

THE OUTSTANDING HANOVERIAN WATERLOO MEDAL AWARDED TO THE CAPTAIN COMMANDING THE FELDJÄGERKORPS AT THE DEFENCE OF HOUGOUMONT DURING WHICH HE WAS WOUNDED. AT ONE POINT HE WAS CAPTURED, ESCAPING ONLY WHEN ONE OF HIS SHARPSHOOTERS 'AT GREAT DISTANCE' PUT A BULLET THROUGH ONE OF HIS CAPTURERS HEAD AND AT ANOTHER TIME WHEN SURROUNDED BY THE ENEMY WAS SAVED FROM DEATH OR CAPTURE BY A NUMBER BRITISH GUARDSMEN. POST WAR HE WOULD BECOME A KNIGHT OF THE GUELPHIC ORDER



GERMANY, HANNOVER, HANOVERIAN WATERLOO 1815 'CAPITAIN AUGUST VON REDEN, FELDJÄGERKORPS 1. COMPAGNIE'

August Von Reden, was from Franzburg, part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in North East Germany. A Forester by trade, he served with the Hanoverian Army from 1813 and although his exact unit is unconfirmed, given his civilian position and subsequent appointment, he almost certainly served as one of the Officers in the Kielmannseggesches Feldjägerkorps. Taking part in the campaigns in Europe during 1813, with the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, Kielmannsegge's unit was disbanded. However at the Duke of Cambridge's request, a new Feldjägerkorps was formed in 1815 and was to be considered to be the elite unit in the Hanover Army. This small unit was manned exclusively by hunters, gamekeeper, forest personnel etc, who were professionally familiar with the use of firearms and movement in terrain, many of whom had previously fought in Kielmannsegge's old unit. Captain Von Reden, was given command of no 1 Company and lead his company throughout the Waterloo campaign, including the battles of Quatre Bra and Waterloo. At the latter, his company took part in the epic defence of Hougoumont. Initially, being used to great effect as sharpshooters defending the woods in front of Hougoumont, the Feldjäger, along with two other Hanoverian and one Nassauer rifle company, held back the initial attacks of the French, who had to march through the Wood to get to Hougoumont. After pushing back the French 3 times, the Feldjäger were forced to retreat on the farm itself. Reforming in the sunken road, Von Reden and his men would remain at Hougoumont for the rest of the day, fighting side by side with British Guardsmen and Nassaers, defending the grounds of the farm. Casualty returns show Von Reden to have been one of the wounded, a large number of his men becoming casualties too.

After the defeat of Napoleon and subsequent occupation of Paris, Von Reden returned to his position as Forester. Army lists note him as Oberforstmeister and Landrath at Calenberg in Central Germany. These positions, which roughly translate as Chief Forester and district administrator, were highly important roles and von Reden would still have been liable to be called up for military service at any point. According to Army lists, he was recipient of the Knight Guelphic Order, 4th Class Guelphic Order, Waterloo medal and Hanover 1813 War medal. He died in Franzburg in 1874.

CAPTAIN VON REDEN AT HOUGOUMONT FROM CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS

The following, translated from German, details the citation for the citation of the awards of the Guelphic medals to Feldjäger's Julius and Wilhelm Brindmann, who fought under Captain Von Reden at Hougomont. Not only does it name Von Reden in the citation, giving details of the desperate fighting the Feldjäger were involved in but it goes on to add a little more information which was not part of the joint citation. This gives details of another incident that Von Reden was involved in, as reported by himself. In the latter, Von Reden tells how during a pause in the skirmishing and presumably before the major French attacks, he went out alone on a reconnaissance to the front of the wood but was jumped by a French Officer and four men, who were it would seem, on a similar reconnaissance. Whilst disarming him, the French Officer punched Von Reden in the face and they were presumably going to take him back to the French lines. However one of the Feldjäger had spotted what was going on and what Von Reden describes as 'at great distance', this marksman shot the French Officer through the forehead and in the confusion that ensued, Von Reden picked up sabre and ran it through one of the French soldiers, perusing one of the other Frenchmen, whilst the other two ran away. Von Reden tells how he then returned to the wood and his men:

"Feldjäger Julius Brindmann and Wilhelm Brindmann.

*Both had to defend a small wood with part of the Feldjäger-Corps and with Nassauer in the battle of Waterloo at Hougemont; The enemy attacked this with superior strength, displaced the defenders, and surrounded captain von Reden (Franzburg *) with several Feldjäger, among whom were those two. Wilhelm escaped, however and although pursued and wounded by gunfire, he summoned another part of his company, through which, in association with some English Guardsmen, the French were thrown back and those who were trapped were freed.*

Julius who was with Captain v. Reden, as soon as he was free again, immediately reached for his rifle and pursued the enemy. When his rifle was smashed to pieces, he rushed into one of the building, fetches another one from a wounded man and remained in action. In the evening, however, he had to go to the hospital, from where he returned to the company on the 29th, having learned that things were going on. The condition of his wound made it necessary that he should be granted official facilities during the march to Paris.

Wilhelm Brinckmann, who at the age of sixteen had already shown himself as a man before Hamburg, was ordered to carry the baggage on June 16 and when he arrived at Nivelles on the march to Quatrebras and heard the thunder of cannons, he wanted to be sent back. With this command being very unpleasant to his soldierly zeal, he constantly begged his captain for permission to go into battle, and was very happy when he received it."

Von Reden's incident with the French:

*"*Captain, later Chief Forester and District Administrator V. Reden died in Franzburg in 1874. - Before the event reported here occurred, v Reden talks of the following incident: After*

a pause in Tirailliren, v Reden was alone on a small hill in front of the position to orientate himself. A small hedge came up against this hill and a French patrol of 1 officer and 4 men had hidden behind it. As he came to this, the patrol immediately pounced on him, tore his saber away, treated him indignantly, and the officer even hit him in the face with a clenched fist. At the same moment, however, a shot rang out, the officer, after hitting his forehead with the words "Jesus!", Collapsed with a shattered skull. Feldjager Apel had seen the danger of his captain and brought his safe shot at one Incredibly distant distance to Capitain von Reden. In the first confusion on all sides, von Reden grabed his sabre again and stabs a Frenchman, pursuing a second while the other two ran away. He then happily arrived back with his company in the little wood."

The above was extracted from "Aus Hannovers militärischer Vergangenheit, by By B. von Linsingen-Gersdorff 1880, pg 531 (Copy included on CD).

HANNOVERSCHE FELDJAGERCORPS

"In German language the word *Jager* means "hunter". In its original sense this is usually translated into English as "rifleman" Jägers of the Napoleonic Wars were armed with rifles, regular or as gifts from huntsmen and foresters, and "were always considered a crack formation." Some actually were huntsmen and foresters and experienced marksmen and experts at concealment in wooded area. The Jagers were to the Germans, what the 95th Rifles were to the British. "



Scharfschütz

Jäger.

Jäger.

Feldjägerkorps von Kielmannsegge.

In the case of the Hannover Feldjager, they had originally been formed under Colonel Graf Kielmansegge in 1813 and fought with the Northern Army around Hamburg 1813-14, before being disbanded at the end of hostilities. Reformed in early 1815, the Duke of Cambridge, had much to do with the forming of this specialist unit of marksmen. Sub Forestry departments were required to send workers from their districts, the Duke personally decreeing that only "trained hunters" could be admitted to the Corp. As such the men sent were hunters, game warden, gamekeeper, forest personnel who were professionally familiar with the use of firearms and movement in terrain. These men would go back to their civilian roles with the Forestry when not required. Two companies were formed, the 1st under Captain Von Reden, the 2nd under Captain Von Doring, the whole under the Command of Major Von Sporken. In June 1815 Feldjager had an effective strength of 321 Officers and Men, though it must be remembered that this was the overall strength and included non combatants. Going into battle, as with any unit, the fighting strength would be much lower as men would be on other duties, sick etc. For example, at Hougoumont, Von Reden's 1st company is generally noted as having a strength of 100-120 Officers and men, Von Doring's would have been similar.

At the battles of Quatrebras and Waterloo, the Feldjager companies formed part of Major General Graf von Kielmannsegge's 1st Hanoverian Brigade. Arriving at the former at 5pm on the 16 June, the Feldjager were immediately in action skirmishing with the French, the Brigade as a whole playing an important role in the final hours of the fighting that day.

Two days later, at Waterloo, the 1st Hanoverian Brigade was posted near the centre of the Allied line. The 1st Company of the Feldjager, consisting of approximately 120 Officers and men under Captain Von Reden, along with the rifle Companies of the Luneburg and Grubenhagen battalions (100 men each), were sent to the Hougoumont farm. On arrival, the three Hanoverian companies, along with a company of Nassau riflemen, were posted in the wood in front of the farm, here to act as snipers. The wood itself was approximately 300 metres long and 250 metres wide and screened Hougoumont's buildings from Artillery fire from the south. Being the most advanced position in front of the right wing of the Allied line, this was expected to come under direct attack from French infantry. When the attack did come, to get to Hougoumont the French had to advance through the woods and through the Hanoverian troops stationed there. This they did, the riflemen inflicting heavy losses on the French, who were driven back three times before riflemen finally driven from the woods at about 11.30am. The Feldjager and the two rifle companies continued to fight in the defence of Hougoumont for the rest of the day, suffering heavy casualties, including Captain Von Reden, who was wounded at some point during the battle. The report of casualties suffered by Kielmansegge Brigade at Waterloo, lists the Feldjager as suffering 15 men killed, 38 wounded, including 3 Officers. 19 men were also noted as missing in action between 16th and 18th June. The vast majority of these casualties were in Von Reden's company.

The key role of the Nassauers and Hanoverian troops at Hougoumont, who along with the Guards Light companies, were the original defenders of the farm is often played down or somewhat belittled in British accounts. There are many reasons for this but the main reasons are that bar the likes of Siborne, many early historians stuck to the narrative that it was the British Guards alone (or as good as) who defended the farm and this myth has stuck. The other is that their aren't that many German narratives of their participation, or at least not in English. 'The Nassauers at Hougoumont', published in the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, 2003 (copy included with research), attempts to put the record straight as far as the 1st Battalion, 2nd Light Regiments key roll in the defence of Hougoumont. This article also makes it clear that if the Nassauers part has been misrepresented then there it's just as likely the part played by just 200 Hanoverian troops, has been too and that a truly accurate account of the defence of Hougoumont is yet to be published.

Interestingly it's not just British accounts, articles and publications that are at fault.

Accounts of the defence by the battalion commander of the 2nd Nassau, talks of the Brunswick Jagers during the battle, when of course it was the Hanover Feldjager. This has lead to many subsequent narratives also mixing up the two units, which is understandable; after all, if a German commander of one unit gets the details of another German unit he is fighting with wrong, its hardly surprising if this hasn't been corrected by later historians. One reason for this was;

"It was not uncommon at the time that the Hanoverians were still called Brunswickers, even though their Electorate, later a British affiliated Kingdom, had split off from Brunswick some 100 years earlier."



Report by the 1st Hanoverian Brigade of Major General Kielmansegge at Waterloo

*".....In front of the English Guards Division, which was at the right of the 3rd Division, was the Hougoumont country house. Keeping it in our hands was important for holding our position. To make up for the Guards Division's lack of light infantry, the **1st Feldjäger Company** as well as 100 men, each, from the Luneburg and Grubenhagen Battalions were detached at that location. The enemy directed his first attack against this post, with many more to follow. It was taken three times by the enemy, but each time our men drove him out again. Our Jägers and riflemen killed a good many of his men since these attacks were always launched in close columns."*

Many books incorrectly state that after retreating from the wood, the Feldjager were ordered back to their own lines. The citations for Binkmann brothers suggests otherwise, as do accounts of von Kielmansegge's Brigade and at least one Guards Officer. Quite apart from anything else, what remained of the companies of the Feldjager and two Hanoverian rifle armed companies, would surely have been of great use over the next few hours and it seems for a time at least, they fell back to the sunken road just behind Hougoumont and fought on from there.

"16 March [1843] Ensign Henry Montagu, later Colonel-in-Chief of the Scots Guards.

Sir

The information I can give you regarding the battle of Waterloo, I fear will be of little service to you. I was attached to the 8th Company of the battalion and remained on the position above Hougomont till about 2 o'clock, when the 6th, 7th and 8th companies marched down together, to the orchard on our left of the garden. On reaching the left corner of the lower fence, the 6th and 7th companies filed inside the hedge, while the 8th marched in file, up to the gate leading into the grass field beyond the orchard, where there was a road which led through the field, and along the outside of the wall. There we began to form companies, when the French troops, standing in line in a rye field, immediately in our front, commenced firing by sections on us. As we got the company in line, we replied as well as we could by file firing, but being much [outnumbered?] lost many men, and were obliged to retire slowly, firing, to the lower corner, when there was a deep lane. Here we remained, being shortly afterwards [reinforced] by 2 companies of a Hanoverian regiment. I remained here a considerable time with Colonel Mercer, who was occupied, reforming stragglers and men who returned from carrying wounded officers to the rear. The bodies of French cavalry passed over the hill in rear of us and were supported by a brigade or division of infantry which halted within short musket range but did not fire on us. After a considerable interval the French cavalry was driven back and almost immediately after I was ordered to take command of the grenadier company which had lost all of its officers. I found it very well formed, occupying the strong fence above the hollow lane, at the bottom of the orchard. I remained with it keeping up a desultory fire, till suddenly a shout arose on all sides, when, we passed out of the ditch and charged across the orchard driving the French before us, and passed another road by the gap at the left corner of the garden wall. The ditch had been cut deep, and had been full of water, but when I reached it, was completely filled with killed and wounded so as to form a complete bridge. We skirmished for a time in the wood when we were recalled into the courtyard, to be reformed and were relieved by some Brunswick or **Hanoverian Jägers..**"



A SCENE FROM THE WOODS AT THE END OF THE BATTLE

Another report of the 1st Hanoverian Brigade role in the battle:

"..The brigade under the command of Major General Count von Kielmansegge stayed at the position in the first line of the centre, about 200 paces to the right of the Genappe highway.....

One of the two **Jäger companies** formed a line of advance posts before the brigade on the slope of the plateau; the other, together with a detachment of 100 riflemen, half of them each, from the Luneburg and Gruenhagen Battalions, was sent to the wood of Hougomont, where there was a lack of light troops. This detachment stayed there throughout the day and contributed to the tenacious defence of this outpost.”

A superb overview of the Hannoversche Feld-Jägercorps from its creation in 1813 can be found here:

<https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=de&u=https://amg.hypotheses.org/quellen/hannoerverscher-feldzug&prev=search&pto=aue>

“The special position of this unit was also expressed in the formation and ranking of the Hanover Army after 1816: the Feldjägercorps was listed separately after the cavalry and before the infantry. After the dissolution in 1821, the permanent staff of 50 men was integrated into the Clausthal Forestry School. Not only did they do their military service in the Feldjägercorps, but at the same time they entered the civilian forest service, the lowest rank of which bore the title of Feldjäger.”



Condition VF, original clip and ribbon. Some contact wear but a lovely looking medal. Exhibited at the Spink Waterloo bicentenary Exhibition, 2015.

As far as Hannover Waterloo medals are concerned, at company or Battalion level, it would be hard to better this medal for the part this Officer played at the battle of Waterloo.