

AN EXCEPTIONAL AND RARE EGYPT 1882 D.C.M. GROUP AWARDED TO A YOUNG SERGEANT, CAMERON HIGHLANDERS, WHO WAS DANGEROUSLY WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF TEL-EL-KEBIR, RECEIVING 'A BULLET WOUND IN THE SIDE IN STORMING ONE OF THE STRONGEST POSITIONS OF THE ENEMY, BUT NOT WITHSTANDING THIS SEVERE WOUND, AND A BULLET IN HIS BODY, HE WENT ON FIGHTING AND FIRED SEVERAL ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION BESIDES BAYONETING MANY OF THE ENEMY' SUBSEQUENTLY VISITED IN NETLEY HOSPITAL BY QUEEN VICTORIA, HE WAS APPOINTED GATEKEEPER OF ST. ANNE'S GATE, WINDSOR PARK ON HER MAJESTY'S PERSONAL INSISTENCE.



DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL, V.R. '2125. SERGT. D. GUNN. 1/CAMN: HIGHRS. 13. SEPT. 82'; EGYPT AND SUDAN 1882-89, DATED REVERSE, 1 CLASP, TEL-EL-KEBIR '2125. SERGT. D. GUNN. 1/CAMN: HIGHRS'); KHEDIVE'S STAR 1882, UNNAMED AS ISSUED; JUBILEE 1897, BRONZE, UNNAMED AS ISSUED; CORONATION 1911, SILVER, UNNAMED AS ISSUED. SECOND: MOTOR CYCLIST D. GUNN, FRENCH RED CROSS, BRITISH WAR AND VICTORY MEDALS 'D. GUNN.'; JUBILEE 1935

D.C.M. Submitted to the Queen, 4 January 1883.

Sergeant Gunn *"received a bullet wound in the side in storming one of the strongest positions of the enemy, but not withstanding this severe wound, and a bullet in his body, he went on fighting and fired several rounds of ammunition besides bayoneting many of the enemy"*

Donald Gunn, aged 18, a jeweller from Greenside, Edinburgh, attested for the Cameron Highlanders on 13 June 1878. Born into a family with a fine record of service in the 79th Cameron Highlanders; his grandfather and grandmother having served in the during the Peninsula War, his uncle having served in the same Regiment during the Crimea War and his cousin, a Colour Sergeant, served with the regiment during the Egyptian campaign of 1882.

Appointed Lance Corporal on 18 June 1879, Corporal, 1 October 1879 and Lance Sergeant, 1 April 1881, he was advanced Sergeant on 20 January 1882, aged just 21 years. Donald served alongside his cousin, with the 1st Battalion, throughout the Egyptian Campaign of 1882 and was present at the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir, 13 September 1882. Both soldiers took part in the Highland Brigades famed charge of the Egyptian redoubts at Tel-El-Kebir,

Sergeant Donald Gunn, was dangerously wounded by a bullet to the chest as he entered the enemy redoubt but carried on fighting until he finally passed out. For his gallantry, he would be awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. His cousin, Colour Sergeant William Gunn, was also in the thick of the action, being mentioned in despatches for his gallantry. Donald is featured in an engraving entitled 'Some of the Worst Cases from Tel-El-Kebir' and William in several photographs of picked soldiers of the regiment who received their campaign medals at the hand of the Queen (The Royal Collection)

From Records of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders;

'The weird night march upon Tel-el-Kebir, long to be retained in the annals of the regiment and the country, can never be forgotten by those who took part in it: the monotonous tramp, the sombre lines, the dimly discerned sea of desert faintly lighted by the stars, were at once ghostly and impressive. The pace was necessarily slow; one halt was made and, shortly afterwards, the directing star having become concealed, another one was chosen, and the direction slightly change to the right. Just as dawn was breaking two shots were fired from the left front, and Private Pollock of the regiment fell dead. It was now evident that the regiment was close upon the enemy. Bayonets were at once fixed. In a few seconds these two shots were followed by others; the bugles of the Egyptian rang out, shells screamed above, and a line of fire poured from the enemy's trenches. The 79th moved steadily on in an unbroken line, not a shot was fired in reply; but on the "advance" from the brigade being sounded, Lieutenant-Colonel Leith galloped to the front, waving his sword and crying, "Come on, 79th!" Breaking into double time, to the shrill music of the pipes, and cheering as they ran, the regiment charged the enemy's lines. Flash after flash continued along the line until the bayonets of the 79th had done their work, and the inside of the trench was full of dead and dying. Daylight was breaking, and the regiment moving to the left cleared the trench, and drove back the enemy in confusion through a small camp in rear of it.'



In the storming of Tel-el-Kebir on 13 September 1882 the Cameron Highlanders 17 other ranks killed or mortally wounded, and 3 officers and 44 other ranks wounded. Eighteen Officers and men of the Regiment, including Gunn, were Mentioned in General Sir Garnet Wolseley's Despatch (London Gazette 2 November 1882), and for his gallant conduct he was additionally awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, one of only four D.C.M.s awarded to the Regiment for the entire Egypt and Sudan campaign 1882-89.

Sergeant Donald Gunn was invalided to England on 31 October 1882, Queen Victoria, when visiting the wounded at Netley Hospital, *'took special notice of Sergeant Gunn who still had a bullet lodged just above his heart.'* (79th News refers). He was discharged to pension on 8 May 1883, and in July 1886, on the personal insistence of Queen Victoria, was appointed Keeper of Queen Anne's Gate, Windsor Park, a position he held until his retirement in 1921. On the outbreak of the Great War he joined the National Reserve, and was employed for nine months guarding German Prisoners of War. He died on 9 September 1940, and was buried at Windsor on 13 September, on the 58th Anniversary of the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir. His youngest son, Norman Gunn, served with the Cameron Highlanders during the Great War, and was killed in action at the Battle of Loos on 28 September 1915.

Donald Gunn served as a Motor Cyclist during the Great War with the French Red Cross on the Western Front from November 1917.

Article in The Windsor and Eaton Express, July 24, 1886:

"Recognition Of Bravery BY The Queen, - The Queen has just appointed Sergeant Donald Gunn, late of the 79th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, to the vacancy caused by the resignation of Sergeant Mayland (late Scots Guards) of lodgekeeper at Queen Anne's Gate, Windsor Great Park. Sergeant Gunn comes of a Scotch family, who have been remarkable for their bravery in England's wars in the past: and is it in recognition of Sergeant Gunn's bravery at Tel-El-Kebir that the Queen has made this appointment. Sergeant Gunn was serving with his regiment, the 79th, at Tel-El-Kebir and received a bullet wound in the side in storming one of the strongest positions of the enemy, but not withstanding this severe wound, and a bullet in his body, he went on fighting and fired several rounds of ammunition besides bayoneting many of the enemy. At length becoming unconscious he was picked up and taken to hospital. He was mentioned in Lord Wolseley's despatches for his undaunted courage and determination and he received the medal for distinguished conduct on the field at the hands of the Queen at Osborne, on Wednesday 24th January 1883. It will be remembered that the Cameron's were one of the first regiments in the trenches at Tel-El-Kebir and a memorial has been raised to the memory of a man called Donald Cameron, of the 7th who was the first man in the trenches and was killed there. Fourteen of the regiment were killed and a large number received severe wounds. Gunn never for one moment thought he would survive the terrible wound he had received, which he says at the time the bullet entered his body was like a red-hot skewer being pushed into him; but strong constitution has however pulled him through and being in the prime of his life, he is now nearly as well as he ever was. The whole of the bullet was never extracted, and he still carries in his body, a portion of it. He was in hospital for four months in Woolwich.

Some account of Gunn's family will prove interesting as the facts show how distinguished the family has been. The most remarkable instance of bravery was perhaps shown by Sergeant Gunn's grandmother in the peninsular campaigns, when she accompanied her husband, Private Donald Gunn, who served with his regiment,

the 79th Highlanders in most of the peninsular campaigns. She was present with him at the siege of Badajoz and also at the battles of Fuentes d'Onor, Salamanca, Pyrenees, Nivelle, Nive and Toulouse. At the last-named engagement her husband was three times wounded, having rejoined his company after his wounds were dressed. On the third occasion, Mrs Gunn carried her husband off the field on her back. She also assisted in dressing other wounded soldiers and was taken notice of by the Duke of Wellington. Her husband was not afterwards fit for active service and retired from the army with a pension which he enjoyed for 50 years. Though Mrs Gunn's personal connection with the 79th ceased at the termination of the peninsular campaign, her son and two grandsons have since been connected. Her son, Sergeant William Gunn, served in the regiment with great credit during the Crimean War. Mrs Gunn's grandsons, Colour Sergeant William Gunn and Sergeant Donald Gunn (the new lodgekeeper) have served with the 79th Cameron Highlanders and the Colour Sergeant is still attached to the regiment. It may be mentioned in connection with the long-extended association of the Gunn's with the 79th, that the father of Mrs Gunn's husband, also named Donald Gunn, served in the regiment. Mrs Gunn died in June 1882 at the ripe age of 99 years. She enjoyed good health and was in possession of all her faculties till within a few weeks of her death. Sergeant Gunn made no application for the post and it is three years since the Queen decorated him with the distinguished conduct medal, but it shows how the Queen remembers the splendid services of her soldier heroes. He is now in the prime of life, being yet a young man and of very smart appearance."



The following is extracted from an article on 11 pages entitled 'A Battle Described From the Ranks' in *Nineteenth Century and After*, Volume 27 (copy with research), which describes how a fellow soldier found Sergeant Gunn wounded on the battlefield, where he apparently lay wounded on the battlefield for a day:

"Having attended to several of the wounded, I began to wander back in the direction of Tel-el-Kebir. Stray bullets, coming one knew not from where, were still flying about. I felt a sudden stinging in the right shoulder which caused me to drop my rifle, but I picked it up and went on although the pain of the shoulder was great. Presently I felt something trickling down

my arm, which to my amazement was blood. I then realised that I had sustained a bullet wound. There were surgeons close by, to whom I went and had a hasty dressing applied to the wound, which I was told was only a flesh injury, and would not give me much trouble. Feeling faint, however, I accepted the offer of a ride from a sailor who was mounted on a camel and offered to take me to my regiment. Camel-back I found rougher than aboard-ship in a high sea. Then Jack and the animal did not seem to understand each other, the camel resenting Jack's attempts to steer it by hitting it on the head with a stick, Jack denouncing the beast in nautical language, and informing me that 'the would not answer the helm.' Although in pain, I laughed so heartily that I fell off the camel, and for a time lay where I had fallen, all but insensible. Pulling myself together, I set out to walk and soon came across Sergeant Donald Gunn, of my regiment, lying dangerously wounded by a bullet in the lung. He could not walk and I could not carry him, but when I reached the regiment I reported his whereabouts as nearly as I could describe. He afterwards told me, however, that he lay all day and the following night before being carried off the field, and he told me also that as night closed in it was surprising what a number of apparently dead Egyptians rose all over the field, and ran away apparently quite undamaged. The recovery of Gunn, who after having been wounded fought on and did great execution before he fell from sheer loss of blood, was long extremely doubtful; but he is now alive with the Distinguished Conduct medal on his breast, and holding the honourable position of one of her Majesty's gate-keepers. Soon after leaving Gunn, I was lucky enough to find a horse tied to a stake.....

.....The total casualties of the British army engaged at Tel-el-Kebir amounted to 339, of which 243 occurred in the Highland Brigade, leaving 96 to represent the losses of the rest of the force. The 79th was the first regiment across the outer entrenchment, because it fixed bayonets on the march, whereas the other regiments of the brigade halted to do this; but the advantage in time was only that of a few seconds. The defenders of Tel-el-Kebir cannot be said to have been taken by surprise, although no doubt they had little idea we were so close as we were when our approach was detected. They slept in the fighting positions, and were alert on the first alarm. We were under their fire for 300 yards, and a very heavy fire it was; but that nine tenths of it was aimed too high-if indeed it was aimed at all—it must have wrought great havoc in our ranks.”



THE GUNN FAMILY AND THE 79TH HIGHLANDERS

The Gunn families service from 'Historical Records of the 79th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders':

"GUNN. Donald Gunn. Joined the 79th in 1808, and served with the regiment throughout the Peninsular war, being present at the battles of Fuentes d'Onor, Salamanca, Pyrenees, Nivelle, Nive and Toulouse, and at the siege of Burgos. At the battle of Toulouse he was three times wounded re-joining his company twice after his wounds had been dressed. On the third occasion he was carried off the field by his wife, Jean Gunn, whose courageous behaviour in dressing the wounds of other soldiers was especially taken notice of by the Duke of Wellington. Mrs. Gunn was with the regiment with her husband in almost every battle and engagement in which it took part. She lived to be upwards of ninety-eight years of age, and died in Edinburgh about a year ago.

GUNN. William Gunn (son of Private Donald Gunn). Became sergeant in May, 1843. Served with the regiment throughout the Eastern campaign of 1854-55, including the battles of Alma and Balaclava and the siege of Sebastopol. (Medal with three clasps, French war medal, and Turkish medal.) Was in possession of the silver medal for long service and good conduct. He was discharged in July, 1857, and died in July, 1883.

GUNN. William Gunn (son of Sergeant William Gunn). Became colour-sergeant on the 8th of July, 1879. Served with the regiment throughout the Egyptian campaign of 1882, and was present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. (Mentioned in despatches, medal with clasp, and Khedive's star.)

GUNN. Donald Gunn (grandson of Private Donald Gunn). Served as a sergeant in the Egyptian campaign of 1882, and was present at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir. (Dangerously wounded. Mentioned in despatches, silver medal for distinguished conduct in the field, medal with clasp, and Khedive's star.)"

From The Dundee Courier & Argus and Northern Warder, June 27 1882

"DEATH OF A PENINSULAR HEROINE – Jean Forbes, a notable woman in her way, and one deserving of a passing notice, died on Saturday morning at 60 Buccleuch Street, Edinburgh, in her 99th year. The deceased accompanied her husband, Private Donald Gunn, who served with his regiment, the 79th Highlanders, in most of the Peninsular campaign. She was present with him at the siege of Badajoz, and also at the battles of Fuentes d'Onor, Salamanca, Pyrenees, Nivelle, Nive, and Toulouse. At the last-named engagement her husband was three times wounded, having rejoined his company after his wounds had been twice dressed. On the third occasion Mrs Gunn carried her husband off the field on her back. She also assisted in dressing other wounded soldiers, and is said to have been taken notice of by the Duke of Wellington. Her husband was not afterwards able for active service, and retired with a well-earned pension, which he enjoyed for fifty years. Though Mrs Gunn's personal connection with the 79th ceased at the termination of the Peninsular campaign, her son and two grandsons have since been connected with that regiment. Her son, Sergeant William Gunn, served in the regiment, with many honours, during the Crimean war, and was afterwards well known in the Edinburgh recruiting staff. Mrs Gunn's grandsons, Colour-Sergeant William Gunn and Sergeant Donald Gunn, are at present serving with the regiment at Gibraltar. It may be mentioned, in connection with the long-extended association of the Gunns with the 79th, that the father of Mrs Gunn's husband, also named Donald Gunn, served in the regiment. Mrs Gunn enjoyed good health, and was in possession of all her faculties up till a few weeks ago; and was, during her later years, in receipt of a small pension from Her Majesty's Exchequer.

**Donald Gunn married Jane Forbes, 26 January 1810, Edinburgh. There appears to be a slight discrepancy over Jean (Jane's) age as her death certificate states she was 91 years of age at the time of her death. Jean (Jane) was the daughter of William Forbes, Farmer & Jane Forbes ms McKay. Her death was registered by Anne Gunn, Daughter."*



Condition GF, contact/star marks with naming weak around start and end of naming on DCM/Egypt, 2nd NEF. Both sets mounted as worn with original ribbons. Interestingly the DCM group mounted on the recipient's ribbon bar which presumably he wore whilst employed at Windsor. Sold with digital research including an OMRS article of DCM's for this campaign

A really exceptional Highland Brigade Tel-El-Kebir DCM group with just 17 such awards for the campaign, just 11 for Tel-El-Kebir, 5 of these to Highlanders