

THE OUTSTANDING MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793 AWARDED TO A SERGEANT OF THE 29TH FOOT, WHO HAVING BEEN BORN TO THE REGIMENT, JOINED IT AGED 7 IN 1795 AND WAS 3 TIMES WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF ROLICA WHERE HIS REGIMENT SUSTAINED THE BRUNT OF THE CASUALTIES, TAKING PART IN THE BATTLE OF VIMIERA AND THE TALAVERA, WHERE THE 29TH AGAIN COVERED ITSELF IN GLORY, HE WAS COMMISSIONED IN 1815 ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF MAJOR GENERAL BYNG. HAVING LOST HIS FATHER, UNCLE AND 4 BROTHERS TO MILITARY SERVICE, HE WAS ONE OF THE FEW OFFICERS INSTALLED AS A POOR KNIGHT OF WINDSOR, HE DIED AT HIS RESIDENCE IN WINDSOR CASTLE IN 1853



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793, 3 CLASPS ROLEIA, VIMIERA, TALAVERA 'JOHN LAMB, SERJT 29TH FOOT'

John Lamb was born circa 1788 to the 29th Foot, his father being a Regimental Sergeant Major and his mother's family all of the 29th. Lamb's father died on active services in the West Indies in 1795, the year the 7-year-old John enlisted to serve in the Regiment. 27 years later he would state he was the only surviving member (male), of a family of military men, both Officers and NCO's, all of whom died on active service, including 4 brothers.

Serving in Ireland from 1798, the 29th took part in the Helder campaign, August to October 1799, before returning to England. Stationed in Halifax, Nova Scotia between 1802 and 1807, Lamb being promoted Corporal on 25 May 1806 and Sergeant the following day (still only 18 years old). On 7 August 1808, they landed at Mondego Bay, Portugal with an army under the command of the Duke of

Wellington and were present at the battle of Rolica on 17 August. During the battle, the 29th, under Colonel Lake, attacked prematurely up its assigned gully and soon found itself surrounded on three sides by French troops. Despite the devastating fire, the right wing of the regiment made it to the top of the ridge, when it was charged from the rear. The Regiment was forced to retreat, leaving Colonel Lake dead on the field and suffering 190 casualties, significantly more than any other regiment and near 40% of the 500 casualties suffered by the British that day. The young Sergeant Lamb, who was present with no 9 Company, was himself wounded three times during the storming of the ridge.

Having been patched up, Sergeant Lamb was present at the battle of Vimiera, 21st August 1808, where as part of Nightingales 3rd Brigade, the 29th suffered far fewer casualties. The Regiment took no part in the Corunna campaign but remained in Portugal after General Moore's army embarked for Britain. Present at the crossing of the Douro in May 1809, the 29th bore a conspicuous part at the battle of Talavera, 27-28 July 1809. Here the Regiment succeeded in driving the French from a vital hill by charging with fixed bayonets. They captured 2 French colours but the eagles had been unscrewed prior to capture denying them the honour of capturing the first eagle of the war. The Regiment suffered 189 casualties. After the battle Wellington wrote to the Secretary of State *"My Lord I wish very much that some measure could be adopted to get some recruits for the 29th Regiment it is the best Regiment in this Army."*

After Talavera, the 29th withdrew to the Portugues border and saw no action at significant battles until the Battle of Albuhera 2 years later. Sergeant Lamb was not present at this battle, which was the last battle the Regiment took part in during the Peninsular War, the remnants of the 29th were ordered home to reform in November that year. Returning to Cadiz in 1813, in June 1814, the 29th Foot were ordered to America to take part in the 1812 War, landing in Halifax on 20 August. The Flank companies of the Regiment took part in the affair at Hampden on 3 September 1814 but the 29th were not actively engaged in any major battles before the end of the conflict. Returning home in 1815, they took no part in the Waterloo campaign, arriving at Ghent on 15 June, just too late to take part in the battles but were part of the occupation force in France from June 1815



THE CHARGE OF THE 29TH AT TALAVERA

An extremely fine account of the 29th Foots Peninsular War service can be found on the Regiments website. More detailed accounts of the battles of Rolica, Vimiera and Talavera can be found on separate pages:

http://www.worcestershireregiment.com/h_29th_Foot_1807to1813.php

COMMISSIONED ENSIGN

In Later 1815, Sergeant Lamb was recommended for a Commission by his commanding officer and by Major General John Byng, who had commanded the 29th Foot during an early part of Lamb's service. In a letter dated, Colchester, 24th October 1815, Major General Byng would write:

"I have been requested by Lt Colonel Tucker commanding 29th Regiment to recommend to the consideration commander of the Forces, Sergeant John Lamb with whose merits and services I am well acquainted – He was born in that Regiment, has served in it above twenty years with the greatest credit. He has never been absent from it and has always bore an exemplary good character. Although still young, his health has suffered very materially, and he is not likely to be again fit for active service. I shall therefore be obliged if you would submit his name to His Royal Highness for an Ensigncy in a Veteran Battalion, which he would very gratefully accept, although it has been explained to him promotion does not go on in those corps."

Lamb was Commissioned Ensign of the 2nd Veteran Battalion very shortly after, on 9 November 1815. He married Catherine Adcock at New Windsor parish Church on 16 March 1816. However on the reduction of the battalion on 24 May 1816, he was placed on retired full pay of it.

A POOR KNIGHT OF WINDSOR

Clearly of very little means bar his retired pay, in 1822, Ensign Lamb applied to become a Poor Knight of Windsor. The Poor Knights of Windsor, a very ancient establishment formed as the Alms Knights but known as Poor Knights until the name was changed in 1833 to the Military Knight's of Windsor. At any one time, there were only around 13 Knights on establishment, vacancies being filled on the death of a current Knight.

In a letter written to R Peel, Secretary of State for the Home Department, circa 1822

"..Your memorialist most humbly ventures to solicit from your Honour an appointment to the next situation as Poor Knight at Windsor that may become vacant, which is at your Honours disposal. Memorialist lost his father ion the West Indies by excessive fatigue and his uncle by a mortal wound 1795, the former Sejt Major, the latter Ensign and Adjutant which proved an irreplaceable loss to memorialist and all his family. He has lost two brothers in the service since and is now the only one of his whole family surviving. He has also to add that his aged Mother (now dead) was born with the whole of her family in the 29th Regt of Foot who all had the honour of being under the Earl of Harrington's most excellent command for many years with great credit. Memorialist has a young and increasing family unprovided for which renders his case the more necessitous.

Memorialist has further to add that from Grandfather down to his youngest brother have all served for many years in his Majesty's service. Your Honours memorialist has served in every campaign with the above mentioned corps from the year 1795 to 1816 and was wounded in storming Rolia in Portugal 17th Aug 1808 under the command of His Grace the Duke of Wellington, since that period, together with the excessive arduous service that memorialist has been employed on and being at present much afflicted with the gout has rendered him totally unfit for actual service.

Humbly relying upon your Honours well known humanity."

A sub note by the Earl of Harrington, ex 29th Colonel, is added to this letter:

"I knew Ensign Lamb for many years in the 29th Regiment. He was a zealous & excellent soldier & the statement of his own & the services of his family I believe to be accurately true. He is in my opinion in every respect worthy of the provision he solicits. Harrington"

A reply from Peel, he stated he never makes any engagements until a vacancy actually occurs.



THE BATTLE OF ROLICA

A further letter was written 5 years later to Lord Viscount Melbourne, the then Secretary of State for the Home Department:

"..Memorialist has a wife and six children totally unprovided for in consequence of which he humbly presumes to solicit from your Lordship and appointment to the situation of a Poor Knight of Windsor (their being two vacancies).

The late Secretary of State Sir R Peel has had memorialists name on the list of applicants upwards of 5 years accompanied with the highest recommendation from Lieut Genl Sir John Byng under whose excellent and distinguished command memorialist had the honour of serving for many years. He therefore begs to inform your Lordship that since his first application no less than 15 vacancies have occurred during the above period.

The military service of memorialist's family amounts to nearly two hundred years, commencing with his grandfather and terminating with his youngest brother (Capt Lamb) who lost his life in consequence of injuries received at the capture of Martinique and Guadeloupe and memorialist is now the only one of a numerous family surviving. Memorialists aged mother (since deceased) with the whole of her family were of that highly respectable corps. The 29th Regt of Foot who bore so conspicuous a part in Spain and Portugal under his Grace the Duke of Wellington.

Memorialists father and grandfather rendered their Country important service in America during the War of 1775 and were both severely wounded – having been detached amongst the savage tribes of Indians and for the good of the service and with a view to cultivate the best understanding with them under those circumstances were compelled to conform almost to every act of cannibalism.

Memorialist has served in every campaign with the above corps from 1795 to 1816 and was wounded three times in storming the heights of Rolia in Portugal 17th Aug 1808 under the command of the Hon Lieut Col Lake who was killed at the head of the storming part. Since that period, together with excessive arduous service that memorialist has been employed on and being at present afflicted with

the gout accompanied with a liver complaint has rendered him totally unfit for active service and an object truly deserving your Lordships sympathy.

Memorialist lost his father in the West Indies by yellow fever and his uncle by a mortal wound in 1795 the former Serjt Maor, the latter Ensign & Adjt which proved an irreparable loss to all his family.

Memorialist has lost four brothers on foreign service since and as before stated, is the only surviving of a numerous military family..."

It is not clear when exactly Lamb was accepted as a Poor, Knight, however he is noted as showing a newly appointed Knight (Major Clarke) to his stall on his installation as a Knight. Lamb was raised from lower to upper foundation of the by now renamed Military Knights of Windsor.



Military Knights of Windsor

The Military Knights of Windsor from the Windsor Castle College website:

'The Military Knights of Windsor claim to be the oldest military establishment in the Army List. Formed by King Edward III shortly after the Battle of Creçy, the foundation consisted of Knights who, having taken their private armies to France to fight for the King, had been taken prisoner by the French who demanded heavy ransoms in return for their release. This often meant selling up their complete estates in order to raise sufficient money..... In 1833, King William IV, changed the designation of the Alms Knights to that of 'The Military Knights of Windsor' and at the same time granted them permission to wear uniform of Army Officers on the Unattached List. This dress is still worn today and comprises a scarlet tailcoat (in the summer), sword, sash and cocked hat with plume.

The Knights are all retired Army Officers dependent on their Army Pensions as, apart from a small stipend, they are not paid for their duties. It is usual for applicants to be married and preference is given to those in needy circumstances. Installation as a Military Knight will usually be before the age of 67. The individual has to be prepared to undertake the numerous duties expected of him over the year, most of which entail being on parade nearly every Sunday. The main event in the calendar is the Garter Ceremony when the Military Knights head this very colourful procession through the Castle precincts and into St George's Chapel, the spiritual home of the Order of the Garter. Additionally, there are four 'obits' (Remembrances of College Benefactors) in the year, plus the occasional military

funeral and the laying up of a Garter Knight's Banner. A further duty involving the Military Knights is to be on parade for State Visits at Windsor Castle. On average, the Knights are on parade approximately 52 times in the year, in addition to which are a number of rehearsals. Most of these duties are linked to the Chapel, and only very occasionally are the Knights on parade away from Windsor. Some Military Knights undertake voluntary roles within the College and Castle.

The Knights' homes in the Lower Ward of the Castle are theirs for as long as they can carry out their duties, and in most cases, this takes them to the end of their days.

See the following link:

<https://www.stgeorges-windsor.org/about-st-georges/whos-who/military-knights/>

John Lamb died aged 67 on 13 August 1853 and was buried with full military honours in St George's Chapel, Windsor, 5 days later. His widely published obituary:

"MILITARY KNIGHTS OF WINDSOR. A vacancy has occurred in the ancient and honourable body by the demise of Ensign John Lamb, of the 2nd Veteran Battalion, who died much respected at his residence in Windsor Castle on Friday. We believe he was in every campaign with her Majesty's 29th, or Worcestershire Regiment of Foot during the whole of war from 1793 to 1816 and was present at the battle of Rolia where he received three wounds, Vimiera and Talavera, for which he had the war medal with three clasps. The deceased veteran was the only surviving member of a numerous family, whose united military services extended over a period of upwards of a century – his father, grandfather, uncle and two brothers, all having perished in the service of their country."



Condition VF, minor contact wear, attractive patina. Sold with a quantity of digital research (mailed to buyer), including Commission letters, applications to become Poor Knight of Windsor circa 1822 and regimental history.

A really quite outstanding medal