

The Death of William Harris as Reported by Various Newspapers.

William Harris was the son of Major-General Philip Harris. He was born 16th June 1849 at Mussoorie, India, and he died on 28th November 1876 at Rawal Pindi. What follows are newspaper clippings that describe what happened to William on the day he died.

His grave is at Rawalpindi and the headstone reads - "Sacred to the memory of William Harris. Lieutenant 21st Regiment Punjab Infantry who was shot dead by a sepoy of his regiment at Rawulpindee on the 28th November 1876."

A Tablet in Christchurch, Rawalpindi (below) reads - "To the glory of God and in affectionate memory of Lieutenant William Harris. 21st Regiment PNI. Suddenly called to his rest at Rawalpindi the 28 Nov. 1876. Aged 27 yrs. The lectern was presented by his brother officers."



The first report appeared in *The Times of India* on 29 November 1877.

MURDER OF AN OFFICER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

RAWUL PINDEE, Nov. 28

Lieut. William Harris, 21st Punjab Infantry, has been deliberately shot dead by an Afghan sepoy of his regiment whilst practising ball firing. The assassin was arrested.

The Times of India 08 Dec 1876

remembered.

THE MURDER OF LIEUT. HARRIS.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

RAWAL PINDEE, DEC. 1.

It is seldom that one witnesses such consternation and grief as were displayed here last Tuesday morning, when intelligence was brought in that poor Lieut. William Harris, of the 21st Punjab Native Infantry, had been shot dead by a murderous, blood-thirsty Afghan sepoy of his own regiment. The scene of the catastrophe was at the regimental butts, where a section of recruits were going through a preliminary course of ball practice under Lt. Harris' command. It appears the section had done very badly, and Lt. Harris censured the worst shots. The slight and well-merited censures administered seems to have incensed the Afghan, who in a momentary fit of passion stepped suddenly forward, and after aiming at the target wheeled round and deliberately discharged his rifle at Lt. Harris, who fell mortally wounded. The sepoy endeavoured to effect his escape, and accordingly made away towards an adjoining field, the whole section firing after him, without however hitting him. Once under cover the assassin discharged five rounds at his pursuers, happily without hitting anyone, when, having expended all his ammunition, he surrendered, and was immediately removed into custody. Lieut. Harris was buried on Wednesday morning amidst the universal grief of all who knew him. The cortege that followed his remains was an imposing one, consisting of almost every European officer, civil and military, in the station, and the whole of the native officers and men of the 21st P. N. I. Great sympathy is felt for Major Harris, brother of the deceased, who commands the 11th N. I. stationed here. The murderer has been tried by court martial, and the proceedings sent up to army head-quarters for confirmation. There is little doubt as to what the sentence will be, but it is to be regretted that any delay should have been allowed to take place in the execution of the miscreant. Summary punishment in cases of this sort is the only effectual means of making an impression on the natives. There are, of course, many wild opinions expressed in connexion with this unfortunate occurrence, some tending to establish a parallel between it and events which preceded the mutiny of 1857; but, from the closest enquiry, there seems to be no room for believing that a spirit of insubordination or disloyalty exists amongst the men of the 21st P. N. I. or any of the other native corps located in these parts. At any rate, it is satisfactory to feel that the blind confidence reposed in the native soldiery prior to 1857, which resulted so disastrously, no longer exists, and that the first signs of disloyalty on their part will be visited with prompt, and there is little doubt, effectual punishment.

The English Newspapers

Birmingham Daily Post, Tuesday, December 5, 1876

Lieutenant Harris, 21st Punjaub Infantry, has been shot dead at rifle practice by a Pathan Sepoy, with whom he had found fault for bad shooting. The murderer, fixing his bayonet, ran away, firing at other officers and men till his ammunition was expended, when he surrendered.

The exact same same paragraph above appeared in the following newspapers:

The Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald, Tuesday, December 05, 1876

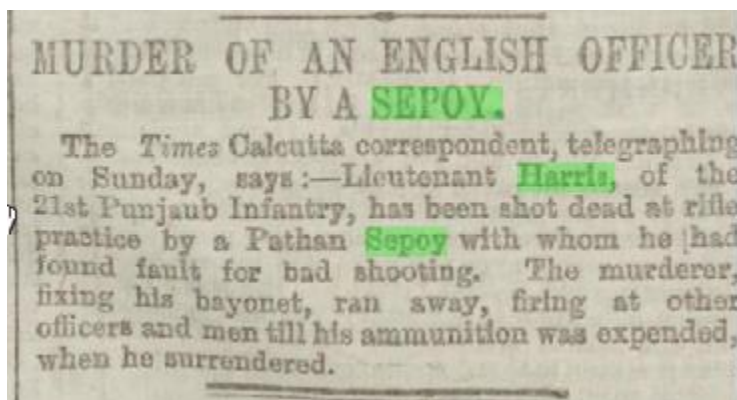
Nottinghamshire Guardian, Friday, December 08, 1876

The Graphic, Saturday, December 9, 1876

The Bucks Herald, Saturday, December 09, 1876

Aberdeen Weekly Journal, Wednesday, December 13, 1876

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, Saturday, December 09, 1876;



Below, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Tuesday, January 2, 1877

THE MURDER OF AN ENGLISH OFFICER BY A SEPOY.

A correspondent of the *Times of India* at Rawul Pindée gives some particulars of the murder, already reported by telegraph, of Lieutenant William Harris, of the 21st Punjab N.I., by a sepoy in that regiment. The writer says:—

The scene of the catastrophe was at the regimental batts, where a section of recruits were going through a preliminary course of ball practice under Lieutenant Harris's command. It appears the section had done very badly, and Lieutenant Harris censured the worst shots. The slight and well-merited censures administered seems to have incensed the sepoy (an Afghan), who in a momentary fit of passion stepped suddenly forward, and after aiming at the target wheeled round and deliberately discharged his rifle at Lieutenant Harris, who fell mortally wounded. The sepoy endeavoured to effect his escape, and accordingly made away towards an adjoining field, the whole section firing after him, without, however, hitting him. Once under cover the assassin discharged five rounds at his pursuers, happily without hitting any one, when, having expended all his ammunition, he surrendered, and was immediately removed into custody. Lieutenant Harris was buried the next morning amidst the universal grief of all who knew him. Great sympathy is felt for Major Harris, brother of the deceased, who commands the 11th Native Infantry stationed here. The murderer has been tried by court-martial, and the proceedings sent up to army head-quarters for confirmation.

The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent, Wednesday, January 03, 1877

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BY A SEPOY.

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Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle, Saturday, January 6, 1877

The Times of India 21st Dec 1877

THE sepoy who shot Lieutenant Harris was hanged on Friday morning outside the jail at Rawul Pindiee. The execution was almost a private one, only small detachments from each regiment being present. This was done partly out of respect to the feelings of the man's former comrades, and partly because a grand parade would have been altogether to his satisfaction. The evening before, the murderer asked leave to bid farewell to his brother, also a prisoner in the jail—a viper's brood apparently. The brother congratulated him on the crime. "Yes, I did well," was the answer, "but I meant to have shot Colonel Stewart also." Colonel Stewart was on the range at the time of the murder, and was in command of the firing party.

The Bath Chronicle, Thursday, January 11th 1877

princess of the house of Annapurna
 The sepoy who shot and killed Lieut. W. Harris, of the
 21st Punjaub Native Infantry, has been sentenced to be
 hanged.
 The French Prefet de Police has issued an order that

The Irish Times gave a quite detailed description of the murder on 3rd January 1877 based on the original *The Times of India* account.

**THE MURDER OF AN ENGLISH OFFICER
BY A SEAPOY.**

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In February 1877 William's replacement was announced (not sure what a Wing Office is):

21st N I—Capt F W Collis, attached (officiating Wing Commander,) to be Wing Officer, vice Lieut. Harris, deceased.
and Lieut O. Hogg to be Wing Officer