



ST GEORGE'S GAZETTE  
Newcastle 18 Sept 1908

"The retirement of Colonel J F Riddell recalls to mind his success as a jockey during his 13 years service in India. I well remember his first success in Agra when he had to ride against such experienced riders as Lt the Hon. C. Lambton and Captain Wade, Paymaster 2nd Battalion. His reputation later while in the Punjab, was such that the men of the Regiment never had any hesitation as to who they were going to back, the horse was of no importance they pinned their faith to the rider and rarely regretted it. Col. Liddell was always remarkably fit during his

service abroad and holds almost a record for purely regimental service never having been employed outside the Regiment except for a short period in Rawal Pindi as Station Staff Officer. On behalf of myself and a few others who would welcome a "Gymkhana" to liven us up in our old age, I beg to wish Colonel Riddell the best of luck."

Brigadier-General J F Riddell

Entry from St. George's Gazette 31 May 1915

"Alas yet another of the old hands of the fifth has gone, killed in action like the majority. Will the long Roll of Honour which has been running like a torrent since last August ever slacken in intensity?"

Jimmy Riddell, or "Pet", as he was better known to succeeding generations of the Fifth, was from boyhood a tried and lifelong friend of the writer. At Sandhurst he cleared the board of prizes at the Annual Sports, and also won the prize for drill. He joined the Depot at Berwick-on-Tweed in 1880, and the same winter took out a draft to the 2nd Battalion at Agra with whom he served almost continuously for 20 years.

Apart from always being a first rate officer he soon became well known as a polo player and gentleman rider above the average. After four years' continuous service at Agra and Meean Meer, neither of them the coolest places in India, he came home for some well earned leave in the summer of 1885 and I think that some of the happiest days of his life were spent in the hunting field that same winter.

During the Hazara Campaign of 1888 he gained his first mention in dispatches, indeed, rumour had it that he earned the Cross for valour in the storming of the Chula Crag. At Stormber, as is well known, the 2nd Battalion of the Fifth and Irish Rifles were within an ace of seizing the hill crest overlooking the enemy's laager, but were inexplicably ordered to retire and did so under very heavy fire. They reached a deep but narrow donga some six hundred yards distance in the plain, here the men, exhausted after a long day on fatigue followed by a longer night on the march and under arms, dropped in scores to sleep. Four captains only succeeded in rousing their units to clamber out under heavy fire and retire still further to the guns where they rallied. A further retirement being ordered, the Battalion made the best of its way back to Molteno, harassed throughout the twelve mile march by shells and galloping parties of Boers needless to say none were more active or set a better example than Riddell throughout this trying operation.

After a few weeks more service at East London, Grahamstown, and a Sterkstroom, he was ordered home to raise the 3rd Battalion of the Fifth at York. Selected to represent the British Army at the inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth he conducted a picked detachment to that Continent, and afterwards rejoined the 2nd Battalion at Bloemfontein whence he brought them home on conclusion of the war.

In 1904 he was appointed to command the 3rd Battalion in South Africa and did so until its disbandment, afterwards finishing his tour of command with the 2nd Battalion.

In 1911 he was appointed Brigadier of the Northumberland Infantry Brigade, and gazetted Brigadier-General 5 August, 1914. Throughout the past winter this Territorial Brigade guarded our coasts, and incidentally the vast military resources of Newcastle on Tyne from the vicinity of Blyth.

In April Riddell and his Brigade went to France, and within a fortnight he fell, as he would have loved to fall amongst his own men, on April 26, 1915. An eye-witness states that he strolled about under fire as unconcerned as though in his own garden, no one in fact could have shown a finer example of coolness and high courage.

Throughout his life he was a master soldier, no finer company officer ever lived, or one who understood his men better; but woe betide any slacker, whatever his rank, who came in contact with him, for Jimmy never suffered fools gladly. In spite of a severe hunting accident a couple of years ago he embodied in his own person a type of complete physical efficiency and boundless energy, but no truer hearted or more loyal comrade ever breathed.

Always a fine horseman and a very bold one he was well-known in the Cattistock country and in all the hunting fields of the Northumberland he knew and loved so well.

In 1912 he married Margaret, daughter of the late Sir Henry Scott, to whom the writer offers unbounded sympathy on behalf of the Regiment and of all the comrades we knew and loved him best."