

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

Some snippets of Dover history

Lt James Hart, Dover's Waterloo Man

- recorded on a gravestone!

Contributed by Phil Wybourn-Brown

ON A COLD, wet and overcast morning in mid June a 23 year old Dover man stood with his regiment on a windswept ridge a few miles from Brussels. Although he did not know it, the young man was about to witness and participate in one of the most significant events of modern history. He also did not know that he had just seven hours to live. The young man was Lt James Hart from Dover, his regiment was the 33rd of Foot, and the windy ridge was close by a village named Waterloo. It was Sunday morning the 18th June, 1815.

The 33rd Foot (1st West Riding, later the Duke of Wellingtons own) formed part of Halkett's Brigade, along with the 2nd Battalion, 30th of Foot (Cambridgeshire), 2nd Battalion, 69th of Foot (South Lincolnshire) and the 73rd of Foot (Highland) Regiments. Standing there upon the ridge James would have witnessed the 'Great Parade' performed by the French Army, and, at around 11.15 that morning he would have seen the first great grey clouds of gun smoke issue from the French line as the Emperor's 'Beautiful Daughters', his guns, opened fire.

The cannonade was directed against the right of Wellington's line and against his gun line. One battery of Royal Artillery was stationed to the front of the 33rds position, and so, as a result of 'counter battery fire', the 33rd and the rest of the Brigade began to suffer heavy losses.

Later as the main thrust of the battle moved to the centre, and then the left of the line, the Brigade was ordered to retire a few paces and to lie down to let the French

shot pass overhead. The tide of French attacks ebbed and flowed over midday and into early afternoon, when, at about 3 o'clock the French infantry withdrew and the French cavalry took to the field. What followed was the greatest massed attack by cavalry in history. The bloodied and thinned line on the ridge rose to its feet as one and formed squares as the French horsemen attacked, withdrew, reformed and came on again, and again and again.

James would have been standing in the ever shrinking square of the 33rd as the riders rode around the square, hacking and stabbing at the heads of the stubborn infantrymen who hung on to the bloody ridge. As the French horsemen retreated the artillerymen would run from the squares to man their guns which the French had left unspiked to pour grapeshot over shell into their backs. Despite this terrible carnage, the French rallied and kept on coming. Finally, towards 5 o'clock the battered and bloody, but unbowed cavalry quit the field so the 'Beautiful Daughters' could speak again.

Once again the 33rd came under fire and James would have seen the bloody holes being torn in the their ranks until, once again, the Brigade was ordered to lie down to allow the shot to pass overhead. At around this time Halkett ordered the Brigade's colours sent to the rear. Such had been the losses that it was felt that there were too few left to defend them. It would be about 6 o'clock, that a French gunner did for Lt James Hart. James was lying down with Lt Pagen and Capt Trevor when a shell exploded overhead, a large fragment from it smashed down on to James' right shoulder, neck and face. He was killed instantly. The fragment bounced over Capt Trevor but it removed Lt Pagen's right ear.

Had James lived he would have

witnessed the attack and the defeat of the 'Old Guard', the end of the battle and the end of an era of history. As it is he lies with the men of his regiment in a mass grave on the field of Waterloo.

At home in Dover his family erected a headstone in their local churchyard in the town centre. It stands in the shade of a small tree to the right of the front doors to St. Mary's Church, opposite the 'Eight Bells', where I sat to write this short account.

Also on the stone are other members of this military family, Lt Charles Hart, late of the 5th Royal Veterans, died 1836. Lt Samuel Hart, 9th of Foot, died 1810, and Christianna Hart, died 29th December...? Theirs would be other stories to write.

The next time you pass St. Mary's, give a thought to 23-year-old Lt James Hart and the events he witnessed on that ridge at Waterloo 187 years ago.



James Hart's gravestone.

The story of

Liege Hulett

FOUNDER OF KEARSNEY COLLEGE SOUTH AFRICA

He answered a Dover Mail advert!

Contributed by Mike McFarnell

KEARSNEY COLLEGE was founded up the North Coast in August 1921 by the joint efforts of Sir J. Liege Hulett and the Methodist Church of South Africa. But in examining the birth of Kearsney College one really has to go back over sixty years before that. After all, what was Liege Hulett doing in South Africa? Had he not decided to emigrate from England in 1857 there would be no Kearsney College today and the name Hulett would be unknown in South Africa.

There is nothing in my research to indicate that Liege Hulett had itchy feet. His family was well established in Gillingham, Kent, though he himself was born in Sheffield. His grandfather was a devotee of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church and all the family, including Liege, were God fearing men. In fact Liege preached his first sermon at the age of 18. By 1856 England was suffering from the aftermath of the Crimean War, and there is no doubt that, looking across the world, there were many young men in England at that time who felt that the grass was greener on the other side.

The critical factor appears to have been a small advertisement in the local paper, the Dover Mail, put in by a Mr Burgess who was a Durban chemist and had property in Verulam. He sought an assistant. Had this advertisement appeared in any other paper rather than the Dover Mail, there would be no Kearsney College today. This looks suspiciously like the 'Hand of Fate'. Not only this, but the position appealed to