

A SCARCE MGS 1793 TO A NCO OF THE ROYAL YORK RANGERS WHO WAS WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE FOR GUADALOUPE DURING WHICH HIS REGIMENT SUFFERED OVER A THIRD OF THE ARMIES CASUALTIES. AN EX ROYAL MARINE, HIS COMPANY ALSO TOOK PART IN THE NAVAL ACTION 'OFF THE PEARL ROCK' FOR WHICH A CLASP WAS AWARDED FOR THE NGS 1793 MEDAL



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793, 2 CLASPS MARTINIQUE, GUADALOUPE ' W DAVIES, CORP. ROYAL YORK RANGERS'

Corporal William Davies, a labourer from Walsall, Staffs, joined the Royal York Rangers in March 1808 and was discharged in April 1811. He had served previously three years in the Royal Marines but was not credited with that Service, possibly because he was under 18.

He was discharged in consequence of 'gunshot wounds of shoulder' at the capture of Guadeloupe on 3rd Feb 1810, presumably during the attack on the fortified French hilltop position. He had served in Captain Wright's Company.

In October 1863 he was admitted to a Chelsea in-Pension when he would have been in his mid 80's.

It is interesting to note that in December 1808, Lieutenant Wright and men from his company were serving as marines on ships in Captain Collier's squadron when they took part in an action off the Pearl Rock on the 12th and 13th. Lieutenant Wright and his men were praised for their gallantry during this action and a clasp to the Naval General Service medal, 'Off the Pearl Rock 13 December 1808' was authorised. However only 14 medals were claimed and of these none were claimed by Royal York Rangers. One can only speculate as to whether Davies, as one of Wright's men and a former Marine, took part in this action.

THE ROYAL YORK RANGERS ATTACK AT THE HILLTOP FORT DURING THE CAPTURE GUADELOUPE

At the capture of Guadeloupe in February 1810, the Royal York Rangers led the successful attack on the fortified hilltop. The attack, which ended with a bayonet charge, gained many plaudits for the Regiment but at a heavy cost. Indeed whilst the capture of Guadalupe cost the Army 4 Officers, 48 Men killed and 15 Officers, 243 Men wounded, the Royal York Rangers alone lost 4 Officers, 27 men killed and 5 Officers, 82 Men wounded! Further details are as follows:

"BRIGADE ORDERS. Feb. 4, 1810.—Brigadier-general Wale has the honour to congratulate his brigade upon the complete success of the action of yesterday, in which as much real, cool, and intrepid courage was displayed, as ever appeared among the annals of history!—Six hundred of the royal York rangers went to the attack of 500 of the best troops of the enemy through passes deemed, by them, impracticable, and routed them from a post considered as inaccessible. By this gallant achievement, the whole army hits this day the proud satisfaction of seeing the flag of truce displayed upon all the enemy's batteries, indicating the approaching end of our present labours.

'The brigadier-general deeply regrets the loss of some gallant officers, and brave soldiers, but it was not to be expected that one of the strongest defended passes of the enemy, and the key to their entrenched camp, could be carried without considerable loss. To major Henderson, who led the attack, the brigadier-general has not words to express his high sense of that officer's invincible intrepidity in surmounting ail difficulties, nor to captains Starck, Sutherland, Darling, and Mathewson, and the officers and soldiers in general, in support of their gallant leader. The brigadier-general calls to mind the critical moment when so many officers and men were killed and wounded; but for the undaunted firmness of the Regt the day would have been lost. But when the brigadier-general recollected the former exploits of the royal York rangers, he was convinced they would ultimately overcome all difficulties. The brigadier-general desires that the names of the gallant officers who fell in this action, lieutenants Copley, Symonds, Martincu, and Gregg, may be recorded in orders, as having greatly conduced to the success of the day. The brigadier-general returns his best thanks to major Hadden, the officers and soldiers of the grenadier battalion, for their support on that day.

GENERAL ORDERS. Head-quarters, Guadalupe, February 5, 1810.—The commander of the forces not being yet in possession of official reports from the general officers commanding divisions and brigades, intended to have deferred adverting in public orders to the high sense he entertains of the eminent services rendered by the generals, the staff, the officers of all kinds, the non commissioned officers, and soldiers of the army now serving under his immediate command, until the final reduction of this important colony: but the conduct of the royal York rangers under the command of major Henderson. In the presence of brigadier-general Wale commanding the reserve, of which corps this regiment forms the principal part, has been of a nature so brilliant, anal so decisive in its Meets, that the commander of the forces feels it his duly to return his thanks in this public manner to brigadier-general Wale, major Henderson, and to the officers and men of the royal York rangers for their distinguished manner in forcing the enemy from their entrenchments and fastnesses in the woods and mountains on the evening of the 3d instant, turning the left of their position, seizing and maintaining the heights which commanded it. And the general is most sensible of the merits and discipline of this young corps in having the next morning at day-break, after being deprived of the talents and appearance of the brigadier-general, and major Henderson their commanding officer, both of whom were carried off the field wounded during the night, persisted in completing the important end arising from their position, by detaching under their captains, and, driving the enemy from his batteries, opened the passage of the bridge to the army which was not to be forced in front. Such a service is a precious deposit in the history of any corps, and cannot fail of being honoured with some signal mark of approbation of their king and country, and the commander of the forces trusts that the state of discipline of

this regiment, its distinguished merits last campaign, in maintaining Fort Edward, under the ordnance of Fort Dessaix, and the exertions of Major Henderson, its commanding officer, on that and the present occasion, will secure to that officer all that consolation and promotion his uncommon services so highly entitle him to. .”*

OFF THE PEARL ROCK

“Just as this squadron reached the Antilles, a separation, either by accident or design, appears to have taken place. At all events the Cigne, and the two schooners, at 11 a.m. on the 12th of December, were discovered at anchor off the Pearl rock, by the gun-brig Morne-Fortunée, Lieutenant John Brown; who immediately made a signal to that effect to Captain Francis Augustus Collier, of the 12-pounder 32-gun frigate Circe, the commodore of a small British squadron stationed between that rock and the town of St: Pierre. Immediately the Circe, accompanied by the 18-gun ship-sloop Stork, Captain George Le Geyt, 16-gun brig-sloop Epervier, Captain Thomas Tudor Tucker, and advice-schooner Express, Lieutenant William Dowers, made sail towards St.-Pierre's ; which one of the French schooners was endeavouring to reach, by being towed alongshore under cover of a body of troops on the beach. Finding it impossible, owing to the near approach of the Stork, to get between the port of St.-Pierre and the Circe, the schooner ran on shore under a battery of four guns, flanked by two smaller ones, and defended also by the troops that had accompanied her from her anchorage at the Pearl. Immediately the Circe, followed by the Stork and Morne-Fortunée, stood in to attack the batteries ; and, engaging them within pistol-shot, soon silenced the two smaller batteries and drove the troops from the beach.

Observing at this time that the French brig and the schooner in her company were unlading, Captain Collier directed the Morne-Fortunée to watch the motions of the schooner on shore, and to give similar orders to the Epervier on her coming up ; and then, with the Circe, Stork, and Express, he made sail. towards the Cigne and her consort, now lying well to windward, close to the rocks, and under the protection of four batteries and a considerable number of troops, with field-pieces, assembled on the beach. Having manned her barge and two cutters, with 68 officers and men, under the command of Lieutenant Charles Henry Croke, Mr. William Collman the purser, and Mr. William Smith the master, and directed Lieutenant Croke to lie off until the French brig's fire slackened, the Circe, followed by the Stork and Express, stood in and opened a close and well directed fire upon the brig, the batteries, and the troops on the beach. As soon as the Circe and Stork, which latter ship had manned her boats to assist those of the former, had run past the batteries and brig, Lieutenant Croke, without waiting for the Stork's boats, dashed on, in the most gallant manner, and boarded the Cigne. It happened, in this instance, that gallantry did not meet its accustomed reward. The three boats were defeated with dreadful slaughter. One boat was taken, another sunk, and the third entirely disabled ; and, out of the 68 men detached from her, the Circe lost nine killed, 21 wounded, and 26 missing : total 56, including, among the badly wounded, Lieutenant Croke, in four places, and Mr. Collman the purser. It being when the issue of this unfortunate business was known, quite dark, the Circe stood off from the shore ; leaving the 18-gun brig-sloop Amaranthe, Captain Edward Pelham Brenton, who had just joined company, to watch the Cigne during the night.

At daylight on the 13th the French brig got under way, and, aided by her sweeps and boats, stood alongshore for St.-Pierre's. Captain Brenton having in the handsomest manner volunteered to bring out the Cigne, the Amaranthe, towed by the boats of the Circe and Stork, used her utmost endeavours to close with her. At 10 A. M, the Cigne grounded near several batteries to the northward of St.-Pierre's : whereupon the British brig tacked and worked in, under a heavy fire from the French brig, and particularly from the batteries, by which the Amaranthe had one man killed and five wounded. The Circe and the rest of the squadron, meanwhile, were engaging the batteries to leeward. By her close and well-directed fire, the Amaranthe soon obliged the crew of the Cigne to quit their vessel and take to the shore :

immediately on which the boats of the Amaranthe, Circe, and Stork, led by Lieutenant James Hay, first of the Amaranthe, gallantly boarded and carried the Cigne, in the face of a heavy fire from the batteries and troops on the beach.

The prize having bilged, it was impossible to get her off: the British, therefore, were obliged to be contented with destroying her. Captain Brenton, having again volunteered, proceeded with a party to destroy the French schooner, then also on shore. By 9 a.m., after overcoming a resistance that wounded Mr. Joshua Jones, the master of the Amaranthe, and killed one and wounded three seamen belonging to the Express, the British set fire to and burnt the schooner. But for the rash act of Lieutenant Crooke (and yet who, under such circumstances, could refrain ?) the whole of this enterprise would have been accomplished with a very slight loss. As it was, the loss amounted to 12 killed, 31 wounded, and 26 missing; a part of the latter probably drowned, the remainder prisoners.”



Condition Reconstituted; brooch marks to obverse and around 9 o'clock on edge, naming unaffected. Contact and edge bruising, with nice original ribbon. Ex GLEN. MAR 1904. SPINK DEC 1959. Lusted Nov 1980

A scarce casualty medal to a scarce regiment, only 49 medals to the regiment, 35 with both clasps. Sold with copy papers, gazettes etc on CD