

AN IMPORTANT MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793 TO A KING'S GERMAN LEGION OFFICER, WHO WAS WOUNDED BEFORE BAYONNE IN 1814. AS SENIOR ADC TO GENERAL VON ALTEN, COMMANDER OF THE 3RD DIVISION AT QUATRE BRAS AND WATERLOO . HE HAD THE HONOUR OF TAKING THE WATERLOO DISPATCHES TO HANOVER ON THE 22ND JUNE 1815 AND WAS REWARDED WITH A PROMOTION AND THE HANOVERIAN GUELPHIC ORDER 3RD CLASS IN 1815. IN LATER LIFE WAS GOVERNOR TO PRINCE ALBERT, FUTURE HUSBAND OF QUEEN VICTORIA AND GIVEN THE TITLE BARON



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793-1814, 5 CLASPS, CIUDAD RODRIGO, VITTORIA, ST. SEBASTIAN, NIVELLE, NIVE 'GEO. WICHMANN, LIEUT. 1ST LINE BN. K.G.L.'

Baron George Christian Wichmann, aged 24, was appointed an Ensign in the 1st Line Battalion King's German Legion on September 20, 1810. Promoted to Lieutenant on October 30, 1812, he served with the regiment in the Peninsula in 1811, 1812 and 1813; in the South of France in 1813 and 1814. Taking part in the assaults on Ciudad Rodrigo and St Sebastian, siege and retreat at Burgos, Tordesillas, battle of Vittoria, crossing of the Bidassoa, battles of Nivelles, Nive, St Etienne and Bayonne. He was slightly wounded before Bayonne on February 27, 1814.

At the storming of the churchyard at St Etienne, before Bayonne, on 27 February. It was intended that the centre of the enemy's position should be attacked by the Line brigade of the K.G.L. (1st, 2nd and 5th); the right by the 1st and 2nd Light brigade, and the left by the

guards. However, the movement against the centre was commenced before that against the flanks, and the brunt of the action fell upon the line battalions of the Legion. Stormed and captured at the point of the bayonet, the entrenched positions on the heights of St Etienne became the object of a French counter-attack late in the afternoon. This was successfully driven back with the bayonet, as was a renewed attempt half an hour later before the French finally gave up their prize. The loss of the Legion on the 27th February was extremely severe, with no less than four officers dead and 23 wounded, for the most part severely, and some 300 casualties amongst the rank and file.

'The officers, setting a noble example to their men, exposed themselves with a degree of intrepidity which nothing could exceed, and justly entitled them to a high place in the official account of the engagement.'



He then took part in the campaign in the Netherlands in 1814 and at the battle of Waterloo in 1815, served as senior ADC to General von Alten, Commander of the 3rd Division. A Division that was both conspicuous for its part and saw heavy losses at both Quatre Bras and Waterloo.

General Graf Carl von Alten: ein Soldat Europas by Runnebaum notes regarding Von Alten Staff at Waterloo:

'In his staff are his two staff officers, Colonel Sir John Kennedy of the 3rd Division and Colonel Berger from Hanover auxiliary corps , and his two aides, Major Heise and Lieutenant Wiechmann'.

Others like Major of Schlütter and Lieutenant Graf von Kielmannsegge aren't mentioned but were certainly part of his Staff as they are mentioned in Von Alten's Waterloo dispatch to the Duke of Cambridge (his Commander in Chief) of 20th June. Wichmann is not mentioned at the end of the letter with other Officers deserving of consideration. However Wichmann was given the great honour of being sent from Brussels with the dispatch to the Duke, arriving at Monbrillant (the Duke's residence) in Hanover on 22nd June and was with the Duke when he

rode through the city announcing the victory. This in itself would have been seen as Von Alten, wishing Wichmann to be rewarded. However at the start of the dispatch, often omitted from published works, is the following:

'Lieutenant Wiegmann, my senior adjutant, who is bringing you this report, has participated in both battles and may be able to inform you on whatever might have been overlooked by myself. I recommend this very gifted officer to your Royal Highness's gracious consideration.'

Almost certainly, Wichmann's Captain's Promotion in the Hanover Army to date from 18th June (date of Waterloo), so presumably his promotion was backdated and the Award of the Hanoverian Guelphic Order 3rd Class, are due to the above.

The 1816 Hanover Awards lists shows his Guelphic Order was dated December 1815, being noted as on the General Staff of Lieutenant-General Counts Von Alten and at the time of publication; he was then a Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards Battalion. There are 52 names on this list but only two of the lower rank of Lieutenant, the other recipient being on Von Alten's Staff also. It was common practice to obtain positions of ADC's as 'favor' to relatives of those of Rank or of influence and the role of ADC to Von Alten would have been a coveted one. Wichmann must also have had someone helping him out, or quite possibly he was related to Major Henry Wiegmann 2nd Light Batt KGL who was killed at Waterloo.

Hannover Army lists for 1818 show he was promoted Captain on 18th June 1815 It also gives that he confirms he was in receipt of the Hanoverian Guelphic Order, 3rd Class and British Waterloo medal.

The reduction of the King's German Legion had officially taken place on February 24, 1816 at Brussels and men were then officially transferred to the Hannover Army. However the process of transfer on 'paper' had probably been proceeding for some time previous to this. On his return to Hanover in 1818, it is noted that Von Alten was pleased to find among his new Staff, some of his old Waterloo Staff; Lieutenant Colonel Heise as Adjutant General his young adjutant Captain Wichmann.

Rising through the ranks to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, he was made a Baron and Awarded the Netherlands Order of Leopold, 3rd Class (date unknown for both). He left the Army in 1833 and would become Governor to Prince Albert, later husband of Queen Victoria, accompanying Albert on his trips to Brussels and his studies at Bonn. From books on Prinz Albert:

Baron Wichmann was specially assigned to us for all outside matters, a worthy and experienced man, the choice of whom for the position had been happily made. He had belonged to the German English Legion, and had taken part under Wellington in the Spanish campaigns and the battle of Waterloo, was a thoroughly unprejudiced man and much loved in Brussels society.

And elsewhere regarding his suitability for the position of Governor to the Prince ;

'He rose to the top of the adjutant general staff of general Alten , who contingent . commanded the Hanoverian. Was attached to 1814 the army wellington in the Netherlands and at the battle of Waterloo in summer 1815 to a central position. Wichmann commanded a company of the Hanoverian grenadiers at peace and took in 1833 his farewell, because he had no opportunities for a higher promotion. Wangenheim (Oberhofmarschall Georg Graf von Wangenheim) boasted of his high education and his wide knowledge of languages. He

personified the 'gentleman dans la force du terme' and had been presented with the Knight of the order of Guelph. Because he is not married, he easily would be available.'

Lieutenant-Colonel Wichmann died 11th October 1861 at Goettingen

Note: The use of both spellings Wichmann and Wiegmann were at the time common spellings of the same name due to how it was pronounced. It is also unknown when Wichmann started serving on Von Alten's Staff and as yet no complete write up of service has been found.



Fitted with silver ribbon buckle, old repair to one side of bottom carriage, otherwise very fine. Accompanied by copies of his service records from the National Archives and a photocopy of page 573 from the book entitled "History of the King's German Legion".

Provenance: Lawson Whalley Collection 1884; Colonel Musgrove Collection 1912; Glendinging, April 1926; Wallis & Wallis, July 2005; Dix Noonan Webb, December 2013. His Waterloo medal has not been noted as extant