

**A VERY RARE SUDAN 1885 BATTLE OF HASHEEN GRENADIER GUARDS
DCM GROUP ONE OF JUST FOUR SUCH AWARDS FOR THIS BATTLE. THE
RECIPIENT A BOY SOLDIER WHO WAS LATER COMMISSIONED**



EGYPT 1882-9, CLASP SUAKIN 1885 '492, SGT MAJ: J.H.HALL. 3/GRENDR GDS'. DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL 'SERGT MAJ: J.H.HALL. 3/GRENDR GDS 26TH MAR 1885', KHEDIVES STAR DATED 1884-6, IMPRESSED '492' AND '3GG', THE LATTER WITH UNOFFICIAL BRASS UNIFORM RETAINING PIN FITTED

The 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards sailed from Gravesend on 20th February, joining the Suakin expedition under General Graham. They were involved in heavy fighting less than a month later. At the battle of Hasheen (Hashin), on the 20th March, the Guards square was left unsupported and forced to slowly retreat under heavy. During this battle that lasted 9 hours, Sergeant Major Hall, was clearly instrumental in keeping his men steady and he was duly Awarded the Regiments only DCM for this battle and one of only four to any regiment present. This presented by the Queen at Winsor Castle on 23rd February 1886. The Citation reads:

'Sergeant Major John Hall, Grenadier Guards, displayed great zeal, energy and coolness on all occasions. On 26th of March 1885, when the square was attacked by the enemy in considerable force, Sergeant Major Hall displayed very conspicuous energy and coolness in assisting the company and section commanders to steady the men and direct their fire. He moved from place to place wherever the attack was most severe, causing steadiness and confidence around him'

Good accounts of the battle of Hasheen are few and far between, it was not a victory but neither was it a defeat, however it very nearly could have been and General Graham's general ship was certainly called into question in regards to the danger he put the Guards Brigade in during the battle. For this reason it seems to have been pushed somewhat into the background in regards battles fought in the Sudan at the time. However, Major Gambier Parry gives an excellent account of the battle (full copy with research) and the following tells of the danger

the Guards were put in and clearly a reason why Sergeant Major Hall's steadiness in action was rewarded:

"... A little before one o'clock, the enemy's fire having slackened, the 49th and Marines were withdrawn from Hasheen Hill and ordered to fall back towards the conical hills in rear. The Guards were also ordered to retire. No sooner had the 49th and Marines begun to descend their hill, than the top was almost instantaneously re-occupied by the enemy, who opened a brisk fire on our retiring troops. A large force also having ascended the lower part of this hill where it rose out of the valley, opened an exceedingly heavy fire on the Brigade of Guards now also falling back. Their square was much hampered by being absolutely filled with baggage-animals, dhoolie-bearers, cavalry, and even artillery, who had all taken refuge inside it, to escape from the effects of the Guards' heavy fire. There was no hurry, and the men moved with the utmost steadiness under the galling fire poured in upon them. Every now and then the square would halt and reply with a volley or two; but they were unable to see the crafty enemy, who took good care to hide himself behind the thickest of the bush, and the rocky ground of the hills. Many a man fell, shot dead, and many were hit; while more than one officer fell, mortally wounded, inside the square. The dead and wounded alike were all placed inside the dhoolies, and this caused a certain amount of delay, as parts of the force were halted to look after the casualties.



Falling back in this way was a tedious business, and it has never been revealed why the Guards were ever put forward into art impenetrable jungle to stand And be shot and under the most disadvantageous circumstances they behaved with the utmost coolness, and the majestic way in which they carried out their retreat, over about a mile and a half of the roughest country, beset by an invisible enemy, is deserving of the highest praise. It is not too much to say that had the enemy been better marksmen, and understood thoroughly the use of their rifles, the Brigade of Guards would have been simply decimated. It was folly first of all to put them in such a position, but this folly was surpassed by the way the retreat was ordered. By the falling back of the 49th and Marines from Hasheen Hill, we gave back to the enemy a position for which our men had fought most gallantly, and from which they were able

to annoy us considerably without our being in anyway able to reply. With no means of covering their retreat, and with a considerable part of the cavalry actually inside their square, the Guards were exposed for an hour or more to a fire, which, if it had been better directed would have nearly annihilated them. To run such risks is hardly forethought, and to handle troops thus is not general ship....”

John Henry Hall is shown on the 1861 Army lists as a Boy drummer/fifer in the 1st (Grenadier) Foot Guards, by the 1871 list he listed as a private in the same regiment. In the 14 years between then and him serving in the Sudan, he had transferred to the 3rd Battalion and been promoted to the lofty heights of Regimental Sergeant Major. In 1890 he was commissioned Quartermaster and Honorary Guards Lieutenant; effectively the rank of Captain in relation to non Guards Officers . Quartermaster John H. Hall finally retired on retired pay on 1st May, 1897. A classic example of the Victorian Boy soldier serving his life in the Army and attaining his highest possible rank in probably the most prestigious Regiment in the British Army. A search of for Service papers or of musters will reveal When exactly Hall joined up, at what age and the dates of his promotions from Boy to Sergeant Major. Given his rank and length of service, its very likely the Guards museum may hold a photo of Hall.



Note; Date of 26th March given on both Citation and medal, clearly this was a clerical error as the Guards were in no such action on the 26th, indeed Hasheen was the only action at which the guards fought like this during the campaign. This was only DCM for the Grenadier Guards for this action and campaign, one of only 4 to any regiment for Hasheen.



Condition GVF/VF. Considering Hall's service and the fact he was a Guard who would be on parade much, the medals are in remarkably good condition, with just a couple of minor EK's and only minimal pitting from the star - this generally confined to letters at 2-3 o'clock on either side of DCM but even here there is not the usual loss of letters. This is probably due to the fact that Hall had a securing pin added to the back of the star, which would have kept contact with the other medals to a minimum. Sold with research on CD.

A really superb group of medals and scarce to have a full citation for Victorian DCM's