

**THE OUTSTANDING 6 CLASP MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793 TO BARON DE LORENTZ A GERMAN WHO IN 1807, AGED JUST 13, JOINED THE 60TH RIFLES AS AN ENSIGN. TRANSFERRING TO THE 7TH FUSILIERS IN 1809, HE WAS WOUNDED AT THE FEARFUL BATTLE OF ALBUHERA, WHERE HIS BATTALION LOST 80% OF ITS MEN. FURTHER TAKING PART IN THE BATTLES OF VITTORIA, PYRENEES, NIVELLE, NIVE, HE WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AT ORTHEZ. SERVING IN THE AMERICAN WAR 1814-15, HE WAS AGAIN WOUNDED AND HAD HIS WHITE SHOULDER BELT CUT IN TWO BY A MUSKET BALL AT THE LIGHT COMPANY'S ASSAULT ON THE CRESCENT BATTERY DURING THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS, HERE THE ATTACKERS LOST TWO THIRDS OF THEIR NUMBER. IN 1826, HE BECAME THE FIRST SUPERINTENDENT OF THE CAPE POLICE, SERVING AS SUCH UNTIL 1860**



**MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793, 6 CLASPS, ALBUHERA, VITTORIA, PYRENEES, NIVELLE, NIVE, ORTHES 'W. C. LORENTZ. LIEUT 7TH FOOT'**

Baron Wilhelm Charles de Lorentz was born in 1794 and came to UK from Hesse Cassel when the Kingdom of Westphalia was created. His service in the British Army was as follows:

Commissioned Ensign, 60th Foot, without Purchase on 1 October 1807, aged just 13. He was promoted Lieutenant, again without Purchase on 8 October 1809 (very young to be Commissioned Lieutenant). Transferred to 7th Foot, 2 August 1810 and serving with this regiment as a Light company Officer. Serving in the Peninular from April 1811, he was wounded at bloodbath that was Albuhera, 16 May 1811. At this battle both battalions of the 7th Fusiliers were present and covered themselves in glory but at a terrible cost. Lorentz was

with the 2nd Battalion, who mustered just 80 men after the battle, this of a total of 435 that took part in the battle. The 1st Battalion fared not much better and for a time after the battle both the 1st and 2nd were formed into a single battalion. Lorentz left the Peninsular in June 1811, no doubt to recover from his wounds. In 1812, he transferred to the 1st Battalion and back to the Peninsular in October that year. In 1813, he took part in the great battles of Vittoria and the series of fierce battles known as the Pyrenees. At Sorauren in particular, the 7th suffered very heavy casualties. Further present at the crossing of the Bidassoa and entering France with the Army, he took part in the battles of Nivelle, Nive and was severely wounded at the battle of Orthes, 27 Feb. 1814. Having no doubt taken part in numerous smaller actions not mentioned.

Later in 1814, Lorentz embarked for America and with his battalion landed in Louisiana just in time to take part in the battle of New Orleans. During the battle itself, the Fusiliers, along with 43rd, another veteran regiment from the Peninsular, were to form the reserve as it was felt that if New Orleans was taken, the army would need these experienced regiments to keep order. However the light companies of both regiments, along with that of the 93rd Highlanders, were tasked with assaulting the Crescent battery, an important position on the extreme left of the American position. After a fearful struggle, during which sword and bayonet were order of the day, the Light troops fought their way into the American batteries. This would be the only success of the battle on the right side of river, however as the attack was unsupported, the Americans forced the British out of the battery. During this action, the light troops of the 93rd, 43rd and 7th, lost two thirds of the 240 men who took part in the assault. Lorentz himself was wounded and had back of his white shoulder belt cut in two by a musket ball. He was however, one of the few Officers to survive the assault. Still only 20 years old, this was the last battle Lorentz took part in

He next appears on Half Pay of the Grenadier Guard, 21 Dec 1820 and on 1 Dec 1825 in Marylebone, London, he married Edith Mills, daughter of James Mills Esq of Jamaica. Apparently, the ceremony had been previously performed in Scotland. A year later, Baron de Lorentz was appointed the first Superintendent of the Cape Police, serving as such from 1826 to 1860. From 1834, he also presided over the police court, his title being changed to 'Judge and Superintendent of Police'

On retirement, he moved back to Britain, his wife dying in 1865, the Baron himself died in Surrey in 1873, aged 79, his obituary stated;

*"Baron De Lorentz, whose death occurred on Thursday last week at his residence, Moira House, Addiscombe, was one of the few remaining Officers who served in the Peninsular War. By birth a German and descended from a family settled at Hesse Cassel, the late Baron quitted his native country with his father on the creation of the Kingdom of Westphalia and at a very early age entered the English service in the 7th Royal Fusiliers. He was present at the battle of Albuera where the Regiment suffered very severely, and where he was wounded, and in all the subsequent actions of the War. For these services he received the peninsular medal with seven clasps. He afterwards accompanies the 7th Fusiliers on the expedition to New Orleans, whence it was recalled on the return of Napoleon I. from Elba. After the close of the war Baron de Lorentz left the army and accepted an important magistrate at Cape Town. He retired from this office in 1862, after having held it for thirty-six years."*

THE BATTLES DURING WHICH BARON DE LORENTZ WAS WOUNDED:

#### **7TH FUSILIERS AT ALBUERA**

*The charge of the Fusiliers at Albuera, perhaps the most magnificent effort ever accomplished even by British soldiery, has been described by Napier in one of the finest*



passages that has appeared in the page of military history, and to it as worthy of the effort we turn.

" The 4th Division had only two brigades in the field, the one Portuguese under General Hervey, the other commanded by Sir William Myers, and composed of the 7th and 23rd British Regiments, was called the Fusilier Brigade. General Cole directed the Portuguese to move between Lumley's Dragoons and the hill, where they were immediately charged by some French Horsemen, but beat them off with great loss ; meanwhile he led the Fusiliers in person up the height.



THE 7TH FUSILIERS AT ALBUHERA

At this time six guns were in the enemy's possession, the whole of Werle's reserves were coming forward to reinforce the front column of the French, and the remnant of Houghton's Brigade could no longer maintain its ground ; the field was heaped with carcasses, the Lancers were riding furiously about the captured artillery on the upper part of the hill, and on the lower slopes a Spanish and an English Regiment, in mutual error, were exchanging volleys ; behind all, General Hamilton's Portuguese, in withdrawing from the heights above the bridge, appeared to be in retreat. The conduct of a few brave men soon changed this state of affairs. Colonel Robert Arbuthnot, pushing between the double fire of the mistaken troops, arrested that mischief, while Cole, with the Fusiliers flanked by a battalion of the Lusitanian Legion under Colonel Hawkshaw, mounted the hill, dispersed the Lancers, recovered the captured guns, and appeared on the right of Houghton's Brigade exactly as Abercrombie passed it on the left. Such a gallant line, issuing from the midst of the smoke, and rapidly separating itself from the confused and broken multitude, startled the enemy's heavy masses, which were increasing and pressing onwards as to an assured victory; they wavered, hesitated, and then vomiting forth a storm of fire, hastily endeavoured to enlarge their front, while a fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks. Myers was killed; Cole and the three Colonels, Ellis, Blakeney, and Hawkshaw, fell wounded; and the Fusilier Battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships. Suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed on their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult, by voice and gesture, animate his Frenchmen ; in vain did the hardiest veterans, extricating themselves from the crowded columns, sacrifice their lives for the mass to open out on such a fair field ; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately upon friends and foes, while the Horsemen, hovering upon the flank, threatened to charge the

advancing line. Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front ; their measured tread shook the ground ; their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation ; their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd, as, foot by foot, and with a horrid carnage, it was driven by the incessant vigour of the attack to the farthest edge of the hill. In vain did the French reserves, joining with the struggling multitude, endeavour to sustain the fight ; their efforts only increased the irremediable confusion, and the mighty mass, giving way like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the ascent. The rain flowed after in streams discoloured with blood, and fifteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill!"

The losses of the Fusiliers were of course tremendous, but their glory was more than commensurate with their sufferings. Their colour staves were shattered to pieces and their colours rent to rags ; their Battalions were broken up into fragments, some of their Companies were represented by units, but they had brought back the lost colour of the " Buffs," they had secured the victory, and the army admitted that "the Fusiliers exceeded everything that the usual word gallantry can convey." In the exhibition of "an example of steadiness and heroic gallantry which history cannot surpass," they found a soldier's consolation for the loss of the comrades who had fallen to win them their fame. Sir William Myers was borne off the field in a dying state to Valverde, where, in the 27th year of his age, he expired next day. His last great fight was fought— his work of glory done ! His corpse was borne to the grave, under an olive tree, in a grove in the neighbourhood of Valverde, by six of his own Fusiliers. Beside him and the undermentioned officers the 1st Battalion had 2 sergeants, 63 men killed ; 14 sergeants and 263 men wounded; the 2nd Battalion had 1 sergeant, 46 men killed; 16 sergeants, 1 drummer, and 269 men wounded. When the 2nd Battalion mustered after the battle it numbered about 80 men ; it went into action 435 strong. The 1st Battalion was some hundreds stronger.



At the 1st battle of Sauron, during the battle for the Pyrenees, the 7th suffered 213 casualties

#### **7TH FUSILIERS AT ORTHEZ**

"Cole's men, and in particular Ross's Brigade were put in early, their job to attack along a long ridge well to the left by the little string of cottages and the church of St Boes, this they did having no great difficulty until, having secured the church and the cottages about it they came to the real fighting ground. The pathway from here led down an easy open space, the enemy lying well positioned at a T-junction uphill above as the ground rose again before them with artillery full ahead and other guns to each flank in enfilade. All the various sheltered spots filled with well-settled infantry. It seems that after the first rush to test the effect of this the Brigade came to a halt and took whatever cover it could find, not before however, Ross himself had been brought down wounded.

This part of the battle having come to naught the Brigade carried on an intermittent fire-fight using the small number of buildings along the road for cover, some wine was found and it is



recorded that there evolved a series of firing and drinking sessions whilst the enemy artillery slowly set about destroying such of these buildings as it was able. This went on for several hours until the CIC anxious to make headway rearranged his reserves so that Ross's men were relieved whilst 7th Division came through them to take the enemy at the rush, being a part of a general counter-attack which eventually won the day.

1/7th were left to pick up their casualties, on the day only 6 men killed but 60 wounded, of which *Lieutenants Burke, Cameron & Lorentz*, two men being taken prisoner”

#### **LIGHT COMPANY OF THE 7TH FUSILIERS AT NEW ORLEANS**

The American position was defended by a line of entrenchments extending from the river to an impenetrable wood. It was skilfully chosen and well manned, but as a fortification it deserves little notice. In this line the principal work was a battery near the river, called the "Crescent" battery. Opposite it the British had thrown up a redoubt whence the attack of the Crescent battery was to be made. The attack was ordered for the 8th. The light companies of the Royal Fusiliers and 93rd Regiment and a Company of the 43rd were to storm the battery, the battalion companies of the Fusiliers and the remainder of the 43rd forming the reserve. The signal for commencing the attack was a rocket, but no sooner was the signal given than the assault may be said to have failed, for instead of the attack being made with order consistent with pre-arrangement, the most lamentable confusion everywhere prevailed, and a series of feeble and disjointed but bloody onsets measured the strength of the British. In the first place the ladders were not properly placed; in the next government and direction, responsibility and capacity, seemed to have deserted the assailants. In one word, it looked, as an eye-witness has stated, "as if folly stalked abroad in the English camp." Officers were running about to seek orders, some of the troops were fighting their way across the lines, certain of destruction for they were without support, and lost to view in the dense mist which surrounded everything; others were standing for orders to push on, but these orders never came.



THE LIGHT COMPANIES ATTACK ON THE CRECENT BATTERY AT THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

With a gallant rush the light companies assailed the Crescent battery, but without the means of passing the ditch and scaling the parapet, their attack was greatly weakened. Yet they pressed on, and at last entered the place through an embrasure the moment after the gun had been fired. Such progress, additionally impeded by the deadly rifles of scores of Kentucky riflemen, was costly and precious. Yet the assailants carried the battery, but they could not hold it, for they, too, were without support, and out of the three companies of 240 men nearly 180 were down, killed, or wounded. The only three officers who escaped from this assault not seriously wounded were Lieut. Hutchison of the Royal Fusiliers, who had three bullets through his cap; **Lieut. Lorentz of the same regiment, who was slightly wounded and had the back of his white shoulder belt cut in two by a musket ball**; and Lieut. Steele of the 43rd, who was the only one who escaped without a scar or mark of any kind. These were unfortunately not the only casualties in this dreadful affair, at the other points of attack things were worse in every respect. "I hastened to the redoubt," says an artillery-officer, "which had been appointed as a place of rendezvous and 'point d'appui', during the action, and communicated to Col. Dickson the confirmation of our complete repulse on the right. Scarcely had this painful truth been told when an officer and some men of the 7th Fusiliers entered the redoubt bearing in their arms Major King, whom they fondly believed might still live. No sooner had they placed their burden on the earth than it was apparent that all hope had fled; poor King was dead, and his sorrowing friends gave me the painful intelligence that the gallant Pakenham was also numbered with the slain."



LORENTZ WHILST SERVING WITH THE CAPE POLICE

Condition, GVF, minor contact or better, sold with Research. A quite outstanding medal to a Fusilier Officers, three times wounded, including at two of the bloodiest battles on the Peninsular and 1812 Wars