

Pte. D. Jenkins, G Company, 1<sup>st</sup> /24<sup>th</sup> Was he there – or not?

By Dr Adrian Greaves

---

An interesting scenario has arisen over the history of Pte. D. Jenkins, G Company, 1<sup>st</sup> /24<sup>th</sup> following recent press interest. As members will appreciate, Dr David Payne of the AZWRS and I have been literally bombarded with queries and observations from our respective Society members, and the media, about this matter. So that we don't have to prepare a large amount of individual replies, we have put together this Journal article so that our initial thoughts are known to Society members.

Last year I was forwarded newspaper correspondence from a descendent of Pte Jenkins, Mr Rees. This stated that there had been a re-dedication of his relative's grave which now showed Pte. D. Jenkins as a 'Rorke's Drift defender'. I was initially delighted with the news. As this was new to me, I conducted some research into this. There is a Pte. David Jenkins of G Company who is recorded by the Zulu War researchers, Alan Baynham-Jones and Lee Stevenson, as being a questionable survivor of Isandlwana. This is based upon Pte David Jenkins who wrote a letter home in which he specifically states he survived the battle of Isandlwana. He wrote.... ***'being only one of the ten that escaped out of the five companies'***. I could find no report of this Jenkins listed as an Isandlwana survivor and, equally oddly, Jenkins didn't mention Rorke's Drift in this letter.

The numerous histories, accounts and documents on the subject likewise don't mention this Jenkins being at either Isandlwana or Rorke's Drift – neither Dr David Payne nor I could find his name on any of the rolls of participants at Rorke's Drift.

The Chard Report merely states that Chard was given a warning by Pte. Jenkins of the 24th - but could Chard have been referring to Pte James Jenkins of the 24th? Pte. James Jenkins appears on the various nominal rolls as a defender at Rorke's Drift - and he certainly participated in the battle because he was killed towards the end of the fighting. James W Bancroft in his book, *The Zulu War, 1879. Rorke's Drift* (Spellmount 1988) wrote;

Lt Chard would also have been killed if Pte Jenkins had not shouted a warning and pulled his officer's head down just as a Zulu round whizzed over it. Private Jenkins himself was later killed.

The art expert, Oliver Millar, wrote at length about Lady Butler's painting, which Mr Rees partly relies on for his claim, on the grounds that Pte David Jenkins was a model for the famous painting. You will find part of Millar's comment in Journal 15. When describing the key to the figures he makes a comment, one that has never been challenged....

One of these is inscribed 'Jenkins' by the artist but no soldier of this name is recorded as having been at the action. (Other than the Jenkins killed).

It was stated in the newspapers at the time the unit returned home that 'amongst the men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 24<sup>th</sup> who disembarked were "a number of men which includes a soldier with the surname 'Jenkins' and the comment after all the names, five in total,...who had been to the rear with prisoners'. Jenkins also wrote a letter to his father just days after the battles, dated 26<sup>th</sup> January, some suggest it was sent on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The letter is written from Pietermaritzburg, a location well over 100 miles of rough tracks from Rorke's Drift, which tallies with the above words 'to the rear'. He was not with the 5 companies of the 1st Battalion present at Isandlwana. In his letter he wrote about the fact that 5 companies, had been slain at Isandlwana, and he was 'one of only 10 survivors that escaped'. If he had been at Isandlwana or Rorke's Drift, how did he get to Pietermaritzburg so quickly? The relevant parts of his letter are as follows;

***Zululand  
January 26, 1879.***

***Dear Father,  
Just a few lines to let you know that I am one of the ten men that escaped out of the five companies.***

The letter signed off:

**No 295 David Jenkins  
'G' Company, 1-24th Regiment  
Pietermaritzburg. Natal.**

In Norman Holme's *The Silver Wreath* you will see that there has always been confusion with regard to 'who was where' due to any number of bogus Rorke's Drift claimants. Bearing in mind all that has been written over the years by well-respected researchers and historians about Rorke's Drift defenders, I suggested Mr Rees obtained a copy of Jenkins' Service Record as this should show exactly where he was on which date. My own research to date shows that Jenkins' records make no mention of Rorke's Drift or Isandlwana, though this is not in itself conclusive.

Meanwhile, Mr Rees has presented his case to the National Army Museum who contacted both me and Ian Knight. We have both expressed our reservations on the matter, based on the absence of any actual evidence that we are aware of.

Apart from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion medal roll, we have not been able to find any reference to Pte. David Jenkins. So far, we have had checked the following Army records for evidence of whereabouts of this soldier on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1879, without success.

**Casualties – Isandlwana – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1879**

**Casualties Rorke's Drift 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> January 1879**

**Nominal Roll Rorke's Drift – Bourne List – from Regimental Pay Roll for January 1879**

**Nominal Roll – Lt. Chard 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1879**

**Nominal Roll – Major Dunbar January 1880**

**Nominal Roll – not attributed – Cantwell?**

**Roll of Honour – undated.**

**Illuminated Scroll – In memoriam.**

**Men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Who Received a Copy of the Address by the Mayor of Durban.**

**24<sup>th</sup> Museum's notes on the preparation for the painting of RD by De Neuville**

**Various medal rolls of the AZW. (Hart's List and Dutton's *Zulu and Basuto Wars*)**

**Local General Orders, South Africa, 1878-79**

**Mr Rees' response to my above observations 'Was he there – or not?'**

(Comments by Mr Rees are indicated by his title, **Mr Rees**. My own comments commence with my initials **AG**.)

**Mr Rees.** There are two worthy sources which comment on James Edmund Jenkins's death in the hospital. I quote:

a) '... the only men actually killed in the hospital were three ... The names were Sergeant Maxfield, Private Jenkins, both unable to assist in their escape, being debilitated by fever, and Private Adams.' (The Report of Surgeon Reynolds - see 'Rorke's Drift' by Dr. Adrian Greaves, p 402)

b) 'One poor fellow, Jenkins, venturing through one of these (the holes in the hospital partition walls), was also seized and dragged away ...' (Reverend George Smith's account).

**AG.** *All these references only refer to a Pte Jenkins, not Pte David Jenkins. And see Bancroft's comment above that Jenkins was killed. Gunner Evans RA later wrote that he lost two friends at Rorke's Drift, Adams and Jenkins of the 24<sup>th</sup>.*

**Mr Rees.** There are actually two references to the behaviour of an 'active', 'fit' second Jenkins in Chard's Second Report.

a) The first (p 373 RD by Dr AG) includes this 'other' Jenkins amongst a group of soldiers who, early in the battle, repelled the attacks of the Zulus with 'great coolness and gallantry'. Remember James Edmund Jenkins was in the hospital in the grips of a fever.

**AG.** *There was only one Jenkins mentioned - James Edmund Jenkins. Sick or not, using a rifle would have been second nature to him. He could easily have left the hospital at various times during the 12 hour engagement. To claim he was 'in the grips of a fever' is speculation. Furthermore, Pte David Jenkins was hardly 'active' and 'fit' - the poor fellow suffered from syphilis - which begs two supplementary questions;*

*1. What was he doing on the front line, and*

*2. How did this syphilitic soldier get back to Pietermaritzburg so quickly?*

b) The second refers to an incident a couple of hours into the battle, long after JEJ had been killed and outside the hospital.

**AG.** *This timing is speculative. We don't know at which point in the fighting that Jenkins was killed.*

**Mr Rees.** Chard writes,

'While I was intently watching to get a fair shot at a Zulu who appeared to be firing rather well, Jenkins 24th, saying 'Look out, Sir,' gave my head a duck down just as a bullet whizzed over it. He had noticed a Zulu who was quite near in another direction taking a deliberate aim at me. For all the man could have known, the shot might have been directed at himself. I mention these facts to show how well the men behaved and how loyally worked together.' (p375-6 'RD' by Dr AG, and p111 'Zulu' by Ian Knight, an extract highlighted to me by the Royal Engineers TA Group in Swansea).

These I believe indicate that 'another' Jenkins was present.

**AG.** *Like other references from participants, Chard only refers to a Jenkins. With regard to Mr Rees' 'belief'; this acknowledges it is open to other interpretations.*

**Mr Rees.** Soon after the battle David sent a letter home to his father to reassure him that he was still alive. The first part of the letter has puzzled many researchers because it appears to suggest that he was one of the fortunate survivors of Isandlwana. However, no trace of his presence there can be found in the regimental archives. Perhaps David realised that the big talking point in England would be of the disaster and casualties at Isandlwana. As he is writing so soon after 22nd January he might not have been able to distinguish between the two separate 'battles' but was rather seeing both as part of one big battle.

**AG.** *This is the most serious defect in Mr Rees' claim, and the whole story.*

*1. I have doubts that anyone who fought on that day could not have been able to differentiate between whether he was at Rorke's Drift or Isandlwana. If Jenkins had been a Rorke's Drift defender, I suspect he would have known. No one else saw him at Rorke's Drift and he is not featured in any of the Nominal Rolls of those present, nor in participants' letters and accounts of the action. Neither is he recorded as having even been at Isandlwana.*

*2. Pte David Jenkins's G Company, commanded by Captain Thomas Rainforth, was stationed at Helpmekaar. As Jenkins's letter to his parents was signed off with the location of Pietermaritzberg and G Company 1/24<sup>th</sup>, he was probably engaged on duty, or under prisoners' escort (he had a distasteful disciplinary record), somewhere between Helpmekaar and Pietermaritzburg during the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> January, not as is being claimed, surviving Isandlwana or fighting at Rorke's Drift.*

*3. Accounts of the fighting would have rapidly become common knowledge throughout the army, emanating from the fugitives departing Rorke's Drift en route to Helpmekaar. I suspect this could be the source that inspired Jenkins' muddled letter home.*

**Mr Rees.** In the second half of the letter David asks his father to contact Isaac Lewis, a neighbour in the Brecon area, to tell him of the death of his son-in-law, George Chambers, at Isandlwana and the narrow escape of his son, Bombardier Thomas Lewis, at the Drift. David writes of Thomas's escape from the hospital at RD to the 'fort' (which was a term used by men at the Drift for the 'fortified' area position which the soldiers had fallen back to in the later stages of the battle). His letter, therefore does speak of RD 'as if he witnessed this young man's rescue and escape'

*AG. This is pure speculation – using words like 'as if he witnessed' is hardly evidence.*

**Mr Rees.** 'he came from the hospital to the fort through all the firing'. (The letter appeared in 'The Merthyr Express' in March 1879 and a Welsh Language Newspaper, 'Y Gwladgarwyr' a week later. These newspapers are online at, respectively, Merthyr Central Library and Aberdare Library)

*AG. The gist of the Rorke's Drift story was well known to soldiers of Chelmsford's returning column within hours following the battle and to the rest of the army in South Africa during the following days.*

**Mr Rees.** In the Autumn of 1879, Queen Victoria asked Lady Butler to depict a scene from a war of her reign. Lady Butler liked to use 'models' who were actual participants in the conflicts of her paintings. She gained access to many of the main heroes in the action at RD, and the returning soldiers also played out a re-enactment of the battle for her. My great-grandfather was a model for the painting. I say this because later news reports of his meeting with King Edward VII and Lady Butler's husband state this ... as does his obituary of August 1912. I quote, 'When the late King and Queen visited Swansea, General Butler singled him out at the dockside in this connection and introduced him to the Monarch who expressed his pleasure at the introduction, and later on, the General personally saw him at the Hotel Metropole and conveyed his wife's regards. Years ago, Lady Butler, by the way, sent Mr. Jenkins a letter of appreciation for his sitting for the painting'. (South Wales Daily Post and Herald of Wales August 1912)

*AG. 'Liking to use models who were actual participants in the conflicts' is not evidence that the soldier who actually modelled for the painting was at Rorke's Drift. The family details are irrelevant; no one doubts Pte David Jenkins was in the 24th in Zululand, so of course he had the medal.*

**Mr Rees.** Preliminary sketches for the painting can be seen in a wide variety of books, but more topically *The National Army Museum's Greatest Battles* website features a sketch of a soldier kneeling with the name 'Jenkins' written above it. The picture is of a living soldier named 'Jenkins', not an idealised portrait of a dead one. Included in the drawing are additional sketches of the hand

positions on the rifle in preparation for the main portrait. I am aware of only one soldier named Jenkins who claimed to be in the painting.

**AG. Two points....**

**1. Pte David Jenkins could have volunteered as the model for the dead man for any one of a number of reasons, it would certainly have been a soft and appropriate duty for a soldier suffering from a sexual disease. Being a model for a painting is not evidence that the model participated in the action. Indeed, art critic, Oliver Millar wrote when describing the key to the figures...**

One of these is inscribed 'Jenkins' by the artist but no soldier of this name is recorded as having been at the action.

**2. In the National Army Museum's weighty tome 'Ashes and Blood - The British Army in South Africa 1795-1914' they have a section about Pte Jenkins and the Lady Butler painting, which negates Mr Rees' above comment that 'The picture is of a living soldier named 'Jenkins', not an idealised portrait of a dead one'. I quote...**

The drawings on this page are preliminary studies for the kneeling figure at the bottom left-hand corner of the completed canvas. They depict a soldier crouching to take aim, his bayonet scabbard bent underneath him, inscribed top right 'Jenkins' with two details of his hands holding a Martini-Henry rifle and squeezing the trigger. It is thought that the main figure could be either Robert (1857-98) or William Jones (1840-1913, both of whom won the Victoria Cross for gallantry at Rorke's Drift. The only man named Jenkins present at the engagement was Pte M Jenkins whose death was witnessed by William Jones\*.

\* See Boydon, Guy and Harding. *Ashes and Blood - The British Army in South Africa 1795-1914*, National Army Museum, 1999. (p. 234)

**Mr Rees.** Several writers on RD such as James Bancroft ('The Rorke's Drift Men'), Lieutenant Colonel Mike Snook ('*Like Wolves on the Fold*') and Kris Wheatley (author of the Legacy series on the lesser known men at RD and a descendant of a RD soldier) have backed David's claim to be a Rorke's Drift Defender as well as his own regimental museum, of course, and now ... The National Army Museum.

**AG. a. Pte David Jenkins never claimed to be a Rorke's Drift defender.**

**b. Mr Rees states that the NAM supports his claim but I understand that it has now backed away from this story, and was not responsible for the recent publicity in the national press. I don't know that anyone of the above has categorically supported Mr Rees' claim. Staff at Brecon give this story a cautionary 80% possibility based on what they believe, which sounds fair to me as circumstantial evidence in the absence of any actual evidence. In our view, 80% is the starting point, not the finishing point for this research.**

**c. Col Snook's 2006 'Like Wolves...' omits Pte D. Jenkins and in any event, the book is unreferenced which precludes any check on his account.**

**d. Kris Wheatley appears to have dropped Pte D. Jenkins from her work.**

**e. In the findings of numerous Zulu War researchers over many years I have found no reference to Pte David Jenkins being at either Isandlwana or Rorke's Drift, or anywhere else; John Young's detailed 'They Fell Like Stones' follows suite, as does all of Ian Knight's extensive and detailed research. Furthermore, there are a great number of letters home from participants; none make any reference to him.**

Much is being made of a ledger at Brecon's 24<sup>th</sup> Regimental Museum containing names of participants at Rorke's Drift, including Pte David Jenkins. This ledger was referred to by Welsh historian and researcher, the then Archivist at Caernarfon Castle, Norman Holme, author of *The Noble 24<sup>th</sup>*, as having formed part of his book's research material – yet Norman Holme makes no mention of Pte. David Jenkins in any of his research, other than recording that he was present in Zululand at the time. We wonder if Norman Holme was referring to Pte David Jenkins when he wrote the following in his *The Noble 24<sup>th</sup>* ...

Many soldiers claimed to have been at Rorke's Drift, or stated that they had been one of the garrison at that place. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the pages of the Regimental journal of the South Wales Borderers contain many references to such men, usually in conjunction with their attendance at the funeral of a former comrade.

By 1978, Norman Holme had collated all known records of the 24<sup>th</sup> in Zululand and had a number of his collations printed under the title *Medal Rolls of the 24<sup>th</sup> Foot*; Adrian Greaves owns one of the first such editions which Norman Holme originally sent to his friend, Frank Emery (*The Red Soldier*). Over the years that followed, Norman Holme continued his research for his following works, *The Silver Wreath* and *The Noble 24<sup>th</sup>* with the full support of the incumbent 24<sup>th</sup> Regimental Museum curators, and latterly Maj. Everett, who made available the latest contents of the regimental archives and assisted Norman Holme 'on virtually a daily basis'. Over a period of more than twenty years, between 1978 and the publication of *The Noble 24<sup>th</sup>* in 1999, neither Norman Holme, nor his many researchers, found any reference to Pte David Jenkins. It is Brecon museum staff's hypothesis that the entry in question was written as a Depot diary, not a ledger. They believe the diary/ledger was overlooked by researchers due to its title, and that, somehow, Norman Holme and all other researchers saw it as a record of the 2/24<sup>th</sup> in the Napoleonic period, without noticing the second line and the dates of the 1/24<sup>th</sup> records, furthermore, they suggest anyone doing research into the AZW could easily be forgiven for missing the second title and not be aware of its existence. Its title is...

#### **Records of the 2/24<sup>th</sup> 1804-1813**

#### **Records of the 1/24<sup>th</sup> 1689-1905**

In Brecon museum staff's opinion, it is difficult to say who wrote the entry in the diary without a full investigation of the handwriting of various 'potentials'. It is their opinion that the diary consolidated 'various records' held in the Depot. Someone clearly used a book that had space after the 2/24<sup>th</sup> entries (some 35 pages), to write (initially) a 'catch up on the records' of the 1/24<sup>th</sup> and subsequent officers have added to it, possibly a Depot Commandant or Depot Adjutant. There are about a hundred pages of considerable detail, written in different handwriting (which you would expect allowing for the length of the period). It is Brecon museum staff's opinion that the entry in question looks like the work of Lieutenant George K Moore, an adjutant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn SWB and a participant in the 1879 conflict, not of Isandlwana or Rorke's Drift, but who took part in the march against Ulundi. The fact that he uses the SWB title points to the diary having been compiled following the formation of the South Wales Borderers in July 1881. To be fair to Lt. Moore, perhaps he based his entry on what he had seen written about David Jenkins when he sat for Lady Butler, and presumed he was the 'Rorke's Drift Jenkins'. A Society member, and a serving army major, has been given sight of the Brecon museum ledger/diary to clarify the relevance of this document. Their report makes the following observations;

An insert for 14 Apr 1879 was present on the pages, which was out of sync. This implies that the details were added to this ledger in an order that linked specific events rather than a strict chronological order and that all entries were added retrospectively of the events. This is also supported by the signature by Lt G K Moore, which ends in 'SWB', clearly indicating he signed these entries off, at the earliest in 1881, or sometime after the 1st Bn became the SWB. The ledger appears to be a compilation of events, possibly pulled together by Adjutants several years after the events using unknown documents rather than an Orderly Book or Daily Diary.

The name of Pte D. Jenkins is present but this could be an inaccurate record and shows no reference to the original nominal rolls. The ledger is not 100% credible as a record of events as it was compiled years later, as indicated by the SWB mention in the signature. The museum staff remain content that there is an 80% possibility Pte D Jenkins had an active role as an RD Defender based on this ledger, his Bible and the fact that Pte D Jenkins had attended various reunions of the events without being questioned by fellow soldiers.

**AG. 1. I accept this assessment as a very fair observation. I also totally accept the Brecon ledger/diary itself is 100% genuine. However, I agree with the observation ... 'The ledger is not 100% credible as a record of events as it was compiled years later, as indicated by the SWB mention in the signature'.**

**2. As Pte David Jenkins never claimed to be a Rorke's Drift defender, why would anyone attending a reunion need to challenge him?**

**3. Had he been a Rorke's Drift defender, might he at some point have asked for his name to be included on a ledger or roll?**

The diary was donated to the Museum in 1950 by the family of an ex 24<sup>th</sup> officer. We have been requested by the regimental curator not to publish photographs of the diary/ledger.

In the same vein of records referring to Pte David Jenkins being out of sync, the 1/24<sup>th</sup> Record of Services lists the following as having been present at the Drift, but the words... 'had been sent' were written by C/Sgt Edwards before he was killed at Isandlwana. He could not possibly have been referring to who was at Rorke's Drift later on the 22<sup>nd</sup>...

Sgt Wilson, Ptes Payton, Desmond, Jenkins and Roy had been sent to the rear with prisoners according to a letter written by Col Sgt Edwards.

If proof was required that this Edwards entry was out of sync, it certainly predates the battle as Roy was in the hospital at RD during the battle - he got the DCM. Since the other Jenkins (James, the one killed) was also 1st Battalion, Edwards could easily have been referring to him rather than David Jenkins, so in fact that reference doesn't confirm in any way that there were more than one Jenkins at RD.

Moving on, it is accepted that Pte David Jenkins returned to the UK in possession of a 'Rorke's Drift Bible' copies of which were given to all of B Company by the ladies of Durban. It is already known that these Bibles were put in B Company's kit bags at the docks before the troops embarked from Durban. This is confirmed by no less than Pte John Williams VC who wrote...

When B Company boarded ship that very same day, each man had in his kit bag a Bible, which they would treasure for the remainder of their lives. Presented by the ladies of Durban, a philanthropic group, each signed by a 'Miss Wilkinson'. (1)

If Pte John Williams VC is to be believed, there is no mention by him, or anyone else, of the Bibles going only to Rorke's Drift men. Therefore, Pte David Jenkins' name in his Bible cannot be evidence of his participation in the action. The contemporary press in South Africa has many accounts of presentations and events for 24<sup>th</sup> men returning to Pietermaritzburg and Durban - none mention Bibles.

With regard to the Mayoral Address, copies were presented to '**The Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of H.M. 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment**'; this distribution also went beyond the Rorke's Drift defenders and possession of a Mayoral Address cannot, on its own, be considered proof that a recipient was actually there. For example, one copy went to Pte. 25B/953 Frederick Evans, who we know was not at Rorke's Drift

As you can guess, Norman Holme's and Julian Whybra's views (JW's *England's Sons*) of suspect Rorke's Drift claimants are re-emerging strongly again. Norman Holme logged all the 1879 records over many years and in 1998 wrote,

Undoubtedly a number of veterans encouraged the belief [that they were at Rorke's Drift] possibly to increase their standing within the community, or with members of their family. Unfortunately, such spurious claims are now firmly embedded in family folklore. (2)

Likewise, in his section headed *Letters from South Africa, (Zulu and Basuto Wars Complete medal Roll 1877-8-9)* researcher Roy Dutton wrote....

Editors of newspapers were not very accurate in their printing of soldiers' letters...they quite often mixed up similar sounding names and also managed to print accounts of some soldiers, who had never been present at Isandlwana or Rorke's Drift. It is important to corroborate such material against other historical sources.

The biographer of John Williams VC, W. G. Lloyd, wrote in his seminal work...

Some men said they were at Rorke's Drift but in fact they had never been to South Africa. Some had been at the small mission station with either the middle column or prior to the second invasion of Zululand, but failed to mention that they were not actually at the legendary rearguard action. And some were to impersonate John Williams VC. On at least three occasions known to the author, deceitful attempts to take advantage of his fame occurred. (3)

We agree whole heartedly. See also, the accompanying Journal article about yet another recently uncovered 'false claimant', Pte George Langridge, who, according to his local newspaper, was given 'a hero's 21 gun salute' at his funeral by the SWB. Woops!

So, what is the answer in Pte. David Jenkins' case? Sadly we have not yet seen any independent confirmation, or a convincing reason, for Pte David Jenkins being at Rorke's Drift. Most of all, we cannot even find a clear, unequivocal claim from the man himself explaining his movements, or even claiming he was there.

As anyone can see from his records, he was constantly in trouble with the authorities and had a distasteful disciplinary record as well as suffering 'the jolly rant' or syphilis (as did many soldiers of that period). He was undoubtedly a 'regimental character'.

This, to us, is a peculiar situation; a man who never claimed to have been at Rorke's Drift is now being credited with having been there. With all the publicity, and welcome 'hype' for the Brecon museum, (not our interpretation) there is the possibility that, if left unchallenged, a belief will grow, and the story that Pte David Jenkins was at Rorke's Drift as a defender will become 'fact' - that is the power of myth turning into belief. As David Rattray frequently said when addressing selected audiences and speaking of 'Welsh soldiers marching into Zululand singing *'Men of Harlech'* - 'why spoil a good story'?

With such willingness to make Pte David Jenkins a Rorke's Drift defender, then what about other cases, for example, Sgt Cooper 1<sup>st</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> who is on the rolls of Isandlwana casualties. His family's belief, in parallel with Jenkin's family, is that Cooper was killed at Rorke's Drift, a belief that is supported by his memorial service papers and a personal letter to his next of kin from the then CO of the 1<sup>st</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> at Helpmakaar Major Upcher, commanding Rorke's Drift, confirming Sgt Cooper's death on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January. This letter is, according to Brecon museum staff, unique; no similar letter is known to the museum.(4) This supporting documentary evidence puts Cooper in close proximity to RD at the relevant time. However, despite this evidence, there is little compelling or substantiated evidence putting him specifically at Rorke's Drift. Consequently, Sgt Cooper's case is not probable but possible - nevertheless, there is more evidence to support Sgt Cooper's case than Pte David Jenkins whose case is neither probable or possible.

Finally, as a former detective of many years, let Adrian Greaves ask the reader to test the following imaginary scenario. For just a moment, let us turn the story on its head and retrospectively pretend that, because of the killing of several hundred Zulu wounded after the engagement, it was a crime to have been a Rorke's Drift defender. Let us now put Pte David Jenkins on trial to face the charge. How could he possibly be found guilty on the 'evidence' currently being put forward to put him at Rorke's Drift when the only line of evidence comes from the press of the day, which would clear him of the charge... that amongst the men from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 24<sup>th</sup> who disembarked were

a number of men which includes a soldier with the surname 'Jenkins' and the comment after all the names, five in total,....who had been to the rear with prisoners.

I submit the case against him would have to be dismissed on the strength of this line alone, especially when it is further supported by C/Sgt Edwards' statement above, leaving no evidence that puts Pte David Jenkins anywhere near Rorke's Drift at the material date/time. Therefore, why suggest the same lack of evidence proves he was present? If this scenario cannot pass such a test, there is no test to pass.

We believe Pte David Jenkins case should, therefore, be treated with caution until his Service Record, or any genuine contemporary record, or mention in another participant's letter confirms his role as a 'defender'; we would then willingly accept that the matter is beyond any question and we could then support the claim of Brecon museum staff and Mr Rees.

The above is our personal opinion. Let's see what pops up.

Dr Adrian Greaves, AZWHS. Author *Rorke's Drift* Cassell 2002.

Dr David Payne, AZWRS. Author *Harford* Ultimatum Tree Press 2008.

### References.

1. Lloyd, W.G. *John Williams VC* Three Arch Press, 1993.
2. Holme, Norman. *The Noble 24<sup>th</sup>* Savannah Publications 1999. We accept he did not mention Frederick Herbert Brown either, but there is other evidence he was there.
3. Lloyd, W.G. *John Williams VC* Three Arch Press, 1993.
4. The original Upcher letter is in Adrian Greaves' personal collection, Sgt Cooper's medal is owned by an anonymous collector. See *AZWHS* Journal 21 for further details.

### Post Script.

a. Numerous Society members, and the press, have asked about the value of such this soldier's medal. A South Africa campaign medal to a non-combatant 24<sup>th</sup> soldier could fetch £900. A Rorke's Drift defender's medal would currently attract offers of £35,000 or more.

b. I was surprised to see that Capt. Greaves, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment NNC \* , is mentioned in the same Brecon diary entry as Pte David Jenkins. According to this Brecon diary, Capt Greaves accompanied Capt Harford when the bodies of Coghill and Melvill were found. Being a very distant relative, I am aware Capt. Greaves' arrived at Rorke's Drift early on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January to help strengthen the position. The Brecon diary entry, of which I was totally unaware, supports the hypothesis that, I too, could have a family member who was significantly connected to Rorke's Drift, albeit post engagement! As Capt Greaves was seemingly accompanying Capt Harford and Lt Hillier when they found Coghill and Melvill, perhaps he was one of those who also found Sgt Cooper's body, now there's a theory to go with my Upcher letter! The hypothesis that there were two soldiers bodies alongside Coghill and Melvill is based upon a contemporary account by Lt. Hillier \*\*, and supported by a handwritten entry by Capt. Harford in his presentation copy of *In Zululand with the British* by Norris-Newman, presented to him in 1880 by the author, that the bodies found totalled '4'. This particular edition, formally owned and annotated throughout by Harford, is in my collection.

Dr Adrian Greaves

\* Referenced in

a. Laband and Thompson. *The Buffalo Border 1879* University of Natal, 1983 and

b. Smith, Keith, L. *Local General Orders Relating to the Anglo Zulu War of 1879*. D.P. & G Publishers, 2005.

\*\* *Telegraph and Eastern Province Standard*, 28 February 1879.