

**THE FINE AND RARE NAPOLEONIC WAR CAMPAIGN PAIR AWARDED TO AN NCO, 40TH FOOT. A REMARKABLE AND LONG SERVING SOLDIER WHO WAS 4 TIMES WOUNDED; AT THE ASSAULT AND CAPTURE OF MONTE VIDEO IN 1807, AT THE BATTLE OF VIMIERA, THE STORMING OF BADAJOZ, AND AT THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO. JUST 25 EGYPT CLASPS ISSUED TO THE 40TH FOOT, OF WHICH ONLY 8 ADDITIONALLY RECEIVED PENINSULAR CLASPS**



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793-1814, 9 CLASPS, EGYPT, VIMIERA, TALAVERA, BUSACO, BADAJOZ, SALAMANCA, VITTORIA, PYRENEES, TOULOUSE 'ROBT. POCOCK, CORPL. 40TH FOOT', WATERLOO 1815 'ROBERT POCOCK, 1ST BATT. 40TH REG. FOOT'. Fitted with replacement silver clip and bar suspension, both medals fitted with ribbon buckles

Robert Pocock was born at Chutton, Taunton, Somerset, and enlisted into the 40th Regiment at Poole, Dorset, on 24 July 1799, aged twenty-one. Pocock served for a total of 19 years 180 days, plus an additional allowance of 2 years for Waterloo, and was discharged in the rank of Corporal at Glasgow on 19 January 1819, in consequence of a reduction in the establishment of the regiment. During his service, Pocock was promoted to Sergeant and reduced to Private a number of times. His discharge papers state that:

*'he served in Holland, South America, Peninsula, North America, and at Waterloo, and was wounded in the left shoulder at the assault and capture of Monte Video, in the right hand at Vimiera, in the right arm at Badajoz, and in the left arm at Waterloo.'*



## SERVICE IN DETAIL

Pocock served with Captain Dansen's and Dalrymple's Light Company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 40<sup>th</sup> Foot in Holland (Helder campaign of 1799) and the Egyptian campaign of 1801, before transferring to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in July 1802, again serving in Captain Dalrymple's company (he had also presumably transferred). Pocock remained in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion throughout the rest of his service, transferring to Captain Gillies Company in 1804 and being promoted Corporal in 1806. He took part in the disastrous South American campaign of 1806-7 and was wounded at the storming of Montevideo.

## ATTACK ON MONTEVIDEO

On 2nd February 1807 a practicable breach had been made on the walls of Montevideo and the Spanish Governor was called to surrender. His answer was defiance, as he had reports that relieving forces of 4,000 men were on their way to the town. Sir Samuel Auchmuty's force therefore decided on an attack at dawn.

The force consisted of a Forlorn Hope, mainly of men from the 54th Regiment under Lieutenant Everard of the Queen's. The storming party consisted of two companies of Rifles and the Flank Company of the 38th with the 40th in support. The remaining Rifle Company and the 87th would wait at the North Gate, which was to be opened by the storming party once they had gained access. The remainder of Auchmuty force would be held in reserve in the event of the Spanish relieving arriving.



At 3 o'clock on the 3rd February the attacking column moved towards the breach in total darkness, and was almost at the foot of the walls before they were discovered. The first guns fired from the defenders and struck only one man but the next swept away 25 of the 30 of the Forlorn Hope. Major Gardner and Captain Dickerson moved towards the walls with the covering and storming parties of Riflemen, but due to the Spanish placing hides into the breach giving the appearance of an unbroken wall they could not find the breach and spent fifteen minutes milling around under a terrific fire trying to locate it. It was Captain Renny of the 40th that located it with his Light Company, but as Renny climbed onto the breach he was shot dead and Lieutenant Smith was wounded. Once over the breach



the stormers had to drop 12 feet into town where others turned to their left and carried the various batteries along the wall. The rest of the 40th also had trouble finding the breach and had to endure heavy fire from the batteries from the walls until they also found it (led by Lt Harry Smith).

After a fierce fight the British cleared the town leaving only the Citadel still holding out but by eight thirty the garrison surrendered. The British loss in total was 6 Officers and 110 men killed, and 21 Officers and 258 men wounded. The Spanish losses were very heavy about 800 killed and 500 wounded with 2,000 taken prisoner. The rest of the garrison escaping in boats across the harbour.

## PENINSULAR WAR

Pocock served in Portugal from 1808 and was again wounded at the battle of Vimiera. Coming ashore with Wellesley on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1808, the 1/40th were brigaded with 1/36th and 1/71st under Major General Ronald Ferguson they are not heavily engaged at the battle of Rolica on the 17th August (Pocock not present) but are in line at the battle of Vimiero on 21<sup>st</sup> August. At this battle the 40th were involved late in the action performing that classic short range full volley fire and bayonet charge for which this army became famous, the enemy after a repeat reception of this tactic turned tail and ran leaving their part of the field free for an advance, not however before leaving on the ground some 46 killed and wounded of 1/40<sup>th</sup>. Remaining in the peninsula until April 1808, he was promoted Sergeant in 1809 and took part in the battles of Talavera, Busaco and Badajoz, where he was again wounded. Pocock's service papers note he was wounded at Badajoz, it is not clear if this was the first of second siege. However muster rolls show him in Regimental Hospital in June/July 1811, so clearly it was the first siege of Badajoz. Here the 40<sup>th</sup> were in position at the fort of St Christovel when the French attacked in force which resulted in the 40<sup>th</sup> sustaining very heavy casualties of 315 killed and wounded. Pocock would take part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> siege and capture of Badajoz in 1812 (clasp awarded for 2<sup>nd</sup> Badajoz).



The 40<sup>th</sup>, again suffered very heavy casualties at both Sieges and storming of Badajoz; 5 Officers and 85 men were killed, or died of wounds and 14 Officers and 200 men were wounded. Indeed, the 40<sup>th</sup>



had 'suffered so severely that on the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> two-thirds of its number were missing, being either killed or wounded'

Pocock further took part in the battles of Salamanca, Vittoria, Pyrenees and Toulouse. Details of 40<sup>th</sup> Service in the peninsular can be found here:

[https://www.napoleon-series.org/militaryinfo/organization/Britain/Infantry/WellingtonsRegiments/c\\_40thFoot.html](https://www.napoleon-series.org/militaryinfo/organization/Britain/Infantry/WellingtonsRegiments/c_40thFoot.html)

After a short period of home service, musters show him variously aboard ship between November 1814 and March 1815. During this time, the battalion left to America to take part in the expedition to New Orleans. They arrived just after the battle, were involved in some small actions and took part in the expedition to Fort Bowyer. Subsequent to this, they were shipped back to Europe to take part in the Waterloo campaign in Lambert's Division. At the battle of Waterloo, Pocock served in Captain Lowry's and was wounded for a 4<sup>th</sup> time at the battle. The 40<sup>th</sup> themselves suffering a 29% casualty rate.



### THE RARE EGYPT CLASP TO THE 40<sup>TH</sup> FOOT

Just 25 Egypt clasps issued to the 40<sup>th</sup> Foot, these being men of the Flank companies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion only. Medal roll notes Pocock in the Light Company and he is one of just 8 men of the 40<sup>th</sup>

Foot to have claimed the Egypt clasp along with any peninsular war clasps. This in addition to his superb service, making the MGS medal a regimentally rare piece.

The published medal roll incorrectly credits him with the Ciudad Rodrigo clasp, which is a transcript error as original rolls clearly show application for only the 8 peninsular clasps on his medal and the Egypt clasp separately (copies of original rolls with medal). Always known as a 9 clasp medal.



Condition edge bruising and contact wear, otherwise good fine and better. Sold with copy research including muster transcripts and copy discharge papers. Ex Fowler collection 1919, GLEN 1927 & 1952, DNW 2004