to Ireland in 1880. When the army reforms were implemented in 1881, regiments became localised and given county names, the 84th became the 2nd Battalion, York and Lancaster Regiment.

It would be nice if when the building work is finished the plaque, purchased by his fellow officers, could be reinstated.

John Colvill, 2012

Postscript

The Memorial was placed along with the other St Giles' Military Memorials in St Oswald's Chapel (north east end of the north aisle). Further details on these can be found in the guide to The Military Memorials of St Oswald's Chapel. This is available on Reception.



St Giles'

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