

Lieutenant Charles William Hinde 1849-1880

83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot - Bombay Staff Corps
1st Bombay Native Infantry (Grenadiers) - Afghan War 1878-80 - Battle of Maiwand



Charles William Hinde – Poona Circa 1873

Charles William Hinde was born 31st August 1849 at Bombay, India, the second son of Major General John Hinde 1814-1881 and his wife Frances Hinde (nee Gould) 1825-1890. Charles was one of nine children born to the couple between 1847 and 1870.

Charles's father was a career soldier, commissioned Ensign with the 8th (The King's) Regiment of Foot 1835, promoted to Lieutenant 1837, Captain 1845, Major 1857, and Lieutenant Colonel 1861. He commanded first a battalion, and then during the Indian Mutiny the regiment in India 1857-1858, for which service he was appointed a Companion of the Bath. After 31 years' service with the regiment, he retired with the honorary rank of Major General in 1866.

In 1869, Charles William Hinde successfully passed his army direct commission examinations held at Chelsea Hospital with a score of 3,666 points. On 17th March 1869, Charles joined the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot as Ensign by purchase, at this time based at Gibraltar.

Up until 1871, the British Army recruited its officers primarily through patronage and purchase. The system of purchase allowed wealthy individuals to buy a commission in the army with a specific

regiment, often with little or no military experience. Many officers came from the aristocracy and gentry, with family connections being a significant advantage.

Young men were drawn to join the army for several reasons. Some sought a social status and prestige, as military service was a respected career, others like William followed their fathers into the army, keeping up a family tradition. The army also provided financial security, and for some, it was a path to advancement in society. Additionally, the allure of adventure, the opportunity to travel, and the possibility of distinguishing oneself in battle or military service were strong motivators.

Those wealthy enough to afford a commission, typically joined a regiment as an Ensign, the lowest ranked officer. The cost of an ensigncy in 1869 was £450, which is the equivalent to approximately £60,000 today. Having joined a regiment, officers could buy a promotion as and when more senior positions became available. The army did make exceptions for officers showing great promise or particularly good service, and in such circumstances, promotions could be granted “without purchase.” At this time, it was customary practice for officers to exchange into different regiments when opportunities arose. This allowed officers to transfer between regiments, often with the mutual agreement of both parties and usually approved by higher command. The reasons for exchange could be strategic, social, financial, or personal.

Joining the army during the 19th Century was not, however, without risk. Besides from the obvious risk of death or injury from military action, the risk to life from disease or climatic conditions was also a very real danger.

During this period in British military history, the health of the British army abroad faced significant challenges. The harsh climate often experienced abroad, coupled with unsanitary living conditions, led to widespread health issues among the troops. Tropical diseases such as malaria, cholera, dysentery, and typhoid were rampant, posing a constant threat to the soldiers.

At a time when the military might of Britain, with its modern weapons and tactics, was far superior to many of its adversaries, deaths from disease far exceeded any that occurred on the battlefield. This was perhaps best illustrated by the Crimean War (1853–1856). Of the 22,000 deaths suffered by the British army in Crimea, only 5,000 were due to battlefield injuries, while the rest 17,000 were due to illness from diseases and the effects of the harsh winter conditions.

Britain had taken control of Gibraltar in 1713 and thereafter had retained a military presence on the rock. During the Napoleonic Wars, Gibraltar had become an important base for the Royal Navy and was designated as one of four British fortresses (together with Halifax, Nova Scotia, Bermuda, and Malta). During the 19th century, the peacetime military garrison at Gibraltar fluctuated between 1,100 and 5,000 troops at any one time.

Having served their time at Gibraltar, the 83rd Regiment commanded by Colonel A. B. Hankey, embarked the troopship “Tamar” 11th March 1870, and proceeded to Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. From Alexandria they travelled by train to Suez on the Red Sea and on 25th March embarked the troopship “Euphrates” for onward transport to India. Arriving at Bombay 8th April 1870, the regiment then proceeded to Poona where it was quartered in Wanourie Barracks.

Poona, located 120 miles southeast of Bombay in the western state of Maharashtra, was one of the most important military and administrative centres for the British in India. Established in the early 19th century, the Poona Cantonment (permanent military station) became a key base for British forces operating in the Bombay Presidency and the surrounding regions. The cantonment was strategically important because of its proximity to the Deccan Plateau and its distance from the coastal areas, making it a safer, less vulnerable location to potential attacks from coastal insurgents. The temperate climate of the region also made Poona an attractive location for British officers and troops, especially during the sweltering summer months in other parts of India.

The Poona Cantonment housed various regiments, including the British Indian Army's artillery and infantry units. This led to the development of infrastructure such as bungalows for officers, barracks, hospitals, roads, and a Bazaar. Over time, Poona became a major centre for British military operations in the western part of India, as well as a hub for the distribution of supplies and reinforcements.

Poona played a vital role in British colonial military strategy, highlighting the widespread nature of British military dominance and their use of strategic locations for garrisons. British officers in cantonments like Poona exercised significant control over the local populace and ensured that their military dominance was firmly established in key areas. These cantonments were designed to support British control over the subcontinent, not only by housing soldiers but by shaping local economies, infrastructures, and communities around military needs.

Soon after arriving in India, Charles began to learn Hindustani, passing an examination in September 1870. In October 1871, Charles joined the Bombay Staff Corps and was promoted to Lieutenant without purchase. The Bombay Staff Corps was a branch of the Indian Army set up in 1861 to provide officers for the Indian native regiments and for the staff and army departments. Charles served with the 21st Bombay Native Infantry, stationed in Bombay, until in November 1874 when he was made Wing Subaltern and Adjutant to the 1st Bombay Native Infantry (Grenadiers).

In September 1878, Lord Lytton the Viceroy of India ordered a diplomatic mission to set out for the Afghan capital Kabul, where he hoped to establish a political residency. By establishing a British political mission in the Afghan capital, it was hoped that British India could control the foreign relations of this 'buffer' state and reduce Russian influence in the region. When, however, the mission was turned back at the eastern end of the Khyber Pass, the British decided to replace the Afghan leader Sher Ali by force.

In November 1878, three British columns, consisting of 40,000 men, prepared to invade Afghanistan. One column was to march through the Bolan Pass and seize the city of Kandahar, a second to occupy the Ali Masjid fortress and secure the Khyber Pass before advancing to Jalalabad, while the third would advance along the Kurram Valley towards Kabul.

The column for the Bolan pass, comprised of a force of 8,000 British and Indian troops under the command of Lieutenant-General Donald Stewart, assembled at Multan in northwest India. From Multan, the plan was to secure the Bolan pass crossing into Afghanistan, and to capture the city of Kandahar.

The 1st Bombay Grenadiers were stationed at Ahmedabad, when in November 1878, the regiment was ordered to make itself ready for service in Afghanistan. In December, it travelled to Bombay and on 16th December arrived at Sukkur in northwest India.

In February 1879, its headquarters left Jacobabad and crossed the Afghan frontier, and for the next twelve months the regiment was employed in the Bolan Pass area, making roads and escorting stores. In March 1880, however, the 650 men of the 1st Bombay Grenadiers, including Lieutenant Hinde, were ordered forward to reinforce the garrison at Kandahar.

Kandahar, in south Afghanistan, had been captured by Lieutenant-General Donald Stewart's force without a struggle 8th January 1879. In the months that followed, the occupation of the city had been relatively uneventful, other than an outbreak of Cholera in July, which it is estimated claimed over 400 lives. When, however, General Stewart headed north to Kabul with his British regiments and division of the Bengal Army, he left Kandahar with a much weaker garrison of mainly Indian troops, under the command of Major General Primrose.

In April 1880, word had reached Kandahar that Ayub Khan, the younger brother of the deposed Ameer Yakoub Khan, had amassed an army with the intention of expelling the British from Afghanistan. The Wali of Kandahar urged the British to intercept Ayub's army before it reach Kandahar.

General Primrose appointed Brigadier General Burrows as commander of a field brigade sent to oppose Ayub Khan's army, with Brigadier General Nuttall commanding the cavalry. Two cavalry regiments, 3rd Bombay Light Cavalry and 3rd Scinde Horse rode out of Kandahar 4th July 1880, followed by the infantry and guns the next day.

The British force was supposed to join up with the Wali's troops at a village called Girishk, only to find that the Wali's men had mutinied, with many joining Ayub Khan's army. The British did manage to seize their six antiquated smooth bore guns and formed a makeshift battery, using soldiers from the 66th Regiment.

The British Force comprised:

66th (Berkshire) Regiment of Foot 474 men

Royal Horse Artillery 6 9-Pounder Guns and 6 smooth bore guns 182 men

No 2 Military Hospital

30th Bombay Infantry (Jacob's Rifles) 625 men

1st Grenadiers Bombay Infantry 641 men

3rd Bombay Light Cavalry 316 sabres

3rd Scinde Horse 263 sabres

2nd Company Bombay Sappers and Miners 43 men

A total of approximately 2,600 men.

The Afghan force, which it was thought to have been around 3-4,000 strong, had been vastly underestimated. The actual numbers were more like:

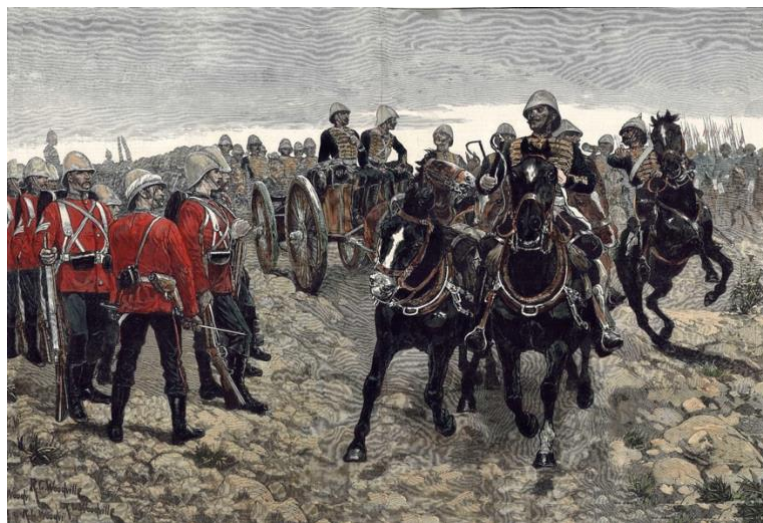
8,000 regular Infantry and Cavalry

3,000-4,000 irregular tribesmen including the notorious Ghazi warriors.

32 Field Guns including six Armstrong's.

A total of approximately 11,000 men. (Hills, The Bombay Field Force, 1880. P19.)

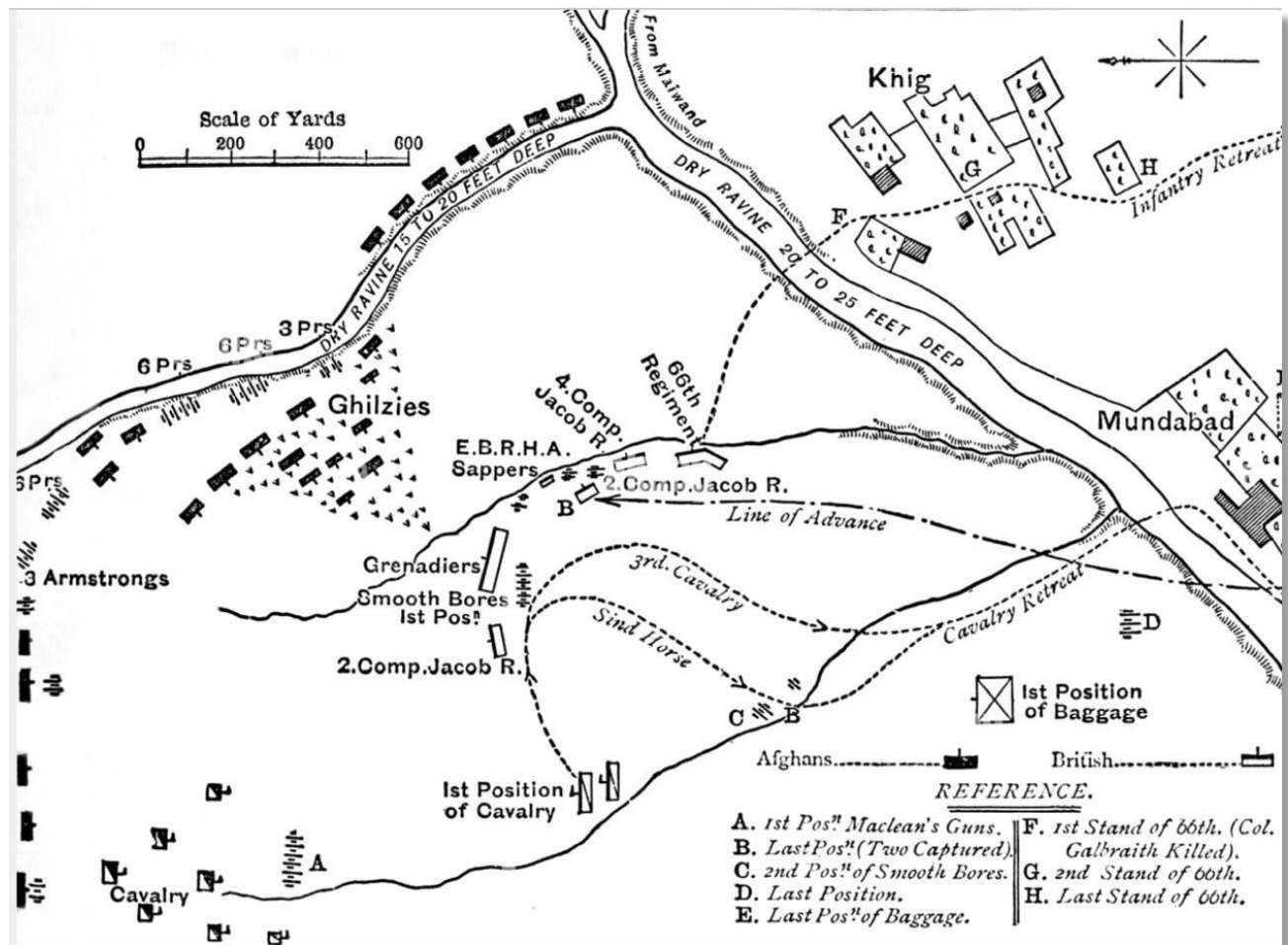
It is noteworthy, that in each account of the Battle of Maiwand, and there are many, the estimated number of Afghan soldiers differs widely, with some accounts suggesting the figure was as high as 25-30,000. What is not in doubt is that the Afghan army that day significantly outnumbered the British, and that the superior number and quality of field guns possessed by the Afghans was a key factor in the outcome of the battle.



66th Regiment and Royal Horse Artillery

The Battle of Maiwand commenced at 10.30am 27th July 1880, near the village of Mundabad, with an artillery battle that initially lasted only 15 minutes. After some initial manoeuvres and

engagements, Lieutenant Hinde and his Grenadiers were placed towards the left of the British line, between the Jacobs Rifles to their left and Royal Horse Artillery, Sappers and Miners on their right. From that point onward, the day developed into a series of fanatical infantry and cavalry attacks from the Afghan forces. A combination of superior artillery firepower and repeated mass attacks from the Afghan infantry began to take a toll on the British line, and particularly on the morale of the Indian army ranks. By 2pm, problems in the supply of food, water and artillery ammunition were causing problems for some units. Breaks began to appear in the British lines, and when the British cavalry refused to charge, failing to reinforce the infantry, Ghazis started to penetrate the British lines.



Battlefield Map of the Battle of Maiwand 27th July 1880

Without artillery and cavalry support, the British infantry lines could not contain the concerted attacks from overwhelming numbers of Afghan infantry and cavalry. By 3.00pm, the British Artillery disengaged and retreated, and so the British companies had no choice but to fight in retreat, falling back towards the villages of Mundabad and Khig.

In the chaos of battle and in retreat, many brave and heroic acts were witnessed by those that managed to escape the battlefield that day.

When two companies of the Jacob's Rifles on the far left of the battlefield were rolled up by an onrush of dense masses of Afghan infantry, they were driven helpless, and panic stricken into Lieutenant Hinde's Grenadiers. In an attempt to mount an organised defence and restore some order to an increasing desperate situation, an order was issued by Lieutenant Hinde to fix bayonets and form a regimental square. The pressure from the onrushing Afghan troops, however, only resulted in the companies becoming 'jammed, and an arrow-shaped struggling mass of men were tightly packed together and unable to use their bayonets or fire a shot. The Ghazis taking advantage rushed in and cut them down, practically helpless for a time.' (Hills, The Bombay Field Force, 1880. P25.)

It has been suggested that had Lieutenant Hinde ordered company squares be formed, rather than a regiment square, it is possible that it may have slowed that Afghan advance at this point in the line. While it is easy to make judgments in retrospect, during the heat, noise, and confusion of battle, with a rapidly evolving situation, matters may not have been as straightforward.

In another account, it was reported that Colonel Anderson of the 1st Bombay Native Infantry, had given a similar or same order, *'For Heaven's sake, my children, form square and steadily. Keep steady, and it will all be right,'* he added in Hindustani. *But this was too late. 'Too late' the Grenadiers scarcely could hear their leader's cry. They were borne back by the wave of battle and the shields of the Ghazis upon the still unbroken ranks of the 66th, whose colonel was last seen galloping the gallant grey upon the swords and bayonets of the Afghan corps in his front".* (Personal Records of the Kandahar Campaign, By Officers Engaged Therein, 1881)

During the fighting that followed, a group of about 100-150 men were separated from the main body of troops and found themselves defending a wall garden at the village of Khig.

By 4.00pm, General Burrows ordered the bugler to sound the retreat. By 5.00pm, towards Khig, the last eleven men of those trapped were finished off by overwhelming numbers of enemy. Killed at this point were later found the body of Lieutenant Charles William Hinde of the Grenadiers.

In another account, this time given by one of Ayub Khan's own officers, he stated that *'these brave men were surrounded by the whole army and that, when all but eleven were killed, these made a desperate charge and perished fighting to the last man.'* (Cardew, Official Account, p.519).

Extracts from a letter dated 1st October 1880, written by Lieutenant-General Primrose, C. S. I. to his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief in India, describe the events leading up to the last stand of the 11 men:



"The Last Eleven at Maiwand" Frank Feller (1848-1908)

"I have it on authority of a Colonel of Artillery of Ayoub Khan's Army, who was present at the time, that a party of the 66th Regiment which he estimated at 100 officers and men, made a most determined stand. They were surrounded by the whole of the Afghan Army, and fought on until only 11 men, inflicting enormous loss upon the enemy. These 11 men charged out of the garden and died with their faces to the foe, fighting to the death; such was the nature of their charge and the grandeur of their bearing, that, although the whole of the Ghazi were assembled around them, not one dared approach to cut them down.

Thus, standing in the open, back-to-back, firing steadily and truly, every shot telling, surrounded by thousands, these eleven officers and men died; and it was not until the last man had been shot down that the Ghazis dared advance upon them."

He further adds that the conduct of these men was the admiration of all who witnessed it; this is the testimony of a man who witnessed the scene, and who gave the information before Brigadier-General Daubeney proceeded to Maiwand.

From an examination of the ground, from corroborative evidence, and from the position in which the bodies were found, I have not the least hesitation in stating that this account is true; and I think that His Excellency will agree with me when I say that history does not afford any grander or finer instance of gallantry and devotion to Queen and Country than that displayed by the 66th Regiment on the 27th of July, 1880.

A nominal roll of the officers and men who fought and died thus nobly has been already forwarded to you, and inquiries from survivors elicit the following facts:

Lieutenant-Colonel Galbraith was last seen on the nullah bank kneeling on one knee with a Colour in his hand, officers and men rallying around him, and on this spot his body was found; here too, fell Captain McMath a gallant soldier, and one who would, had his life been spared, have risen to distinction in H.M.'s Service; close by, 2nd Lieutenant Barr was shot dead over one of the Colours.

Captains Garrett and Cullen were both killed on the field in front of the nullah, up to the last moment commanding their companies and giving their orders with as much coolness as if on an ordinary regimental parade.

Captain Roberts was mortally wounded in the garden, where the last stand was made, and here also fell Lieutenants Rayner and Chute, 2nd Lieutenants Olivey and Barr; the two latter officers were seen holding up the colours, the pole of which was shattered to pieces, as rallying points; and Lieutenant Honywood was shot down whilst holding a Colour high above his head, shouting, 'Men what shall we do to save this?' Sergeant-Major Cuppage was shot dead outside the garden whilst carrying a colour, and many other N.C. Officers and men laid down their lives in the attempt to save the Colours of their Regiment on that day. With the gallant band who made this last grand effort, fought and died Major Blackwood, E.H.A., Lieutenant Henn, E.E., and Lieutenant Hinde, 1st Grenadiers with some of his men."

In another poignant account, this time published in the Pall Mall Gazette 21st January 1881, a native Afghan sent out by the British to obtain information on the movement of Ayub Khan's army, gave an account of the collapse of the British line at Maiwand and the end of the battle.

"The battle was now at its height. I could see the British guns in three divisions — left, centre, and right — with infantry between them. Some cavalry appeared in rear of the flanks, and the main body of it standing square behind. After about an hour I saw that the British were falling back. I descended from the mound and joined the Ghazis on the left. Bullets and round shot now began to fall near me.



E Battery Royal Horse Artillery escaping from the overwhelming Afghan attack at the Battle of Maiwand, from "Maiwand: Saving the Guns" by Richard Caton Woodville

Then the British guns ceased, and only the sound of small arms was to be heard. After the guns ceased the British infantry stood for some time, apparently in squares or clumps; the 66th, Grenadiers, and Jacob's Rifles were separated from each other by a distance of about eighty or a hundred yards. After a while the Ghazis, with shouts of "Yor charia!" rushed on the British infantry, which gave way from the left and retreated towards the right and rear, keeping up a running fire as they moved.

There was a dry river on the right of the position, and beyond that again some walled gardens. I was standing near the foremost of the gardens with a crowd of Ghazis and horsemen. The latter were partly composed of regulars, dressed in red coats and sheepskin caps, and partly of irregulars. They cowered behind the walls of the gardens and could not be brought to face the bullets. A Cabuli sowar was active in trying to get them forward; but they only muttered, "Who is going forward to die?" etc. and refused to move. The 66th made for the foremost garden and the Sepoys for those in the rear. As the 66th descended into the dry river, their bullets began to take effect on the aforesaid crowd of Ghazis and horsemen, who made off towards the mound on which I had been previously standing. The wall of the garden was about six feet high and was broken in some places. Over this the soldiers scrambled, closely followed by the Ghazis, who feared to give the soldiers time to make 'morchas' (squares). I, and the men with me, moved round to the left, so as to get to the rear of Ayoub's men, and watched the fight going on at the garden.

The fight was, as far as I saw, entirely confined to artillery and musketry. I saw no swords used in actual fight. By the time I got round to the rear of Ayoub's fighting men, the remains of the British infantry were leaving the gardens and making for Khusk-i-Nakhud. I noticed soldiers with their rifles tucked under their left arms loading and firing to the rear they ran. I saw no artillery and cavalry now. They had all gone off in the direction of Khushk-i-Nakhud. The battle was now over. I found myself on the ground which had been occupied by the British fighting line, the actual spot where I stood was between the positions of the 1st Grenadiers and the 66th. The ground was strewn with dead bodies, those of the Ghazis encumbering those of the British. I saw no wounded. The Ghazis who had followed the retreating infantry had cut up all the wounded. I saw but one dead horse. It had a numda on and looked like an infantry charger. Band instruments, rifles, helmets, were scattered all around. I found the lower half of the staff of a regimental colour. The upper half was broken off,

and the colour itself gone. In the direction in which the left division of the British guns had stood a great smoke was rising, and I heard occasional reports. I concluded that the Ghazis had set fire to the wagons of the captured guns.



The final stand Battle of Maiwand 27th July 1880

When I came to the dry river, I saw tents and commissariat stores lying about, such as loaves of bread, tins of preserved fish, and two barrels of spirits, the contents of which had been partly spilled on the ground. I then went to the garden in which the 66th had taken refuge. It was unoccupied save by the dead. A young Pathan was hacking the body of a bheesty. I made him desist. There were about 70 bodies of Europeans. They had been stripped of accoutrements and boots; otherwise, they were

as they fell. One body was partly burned from the clothes catching fire. I did not see any dead Ghazis in the enclosure, but there were some outside. There were not many. Ghazis were crowding around the enclosure dividing the spoil — viz., the rifles, accoutrements, and boots. They did not take the clothes off the dead. It was now 5 p.m. All firing had ceased. I saw no prisoners in the hands of the Ghazis. The Ghazis said they had gained a great victory and would fight again at Candahar. They had lost severely, and all the evening were burying dead and attending to wounded.”

By most accounts of the Battle of Maiwand, Lieutenant Charles William Hinde was one of the eleven last men standing on the battlefield, bravely holding out against overwhelming odds and towards the end facing certain death.

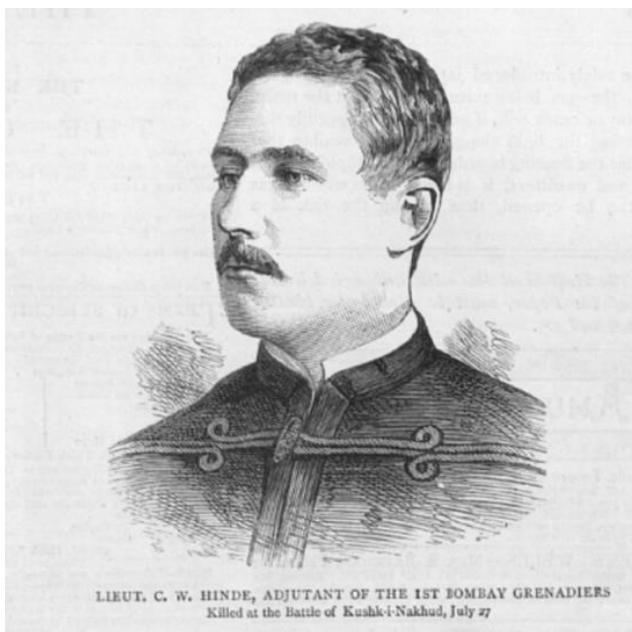
Final losses and casualty figures for the Battle of Maiwand are still disputed today, but it is estimated that the British lost 1,000 officers and men that day plus 450 camp followers killed. The losses inflicted upon the Afghans were summed up by themselves as “beshumar” (countless), 3,000 to 4,000, and they added that it took them seven days to bury their dead. (Hills, The Bombay Field Force, 1880. P29.)

News of the British defeat was received at home with great shock and disbelief. It is thought that Charles’s father Major-General John Hinde C.B., who had been in failing health, was made worse by the news of his son’s death and died 7 months later 1st March 1881.

The loss of the Queen's Colour and Regimental Colour of the 66th Regiment of Foot at the Battle of Maiwand, following so soon after the loss of the Colours of the 2nd/24th Regiment at the Battle of Isandlwana 22nd January 1879 during the Anglo-Zulu War, resulted in Regimental Colours no longer being taken on active service.

The wall of the north aisle in St Peter’s Church, Powick, bears an oval marble memorial, upon which are these simple words:

‘In memory of Lieutenant and Adjutant Charles William Hinde, 1st Bombay Grenadiers, second son of Major General Hinde CB and Frances his wife, who was killed in action at Maiwand, Afghanistan on the 27th July 1880, in his 31st year of his age. He died as he had always lived, in the faithful execution of his duty’.



“He was one of the smartest and most popular officers in the service.” The Graphic, 23rd October 1880

Lieutenant Charles William Hinde aged 24

