

THE EXCEPTIONAL & UNIQUE 88<sup>TH</sup> 'DEVILS OWN' CONNAUGHT RANGERS PAIR AWARDED TO A CAPTAIN, LATER MAJOR GENERAL, WHO JOINED THE 88<sup>TH</sup> AS A 12-YEAR-OLD ENSIGN IN 1805 & AFTER SURVIVING THE STORMING OF BADAJOZ WHERE HIS BATTALION SUFFERED SO GREATLY, WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED AT SALAMANCA WHERE THE 88<sup>TH</sup> ACHIEVED THE NOTABLE FEAT OF CAPTURING THE 'JINGLING JONNY' OF THE FRENCH 101<sup>ST</sup> REGIMENT; THIS MEDAL BEING UNIQUE TO AN OFFICER CASUALTY. A FELLOW OFFICER WOULD DESCRIBE THAT '*WHEREVER HE WENT HE WAS THE MAGNET OF ATTRACTION & WHEN WE QUITTED MADRID IT WOULD HAVE REQUIRED A TRAIN OF VEHICLES MUCH MORE NUMEROUS THAN WOULD HAVE SUITED OUR ORDER OF MARCH TO CONVEY THOSE LADIES WHO WERE & WOULD LIKE TO BE MORE CLOSELY, ATTACHED TO HIM*'. SERVING THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE PENINSULAR WAR, HE THEN SAILED TO AMERICA, HIS BATTALION TAKING PART IN THE PLATTSBURG CAMPAIGN & AFTERWARDS SERVED IN INDIA AS A.D.C. TO GENERAL SIR THOMAS REYNELL AND WAS SPECIALLY PROMOTED FOR HIS SERVICE AT THE TAKING OF BHURTPORE IN JANUARY 1826



MILITARY GENERAL SERVICE 1793, 7 CLASPS, FUENTES D'ONOR, BADAJOZ, SALAMANCA, NIVELLE, NIVE, ORTHES, TOULOUSE 'F. MEADE, LIEUT. 88TH FOOT' CLASPS WIDELY SPACED ON A CUSTOM-MADE CARRIAGE WHICH IS DETACHED FROM THE SUSPENSION, ARMY OF INDIA 1799-1826, CLASP, BHURTPOOR 'CAPTN. F. MEADE, 88TH FOOT, A.D.C.' SHORT HYPHEN REVERSE, OFFICIALLY IMPRESSED NAMING, CLASP DETACHED FROM SUSPENSION AND LOOSE ON RIBBON.

Frederick Meade, son of Reverend Richard Meade, of Innishannon, county Cork, Ireland, was born circa 1793. On 26 March 1805 at the age of just 12 years old, he was appointed Ensign in the 88th Foot (Connaught Rangers). Appointed Lieutenant, 30 March 1809, Meade served with the 2nd Battalion 88th in the Peninsula from January to November 1810, including the siege of Cadiz, after which he served in the lines of Torres Vedras where he transferred to the 1st Battalion. He then served with 1/88th at Redhina, Casal Nova, Foz d'Arrouce, Sabugal, Fuentes D'Onor, 2nd siege of Badajoz, El Boden, capture of Badajoz, battles of Salamanca (where he was severely wounded), Nivelles, Orthes, Vic Bigorre, and Toulouse. He also served in North America in 1814, during the latter phases of the 1812 War, where his Regiment formed part of the force at the battle of Plattsburg. Returning to Europe in 1815, the 88th were too late to take part in the Waterloo campaign but from late 1815, served in France with the army of occupation.

In 1821, he proceeded to India on special service and as A.D.C. served on the staff of General Sir Thomas Reynell, being promoted Captain, 7 April 1825. Between December 1825 and January 1826, he took part in the second great siege and storming of Bhurtpoor, where under Sir Stapleton Cotton (afterwards Lord Combermere), General Reynell, in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, commanded and led the principle storming column. As such, Captain Meade, who was the only member of the 88<sup>th</sup> present, would have been in the thick of the action.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Bharatpur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Bharatpur)

Post campaign, Meade was one of a small number of officers to be promoted for their services at the capture of Bhurtpoor and was advanced to the rank of Major, 19 February 1826. However on his return from India he was placed on Half-pay, 28 August 1827. On 13 May 1829 he married Dorcas Beamish, daughter of William Beamish of Beaumont of County Cork, who had served in the Navy and the Army during the American War of Independence.

Promoted Lieutenant-Colonel (unattached), 23 November 1841, Colonel, 20 June 1854 and Major-General, 26 October 1858. Major-General Frederick Meade died at St Anne's Hill, Blarney, Cork, on 12 September 1865.

#### **MENTIONS OF LIEUTENANT MEADE DURING THE PENINSULAR WAR**

William Grattan, in his Adventures with the Connaught Rangers 1809-1814, makes the following mentions of Lieutenant Meade, a little time after his severe wounding at Salamanca:

*'The season was on the wane, summer was almost over, and it was well known that Lord Wellington meditated an attack on the town of Burgos; nevertheless all was tranquillity and gaiety with the troops at Madrid, and many of the sick and wounded from Salamanca reached us. Amongst the number was my friend and companion, Frederick Meade of the 88th. He had been badly wounded in the action of the 22nd, and with his arm in a sling, his wounds still unhealed, and his frame worn down by fatigue and exhaustion, his commanding officer was surprised to see him again so soon with his regiment; but various rumours were afloat as to the advance of the Madrid army upon Burgos, and Meade was not the kind of person likely to*

be absent from his corps when anything like active service was to be performed by it. Endowed with qualities which few young men in the army could boast of, he soon made his way into the very best society that the capital of Spain could be said to possess. A finished gentleman in the fullest acceptation of the word; young, handsome, speaking the Castilian language well, the French fluently, a first-rate musician, endowed by nature with a fine voice, which had been well cultivated, it is not surprising that he soon became a general favourite. In a word, wherever he went he was the magnet of attraction, and when we quitted Madrid it would have required a train of vehicles much more numerous than would have suited our order of march to convey those ladies who were, and would like to be more closely, attached to him. Poor fellow! he was greatly to blame, but it was not his fault; if the ladies of Madrid liked his face, or his voice, how could he help that? My man, Dan Carsons—and here I must say a word of apology to my friend Meade for coupling their names together—told me when we were on the eve of quitting Madrid, “that he (Carsons) didn’t know how the devil he could get away at-all-at-all, without taking three women, besides his wife Nelly with him.”’



On the subsequent bleak and disorderly retreat into Portugal during the winter of 1812-13, Grattan finds Meade once more:

*'My feet never quitted the shoes in which they were placed, from the moment of the retreat until its close. I knew too well their value, and if I once got my feet out of them (no easy matter), I knew right well it would take some days to get them back again, they were so swollen; and even if I were dead, much less crippled, there were many to be found anxious to stand in my shoes—to boot!*

*There were others, and many others, as badly off as I was. My friend Meade was obliged to leave his shoes behind him. He tried to walk barefooted for a while, but it was impossible. The gravel so lacerated his feet that he could not move, and he was obliged to make some shift to get a pair in place of those he had abandoned. Captain Graham of the 21st Portuguese, a lieutenant in my regiment, was so worn out with fatigue, barebacked and barefooted, that, on one night of the retreat, having been fortunate enough to get a loaf of bread, he joined me and my companion Meade; but, so unable was he to eat of the food he brought to share with us, that he fell down on the ground and never tasted a morsel of it. It is, therefore, tolerably clear to any man possessing common understanding, that the junior officers of the army, from the neglect of their superiors, were not in a state to do more than they did.*

*The retreat still continued, but the army was unmolested, and at length, after an absence of so many days, we once more got sight of our baggage. The poor animals that carried it were in a bad state; but they were even better than our cavalry or artillery horses. Of the former, three-fourths of the men were dismounted; and the latter could, with difficulty, show three horses, in place of eight, to a gun.'*

H. H. Robinson, the author of *The Life of Sir Thomas Picton*, made some ill-considered and inaccurate statements about the 88th to which William Grattan took great exception. Consequently he wrote to the then surviving officers, whose replies he published as an appendix of Vol. II of his *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers*. His old friend Meade was happy to oblige and wrote as follows:

*'Belmont, Innishannon, Aug. 12, 1836.*

*My dear Friend - Being called upon by you, as a Peninsular man, to state whether I remember any instances having occurred in the 88th Regiment of men going into action deficient of ammunition, and of their having sold their ball cartridges for agua ardiente [moonshine], substituting in lieu thereof pieces of coloured wood, I do hereby declare that, although I served with that corps as a Subaltern during the greater part of the Peninsular campaigns, I never heard of such a practice in the regiment, nor can I believe that such a deception could have been practised without the knowledge of the officers.*

*Frederick Meade,  
Major unattached.'*

## **THE 88TH DURING THE PENINSULAR WAR**

During the Peninsular War, the 88<sup>th</sup> 'Devils Own' Connaught Rangers was brigaded within Thomas Picton's 3rd Division, under whose leadership the 88th was to establish a reputation as one of the most fearsome battalions in Wellington's army. On 27 September 1810, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Wallace, the battalion distinguished itself with a fierce bayonet charge, prompting Wellington to comment, "*Wallace, I never saw a more gallant charge than that just made by your regiment.*" Its next major action came at Fuentes d'Onor on 3rd-5th May 1811, when the 88th again did great execution with the bayonet and at one point trapped about a hundred Frenchmen in an alleyway, none of whom survived the battalion's attack, the 88<sup>th</sup> would lose 68 Officers and men. The 88th was at the forefront of

the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo, when the forlorn hope provided by the regiment, under Lieutenant William Mackie, led the assault of the 3rd Division against the main breach. Here they lost 63 officers and men.



The 88<sup>th</sup> at the storming of Badajoz

During the storming of Badajoz, the 88<sup>th</sup> escalated the walls of the castle and fought the French 88<sup>th</sup> Regiment which defended the ramparts, here they would lose a further 250 men. At Salamanca, as part of the spearhead brigade of Packenham's 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, the 88<sup>th</sup> led by Lieutenant Colonel John Alexander Wallace launched a devastating attack which shattered the left wing of the French Army and helped to bring about a crushing British victory. During the battle the 88<sup>th</sup> achieved the notable feat of capturing the 'jingling Jonny' of the French 101<sup>st</sup> Regiment but to the cost of a further 6 officers 121 men. This instrument became one of the 88<sup>th</sup>'s most treasured relics and was always carried in front of the bands and drums on ceremonial parades by the tallest man in the regiment. See:

<https://collection.nam.ac.uk/detail.php?acc=1956-02-868-1>

With the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division back under the Picton's command, the 88<sup>th</sup> was lightly engaged at the battle of Nivelles, 10 November 1813 and saw no actual fighting at Nive in December. However at the battle of Orthes on 27 February 1814 the 88<sup>th</sup> were very heavily engaged and suffered a devastating number of casualties, at one point French cavalry getting among the leading companies. 13 Officers and 255 men were killed or wounded, higher than any other regiment. Indeed bar the 87<sup>th</sup>, who's casualties were not much lower, the 88<sup>th</sup>'s were near double that of the next highest. At Toulouse on 10 April 1814, the 88<sup>th</sup>, with its strength now down to 447, suffered casualties of a further 3 Officers and 83 men

### **AMERICAN WAR AND THE BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH**

Shortly after the battle of Toulouse in April 1814, the 88<sup>th</sup>, along with Lieutenant Meade, was sent to Canada to take part in the War against American and arrived at Quebec in August 1814. The regiment clearly took its reputation with it as its Officers were centre of attraction anywhere they were based.

The 88<sup>th</sup> was involved in Sir George Prevost's Lake Champlain campaign (August-September) and the battle of Plattsburgh on 11th September. Here the light company of the 88<sup>th</sup> were heavily involved, distinguishing itself at the forcing of the passage of the Sarniac and Savannah under heavy enemy fire. They had been detached from the rest of the battalion and attached to General Power's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade and with other light companies of the Brigade were in advance of the Army, attacking the enemy when to their consternation were ordered to recross the river and join in the retreat of the main Army.



The 88<sup>th</sup> capturing the 'jingling Jonny' at Salamanca

### THE SIEGE OF BHURTPORE

“After the rightful successor to the ruler of Bhurtpore was murdered in 1825, lawlessness and oppression broke out. The Governor General authorised an attack on Bhurtpore, ordering Lord Combermere, the Commander in Chief, to conduct the operation in person. Realising that not storming Bhurtpore would have disastrous consequences, Lord Combermere assembled a strong force consisting of one cavalry, two infantry divisions and a powerful siege train of the Bengal Army. Together they marched towards Bhurtpore, a citadel protected by a thirty foot ditch and surrounded by a well built wall, which was eight miles in circumference and studded with thirty five semi-circular bastions.

By 13 December 1825, the British had surrounded Bhurtpore with a series of cavalry posts, while the infantry and siege gunners were concentrated opposite the north eastern side which was to be attacked. Under enemy artillery fire the slow, methodical work of digging the parallels, emplacing the guns behind defensive parapets and bringing up and defending massive quantities of ammunition began.



The storming of Bhurtpoor.

The first parallel had the gun in place by 22 December 1825 and by Christmas Eve the first of two siege batteries was able to begin firing at a range of six hundred yards. By 26 December 1825 the other battery was in action just two hundred and fifty yards from the long necked bastion. The British force pushed forward until 5 January 1826, when it was within forty yards of the ditch and seventy eight heavy guns and mortars were in action against the selected front attack. The siege continued until the night of 18 January when two breaches were made and mines exploded so that within two hours the fort had been stormed and taken. British forces lost nearly 1000 killed and wounded in the fighting; the defenders of Bhurtpore suffered losses estimated to be about 8000.”

A far more detailed account is to be found in ‘Narrative of the siege and capture of bhurtpore’ (published 1830) a digital copy of which is included with the research

### **GENERAL MEADE’S MEDALS**

Although other MGS medals have been noted as extent with modified spaced clasps, why General Meade didn’t have the clasps refitted to the suspension is unclear as the removal and refitting of new backstraps was clearly done by a skilled jeweller. However it may well be that Meade wished to wear the clasps on their own, much like later veterans wore medal ribbon bars. This is borne out by the fact that roll bars have been refitted to both medal suspensions and the clasps themselves (see pic), which would allow the clasps to be suspended by a ribbon without the need for the medal itself to be in place. Meade was officially issued with 6 clasps to his M.G.S. medal and according to the medal roll is not entitled to the clasp for Nive which he clearly felt he was entitled to and no doubt was.



In all, 28 88<sup>th</sup> officers received the MGS medal and not counting surgeons just 7 survived to claim the clasp for Badajoz and 7 for Salamanca, Meade's being the only medal awarded to an Officer casualty at the latter battle and thus is a rare example to an officer of this most important battle for the Regiment. Meade's Army of India medal is also unique to the 88<sup>th</sup> Foot.



Condition EF, both with an attractive patina and original ribbons; the AoI ribbon much frayed. Sold with digital research including medal rolls, Regimental history, Adventures with the Connaught Rangers, Narrative of the siege and capture of bhurtpore etc.

A quite superb and unique pair to the 88<sup>th</sup> Ex Noonans Feb 2021 (£9750).