

THE EXTREMELY RARE I.G.S. 1854, CLASP 'PEGU' GROUP TO AN OFFICER, 18TH ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT KILLED WHILST GALLANTLY LEADING HIS MEN AT THE STORMING OF GREAT SCHWEDAGON PAGODA, RANGOON, 14 APRIL 1852, WHEN HE WAS STRUCK BY MULTIPLE BULLETS ON THE VERY STEPS OF THE PAGODA ITSELF. ONE OF JUST TWO BRITISH OFFICERS KILLED DURING THE CAMPAIGN



INDIA GENERAL SERVICE 1854, CLASP PEGU 'ADJT ROBT DORAN. (LIEUT.) 18TH RL IRISH REG.'

"He fell at the head of his men, cheering them on to the attack; his own daring spirit leading him to seek to be the first to plant his country's colours on the enemy's walls. He was pierced by seven bullets and died after lingering for an hour. The night before his death this gallant officer had written in pencil, under a wagon, a note to his wife., stating that he had just prayed to God to be spared for her sake."

Robert Doran, the son of Major John Doran, late 18th Royal Irish Regiment, of Ely House, County Wexford, Ireland, was born on 18 June 1827. He was commissioned Ensign into his father's old regiment on 26 January 1844 and was advanced to Lieutenant on 6 August 1847. Doran was later appointed Adjutant of the battalion and embarked with the regiment for India in November that year. Though understood that the Royal Irish would be ordered home shortly, in early 1852 the regiment found itself hurried off to take part in the Burma campaign in early 1852. Adjutant Doran was one of the storming party when British and Indian regiments stormed the Great Pagoda (Shwedagon) in Rangoon, Burma on 14 April 1852 and was of the four British killed in the attack; 42 of the regiment were wounded. According eye witness reports Doran was shot either 7 or 4 times as he entered the Pagoda's compound and attempted to ascend the temple's steps. He was initially buried at the north eastern corner of Shwedagon Pagoda platform (see sketches with the group). However, he and other fallen comrades were later exhumed and reburied in Rangoon's Cantonment Cemetery. The inscription reading: 'Lt. Robert Doran, H.M's 18th Royal Irish, who fell at the taking of the pagoda on 14th April

1852'. A Cabinet card of this grave is include in the group. There is also a memorial to Doran in The Curragh Military Cemetery, Ireland. Robert Doran was the younger brother of General Sir John Doran K.C.B. and was just 5 days married when he was summoned for active service



From The Campaigns and History of the Royal Irish Regiment:

"..For more than forty hours General Godwin was unable to advance. His commissariat officers were very slow in issuing rations to replace the one-day's supply carried by the troops; the gunners were equally slow in landing and transporting to the front the four 8-in. howitzers, on which he relied to make a breach in the defences of Rangoon; and it was not until 5 A.M. on the 14th that the column was again in motion. The XVIIIth and the 40th Bengal Native Infantry led, followed by the 51st and the 35th Madras Native Infantry; the 80th were in charge of the guns, and a Madras Native Infantry regiment kept up communication with the ships in the river. Working slowly through jungle so thick that paths had to be cut for the passage of the guns, Godwin avoided the enemy's main stockades; but as his leading troops came within sight of the great pagoda, the guns on its terraces opened fire. Opposite the gate in the eastern wall, by which he proposed to force his way into Rangoon, the ground was so difficult that there was barely room for the XVIIIth and the 80th to form up in quarter columns, while they halted till the guns had made a practicable breach. The Burmese artillery played upon the

easy target offered to them, and their skirmishers became so bold that five hundred muskets were required to keep them at a respectful distance from the main body of the infantry. The situation was becoming impossible when it was discovered that the gate had been opened, presumably to afford a safe retreat to the Burmese soldiers who were harassing our flanks. Godwin determined to assault forthwith, and placed Lieutenant-Colonel Coote in command of a storming party, composed of two companies of the Royal Irish, the wing of the 80th, and part of the 40th B.N.I. Under a galling fire, the column moved with great steadiness across a shallow valley, half a mile in width, and swept like a tidal wave over terrace after terrace until the Shwe Dagon was won. Then the Burmese broke and fled in panic, losing heavily in their retreat, especially at a point where part of the grenadier company of the Royal Irish fell upon them in flank with the bayonet, and in a short time Rangoon was in our hands. In the British land forces the casualties between the 11th and the 14th of April were a hundred and forty-five—two officers were killed and fourteen wounded; fifteen of the other ranks were killed, and a hundred and fourteen wounded. Nearly a third of these losses fell upon the Royal Irish: Lieutenant and Adjutant R. Doran, pierced by four bullets, fell mortally wounded at the foot of the pagoda; Lieutenant-Colonel Coote, Captain W. T. Bruce, and Lieutenant G. A. Elliot were wounded; a sergeant and two privates were killed, a sergeant, a drummer, and thirty-seven privates wounded ..”



The Wexford Independent, 5 June 1852 contained the following article on Lieutenant Doran:

THE LATE LIEUTENANT R. DORAN.

It was only a few days back, that it was our very pleasing task to announce the marriage of our young and gallant countryman, whose name appears above; but it now becomes our painful duty, to communicate to his relatives and friends here, the sad intelligence of his death, which he met—if it be any counterpoise to the sad bereavement of one so young, so promising, and so brave—covered with honor and glory and the shout of victory around him. Lieutenant DORAN was the second son of Major DORAN, and grandson of ROBERT HUGHES, of Ely House, Esq.; and, in addition to his Lieutenancy, filled the important post of Adjutant, in that Regiment—the 18th Royal Irish—in which his Parent served with much distinction for upwards of thirty years. He was only five days united to his amiable and accomplished wife—daughter of the late THOMAS BRACKEN, of Belchamp Hall, Suffolk, Esq., and of Calcutta—when the trumpet of war summoned him to the post of duty. The following extracts from letters received from some of his brother officers and the General commanding, show the high estimation in which he was held in the army:—

"Calcutta, 24th April, 1852.

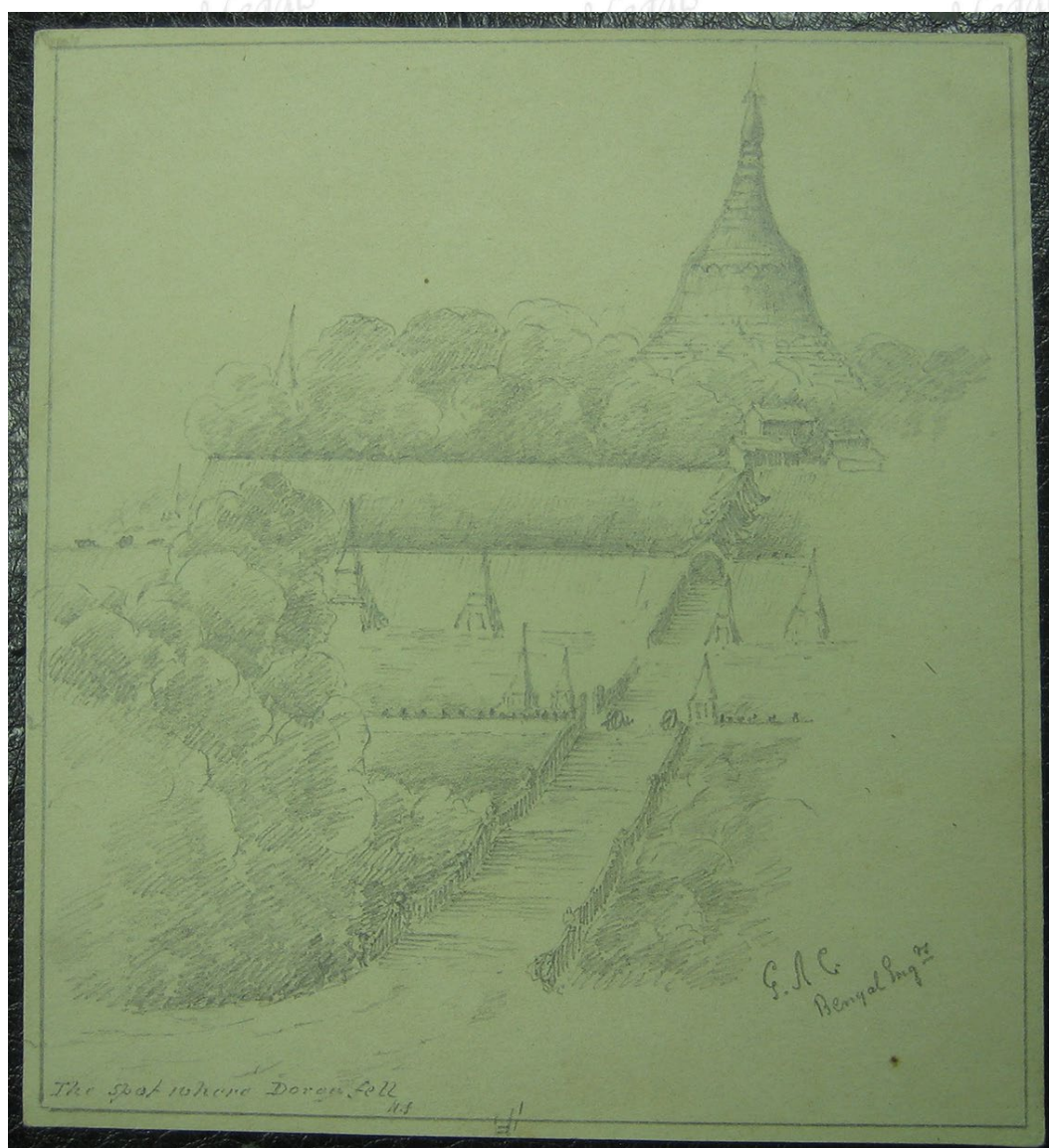
"The most melancholy duty has fallen to my lot of announcing to you, and to his bereaved Parents, the death of Lieutenant Robert Doran. He was killed at the storming of the fortified Pagoda at Rangoon, during the attack of the 14th instant. The despatches announcing the fall of Rangoon, and his death arrived here late yesterday afternoon. He seemed to have been the only officer killed on the occasion—certainly the only officer of the 18th, such is the will of the Almighty. He fell at the head of his men, cheering them on to the attack, his own heroic spirit leading him to seek to be the first to plant his country's colors on the enemy's walls. He fell pierced by seven bullets, lingered for one hour, and died composedly with the shouts of victory in his ear. I copy the following extract from his friend, George Elliot's letter to me, it is dated 'Rangoon, the 17th April: as the friend of my dearest friend Doran, it is my painful duty to communicate the melancholy tidings of his death to you, in order that you may break them to her, who is most deserving of all our sympathy. On Wednesday, the 14th instant, we stormed this fortification, and our honest friend too gallantly charged with the storming party; but ere he reached the head of the long stairs by which he was ascending, he fell mortally wounded—pierced with seven bullets. He was immediately carried up, and lived for about an hour-and-a-quarter, apparently without much

suffering, retaining his power of speech and his senses to the last. I did not see him 'till all was over, as I was detached with my company by the General, at an early period of the day, and entered at a gate distant from the one which he so nobly attacked. I was merely told at first that he was wounded, and hurried on to render any assistance that I could; but, alas! when I arrived, it was too late, death had snatched away my dearest friend, and, I may add, the idol of the whole force. Then, indeed, did I feel what it was that we had lost, and I shed the first tear that had fallen from me for years, over my loved and constant companion. On the same evening we consigned him to a soldier's grave, amid the lamentations of the regiment, by which he was so universally beloved, and in the presence of the whole force naval and military who attended his funeral." I also copy the note written by General Godwin commanding the force, to his poor afflicted widow, my niece; the note is dated Great Pagoda, Rangoon, April 18th.

"My dear Madam—It is with heartfelt grief I address you, knowing there can be no consolation in this world for the irreparable loss you have sustained in the bereavement of your gallant husband. Time only can mitigate your sorrow, but it may be some pleasure, melancholy as it is, to know his noble and gallant bearing in the storming of this place. I am now an inhabitant of, was the admiration of all; and he met his fate by being out of his place, in order to take rank amongst the first to plant his foot on the first step of victory. I saw him, and had his hand in mine in the ascent to this place, and the cheerful look and smile made me believe his hurt was not serious, and God knows the shock I felt an hour after, to learn he had closed his honourable career. All here attended, and paid respect to his last call in this world. God bless you my dear Madam, and give you strength to bear the blow you have received."

I copy also the following account from a morning paper. "The three first who ascended were Lieut. Col. Coote, Lieutenant Doran, of the 18th, and Captain Litter, and I regret very much to add, that the first officer was severely and Lieutenant Doran mortally wounded. Poor fellow, he received seven wounds, and expired in an hour deeply and sincerely regretted by every officer and man in the regiment, and most deservedly so. for a nobler fellow, and more gallant and amiable soldier never lived; no other officer was killed." If there be any comfort, you will find it in these extracts. He died the death of a gallant soldier, fighting for his country, not cut off as many here have been since, by those dire diseases, cholera and coup de soleil. The Almighty vouchsafed him a nobler end, such as his heroic heart, perhaps would have asked for, had he not just united his life and happiness to another. He prayed to be spared, so wrote he on the 13th, in pencil, under a waggon, to her for her dear sake, and the sake of you all, to whom he seemed ever to have clung with the devoted affection of a son and brother."





The spot where Doreen fell



ADDITIONAL ORIGINAL ITEMS

The Following original item, documents and sketches sold with the medal. The sketches, which are in different hands, were likely sent back to Doran's family after his death to show where he was killed and where he was buried. Lieutenant G. A Craster, Bengal Engineers, who signed one sketch, took part in the Pegu campaign.

1) Doran's Commission document or the rank of Ensign, in the 18th Regiment of Foot, dated 2 January 1844

2) A small card calling card with two fine and ornate silver shirt studs, that Lieutenant Doran was wearing when he was killed. Under them, in ink is written 'Uncle Robert Doran's studs when killed on steps of Pagoda Burmah 14th June 1852'

- 3) A very fine and detailed Sketch of the Pagoda, titled 'The Spot Where Doran Fell' signed G. A. C. Bengal Engineers, was by Lieutenant G. A Craster
- 4) A sketch that shows a memorial, with two artillery pieces either side, titled 'The Spot Where Doran Sleeps', unsigned.
- 5) Another sketch, in a different hand, that shows a memorial from a slightly different angle, artillery piece in view and a soldier guarding. The signed 'Bob Hashey' (surname hard to make out)
- 6) A sketched map of the Pagoda, titled 'a Marks the Spot Where Poor Doran is Buried', unsigned
- 7) Two finely executed sketches of what appear to be Officer living quarters, possible Doran's
- 8) A Cabinet Card image of Doran's grave. This likely taken a decade or so later, possibly during the 1880's campaigns.



Various 5 or 6 Officers killed during the campaign of 1852-3, Lieutenant Doran of the 18th and Armstrong of the 51st Foot being the Officers of British Regiments.



Condition EF, with a lovely patina. Queen's head still retaining much of its frosted finish. Sold with copy research (digital). This group fresh to the market, it appears direct from the family