

SIR JOHN HALL

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SIR JOHN HALL

Sir John Hall hailed from Littlebeck, Westmoreland, a picturesque and secluded hamlet community hidden in the bottom of a deep valley. Littlebeck derives its name from Little Beck, the tributary of the River Esk which flows through the valley. His father was local squire.

John Hall was born on November 1795 and baptized 30 December 1795. He joined the Army six days after Waterloo and was posted to a General Hospital at Brussels. He was attested to the Horse Artillery 24 June 1815; awarded half-pay on 25 February 1816 and full pay 25 September 1817. He became an Assistant Surgeon on 12 September 1822 and Staff Surgeon 8 November 1827. He was enrolled with the 33rd Foot Regiment on 28 July 1829, becoming Staff Surgeon 1st Class 26 February 1841. He was appointed Deputy-Inspector General of Army and Ordnance Medical Departments on 25 September 1846.

He was in the Cape of Good Hope and Eastern Cape for the 7th and 8th Frontier (Kaffir) Wars 1847 and 1850-1851, and at Boomplaats. He was made Inspector General 28 March 1854. He retired on half-pay on 1 January 1857, dying in Pisa on 17 January 1866.

His professional qualifications are listed as MD (St. Andrews, 1847) and FRS (Edin).

For his service at Waterloo, in the Crimea, during the South African Frontier Wars and to the nation, he was awarded the Legion of Honour (3rd Class), the South Africa Medal 1854 and the Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Order of Bath (KCB) 1857.



South Africa Medal was authorized in November 1854. It was awarded in respect of being involved in one of three campaigns in South Africa: the Frontier ("Kaffir") Wars of 1834-35, 1846-47 and 1850-53. There were no clasps. This medal is inscribed J.HALL.

Listed amongst the Memorials & Monuments formerly in the Royal Garrison Church, Portsmouth is one for Sir John Hall. His memorial plaque was originally sited on one of the benches in the nave. This area of the church suffered the worst effects of the bombing in 1941. Both bench and plaque are thought to have been destroyed. The memorial inscription from a church ledger reads as follows:

D.D. OFFICERS WHO SERVED UNDER HIM TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF SIR JOHN HALL M.D., K.C.B., P.M.O. OF THE ARMY IN THE CRIMEA THIS OFFERING IS MADE IN TESTIMONY OF HIS UNTIRING ZEAL, ENERGY AND DEVOTION TO DUTY UNDER MOST TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES

THE ARMORIAL DETAILS OF SIR JOHN HALL

Sir JOHN HALL, K.C.B., M.D., Inspector-General of Hospitals, and Chief of the Medical Staff of the Army, son of late JOHN HALL, Esq., of Littlebeck, Westmoreland.

ARMS:..Or (gold), on a pale between two battle axes erect Sable (black), three talbots' heads coupé of the field (i.e., gold).
CREST:..On a wreath the battlements of a tower, thereon a cock entwined by a snake all Proper (natural color).
MOTTO:..*Perseverantia Et Cura Quies.*

Florence Nightingale called his award of the K.C.B., "Knight of the Crimean Burial grounds".

DR. JAMES BARRY, DR. SIR JOHN HALL AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONNECTIONS

Controversy surrounded Dr James Barry during his life and continues to this day. He was posted as an Assistant-Surgeon to the garrison in Cape Town in August 1816. In December 1817, he became physician to the household of the governor, Lord Charles Somerset. After a much publicized career, he left the Cape finally in 1827.

When the Crimean war (1853-56) started, Dr. James Barry sought an appointment there from a posting in Corfu. Ignored, he decided to go at his own expense. The Senior Medical Officer at the Barrack Hospital in Scutari wrote to Sir John Hall to warn him of Barry's imminent arrival. I quote: "I may as well warn you that you are to have a visit from the renowned Dr Barry. He called on me yesterday and as I never met him before, his appearance and conversation rather surprised me. He appears to be in his dotage and is an intolerable bore He will expect you to listen to every quarrel he has had since coming into the service. You probably know that there are not a few". Perversely, Barry and Hall are reported as having become good friends. Later, Hall sent Barry a copy of his report to the Crimean Sanitary Commission, the which had been orchestrated by Florence Nightingale. She was to recall an ignominious encounter with Barry with some bitterness.

In 1847, Port Elizabeth, Cape (Fort Frederick) received a military health inspection from Dr. Sir John Hall, who arrived in the *Thunderbolt* on her last and fatal voyage from Cape Town. He stayed at the Phoenix Hotel, where the landlord was Mr. Boswork.

In his letters, Dr. Hall described the miserable hospital conditions at the Fort. At the time Algoa Bay was filled with reinforcements for the frontier Kaffir War (1846-47). In support of the newly appointed and

vastly over-worked staff surgeon, Surgeon Jameson, Dr Hall ordered the entire barracks to be made over to the invalids and the soldiers to be put under canvas. Before Sir John left on a tour of facilities in Grahamstown, he recommended that Port Elizabeth should become a convalescent station for the frontier with a "decent hospital". On this advice, the foundations of a small hospital were laid. However, the continuation of the 7th Kaffir War prevented any progress on the building.

Sir Harry Smith replaced Sir Henry Pottinger as Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, returning to Cape Town on board the *Vernon* on 1 December 1847. In what was later called "a compulsive neurosis", *inter alia* he annexed the country between the Orange River and the Vaal on 3rd February, 1848. This was opposed by the Boers north of the Orange River, whom, led by Andries Pretorius, moved en force southwards with the intension of evicting the English. Sir Harry Smith advanced to deal with them. He was accompanied by two Rifle Brigade companies, elements of the 45th and the 91st Regiments, a detachment of Cape Mounted Rifles, three field guns, a small unit of Sappers and Miners, and a Medical Department. The latter consisted of Mr. (later Sir John) Hall, Dr. Atkinson and a Mr. Power. Pretorius did not engage the English but gradually withdrew his force to the neighbourhood of a farm *Boomplaats*, north-west of Bloemfontein. On 29th August, 1848 Smith reached the farm and that afternoon ordered an attack.

A Captain A S Murray, one other officer and 14 rank and file died as a result of the action. Injured in the skirmish, they had been placed on wagons and taken to *Boomplaats* farmhouse where Dr. Hall had made into his field hospital. Apparently, Murray was conscious to the end and asked Dr Hall to write to his father and to send back a sealed package to his wife. Hall had Murray buried at the foot of a peach tree in the farm's orchard with the others near by. Later memorials were raised to Murray on site, at the military church at Plymouth (where indeed a memorial was raised later to Dr Sir John Hall) and at St. George's Cathedral, Cape Town Cathedral.

Of interest, some other famous physicians visited the Eastern Cape in the first half of the 17 century. The first was Dr. Robert Knox of the 72nd regiment, who was stationed at Algoa Bay. He served at a General Hospital in Brussels and expressed great concern by the primitive amenities that were available to deal with the wounded among Wellington's troops in Belgium.. Later, at the Cape, he made valuable ethnological, zoological, geographical, meteorological and medical research. He left Port Elizabeth at the end of 1820 and returned to Edinburgh University where he became a distinguished anatomist and professor of medicine.

Another was Sir Andrew Smith, who, between 1820 and 1837, was posted to the Cape. He too made an invaluable contribution to ethnological, zoological and medical research. He was appointed Deputy-Inspector General of Army and Ordnance Medical Departments on 19 December 1845, Inspector General and Superintendent of the Army Medical Department on 7 February 1851. When he retired 22 June 1858, it was his post that Florence Nightingale was instrumental in having denied John Hall.

The other was Dr. Thomas Alexander, about whom more anon. He served in the 'Kaffir Wars' of the Eastern Cape between 1851 and 1853 where he again influenced army medical policy. He was to succeed Sir Andrew Smith.

PROMINENT VICTORIANS, DR SIR JOHN HALL AND THE CRIMEAN WAR (1853-56)

Dr. Thomas Alexander, C.B., F.R.C.S. (Edinburgh), was born in Prestonpans, East Lothian on 6 May 1812 (alt. 29 / 30 April 1812). He trained at both the Universities of Paris and Edinburgh. At Edinburgh, a prominent tutor of his was the famous anatomist Robert Knox. He qualified as a surgeon on 9 June 1831 and on 10 October 1834 accepted the position of Assistant Surgeon (Second Class), in the British Army. He spent his entire working life endeavoring to improve the medical and hygiene conditions to which military personnel were exposed. Despite his unquestionable surgical ability, it took him twenty years to attain the rank of First Class Surgeon. There can be little doubt that this was due to his constant questioning of conventional wisdom.

In 1854, at a critical moment in Dr Alexander's career, he traveled with the British Expeditionary Force to Gallipoli and Scutari in Turkey where he was attached to the Light Division. On the declaration of the Crimea War, the Horse Guards dispatched with this expeditionary force a Hospital Conveyance Corps, or Ambulance Corps. This consisted of some 300 decrepit Chelsea Pensioners who succumbed either to age, disease or famine. Even Lord Raglan admitted that the Ambulance Corps was 'a complete failure!'

In the Crimea, Alexander found cholera, typhus, scurvy and rheumatism rife and a fearful mortality rate amongst the soldiers. In August 1854, Dr. Alexander went to Varma and was appointed Senior Medical Officer in the field. The Doctor was repeatedly mentioned in dispatches - "mentioned most honorably for his able exertions" - remaining as he did at the front line and serving at the battles of Alma, Balaklava and the infamous Sebastopol.

Alexander was at Edinburgh University together with James Young Simpson, the inventor of chloroform. His first set-to with Sir John Hall was when he insisted on the use of chloroform in the field. Sir John Hall, Principle Medical Officer and Inspector General of Hospitals, and someone who believe in pampering soldiers, issued a memorandum to all Medical Officers cautioning against the indiscriminate use of Chloroform when operating on badly wounded men;

"For however barbarous it may appear, the smart of a knife is a powerful stimulant, and it is much better to hear a man ball lustily than to see him sink silently into his grave"

Alexander found an invaluable ally in The London Times correspondent, William H. Russell, who had also traveled to Turkey with the Expeditionary Force. He filed disparaging reports regarding organizational inadequacies and a general lack of proper medical facilities in the army.

"Certainly the Army Staff could not be worse. We might as well have an old woman in Command us as Lord Raglan. Then our Commiserate is nearly useless. Our ambulance totally useless, and our Medical

Department very bad' "

"The manner in which the sick and wounded are treated is worthy only of the savages of Dahomey", he wrote in *The Times*'.

On another occasion, the correspondent went on record as describing the surgeon as "a gentle giant of a Scotchman sitting on a beach with a man's leg on his lap while pouring out the vials of wrath on Sir John Hall (then Senior Deputy Medical Inspector General) for landing an army without medical supplies".

Another dynamic in an already fraught environment was the arrival of women in the battle zone. Several women from this time were to leave an indelible mark on our future history of medical care for they each contributed to a political environment which was to nurture the future development of the nursing profession.

Mary Seacole was born in Kingston, Jamaica, had traveled widely, and had studied various forms of folk medicine becoming an authority on the treatment of yellow fever, typhus and cholera. With the outbreak of the Crimean War, Seacole offered her services to the government, but was not accepted. Since she was unable to find a way to go to the Crimea with an official party, she spent her life's savings (\$4,000) to buy passage, food, medicines, and other supplies. She established her base close to the front lines between Balaclava and Sebastopol. Mary was careful not to tread on medical toes being judicious in her offers of advice and physical assistance. As a result, she won the acceptance of Sir John Hall, who reflected: "She (Mary Seacole) not only, from the knowledge she had acquired in the West Indies, was enabled to administer appropriate remedies for their ailments, but, what was of as much importance, she charitably furnished them with proper nourishment, which they had no means of obtaining except in hospital, and most of that class had an objection to go into hospital." She was to remain in the Crimea until the end of the war, returning to England, sick, wounded, and penniless. Her autobiography carries an introduction by William H. Russell.

Another volunteer was Sarah Anne Terrot, one of eight Sellonite sisters (an Anglican order) who went to Scutari with Florence Nightingale in November, 1854. She, unlike many of the women, had helped nurse the poor during a cholera epidemic in the slums of Plymouth, England. Terrot and her group worked at the General Hospital in Scutari and wrote extensively on the unsavory environment within the hospital and poor physical circumstances in which the ill and injured were managed.

Lady Mary Stanley took approximately 20 women to the Crimea. Amongst them were two of import: Betsy Cadwaladyr or, as she is better known, Elizabeth Davis, a Welsh domestic servant who had traveled widely and was paid by the government to go to the Crimea as a professional nurse. Her use of a non deplume was occasioned by the unfavorable manner in which Welsh women were then treated in society. Her memoirs were told to Jane Williams, an oral historian, in order to be recorded. Cadwaladyr found a different form of service, spending her time preparing food and became known for her ability to spirit food from nowhere. She was an uncompromising critic of Nightingale and the other ladies whom she felt were not physically and socially equipped for the work they endeavored to do.

Another graphic authoress in the years to come was Frances Magdalen Taylor, whose group joined with that led by Lady Mary Stanley. Later, on their arrival at Constantinople, they joined Nightingale. Between Stanley and Nightingale there was to develop a considerable enmity, and most of the Stanley nurses left Scutari and moved on to Koulali. Both Terrot and Taylor, however, thought very highly of Nightingale, speaking in glowing terms of her concern for the soldiers. Their written accounts similarly bear testimony to the problems experienced with Dr. John Hall, who did not want females in his hospital and frequently failed to order food for his patients.

Late in 1854, Florence Nightingale arrived at the Scutari hospital complex from England together with her a group of 38 nurses. Britain had inherited Scutari barracks hospital from the Turks. It was filthy, damp, malodorous, and overrun with rats. The medical service was inefficient and wholly ill-prepared for the conflict. Teams of men designated to carry the wounded from the battlefield were mostly drunk, idle and incompetent. Cholera, dysentery and gangrene were rampant. The military personnel who were severely wounded or had contracted disease were removed by ship from Varma to the Scutari, some miles behind the lines.

Florence Nightingale introduced notions of cleanliness and sanitation, organised the provision of food, and improved nursing standards. Initially her presence was tolerated but she was never truly accepted by the army hierarchy. In fact, her actions were repeatedly condemned by Sir John Hall. From this time, there arose a strong and mutual animosity between the two of them, one which was to last a lifetime. Sir John Hall was to live to regret this.

With the interventions from Nightingale, the hospital death-rates began to decline dramatically - or so it was perceived. Nightingale at first believed that the casualty rate was high because the victims were "half dead", and because of factors such as bad food and a lack of recreation. Her view was supported by an assessment made by commissioners John McNeill and Colonel Tulloch who had tried to influence Parliament by blaming the casualties on incompetence on the part of the officers. The Board of Generals adroitly ignored these opinions, finding the army officers innocent and laying blame at the door of the Treasury.

The above report was closely followed by another, that of William Farr, the statistician, whose analysis of the deaths in the Crimea suggested that the fatality rate could be attributed to bad hygiene and not the postulated inadequate food, overwork or lack of shelter,. Indeed, examination of the available statistics suggested that Dr Sutherland's Sanitary Commission had greater success in reducing the death rate than Nightingale solely by cleaning up the hospital precincts.

Though absolute proof of Farr's thesis was lacking, Nightingale was mortified and despite the fact that this could serve to discredit her, she pushed for a Royal Commission to investigate the matter. Florence Nightingale was socially well placed, numbering Sidney Herbert, Lord

Palmerston (later Prime Minister, January 1855), Lord Panmure (later Secretary for War) and later Thomas Alexander amongst her friends.

It was Sidney Herbert who had formed body of selected NCO's "of good character able to read and write" who were trained to act as Medical Orderlies and Hospital Assistants but it was not until February 1856 that the Corps was officially established, effectively too late to be of service in the Crimean War.

Despite his being commended for his service in the House of Commons address, and being recommended by the then Director General of the Army Medical Services, Dr. Sir Andrew Smith, for promotion to Local Inspector General, Thomas Alexander became the focus of Sir John Hall's disapproval and was posted to Canada as a Principal Medical Officer. His tour of duty in Canada was to be short, however, for a Royal Commission chaired by Lord Panmure was established to examine the standards of hygiene and sanitary conditions which should prevail in the British Army. Alexander was recalled to serve on the Royal Commission, his task to formulate policy for the hygienic management of army barracks and hospitals, a task that would occupy him for the remainder of his life.

Meanwhile, cross-examination of Sir John Hall and his subordinate, Dr Mouat, was less than satisfactory for they skillfully avoided answering whether they approved the sanitation in hospital buildings, whilst failing to supply any documentary proof of having objected to it either. Their managing to avoid taking any responsibility for their ineptitude saved both Sidney Herbert's government and their commissions. Neither Herbert nor Hall avoided Nightingale's wrath though.

Early in 1858, Dr. Sir Andrew Smith, retired; and Nightingale ensured that Dr. Thomas Alexander replaced him as Director General. His appointment was gazetted on 11 June, 1858. Thus it was that Sir John Hall was denied the promotion which he had expected.

Sadly, on 1st February 1860, at the age of 47, Thomas Alexander died while working at his desk. The cause of death is presumed to have been a cardio-vascular accident. Sir John Hall had retired 1 January 1857 and was not recalled.

GENEALOGY OF SIR JOHN HALL

1. Hall, John Esq., of Littlebeck and Isabella (née Fothergill)
 - 1.1 Hall, Thomas bapt. 1789 February 6 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)
 - 1.2 Hall, William bapt. 1793 November 6 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)
 - 1.3 Hall, John bapt. 1795 December 30 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)**
 - 1.4 Hall, Isaac bapt. 1798 April 1 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)
 - 1.5 Hall, George bapt. 1800 January 12 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)
 - 1.6 Hall, Robert bapt. 1802 April 19 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)
 - 1.7 Hall, Margaret bapt. 1804 November 1 (Crosby Ravensworth PR)
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Friday, January 14, 2005: Though there are certain to be other sources of information pertinent to Sir John Hall, given the logistical constraints the author has only explored those references quoted below. Thus, this should be seen as a preliminary communication and not definitive. Any contribution to expanding on, or correcting, the information here listed will be welcomed

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