

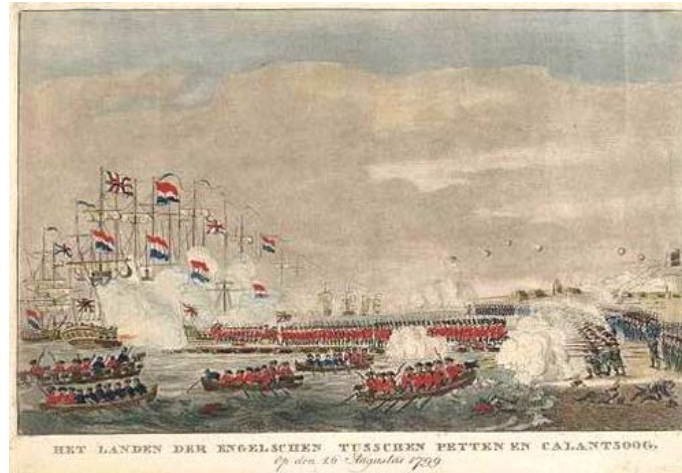
OUTSTANDING AND VERY RARE NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL, TO GENERAL HUGH ARBUTHNOTT KCB, WHO AS A MEMBER OF THE LIGHT COMPANY, 49TH REGT WAS CAPTURED DURING THE HEROIC RAID ON OSTEND 1798, SERVED HELDER 1799, THE BALTIC, PRESENT AT THE NAVAL BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN 1801. TRANSFERRING TO THE FAMED 52ND FOOT, OFFICER COMMANDING AT COPENHAGEN 1807, PENINSULAR WAR WITH CRAUFURD'S LIGHT DIVISION ; RETREAT AND BATTLES OF CORUNNA, COA, COMMANDING AGAIN AT THE BATTLES OF BUSACO AND FUENTES D'ONOR AMONG OTHER AFFAIRS. AWARDED THE ARMY GOLD MEDAL 1811



NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793, CLASP COPENHAGEN 1801 'H.ARBUTHNOTT, CAPT 49TH REGT'

General Hon. Hugh Arbuthnott (KCB) of Hatton, Kincardine joined the 49th Regiment as an Ensign in 1796. He was in the Light Company of the 49th at combined Naval and Army attack on Ostend in 1798. Here a daring raid of under 1300 picked men was made under the command of Captain Home Popham and Major General Eyre Coote, the objective to destroy the lock gates at the Bruges-Ostend-Canal. The assault was successful, making canal navigation between Holland, Flanders, and France impossible. This meant that any movement of barges had to be by sea, leaving them vulnerable to attack by the Royal Navy. However the small force was hemmed in by vastly superior French forces and after desperate resistance, in which 115 Officers and men were lost, they were forced to surrender.

Arbuthnott also took part in the Anglo-Russian expedition to the Helder in 1799, including the attack on the lines on 10th September and battles of Bergen on 19th September and Alkmaar 2nd October. This campaign that was very hard fought and resulted in many casualties is often overlooked.



Arbuthnott then served in the expedition to the Baltic and at the battle of Copenhagen in 1801 (NGS medal) when the 49th, 760 strong, under Lt Col Brock (of 1812 War fame) were embarked on board Nelson's fleet acting as marines. During the battle the plan was for the 49th with a Naval Brigade to have been landed to storm the main battery's once the guns had been silenced. However the protracted and heroic defence of the Danes rendered the attempt impracticable and the battle was finally decided through the actions of the fleet alone. Colonel Brock along with Captain Arbuthnott and his Light Company were aboard HMS Ganges. See *'The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Issac Brook KB'* (included on research CD) for more detailed accounts of the expedition to Helder, Copenhagen and actions the 49th were involved in during Arbuthnott's service.



Promoted Major and then joining the 52nd Foot in 1805, in July 1807 Arbuthnott took command of the 2/52nd Foot for the first time and embarked with the expedition to Zealand, taking part in the siege and capture of Copenhagen and action of Kieoge.

Transferring to the 1/52nd Foot, he accompanied the expedition to Sweden, and afterwards to Portugal and Spain under Sir John Moore, where he was present in the rear guard under Sir Edward Paget during the retreat and battle of Corunna, where the 52nd were heavily engaged and played an important part in the victory. Served also in the Peninsula under the Duke of Wellington in Robert Craufurd's Light Division. Present at the battles of Coa and various affairs in the lines of Torres Vedras.

Battles in the Peninsular

In March, 1810, the Light Division was pushed forward towards the Agueda as a corps of observation, being thus employed, under conditions requiring the greatest alertness and

activity, on duties essentially those of light troops. In the absence of definite orders to withdraw behind the Coa, and in order to impede as much as possible the French force besieging Almeida, General Craufurd maintained his forward position until, on July 24th, he was attacked by about six times his own number and forced across the river. In a battle reflecting the greatest credit on all ranks, the division extricated itself from a most dangerous situation in a way troops less highly trained and disciplined could not possibly have done, at a cost of some 300 casualties, the French losing more than double that number.

Major Arbuthnott took command of the 1/52nd Foot in August 1810 (until November 1810) after Colonel Barclay was appointed to command the Brigade and at the Battle of Busaco, on September 27th following, in a perfectly-timed surprise counter-attack from a concealed position, the 43rd and 52nd completely routed a French column, two private soldiers taking prisoner a French general. In giving the order to charge, General Craufurd called to the 52nd to 'revenge the death of Sir John Moore' and according to Napier;

'seeing that the French were still in column and in great confusion from the unexpected suddenness of the charge and the shout which accompanied it, had wheeled up their companies by the left, and thus flanked the French column and poured a well-directed fire right into them. Major Arbuthnott, who was on my left, did the same with the remaining companies of the 52nd, so that the enemy was beset on both flanks of his column, and, as you may suppose, the slaughter was great. We kept firing and bayoneting till we reached the bottom, and the enemy passed the brook and fell back upon their main body, which moved down to support them and cover their retreat. All this was done in a very short time that is, it was not above twenty minutes from the charge till the French were driven from the top to the bottom of the mountain like a parcel of sheep. I really did not think it was possible for such a column to be so completely destroyed in a few minutes as that was.'



The winter was spent on outpost duty in front of the lines of Torres Vedras and Major Arbuthnott left for Britain towards the end of the year, only to return to the Peninsula in March 1811, now Brevet Lt Colonel in Command of the 2/52nd. On May 5th was fought the Battle of Fuentes D'Onor, where the regiments of the Light Division, in squares, proved themselves as good as at their own open order work. Arbuthnott was promoted Lt Colonel on 9th May and despite having been promised the vacant Colonelcy of 52nd by none less than Wellington himself, superior patronage at Horse Guards gave the Command to Lieutenant Colonel John Colborne in July 1811. After being passed over he returned to the UK and took no further part in the Peninsular War.

Post War he became Conservative member of Parliament for Kincardineshire and Deputy-Lieutenant, a post he served in from 1826 until 1865 when he retired. He was unmarried and died on July 11th 1868 aged 88.



Arbuthnott entered the army (ensign) May 1796; Lieut. 49 Ft. Sept. 1796, Capt. 1799; Maj 1804; Maj. 52 Ft. 1805, Lt.-Col. 1811; half-pay 1815 and Made CB; Col. 1821; Maj.-Gen. 1830; Lt.-Gen. 1841; Col. 38 Ft. 1843; Gen. 1854; Col. 79 Ft. 1862 and made KCB. Died 1868.



General Arbuthnott received the Army Gold Medal for Commanding the 52nd at Busaco but oddly does not seem to have received a clasp for Fuentes D'Onor (no Officer of the 52nd does). He was also made CB in 1815 and received Military General Service Medal with two Clasps for Corunna and Fuentes D'Onor in 1849. According to his Army list entry, during his service he was present at the capture or destruction of upwards of seventy vessels of War!

The last two Army Officers NGS for Copenhagen were sold by DNW in 2001 (approx £11,000) and 2004 (approx £14,000). A very rare medal to an Officer with a fantastic service-one of just 44 Army NGS medals (any rank) for the Napoleonic Wars! Ex Glendining's May 1932