

Robert Ratcliffe

**Isle of Wight County Press
21 January 1933**

KANDAHAR VETERAN'S DEATH AT NEWPORT.

A veteran of the Afghan and Egyptian Wars, and an old and much respected resident of Newport, Mr. Robert Ratcliffe, for 30 years licensee of the Kings Head Inn, St. Thomas'-Square, passed away on Thursday, at the age of 74, at 52 Carisbrooke-road, where he lived with his wife and daughter. He had been in delicate health for some years. A native of Musselburgh, Scotland, he joined the 1st Seaforth Highlanders when in his teens, and with that regiment, in which he rose to the rank of sergeant, he took part in the famous march from Kabul to Kandahar, under the late Lord Roberts, during the Afghan War of 1878 to 1880, and in the Egyptian War of 1882 he was present at the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir. He held the medals for these campaigns, with bars for the two historical engagements referred to, and also the Khedive's Star. He came to Parkhurst with the battalion on their return from the Egyptian War in October 1882, and married Miss Fanny Cole, of Newport. After 10 years in the Seaforths he transferred to the Scottish Rifles, with which regiment he completed his 21 years at Parkhurst and continued to reside at Newport on leaving the Service in 1898. During the South African War he returned to the colours and served with the Royal Rifle Reserve Regiment at Parkhurst, and on the outbreak of the Great War, although then 56 years of age, he was one of the first members of the National Reserve to volunteer for home defence duties, and for 4 1/2 years he acted as master-cook to the 5th Hants. (National Reserve) Battalion at Aldershot. As may be inferred from this splendid record of service, he was a fine old soldier and retained his military bearing to the last. During his long occupancy of the Kings Head Inn he was a popular host, and he also gained many other friends by his keenness in sport, as a gardener, and as a member of the British Legion. On the occasion of the Prince of Wales's visit to the Royal I.W. Agricultural Show in 1926, the Prince noticed him among the British Legion guard of honour and chatted with him for some minutes, His Royal Highness being interested to find that Ratcliffe was a veteran of a regiment of which he (the Prince) is colonel-in-chief. Mr. Ratcliffe was one of six old comrades of the regiment, all veterans of either the Afghan or Egyptian Wars living in the Island, whose photographs were published in the *County Press* in October 1930. Last September, on the 50th anniversary of the battle of Tel-el Kebir, he received a congratulatory illuminated scroll from the Seaforth Highlanders Regimental Association. The funeral will take place on Tuesday, service at the Congregational Church at 1.45 p.m.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,

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