

THE OUTSTANDING CRIMEAN WAR 'CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE' D.C.M. MEDALS AND ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS GROUP AWARDED TO A TROOP SERGEANT-MAJOR, 8TH ROYAL IRISH HUSSARS WHO WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AT BALAKLAVA', HIS D.C.M. BEING AN EXTREMELY RARE CONFIRMED AWARD FOR THE CHARGE, WITH ONLY AROUND 20% OF THOSE AWARDED BEING CONFIRMED FOR THE BATTLE. SERVING THOUGHT THE CRIMEAN WAR; HE WAS NO LESS THAN THREE TIMES INCLUDED IN IMAGES BY THE FAMED CRIMEAN WAR PHOTOGRAPHER ROGER FENTON. GRANTED A COMMISSION IN THE 8TH HUSSARS IN 1857 AND WAS PRESENT AS STAFF OFFICER LEFT WING AND ADJUTANT THROUGHOUT THE CENTRAL INDIAN CAMPAIGN DURING THE MUTINY, ENDING HIS DAYS IN DUBLIN AS CAPTAIN AND PAYMASTER, 18TH ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT



DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL, V.R. 'LIEUT. M. CLARKE. 8TH HUSSARS', CRIMEA 1854-56, 4 CLASPS, ALMA, BALAKLAVA, INKERMANN, SEASTOPOL 'LIEUT. M. CLARKE, 8TH HUSSARS.' OFFICIALLY IMPRESSED NAMING, INDIAN MUTINY 1857-59, 1 CLASP, CENTRAL INDIA 'CORNET. M. CLARKE, 8TH HUSSARS.' PIERCED AND PLUGGED JUST BELOW SUSPENSION CLAW, RETAINING ROD LOOSE; TURKISH CRIMEA 1855, SARDINIAN ISSUE, A CONTEMPORARY STRIKING BY 'J.B.', UNNAMED AS ISSUED, WITH SWIVEL RING SUSPENSION.

D.C.M. Recommendation dated 12 January 1855; according to Abbott's roll, a replacement medal was ordered on 5 August 1861.

Note: Clarke's Crimea Medal and D.C.M. are both official replacements named to him as a

Lieutenant, his rank in 1861. It is likely that the originals were lost during the Indian Mutiny.

Michael Clarke was born on 4 March 1818 at Bohola, Castlebar, Ireland and enlisted in the 8th Hussars at Hounslow, London on 2 January 1836, giving his age as 18 years. Advanced to Sergeant in 1849 and to Troop Sergeant-Major in March 1854, the following month he embarked for the Crimea in the H.T. Shooting Star, arriving in September. He was subsequently present at the battles of Bulganak and Alma, before participating in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava.



The 8th Hussars during the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava:

"The 8th formed the right of the second wave of the brigade attack. Less one troop which remained as escort to Lord Raglan this time under the command of Captain Paymaster Henry Duberly, the 8th went in with 115 officers and men making it the smallest of the brigade's regiments. The three troops were commanded by Captain Tomkinson, Lieutenant Lord Fitzgibbon and Lieutenant (Adjutant) Edward Seager."

Moving down the valley, as the pace intensified their lines began to separate but sufficient cohesion seems to have been retained in order for the regiment to ride through the front batteries. Furthermore, they drifted right, allowing the 4th Light Dragoons to become separated. This is perhaps unsurprising given that troop leader Tomkinson became violently dismounted and Fitzgibbon was killed as the regiment came under heavy fire.

Passing clear through the enemy's front, past the gun line they halted in the clear by up to

four hundred yards forward in open ground. Rallying and wheeling to commence their retreat the rump of the 8th were blocked by three squadrons of Colonel Jeropkines Russian lancers which had descended into the valley and began forming up behind the overrun gun-line. The hussars charged with about 70 men (including 20 of the 17th Lancers), driving them off before they had completely formed up. Still under the direct command of Shewell and de Salis with Lieutenant Seager, they fought back through the front lines and the survivors made their way back up the valley as best they could."

Of the 115 Officers and men (one and a half Squadrons) who took part in the charge, the 8th Hussars would suffer 21 killed and 20 wounded, or 37% of their number, which was roughly in line with the 40% casualties suffered by the Brigade as a whole. The 8th had an additional 38 horses killed and many more wounded.



The official casualty list, published in the London Gazette of 17 November 1854, records that Clarke was slightly wounded at Balaklava on 25 October 1854. His original Statement of Services - W.O. Form 360 B - states that he was '*Wounded at Balaklava*'. In contrast to the official casualty list, an original booklet, published circa 1871, entitled '*Testimonials in Favour of Captain M. Clarke*' (with group) which includes a detailed Record of Service, describes his injuries at Balaklava as having been severe. The booklet, also containing references from seven former officers of the 8th Hussars written at the time of his transfer from the regiment in March 1867, includes the following testimony from Edward Seager, Colonel, Late Lieutenant-Colonel 8th Hussars, also suggesting that his injuries during the charge were more than slight:

'I have much pleasure in stating that I have known Lieutenant Michael Clarke, late of the 8th Hussars for a period of nearly thirty years, during which time he served with me in that regiment... I believe that he was never absent from his duty, except when severely wounded in the charge at Balaklava...'

This is further backed up by another from E. Tomkinson, Lieutenant-Colonel Unattached, late Captain and Brevet-Major 8th Hussars:

'I have known Lieutenant Clarke of the 8th Hussars since 1843, soon after which he became Sergeant in the Regiment, afterwards Troop Sergeant-Major of the Troop I commanded, from 1851 to 1857, and I can truly say that I always found him a most valuable Non-commissioned Officer, especially during the Crimean War; during the whole of which he was present with the Service Troops, though badly wounded at Balaklava. I cannot speak too highly of the energy and zeal with which he performed his duty during the Campaign.'

As can be seen from the above, Clarke served as Troop Sergeant Major of Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) Tomkinson's Troop during the Crimean war. Tomkinson would lead one of the two Squadrons during the charge and would have his horse shot from under him, command then devolving to Lieutenant Seager.

Following Balaklava, Clarke and the remaining members of the regiment were present at the Battle of Inkermann, although only in a minor role, and he thereafter took part in the actions at Kertch and Tchernaya and the Siege and Fall of Sebastopol.

CLARKE PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE CRIMEA BY FENTON

Troop Sergeant-Major Clarke was photographed by the famed photographer Roger Fenton three times during his time in the Crimea. Twice he appears in camp scenes with Officers and NCO's of the 8th Hussars and a third time in a superb shot of himself being poured a 'tot' by Sergeant O'Meara, who is also featured in all three photographs;

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/2/collection/2500385/two-sergeants-of-the-8th-hussars>

Clarke returned to England, via Turkey, in May 1856 and was then posted with his regiment to Ireland before embarking for India. Gazetted Cornet, without purchase, on 16 October 1857 and appointed Adjutant, without purchase, on 24 November 1858, Clarke served during the Mutiny in the Central Indian Campaign as a Staff Officer, Left Wing 8th Hussars from 15th April 1858 until 30 April 1859. He is recorded as being present at Kotah 30 March 1858, Pupulda 8 April 1858, Rajpootanah 15 December 1858 and the Pursuit of Rebels 15 December 1858 to 30 April 1859. Promoted Lieutenant (by purchase) on 11 May 1860, he remained with his regiment in India until 12 May 1862 after which he was stationed in the United Kingdom. A broken leg resulting from a kick by a Troop horse ended his cavalry career and he transferred as a Lieutenant to the 59th Foot on 15 March 1867. He saw two further periods on the Staff, firstly as Adjutant, District Recruiting Staff, at Liverpool from 22 April 1868 until 1 April 1870 (becoming Captain unattached on 1 April 1869) and then as Acting District Paymaster, Control Department, at Inverness from 1 April 1870 until 30 September 1873. He then received half-pay until 13 June 1874 when he was appointed Paymaster, 2nd Battalion, 18th Foot and then on 1 April 1878, Paymaster, Army Pay Department (attached 18th Foot). He died while still serving, in Dublin, on 27 December 1878 and is buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, County Dublin, Ireland, his headstone inscribed:

'To the memory of Captain M. Clarke, Paymaster 2nd Bn. 18th The Royal Irish Regiment. Late Adjutant 8th (Royal Irish) Hussars, died 7 Dec 1878, aged 61 years. He was one of the six hundred at Balaklava.'



TROOP SERGEANT MAJOR CLARKE AND SERGEANT O'MEARA BEFORE SEBASTOPOL

Clark's testimonial of service lists the following under 'BATTLES OR ACTIONS IN WHICH PRESENT':

Bulhanak – 19 September 1854
Alma – 20 September 1854
Mackenzie's Farm – 24 September 1854
Balaklava – 25 October 1854
Inkermann – 5 November 1854
Kertch – 22 May 1855
Tchernaya – 16 August 1855
Siege and Fall of Sebastopol – 9 September 1855
Kotah – 30 March 1858
Pupulda – 8 April 1858
Rajpootanah – 15 December 1858
Persuit of Rebels – From 15 December 1858 to 30 April 1859

Sold with the following original documents, including some rare pieces, all in superb condition:

1) Clarke's Statement of Services with hand written entries up to the time of his transfer to the 59th Foot in 1867

- 2) A most interesting booklet of testimonials printed circa 1872 containing references about Clarke submitted in 1867 from seven senior officers of the 8th Hussars and a record of service
 3) Eight original Commissions documenting his progression from Cornet of the 8th Regiment of Light Dragoons in 1857 through to Paymaster of the Army Pay Department in 1878. With two original O.H.M.S. sent envelopes
 4) A photographic image of the Clarke in uniform wearing his medals.



A LIGHT BRIGADE D.C.M. OR NOT

Clarke's original Statement of Services confirms that his Distinguished Conduct Medal was awarded '*distinguished conduct in the field at Balaklava*'. This latter entry is critical, for it confirms that his gallant deed/s were performed during the charge of the Light Brigade. Confirmation of why and when an award was made is a major issue with D.C.M.s to Light Brigade Regiments because each Regiment received eight such awards but not all were for Balaclava; some were for other battles, minor engagements or for general outstanding service. Of the forty D.C.M.'s issued to Light Brigade Regiments, just over two thirds were to confirmed chargers and each of these awards has the potential to have been awarded for the famed charge and most likely were. However, of these only eight (including Clarke's) are supported by some evidence that the award was indeed for the Balaclava. As such medals to these eight are more highly prized.



CAPTAIN CLARKE WEARING HIS MEDALS

THE MEDALS

As noted Clarke's Crimea Medal and D.C.M. are both official replacements named to him as a Lieutenant, his rank in 1861. Given the replacement date and that the Mutiny medal is the original issue, it is likely that the originals were lost during the Indian Mutiny. One beneficial consequence of this is that the Crimea medal is officially impressed, whereas its original would have been issued unnamed. It is interesting to note that the loss of medals during the Mutiny was a not uncommon issue, so much so that the government in India sanctioned the reissue of medals gratis, to Officers and men who had lost theirs. The Turkish Crimea medals did not start being issued until 1860, though there was a great shortfall in numbers and many were manufactured by British companies. As such, this is almost certainly Clarke's original piece.



Condition, generally VF with light contact marks from wear. All medals with top silver riband buckles. Sold with research. A quite outstanding and rare Light Brigade chargers group