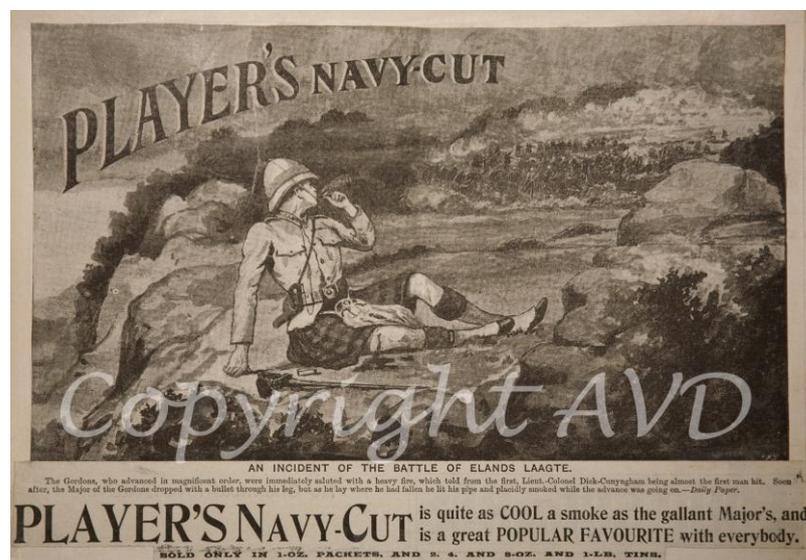


Lieut-Col. W.H. Dick-Cunyngham, V.C.



Lieut-Col. William Henry Dick-Cunyngham, was the third and youngest son of Sir William Hammer Dick-Cunyngham, Bart., of Prestonfield and Lambrughton, N.B. He received his first commission in the 92nd (Gordon) Highlanders in February, 1872, was promoted Lieutenant about a year later, and Captain in October, 1881. He was Wing-Adjutant from January, 1877, to January, 1878, and in April, 1878, became Adjutant of the Regiment.

He served throughout the Afghan War 1878, 1879, 1880, first in the Transport Department under Sir Donald Stewart, being afterwards in the division under Sir Thos. Biddulph, and subsequently with the 92nd Highlanders in the Kurum Valley under Sir Frederick Roberts; taking part in the siege of Sherpur and being awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in the attack on the Sherpur Pass on the occasion of the storming and capture of the dominate heights, 13th December, 1879. He was also with the 92nd in the march from Cabul to Kandahar, August 1880, and was present at the Battle of Kandahar. Lieut-Col. Cunyngham, who served also with the 92nd Highlanders in the latter part of the Transvaal Campaign, won the Afghan medal, with two clasps, and the bronze star "Cabul to Kandahar". During February, 1897, Maj. W.H. Dick-Cunyngham was appointed to take command of the 2nd Batt. Gordon Highlanders. They left for South Africa from Bombay on September 24th, 1899. After arriving in Durban they immediately were directed to Ladysmith. On the 21st of October, the Gordons had their first real baptism of fire at Elandslaagte.



Entering the battle, 425 strong, the Gordons lost 115, and of their officers there were only 3 who were not hit. Dick-Cunyngham was severely wounded in the arm. Sergt. Lawrence Forbes describes in his diary the following: "When I had got about half-way across, I saw the Col. lying. Sergt. M'Arthur, called on me to help to bind the old chief up, which I did. We were exposed to the Boers' fire for almost 5 min. The Col. lay and cheered on the men, and after he had a bit of a rest he managed to go on a bit further. He tried to be up at the charge, but couldn't manage it."

After recovering from his wound, he resumed command in early December. The pipers played him in and the whole regiment turned out and cheered him. He found his men in good spirits with a very low sick-rate. During the battle of Platrand, on the 6th of January, 1900, at 4.20am, Lieut. Col. Dick-Cunyngham had crossed the iron bridge with "A", his first company, and sending it on waited for the rest of his command. Here he was struck in the side by a bullet, which, fired from the far side of the plateau, had travelled more than 3000 yards. He fell from his horse. It was his first Battalion parade since Elandslaagte.

Capetown, 24^{1/2} January 1900
Dear Mrs. Dick-Cunyngham,
Let me assure you of
my heartfelt sympathy in
the terrible loss you have so
recently sustained, in which
I venture to think, Mrs. Ke
alone to share, for your
gallant husband was a
valued friend & comrade in
Afghanistan.
It may be some slight
solace to you to learn how
deeply his untimely end is
deplored by all who knew
and admired him.
May God grant you
strength to bear bravely
what He has thought fit
to order. Believe me
yours sincerely
Robert D. Roberts

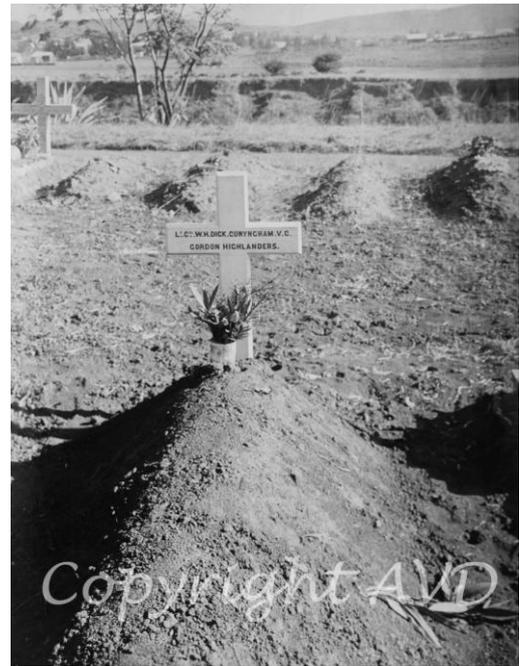
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Original letter from Lord Roberts to Mrs. Cunyngham

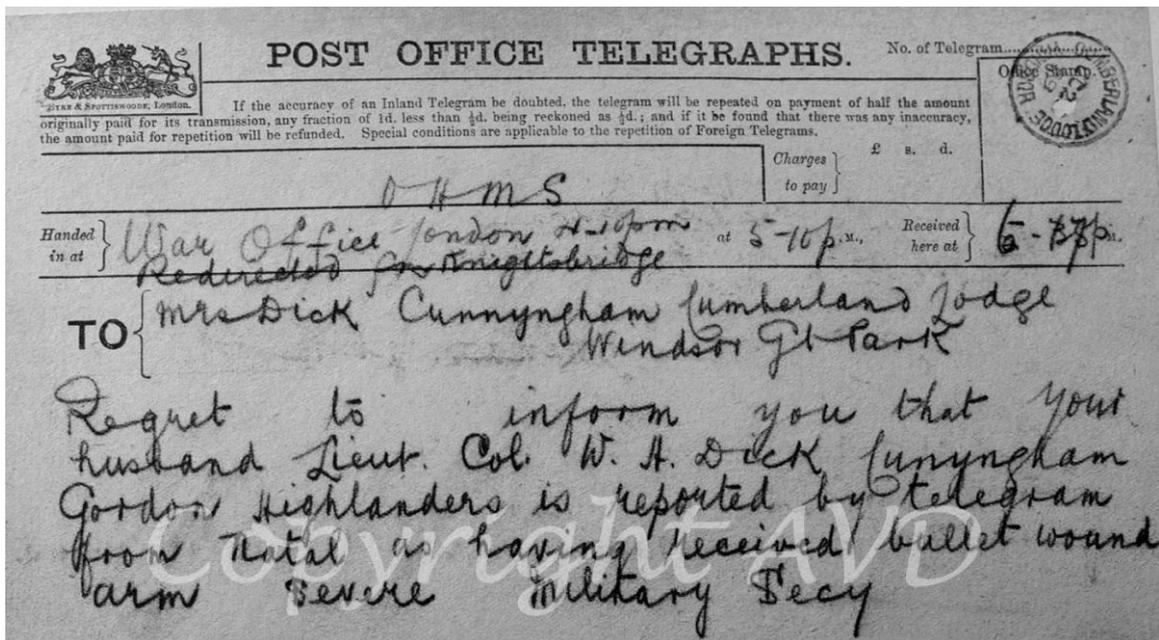
A cairn was erected on the spot where he fell, every man in the Battalion contributing a stone. In the evening, the Gordon main body had returned to camp arriving at 8.30pm, where they learned that their commanding officer had expired.



Monument to Dick-Cunyngham at Ladysmith where he was killed



Original photo of Cunyngham's grave, Ladysmith



Telegram informing Mrs. Cunyngham of her husband's death

An hour later six officers and six sergeants lowered his coffin into the grave. A short service was read, a stable lantern gave a dim light; those present would never forget the occasion and the surroundings. He was one of the most truly beloved officers who ever belonged to the regiment. His heart was as true as steel, his manner courtesy itself. "In kilt and bonnet, with a moustache so light that it seemed almost white against the bronze of his face, he caught every eye."

References:

1. The life of a Regiment, volume III: 1898 – 1914 – Lt.-Col. A.D. Greenhill Gardyne
2. Private Collection: Dr. Arnold van Dyk - Scrapbook of Col. Dick-Cunyngham