

THE MEDALS OF THE PENINSULAR WAR (1808-14)

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The Peninsular Battle Honours of the **14th/20th King's Hussars**: Douro, Talavera, Fuentes D'Onor, Salamanca, Vittoria, Pyrenees, Orthes, Peninsula (**14th Light Dragoons**) and Vimiera, Peninsula (**20th Light Dragoons**) are well known to all, but few realize that the bars (or clasps) of the medals commemorating important actions, given for the Peninsular War do not coincide with the battle honours.

A **14th Light Dragoon** could have earned a maximum of eleven bars if he had served with the Regiment throughout the campaign, and a **20th Light Dragoon** three bars. These bars were: **14th Light Dragoons**: - Talavera, Busaco, Fuentes D'Onor, Badajoz, Salamanca, Vittoria, Pyrenees, Nivelle, Nive, Orthes, Toulouse.

20th Light Dragoons: - Maida (the only cavalry present) Vimiera and Roleia. It seems extraordinary that no bar was given for the Battle of the Douro (1809) although it was one of the battle honours granted to the 14th Light Dragoons.

It is necessary to remember that it was not until 1st June 1847 that the issue of a medal to the survivors of the Peninsular War was sanctioned, although a medal was given in 1816 to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo.

The medal was to be known as **The Military General Service Medal (1793-1814)**. As the last battle of the Peninsular War had been fought in 1814, a period of thirty-three years had elapsed before due recognition was given to the troops who had been through such privations.

This explains why the number of recipients of the medal were so few. The only persons rewarded with medals previous to 1847 were the senior officers of the Army and certain regimental commanding officers who were given gold medals and crosses. Amongst these were two **14th Light Dragoons** namely:

Colonel S. Hawker: for Talavera

Lieut.-Colonel F. B. Hervey: for Fuentes D'Onor, Salamanca, Vittoria and Orthes.

A short description of the **M.G.S. Medal** and the bars may be of interest to readers.

- On the obverse the medal is a diademed head of Queen Victoria, with the date of issue 1848 below, and the legend "Victoria Regina" above.
- On the reverse is depicted the Queen placing a laurel wreath upon the head of the Duke of Wellington, who is kneeling before her, and in the exergue the date 1793-1814. The recipient's name and Regiment is indented on the edge of the medal in capital letters. The ribbon is crimson with blue edges.

The total number of bars sanctioned was twenty-eight of which two were for service in the West Indies in 1809-1810, three for services in North America in 1812-1813, one for lava in 1811 and one for Egypt in 1801. This last bar was not given until 1850.

No medals were issued without bars and the maximum number of bars issued to any person was fifteen, and only two men in the whole Army proved their claims to this number. The number of officers and men of the 14th and 20th Light Dragoons who received the medal with bars were as follows:

14th Light Dragoons Eleven bars, officers 1, O.Rs. 17; ten bars, officers 1, O.Rs. 11; nine bars, officers nil, O.Rs. 6; eight bars, officers 2, O.Rs. 9; seven bars, officers 3, O.Rs. 19; six bars, officers 2, O.Rs. 19; five bars, officers 4 O.Rs. 22; four bars, officers 4 O.Rs. 18; three bars, officers 1 O.Rs. 14; two bars, officers 3 O.Rs. 27; one bar, officers 3 O.Rs. 6. **Total recipients: Officers, 24 medals; O.Rs. 168 medals.** (*These figures are taken from The Medal Roll of the M.G.S. Medal.*)

The Regiment had embarked in 1808 for the Peninsula with 770 other ranks, and drafts amounting to 445 were afterwards sent out making a total of 1,215 other ranks who served with the Regiment. As only 168 other ranks received the medal the balance of 1,047 were either killed in action, died before the medal was sanctioned in 1847 or failed to put in their claims.

The only officer who obtained the maximum eleven bars, was **Major Lovell B. Badcock** (afterwards B. Lovell Lovell).

Cornet C. Cureton: who served in the ranks of the 14th Light Dragoons under the name of Cpl. Roberts, and who afterwards became Adjutant-General in India and who was killed whilst commanding the Cavalry Division alongside his old Regiment at **Ramnuggar** in 1848 obtained ten bars.

Major Thomas W. Brotherton: who became Inspector of Cavalry and who died as General Sir T. W. Brotherton, G.C.B., in 1868 had eight bars to his medal, one of which was for Egypt 1801, but this bar was earned as an officer in the Coldstream Guards before he transferred to the 14th Light Dragoons.

A unique bar for a **14th Light Dragoon:** was that for **Corunna**, among four bars obtained by:

Pte. John Cordall but the Corunna bar was won whilst he was serving in the Royal Waggon Train.

Another curious combination of bars was that of **Daniel Owen Davies** Assistant Surgeon, 14th Light Dragoons, who had the bar for Barros with five others, but he was originally in the 87th Foot and only transferred to the Regiment in 1814.

20th Light Dragoons: Three bars, officers 1, O.Rs nil; two bars, officers 3 O.Rs. 15; one bar, officers nil, O.Rs. 17. Total recipients: Officers 4 medals; O.Rs. 32 medals. Only one officer and three other ranks of the 20th Light Dragoons were granted the bar for Maida and consequently the medal with this bar is very rare.

It must be noted here that only one squadron was at Maida and only a part of the Regiment at Vimiera and Roleia.

REGIMENTAL MEDALS

It was the custom in many regiments to bestow regimental medals as rewards for bravery or for meritorious service. The **14th and 20th Light Dragoons** had their own medals but unfortunately **no known records exist** as to the conditions of issue, the number issued nor the names of the recipients.

In the medal collection of the 14th/20th Hussars there are two Regimental Medals with "Peninsula" engraved on them and one with the date of 1815. The author of this article has a Regimental Medal granted to: **James Morris** and on one side is engraved "For Soldierly Merit" and on the other side " 14th L.D." within a wreath of laurel leaves. The word "Peninsula" is engraved on what corresponds to a bar.

In D. H. Irwin's classic book on war medals mention is made of an oval silver Regimental Medal to **Thomas Betts**, 20th Light Dragoons. On the obverse is a crown surmounting "G.R. XX Jamaica L.D." and on the reverse "Reward of Merit from Lieut.-Colonel Robert Gillespie: 20th June 1800. "

The most interesting Regimental Medal is that presented by the officers of the Regiment to **William Hanley**, Corporal, 14th Light Dragoons. On the obverse is engraved "Fortitudine Blasco Sancho, 26th July 1812 Peninsula."

This medal was given for Hanley's gallant exploit at Blasco Sancho, in which he, whilst commanding a patrol of seven men, captured two officers, one sergeant, one corporal and twenty-seven mounted dragoons of the French Army. A detailed account of this exploit by Major Brotherton is narrated in the Historical Record of the 14th King's Hussars, Vol. I, and Hanley's own version in the United Service Journal, November 1840.

Hanley was also awarded in 1848 the M.G.S. with the maximum number of bars (eleven) for the Regiment. The Blasco Sancho Medal was in the collection of Lord Cheylesmore, but its present whereabouts is unknown. Some doubt exists as to the correct coloured ribbon for the 14th L.D. Regimental Medal.

Generally, the crimson with blue edges of the Waterloo and M.G.S. Medals is found but **Hanley's** medal ribbon was crimson and that of **F. Hall** (see below) dark blue. The 14th/20th King's Hussars now possess the undermentioned M.G.S. and Regimental Medals in their collection:

14th Light Dragoons

Capt. F. Anderson: (originally in 23rd Foot) M.G.S. 6 Bars;

Sergt. H. Ivatts: M.G.S. 11 Bars and Regimental Medal for the Peninsula

Joseph Higgs: M.G.S. 11 Bars

L./Sergt. J. Montaigne: M.G.S. 11 Bars

William Wichellow: M.G.S. 10 Bars

Charles Manning: M.G.S. 10 Bars

Tp./Sergt./Major W. Newman: M.G.S. 10 Bars, and Long Service and Good Conduct

James Anstead: M.G.S. 7 Bars; William Mouldy, M.G.S., 7 Bars

John Bitner: M.G.S. 6 Bars

John Barnes: M.G.S. 5 Bars

Thomas Chambers: M.G.S., 4 Bars

Thomas Hicks: M.G.S. 3 Bars

Elias Elliott: M.G.S. 2 Bars and Regimental Medal for the Peninsula

F. Hall: Regimental Medal dated 1815

20th Light Dragoons

James Haywood: M.G.S. 2 Bars (Vimiera, Roleia);

George Simmonds: M.G.S. 1 Bar (Maida);

William Balls: M.G.S. 1 Bar (Vimiera).

The author has also in his collection:

Joseph Butler: 14th L.D. M.G.S. 7 Bars;

John Harris: 14th L.D. M.G.S. 6 Bars;

James Morris: 14th L.D. Regimental Medal for the Peninsula.

If this article should stimulate any readers to start a collection of medals, one word of advice may be useful, i.e. **Beware of forgeries**, for there are many about, especially forgeries of the M.G.S. Medal. Even if the medal is genuine, the bars may be defective and it is the bars that give the values to the medals.

It is hoped to publish further articles on later medals issued to the 14th/20th Hussars.



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