

THE FINE AND RARE 2 CLASP ARMY OF INDIA 1799 TO AN OFFICER OF THE 22ND N.I. WHO SERVED WITH GENERAL LAKE DURING THE SECOND MAHRATTA WAR 1804-5 BEING SEVERELY WOUNDED DURING THE 2ND DISASTROUS STORMING OF IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS OF BURTPUR IN JANUARY 1805. FURTHER SERVING IN THE GURKHA WAR OF 1814-16, IN 1826 HE TOOK PART IN THE SUCCESSFUL SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF BHURTPUR, NO DOUBT BEING ONE OF THE FEW MEN TO TAKE PART IN BOTH SIEGES, 21 YEARS APART. MADE C.B. FOR HIS SERVICES AT THE LATTER, HE FINALLY RETIRED AS LIEUTENANT-COLONEL IN 1830



ARMY OF INDIA 1799-1826, 2 CLASPS, NEPAUL, BHURTPUR 'MAJOR WM. L. WATSON, ADJT. GENL.' SHORT HYPHEN REVERSE, OFFICIALLY IMPRESSED NAMING

C.B. London Gazette 2 January 1827

William Larkin Watson was born in Calcutta, India in 1784, the son of Captain Samuel Watson, Bengal Army and Mary, his second wife. Having served as a Cadet in England, he was appointed an Ensign on 9 November 1800 and returned to India on 9 December 1800. Initially posted to the 2/8th N.I. in April 1801, he was transferred to the 11th N.I. and thence to the 22nd N.I. in 1804, having been advanced to Lieutenant in September 1803.

During the Second Mahratta War 1804-5, Watson served with the 22nd N.I. who formed part of General Lord Lake's force. As part of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, the 22 N.I. itself took part in the second phase of the Hindustan campaign from October 1804, taking part in the battle and taking of Deig, November and December 1804 before arriving at the great fortress of Bhurtpoor (Bharatpur) on 2 January 1805. This formidable fortress town, surrounded by 80 – 120 feet walls, which itself was surrounded by an 8 mile long, wide water filled ditch. The whole surrounded by jungle and swamps, made the taking of this place a formidable task and one that had to that date not been accomplished. Lake brought with him little under 9,000 cavalry, infantry but was relatively light on artillery. Facing him was a garrison of between 20,000 and 50,000 armed and motivated troops.



On 9 January 1805, a breach was made in the walls and the first attempt to storm the fortress was made. The 22nd N.I. (no doubt including Watson), formed part of this force, the flank companies forming part on the main attack; the rest of the Regiment, the left attack. The attack was a disaster, with most attackers not getting over the moat and those that did were mown down. One account tells how:

'It was physically impossible for us to establish ourselves upon the breach, so as to deal with the mass of spearmen. Our poor fellows were mown down like standing corn, without the slightest hope of success..'

The loss to the attackers was great; 456 Officers and men killed and wounded. This number including 1 Officer and 43 men of the 22nd N.I.

A week later, another breach was made and on the 21 January, a second attempt to storm the fortress was made. Again including the 22nd N.I. but this time portable bridges and scaling ladders. The result was the same but with even heavier losses of 548 Officers and men killed and wounded, from an attacking force of around 1500. Exact numbers of casualties of the 22nd N.I. were not listed, however 3 Officers, including Lieutenant Watson, were wounded, the latter severely.

Two further assaults were made between the 21 January and 22nd February 1805, each with disastrous results and with the final assault a failure, it was decided against further attempts. Lakes's force had suffered and horrendous numbers of casualties; 3292 killed and wounded and achieved nothing, resulting in an embarrassing defeat for the British.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Bharatpur_\(1805\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Bharatpur_(1805))

NEPUAL AND RETURN TO BHURTPOOR

Still with the 22nd N.I., Watson was promoted Captain in January 1815, serving in the Nepaul War 1814-16 (the Gurkha War), he served as Assistant Adjutant General, being appointed 1st A.A.G of the Army in 1816. It was during this hard fought war that Nepalese soldiers first served in British service, initially as irregulars, several battalions were formed that would remain in British service after the war, eventually becoming the Gurkha Rifles:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Nepalese_War

In 1818 Watson transferred to the 1/22nd N.I. as 1st A.A.G. of the Army (with official rank of Major) and in 1825 was appointed A.G. (with official rank of Lieutenant-Colonel). In the latter capacity he served at the siege of Bhurtpore, January 1826, the place he had served at exactly 21 years previously and was no doubt one of the few Officers to have seen at both sieges. This time, a far greater British force of 20,500 men under General Lord Combermere was tasked with taking the impregnable fortress. However this time, the result would be entirely different. Arriving before Bhurtpoor on 19 December 1825, the fortress was besieged before a great assault was made on the 18 January 1826. At 8.30 a large mine was exploded under the north-east angle and that was the signal for a concerted assault on two breaches and a gate. Within an hour the British troops had penetrated the walls, and by four in the afternoon the garrison had surrendered. British casualties 580 killed and wounded (920 over the siege). As Adjutant General, the official history *'The Narrative of the Siege and Capture of Bhurtpore'* (digital copy included with research), has a large number of entries for Watson. For his services he was awarded the C.B. on 2 January 1827.

In 1827 Watson was posted as Lieutenant-Colonel of the 27th N.I., and thence to the 2nd European Regiment in April 1828; the 43rd N.I. in September 1828; and the 53rd N.I. in 1829. Lieutenant-Colonel Watson retired on 9 May 1830 and died at Harwood House, Pittville, Cheltenham on 6 April 1852.



Condition GVF, minor edge wear or better. With a most attractive patina. Sold with copy research, including gazettes for Bhurtpoor 1805, original medal roll, Bengal Army list service, Will and other genealogical research. Ex DNW July 2011 (£5800 inc premium)

A quite superb medal to a long serving Officer and rare to an officer who served at both sieges of Bhurtpoor. Just 24 Army of India Medals with these clasps.