



*Service of Dedication in Memory of*

*Sgt. Joseph Windridge,  
Pte. Robert Cole &  
Pte. Samuel Parry*

*'Defenders of Rorke's Drift'*



*12.30pm, Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2015  
Witton Cemetery, Birmingham*

## *Introduction*

As members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 24<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Warwickshire) Regiment, Joseph Windridge, Robert Cole & Samuel Parry were present at the legendary defence of Rorke's Drift which took place in South Africa during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.

Along with the rest of the tiny garrison totalling approximately 150, the three men fought tirelessly against thousands of Zulu warriors as they tried desperately to defend the small supply depot & hospital on the Natal border, just hours after the massacre of over 1300 British troops at Isandlwana several miles away.

The battle raged for twelve hours throughout the night of January 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>, during which there occurred a frantic evacuation of the hospital after the building was set alight. Following a desperate struggle the Zulu attacks finally lost momentum, & Rorke's Drift was eventually relieved later that morning.

After the battle the heroism of the defenders was recognized by the award of 11 Victoria Crosses & 4 Distinguished Conduct Medals (a fifth being subsequently withdrawn). Seven of the VCs were awarded to members of 'B' Coy 2/24<sup>th</sup>, the largest amount ever given to one regiment for a single engagement.

**Joseph Lenford Windridge** was discharged in 1883 having served twenty four years with the army, and he returned home to Birmingham. Tragically, he & his wife Helena later lost six of their young children to tuberculosis in just three weeks during 1896. Joseph himself died on 30 August 1902 aged 60, and was buried in an unmarked grave No.11324, Plot 97 of Witton Cemetery.

**Robert Edward Cole** was a hospital patient suffering from typhoid fever during the defence of Rorke's Drift, but survived the battle & later recovered. He too left the army in 1883 after six years' service and went to live in Birmingham. He died on 19 August 1898 aged 48 and was laid to rest in grave 54737, Section 164.

**Samuel Parry** returned to England in March 1880 & was admitted to Netley Military Hospital. He was found to be suffering from chronic rheumatism caused by exposure at Rorke's Drift after the battle, & was medically discharged from the army two months later. He died on 20 May 1898 of tuberculosis aged 39 and was interred in grave 41652 Section 190.

In 1881 the 24<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Warwickshire) Regiment became known as the South Wales Borderers, & this regiment continues to exist amongst the history & traditions of the Royal Welsh.

Although Joseph Windridge, Robert Cole & Samuel Parry continue to lie in unmarked graves within Witton Cemetery, these superb new memorials will at least now serve as a permanent local reminder of their involvement in this most famous of British military actions.

*Biographical information from 'Legacy of the Rorke's Drift Heroes' by Kris Wheatley*  
*[www.rorkesdriftlegacy.com](http://www.rorkesdriftlegacy.com)*

## **Order of Service**

Introduction & welcome by Royal British Legion County Chair  
Councillor Anita Ward

A short account of the Defence of Rorke's Drift by Mr. Bill Cainan  
(former curator of the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh, Brecon)

A short account of Sergeant Joseph Windridge by Mr. Graham Mason  
(Anglo-Zulu War researcher)

**Service of dedication by Father Oliver Coss, Royal British Legion**

### **Unveiling Ceremony**

#### **The Exhortation:**

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
We Will Remember Them  
**All:** "We Will Remember Them"

*Memorials unveiled by;*

**Mr. Mark Thursfield** - Descendant of Sgt. Joseph Windridge  
**Mrs. Sandra Barker** - Great granddaughter of Pte. Frederick Hitch VC

**The Last Post - silence - Reveille**

### **Wreath-laying Ceremony**

**Deputy Lord Mayor of Birmingham:** Cllr. Mike Leddy  
**Family of Joseph Windridge:** Mrs. Denise Thomas (Great Niece)  
**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Royal Welsh:** 'B' (Rorke's Drift) Company  
**Royal Warwickshire Regiment:** Col. Bob Carruthers OBE TD  
**The Royal British Legion:** Cllr. Anita Ward  
**SSAFA:** Mrs. Sharon Broer  
**Army Cadet Force**  
**Sea Cadet Corps:** TS Vernon  
**Air Training Corps:** 487 Squadron

### **Final Prayer & Blessing**

Including the Regimental Collect of the Royal Welsh

## *Acknowledgements*

Drum Major Tim Needham RM would like to offer his sincere thanks to the following organisations & individuals, whose invaluable contributions have ensured that the unmarked graves of three of the Defenders of Rorke's Drift shall not remain forgotten:

*Bellamy & Waterhouse Monumental Masons*  
[www.waterhouseandco.co.uk](http://www.waterhouseandco.co.uk)

<i>Mr. M. Pentreath</i>	<i>Mr. C. Allen</i>
<i>Mr. G. Spunkman</i>	<i>Mr. C. Fielding</i>
<i>Mr. J. Needham</i>	<i>Mr. P. Cameron</i>
<i>Mrs. D. Thomas</i>	<i>Ibutho History Group</i>

Also for their valued assistance:

*The Royal British Legion*  
*Regimental HQ, The Royal Welsh*  
*The Service & Service Charity organisations providing wreaths*  
*The Diehards & 1879 Re-enactment Groups*  
*Witton Lodge Community Association*  
*Witton Cemetery*



*Some of the men who defended Rorke's Drift; 'B' Coy 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment*

On completion of the ceremony all those present are invited to Perry Common Community Hall at 87 Witton Lodge Road B23 5JD (1.7 miles away) for teas/coffees & an informal reception.

Any donations to the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh would be gratefully received – contact details can be found at:

[www.royalwelsh.org.uk/regimental-museum-of-the-royal-welsh](http://www.royalwelsh.org.uk/regimental-museum-of-the-royal-welsh)  
Telephone 01874 613310