

A SUPERB SOUTH AFRICA 1879 TO A RAAFF'S TRANSVAAL RANGERS TROOPER WHO UNDER BULLER SERVED AT THE BATTLES OF HLOBANE AND WAS WOUNDED AT SEKUKUNI STADT WHILST SERVING WITH THE BORDER HORSE. AN EX 32ND FOOT PRIVATE.



SOUTH AFRICA 1877-9, CLASP 1879 'TRP J A MCMASTER TRANSVAAL RNGRS'

1545 Private Joseph A Masters /McMasters served with the 32nd Foot prior to joining the Transvaal Rangers in early 1879. He is noted in the Army register as serving with the 32nd in South Africa in 1871 and discharged in 1877. He then appears on the medal and casualty roll as dangerously wounded whilst serving with the Border Horse at Sekukuni campaign.

Formed by Pieter Raaff in 1878 and serving against the Pedi and Sekukuni. In November/December 1878 Raaff was out recruiting again as many of the original members of this units six months Service was at an end and he was eventually able to raise his strength to about 150 European and Coloured men - mainly recruited in the Kimberley Diamonds fields the units members were a tough lot being described by one observer as '*a more forbidding lot of mixed Hottentots and scum of the Diamond Fields was never collected together outside a prison wall*'. This they may have been but they were also to prove to be one of Buller's finest units.

Initially the Transvaal Rangers were attached to Rowlands column but were transferred to Wood's Column after the disaster of Isandhlwana. They served with distinction at the Battles of Hlobane, Khambula, the Skirmish on the White Mfolozi River and the Battle of Ulundi

Masters is mentioned as one of the known men to have served at the battle of Hlobane (which is very rarely found). Of 142 medals to this unit, only 71 men actually took part in the battle, making it impossible to find if they were present unless mentioned by someone else.

Presumably he would have been at Khambula also and probably Ulundi but this cannot be confirmed. Since the Transvaal Rangers were disbanded shortly after the Zulu War, many of their men are to be found joining units that were still active. The Border Horse would be a natural choice for many as both had served together. Indeed the medal roll confirms this on a number of men.



Commandant Pieter Raaff (seated centre right) and his officers of the Transvaal Rangers. (Museum Africa, Johannesburg)

From British battles regarding the attack of Sekukuni Stadt:

"Meanwhile Major Carrington, with the force already detailed, had worked his way around to the left and had speedily become engaged with the Basutos on the hills above it. The Transvaal Mounted Rifles and Border Horse quitting their saddles, charged up the hill on foot, and soon stormed the first line of schanzes, ably supported as they were by the Mounted Infantry, under Lieutenant De Courcy O'Grady, of the 94th Regiment; and then the whole, rushing with cheers up the steep and rugged ground, drove the Basutos out of the second line of defences higher up, and won a ridge of somber-looking rocks, though under a plunging downward fire, which ultimately drove back the Native Contingent; on this the men of Sekukuni made a rush upon Carrington's men and their horses below, but were compelled to retire under the withering fire that bowled them over in heaps. About half-past six, the left wing of the Swazies appeared over the hill tops in this quarter, and came down towards the dark ridge just mentioned, and within an hour the united divisions had cleared out the caverns and defences of all but the dying and the dead, and then Major Carrington descended towards the central town, the huts of which he left sheeted with flame, as he worked his way downward to the plain. In the early part of this conflict, Captain Maurice, of the Artillery, had a dangerous wound in the shoulder, and Sergeant-Major Constable was conspicuous for his bravery."

The Border Horse was raised and commanded by Lt Col Weatherley, an ex-Imperial officer, in the Transvaal, for the Zulu War. The Regiment, 61 strong, lost its commanding officer,

and 38 of all ranks killed, and one wounded, at Hlobane. It served under Major Dennison at Kambula and in the Sekukuni campaign.



Condition VF. A rare confirmed Hlobane participant, with not more than a handful confirmed for all units but rarer still to a known ex Imperial soldier and a casualty. Sold with copy rolls etc. Ex Noonans 2022