

A Lucky Escape in Afghanistan

Robert Kipling, of unproven origin (although see 'Shotton 1911'), was commissioned from the ranks in the 44th (Essex) regiment in 1837.

44th Foot.—Ensign R. Stuart to be Lieutenant, without purchase, vice Hadfield, appointed to the 3d Light Dragoons; Serjeant Major — Kipling to be Ensign, vice Stuart.

London Standard - Saturday 01 July 1837

(From the Englishmen Sept. 20)

Ensign Kipling of H. M. S. 44th Regiment of foot having lately been promoted to that rank from the grade of Serjeant Major, of the corps, the non-commissioned officers have subscribed to present him with a sword " as a token of their sincere esteem and regard." The selection of the sword has been entrusted to Messrs-Guest and Co. of Cossitollah, who appear to us to have made choice of a weapon worthy of being sustained 'upon a soldier's thigh.'

Bombay Gazette - Wednesday 04 October 1837

Ensign Kipling, who recently got his commission in the 44th, had served twenty-six years in that regiment, latterly as Serjeant-Major, and his brother soldiers were so pleased with his conduct that they presented him with a handsome sword on his promotion.

Monday 18 June 1838, Caledonian Mercury,

44th—*Ghazee pore, 27 Nov. 1837*—The sword, which had been subscribed for by the non-commissioned of Her Majesty's 44th Foot, for presentation to Ens. Kipling, their late and much-respected Serj.-Major, having arrived at the head-quarters of the corps on the 13th instant, on the 18th the whole of the non-commissioned officers assembled in the long room of the regimental canteen for that purpose. On the approach of the Ensign, he was met at the door by the Quartermaster-Serjeant of the regt., viz., Martin Sharpe Whittaker, who, in the name of the remainder of the non-commissioned officers assembled, presented the sword (which has the following inscription engraved on its blade, viz., "Presented to Ensign Kipling, their late Serjeant-major, as a token of their sincere esteem and regard"), with the following very appropriate address:—"Ensign Kipling, in behalf of myself and the rest of the non-commissioned officers of the regiment, I have much pleasure in presenting you with this warlike badge, the most honourable that can be given from a body of brother soldiers to another. We beg you will accept it as a mark of their approbation of the straightforward performance of your arduous duties as Serj.-maj. for these last 13 years; and as a further mark of their sincere esteem and regard, trusting that you may rise into the higher grades of the service with as much honour and respect as now marks your present well-earned promotion, and which we all view with feelings of joy and delight. Should you ever be called upon to draw this honourable weapon in battle, may it be with honour and glory to your Sovereign, your country, and yourself."—After Ens.

K. had received the sword, he delivered the following short but feeling reply:—"Non-commissioned officers,—in receiving this sword from you as a mark of your esteem and regard for me, I return you my sincere thanks, and, at the same time, hope that you will individually consider my silence to speak more the feelings of my heart, for this your mark of esteem, than if I was speaking to you for an hour."—The individual in question is an old and faithful soldier, having served three Kings and the present Queen for upwards of 26 years. He enlisted on 1st May, 1811, into the 24th reg. of Foot, and joined the 2nd batt. in Portugal a short time afterwards, with which batt. he continued to serve till the peace in 1814. On the reduction of that batt. he was sent to join the 1st, then serving in India (Bengal), and on the return of that corps to Europe, in 1822, he extended his services to his present corps, the 44th Foot, and, in Nov. 1824, was appointed Serj.-Major to the reg., ever since which period he has performed the arduous duties of that situation, which no doubt have been done to the satisfaction of his Commanding Officer; and has now been rewarded for his long and faithful services by a commission from Her Majesty, which may he long live to enjoy.

(The 2nd battalion of the 24th was raised in Warwick in 1804 and had suffered heavy losses at Talavera in 1809).

44th Foot—L. Mitchell, Gent., to be Ensign, without purchase, vice Kipling, appointed Adjutant; Ensign R. Kipling, to be Adjutant, vice Code, appointed to the 3d Light Dragoons.

Freeman's Journal - Friday 29 June 1838

<i>Ensigns.</i>	
Fred. Jenkins	26 Jun. 35
Wm. MacMahon	6 Nov
Geo. H. Skipton	11 Jun 36
Wm. G. Raban	25 Sept.
Rob. Kipling, <i>adj.</i>	30 June 37
Henry Cadett	28 Nov.
Edw. T. Roberts	18 May 38
Fred. J. Campbell	Fortye 1 June
Samuel Swinton	9 Nov.
<i>Pay.</i> T. Bourke	17 July 25 19 Oct. 04
<i>Adj.</i> Rob. Kipling, <i>ens</i>	27 Dec. 37

The Army List 1842

44th Foot.—Ensign G. H. Skipton to be Lieutenant, without purchase, vice Jenkins, deceased; Ensign and Adjutant R. Kipling, to have the rank of Lieutenant; W. Swayne, Gent. to be Ensign, without purchase, vice Skipton.

London Standard - Wednesday 30 December 1840

[1842]

44th (The East Essex) Regiment of Foot. 223

The SPHINX, with the word "EGYPT"—"BADAJOZ"—"SALAMANCA"—
"PENINSULA"—"BLADENSBURG"—"WATERLOO"—"AVA."

Rank.	Name.	Rank in the	
		Regiment.	Army.
Colonel	Gore Browne	29Jan.1820	Gen. 10Jan.1837
Lieut. Col. . . .	{ John Shelton	6Sept.1827	Col. 23Nov.1841
	{ Thomas Mackrell	25June 30	do
Major.	{ Alexander Campbell	21Feb.1840	6June 1832
	{ William Boxell Scott	16Apr. 41	
Captain.	{ Charles O'Neill	31May1821	Major 10Jan.1837
	{ James Johnston	23Jan. 23	— 22July 30
	{ Benjamin Halfhide	6May. 24	— do
	{ Thomas Swayne	30Jan. 36	
	{ Robert Bradford M'Crea	11June	
	{ Alured William Gray	15June 39	14June 1839
	{ Thos. Richard Leighton	14Feb. 40	
	{ Thomas Robinson	28do	
	{ Aug. Halifax Ferryman	16Apr. 41	
	{ James Douglas DeWend	22May	
	Lieutenant . .	{ J— D— Young	7Jan.1827
{ Edward Woolhouse		6July	26June 1817
{ William Henry Dodgin		29May 28	
{ Charles Ernest Turner		28Oct. 31	12Oct. 1815
{ William Evans		23Oct. 33	
{ William George White		29Aug. 34	
{ Thomas Alexander Souter		8May 35	
{ Francis Montresor Wade		26June	
{ Arthur Hogg		30Jan. 36	
{ Duncan Trevor Grant		1Apr.	
{ J. Chilton Lambton Carter		23Sept.	
{ Edward Sandford Cumberland			
		18May 38	
{ William G— Raban		14Feb. 40	
{ William Mac Mahon		28do	
{ Henry Cadett	29do		
{ Samuel Swinton	12June		
{ George Henry Skipton	10Sept.		
{ Robert Kipling	do	Adjutant	

44th : The Commander-in-chief in India has made the following appointment, until her Majesty's pleasure shall be known. Capt. D. FitzGerald Longworth, from 4th foot, to be Capt., vice Beebee, who exchanges ; dated Aug. 27th, 1841. Lieut. W. White has been appointed to act as Adjutant during the absence of Lieut. and Adjutant Kipling, who has proceeded to Calcutta on leave from 1st Oct. 1841, to the 31st March, 1842, to be examined by a medical board. Capt. Gray is on sick leave, in the provinces, from 15th Sept., 1841, to 14th Sept., 1842. Ensign V

Argus, or, Broad-sheet of the Empire - Saturday 20 November 1841

In late 1841, the regiment was besieged in Kabul and attempted an unsuccessful retreat towards India.



Last stand of the 44th at Gandermak (13 January 1842)

At first, Robert's fate was not known but then a report arrived in London in April of a most lucky escape (see Appendix), outlined below in the regimental history.

On the 1st of October the strength of the regiment 1841 at Cabul consisted of twenty-five officers,* thirty-five sergeants, fourteen drummers, and six hundred and thirty-five rank and file. It is important to notice this, since it will be seen that all the officers save three were killed, and nearly the whole of the men perished.

The above, with the exception of Colonel Shelton, Lieutenants Evans and Souter, were all killed; Lieutenant Souter being the only officer who was present at and survived the final struggle.

Captain A. W. Gray and Lieutenant R. Kipling (Adjutant) had obtained leave to Europe, and left Cabul for India on the 2nd of October. *En route* through the passes of Affghanistan they were molested and fired upon, and were obliged to adopt the Affghan costume for safety. Lieutenant Kipling, who had been Sergeant-major, and, though a fine old soldier, was no linguist, would most certainly have been murdered, but for his companion, Captain Gray, whose appearance and proficiency in the language, well enabled him to pass for a native chief; the two, after many narrow escapes, at length reached the plains in safety.

From another Correspondent.—SIR,—As you have expressed a wish to know who the officers of the 44th Reg. were at Cabul head-quarters, I beg leave to send you a nominal list :—Colonels—Shelton, Mackrell ; Maj. Scott ; Capts.—Swayne, M'Crea, Leighton, Robinson, De Wend ; Lieuts.—Dodgin, Collins, Evans, White, Souter, Wade, Hogg, Cumberland, Raban, Cadett, Swinton, Fortye ; Ens. Gray. Staff—Paym. Bourke, Quartm. Halahan, Surg. Harcourt, Assist.-Surg. Balfour. The absent officers were employed at depot in India, sick in Europe, or on way to join. It may be here remarked, of the 656 privates 264 were recruits when the corps was at Kurnaul, in October, 1840, the month the 44th marched for the north-west. Lieut. Collins was promoted to an Unatt. company, but his having left Cabul previous to the evacuation is not known. Capt. Gray and his companion K. (meaning Adjutant Kipling) are both at Kurnaul. Assist.-Surg. Balfour and Lieut. Evans remained at Cabul in the Balla Hissar. Poor Evans had been badly wounded.

Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service - Saturday 23 April 1842

Cabool ; T. A. Souter, prisoner at Tootoo ; R. Kipling, adjt., on leave to Calcutta, escaped through Lughman at the first outbreak of the insurrection ; Ensign H. J. White had not

Morning Post - Tuesday 05 July 1842

-Kipling and Grey ordered to join other details at Cawnpore, where Mrs. Grey died a few days since.

Naval & Military Gazette and Weekly Chronicle of the United Service - Saturday 17 September 1842

Detachments from India arrived at the Invalid Depot at Fort Pitt barracks, consisting of the 9th, 18th, 26th, 31st, 44th, and 55th. Their strength on embarking on board the ship William Money, Capt. Blackford, at Calcutta, on the 12th of April last, consisted of 13 rank and file of the 9th, 33 of the 18th, 10 of the 26th, 10 of the 31st, 4 of the 44th, and 14 of the 55th, with Adjutant Kipling and Lieut. Carey, both of the 44th, seven women and nine children. The troops during their voyage, which lasted nearly six months, suffered considerable sickness, producing thirty-one deaths. The only medical gentleman on board, who attended the soldiers, was a civilian, named T. G. Welsh. On disembarking at Gravesend, seven soldiers and two women belonging to the detachment, were declared lunatics, and they have been forwarded to Fort Clarence. On board there were ten soldiers belonging to the East India Company's service, also lunatics ; they were, however, taken with the ship to London. The soldiers of the line, since their disembarkation, have made a complaint to Major Kelly, at Gravesend, of the treatment they received on board, from the dirty state of the ship and want of water. ; no fresh rations whilst in harbour at St Helena, very bad salt rations, no medical comforts for the invalids, &c.

Limerick Chronicle - Wednesday 11 October 1843 (Forts Pitt and Clarence were in Rochester)

**PRESENTATION OF NEW COLORS TO THE 44TH REGIMENT.
Portsmouth, Tuesday.**

Yesterday the 44th regiment, which is now doing garrison duty at Gosport, was presented with new colors by Lady Pakenham, the wife of the major-general commanding the district, Sir Hercules Pakenham. The day was remarkably favorable, and a considerable number of the nobility and gentry of the neighborhood, as well as the naval and military officers stationed in the garrison, were on the ground.

The ceremony of consecrating the colors was performed by the Venerable Archdeacon Wilberforce, who made a very powerful and impressive address to the regiment. The venerable archdeacon concluded his address with a beautiful and appropriate prayer.

Immediately after the consecration of the colors Lady Pakenham presented them to the ensigns who had been selected to receive them at her ladyship's hands, and in so doing spoke as follows:—

"In presenting the colors of the 44th regiment, I am deeply moved, for I cannot help feeling a recurrence of those painful emotions their late history in Afghanistan excited when perusing it; yet when I look around me on the few brave men who survived those almost unheard-of perils.

Dublin Evening Packet and Correspondent - Thursday 14 December 1843

44th—Lieut J A L Philipps, from 11th, to be Lieut vice Scott, exchanges; Lieut C H M Smith to be Adjutant, vice Kipling, who resigns the Adjutancy only.

Belfast News-Letter - Tuesday 19 December 1843

44th Foot.—Ensign J. Le M. Carey, to be Lieutenant, by purchase, vice Kipling, who retires; W. Dunkin, Gent, to be Ensign by purchase, vice Carey.

Hampshire Advertiser - Saturday 16 March 1844

Cornet FitzGerald, 3d Dragoon Guards, Lt. Kipling, 44th, Ensign Walsh, 73d, Lieut. O'Brien, 89th, and Capt. Trotman and Grant, 1st West India Regt. sold out of the Service on Friday.

Limerick Chronicle - Wednesday 20 March 1844

It seems that Robert had a wife in India, to whom he returned (or maybe she had travelled to England with him in 1843 and both had returned). She died in 1845 and Robert himself perished the following year (his age at death was left blank).

1845 August	28 th	Mary Anne Kipling	37	wife of Mr R. Kipling - late Lieut. and Adjut. 44th Foot.	Military Burial Ground	42. Etson. Genl. Chaplain.
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Sacred to the Memory of Mary Anne, wife of Mr. Robert Kipling, late Lieutenant and Adj. H. M. 44th Foot, departed this life on the 27th day of Augt. 1845, aged 37 years; Military Burial Ground Bhowanipore; Bengal Obituary p.248; N/1/68 f.119

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Burials at Fort William in the Presidency of Calcutta

<i>When Died</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Rank</i> <i>Grade</i> <i>Rank</i>	<i>When Buried</i>	<i>Signature by whom Buried</i>
<i>1812</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>...</i>	<i>...</i>	<i>...</i>	<i>...</i>	<i>...</i>

Fort William was the main British base in Calcutta and Bhowanipore was its burial ground.

Appendix – Grey and Kipling’s Escape

London Evening Standard - Thursday 10 March 1842

CAPTAIN GRAY’S NARRATIVE.—AN ESCAPE FROM THE GHILZIES.

(From the *Bengal Hurkara* of January 3.)

We have the pleasure to-day to lay before our readers a most interesting narrative of the escape of Captain Gray, of her Majesty’s 44th Foot, from the designs of the Ghilzies; and it will be seen from it that the *quem Deus vult perdere* principle was in full operation on the fate of poor Burnes, who entirely disregarded the correct information sent to him by Captain Gray, himself an excellent linguist, and, therefore, well capable of comprehending what the friendly chief related :—

“ I commenced my march from Cabool at daylight on the morning of the 2d October, with an escort of 20 Hazir Bash horsemen, furnished me by Sir A. Burnes, and proceeded as far as a village called Boodkhah, about six miles from Cabool, when one of the dak runners came up to me stating that a Kafilla had been plundered by the Ghilzies the previous night, at a place called Tezeen, and advised me not to proceed till I had heard from Sir A. Burnes, to whom they had reported the circumstance. I, in consequence, went off the road, and remained there till I could hear something further, but was not kept long in suspense, when I perceived a horseman galloping up in my direction. It was one from Sir A. Burnes with a note for me, wishing me not to proceed any further, as the pass was not safe, but to go into the village of Boodkhah, and there remain till I should hear from him again. I, therefore, took his advice, and on the evening of the 3d got another note from him, saying there was a party of 400 horsemen going in my direction, and that I might embrace the opportunity of accompanying them as far as Gundamuck, that the chief was a very respectable and trustworthy man, requesting me at the same time to be altogether guided by his advice. I accordingly left the village and joined his camp on the evening of the 3d; and at daylight on the morning of the 4th we commenced our march towards the Khoord Cabool Pass, and on gaining the mouth of it, found it in possession of the Ghilzies,

who were so strongly posted on the heights that the chief thought it advisable not to attempt a passage, but endeavour to get through another pass called the Chinaree. We then shaped our course for it, and on reaching it found it also in possession of the enemy; finding this to be the case, the chief held a consultation with his sirdars, when they unanimously agreed to try another pass, stating at the same time that the natural difficulties of it were so great that he was afraid we should not be able to surmount them; however, it was decided that the attempt should be made, and I am happy to say we surmounted every difficulty, and having got safe through by four p.m., took up our camp in the dry bed of a river between Sa Baba and Tezeen. Everything appeared to be quiet till between eight and nine o'clock, when some people appeared on the hills that surrounded us, and challenged some of our escort, saying, that if they would give up the two officers, K—— and myself, they should receive 3000 rupees for each of us, and that the escort would be permitted to proceed without molestation. The answer they received from our party was, 'That the officers were under their protection, and protect them they would to the very last.' The sentence was scarcely finished, when a shrill whistle was heard in the hills, followed by a tremendous volley from the sides, and directed on my tent, which was the only one in our camp. I immediately jumped out of bed, put on my clothes as quickly as possible, and had the tent struck. I then got our escort to saddle their horses and be prepared in case the enemy might descend; but, finding they had no intention of doing so, but were determined to pick us off without exposing themselves, our party thought it necessary that they should be dislodged, and commenced ascending the hills on each side, the enemy all the time pouring on us a most destructive fire; and, after a contest of several hours, they succeeded in driving them from the heights. We were engaged from between eight and nine o'clock, at which time the moon had just got above the hills that surrounded us, and threw her light on our party below till four o'clock the following morning, the 5th. On the return of our party a council of war was held, to which we were invited; the chief said he had sent for us to know what our wishes were, whether we wished to proceed or turn, that the whole of the passes of Gundamuck

be in possession of the Ghilzies, that one of them had 50 men in it, and that none of his escort had a single horse left. I replied, 'If such is the case, I would certainly advise our returning to Cabool,' when a very young man, a son of the Naib Shurreef, at Cabool, started up and said, 'I am directed to escort these officers as far as Gundamuck; we have sustained the attack of last night, and why should we fly? No; 'forward' is the word with me,' and, shaking his beard at the same time, which is considered in the light of an oath with them, they all followed his example, saying, 'Pesh,' which is 'Forward.' The chief then directed me to have my cattle loaded, and to disguise ourselves, which I accordingly did, borrowing from amongst them one thing or another, and by daylight on the 5th we were on the move towards Gundamuck, and, on reaching the Parree Durra, or Fairy Pots, we found it literally alive with the Ghilzies. We in consequence halted for a few seconds to consult; however, it was thought advisable not to attempt it, but to take another direction across the Doblee and Udruk Budruk Mountains into the Laghnon Valley, which we did, and it is only wonderful how we ever effected it; the ascent was dreadful—only one at a time could ascend; however, we got over the difficulties, keeping on at a pretty good pace for fear of the enemy overtaking us, which they did not do till about the close of the evening, when they came up with our straggling rear, cutting up every one they could lay hands on; we had a great many camp followers who were returning to the provinces, and mostly all on foot; they were all cut up, poor fellows; and several servants of K— (six of them), his tent, bed-clothes, and two tattoos; and it was not till about four o'clock on the morning of the 6th we halted at a village called Mumrour, our party coming in by twos and threes, having been on the move for 23 hours, without even a halt. You may guess the state we were in when I tell you that the moment we got into the village, K— and I just tied our horses to a tree, and fell down fast asleep in one of the public roads of it, and had scarcely lain an hour, when the chief sent for me, and informed me that we were not safe in the village, and that he advised our proceeding on to one that we would be safe in. Away we started, and between seven and eight o'clock that evening reached the fort of Teer Ghurree, or Tigree, as it is called; we were then put into a hut, which was surrounded by a high wall, and there remained for 17 days, expecting every moment to have our throats cut. On the morning of the 7th the chief of our party, Mahomed Uzzeen Khan, came to me and said he had something to communicate. I consequently took him aside, when he told me that he was very much alarmed for our safety; in fact, that the whole of Affghanistan were determined to make one cause of it, and to drive out and murder every Feringhee in the country, that there was not the least reliance to be placed on our escort, and that the country round about, and Cabool itself, were ready

to break out. On hearing this from so respectable a chief and several other people, I thought it my duty to apprise Sir A. Burnes of it. I immediately sat down and wrote him an official letter, acquainting him with what was going on, and that treachery was at the very threshold of their doors, and also informing him of the attack upon us near Tezeen. A new difficulty now presented itself—how the letter was to be conveyed to him; however, this was very soon settled by the chief, who said that he would give the man who took it and brought back an answer 20 rupees and a khelat. It was taken and delivered to Sir A. Burnes, and the bearer of it brought a letter to the chief, acknowledging its receipt, but I never heard a line from Sir A. Burnes. This can easily be accounted for—the idea of my writing and telling such bigwigs that treachery was on foot! Had I been a little ‘political’ they might have given ear to it. What has been the consequence of his incredulity! Why he, his brother, Swayne, Robinson, and Raban, of ours, and several others, were murdered in his house! I only regret I did not keep a copy of the official letter I wrote, for I certainly would publish the whole transaction. As it was official, Burnes ought to have laid it before Sir William M’Naghten and the General. I am not aware he did not, but strongly suspect so, otherwise he would not have suffered as he did. Whilst we were, I may say, prisoners, several old mollahs used to come in and see us, and I very soon found out the drift of one man’s visits, and therefore begged of K—— to let me conduct the whole of our plans for leaving the place we were in. During our confinement I had received several letters from a Captain P. Burn, at Gundamuck, requesting me to proceed with the escort with me to his support. On the receipt of his letter I sent over to the chief of our party, and requested him to allow me to take the party to his assistance; he said he could not, that he was sent for the sole protection of the property on the Laghnon Valley, and that on his leaving it the Ghilzies would immediately attack the places and destroy the whole valley. I wrote to Burn to this effect, acquainting him at the same time that the party was not under my command, but, on the contrary, that my hands had been completely tied by Sir A. Burnes previous to my leaving Cabool; however several notes passed between Captain Burn

and myself, and his chief object appeared to me to be to get us out of the dilemma we were in; and he wrote rather a severe letter to the chief, who appeared to be much annoyed, and came over to us, and asked me if we were anxious to go? I replied, 'We are; and that if he would give me 20 horsemen, I would make the attempt to Gundamuck.' He said, 'Very well; the day after to-morrow be ready to start; in the meantime I will send out people and find out the state of the pass to Jellalabad.' I said, 'I wished to go to Gundamuck to Captain Burn.' However, before the day arrived for our departure, he came and said it was impossible to go, as we were literally surrounded by the Ghilzies, and put us off for a couple of days more. We were obliged to submit, but at the same time determined not to be put off another day, and made every preparation for starting. The two days previous to our leaving the old mollah came in and asked me if we had made up our minds as to when we would leave, and in what direction. I told him that we had, that we should leave on such a day and go to Gundamuck; but at the same time I must tell you I had a most faithful and intelligent spy in my service—my muleteer. Through him I heard of all that was going on; consequently, on the morning we started he took me on one side and told me that the mollah had been very busy in planning our destruction; that he had taken the Ghilzies off the pass leading to Jellalabad and had placed them on the road to Gundamuck. Shortly after this the chief sent word that he was ready to start. We did so at daylight on the morning of the 23d of October, all the party fully expecting that Gundamuck was to be our destination, and on our reaching the junction of the two roads I asked the chief to let me have 50 men, and that I would make the best of my way to Jellalabad, and not to Gundamuck; I was determined on doing so, and by five that evening reached it, a distance of 40 miles. I went and called on the governor of the place, and requested him to give me protection, which he did; halted the 24th, and by the 28th reached Peshawur, where I considered myself safe; halted a day there, and in 15 days reached Ferozepore; halted there four days, and at Ludiana two, and arrived at Karnaul on the morning of the 3d of December, a complete Affghan, with a beard, &c., as long as my arm. My disguise saved me many a shot, and, thank God, I have got through all my difficulties without even a scratch."