The Napoleon Series

Swedish Decorations Awarded to British Soldiers for Leipzig

By: Richard Tennant

In most countries during the 18th century, the orders and decorations of the monarchies were often limited to a selected few and all knights had to be noblemen. Military decorations were the perks of the officers. This medal is the earliest that was issued for bravery as distinct from 'service to the country'.

För Tapperhet I Fält (For Brave Conduct in the Field)

Established in May 1789 by Gustavus III in silver, to be awarded to non-commissioned officers and soldiers 'For Bravery in the Field'. In May 1808 Charles XIII ordered the medal to be struck in gold to reward officers who had performed acts of bravery in the field fighting the Russians who had attacked Sweden.

From 1789 to 1804 the obverse of the medal shows the head of King Gustavus III and his title; during the years 1804-09 this was replaced by the royal cypher of Gustavus IV. Since June 1809 the obverse shows the badge of the Royal Order of the Sword.

The original ribbon for the medal was plain blue, later a ribbon of yellow with blue side stripes was used. The ribbon as illustrated was confirmed by decree in 1819.

It should be noted that the ring suspension differs between the silver and gold versions. For the silver version the medal itself is pierced to take the ring. On the gold version there is a loop on the rim of the medal to take the ring.

All versions of the medal are ‘struck’ as distinct from being cast or engraved.

Royal Order of the Sword

Established in 1748, this is Sweden’s oldest and principal Military Order, awarded to both officers and men. The Order has five classes:

- Commander Grand Cross – the badge of the Order on sash or on a collar, and Star.
- Commander 1st Class – badge of the Order on a necklet and the ‘plain’ Star.
- Commander – badge of the Order on a necklet.
- Knight 1st Class – badge of the Order in gold on a chest ribbon.
- Knight – badge of the Order in silver on a chest ribbon.
This image of the Royal Order of the Sword was kindly supplied by Tom Bergroth, Curator of the Chancery of The Royal Orders / (Kungl. Maj:ts Orden) in Stockholm. This Knights Badge is dated back to the late 1790s and early 19th Century. The ribbon, however, is from the early 20th Century.

British Recipients
In the year 1813, though the British Army had been fighting for many years, there was no official decoration or medal by which any specific act of gallantry could be rewarded. This, however, was not so in other continental armies of the period, and in the Swedish Army there was a decoration ‘FÖR TAPPERHET I FÄLT’ (‘For brave conduct in the field’) – a description of which has already appeared in this journal (Vol XL, no 7). This decoration instituted in 1788, has always been awarded for conspicuous gallantry in war and issued to officers in gold and to other ranks in silver. It is always struck and never cast or engraved, and is still available for issue now-a-days should Sweden go to war.

För Tapperhet I Fält Medals The photographs were kindly supplied by Eva Wiséhn, Senior Curator at the Kungl. Myntkabinettet / The Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm.

It would appear that Lieutenant Amherst Wright, who succeeded to the command of the Rocket Brigade when Bogue² was killed, was asked to submit a list of the NCO’s and men who distinguished themselves at Leipzig, for the award of the decoration referred to above. This list, printed below, was prepared by him and forwarded through the usual channels until it is embodied in a letter in French to “Son Altesse Royale Monsieigneur le Prince Royale” from Le Baron de Tawast, sous chef de l’état Major-General, on 8th December 1813. The original is signed in the top left hand corner “Approuvé Charles Jean.” The eight medals which had not been presented were delivered to the men who had been awarded them by Col Bjornstierna on about the 12th January 1814.
A List of Non-Commissioned Officers and Privates of the Royal English Rocket Battery Who Distinguished Themselves at the Battle of Leipzig on the 18th October 1813.

| Rank            | Name                  
|-----------------|-----------------------
| Lieutenant      | Strangways            |
| Sergeant-Major  | James Wright          |
| Serfeant        | Daniel Dunnet         |
| Bombardier      | Thomas Lloyd          |
| Gunner          | John Thimmonds        |
| Driver          | George Fox            |
|                | John Paltculls        |
|                | John Bates            |

Note. It would appear from this that both Lieutenant Stangways and Sgt-Major James Wright received their decorations on the battlefield or very soon after it.

If this were the end of the story it would be simple, but another “Tableau de la distribution des Medaillles en argent pour la bravoure” shows that eleven silver medals were awarded to and received by the men of the Rocket Brigade at this time, and Captain Belfrage (Generalstaben-Krigshistoriska Avdelning, Stockholm) has been unable to find out the names of the two other men that received them. There is, however, evidence enough to assume that one of these medals was awarded to Gunner Thomas Wadkis but the other cannot be traced.
In addition to the above, another issue of these decorations was made to the men of the Rocket Brigade in 1820 (cp Col Leslie’s article) when the following received them at Woolwich in August of that year.\footnote{5}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>Michael Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robert Chalkley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal</td>
<td>Edward Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Wareham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombardier</td>
<td>John Guy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was unfortunate that Wright, when he sent in the list of names in 1813, merely sent in the names of the seniors of each rank and the oldest soldiers. The decorations must have thus lost all interest as such to the men and been merely looked upon by them as a medal commemorating the campaign of which insufficient were issued. Thus we find that those that could afford it having either cast or engraved\footnote{6} copies made and wearing them. Hence the large numbers of spurious copies of the medal which exist.

With regard to the second list of medals awarded in 1820, these men were the next senior in rank to those that had already received it in 1813. It is probable that, knowing how the first recipients had been selected, the same system was continued for the second award, and indeed it is difficult to see what other system could have been followed in this case as all the officers who were present with the Brigade at Leipzig had left it.

**Decorations, etc, Awarded to the Officers**

Here the story is quite straightforward and is best shown as follows:-

*Captain Richard Bogue* was posthumously appointed a “Knight of the Swedish Military Order of the Sword” and the insignia of the order was sent to his widow on 6\textsuperscript{th} January 1814.

*Lieutenant Amherst Wright* was awarded:

1. The medal in gold “For brave conduct in the field” on the 17\textsuperscript{th} January 1814
2. The rank of Captain in the Swedish Army on 6\textsuperscript{th} January 1814
3. The Swedish Military Order of the Sword, 4\textsuperscript{th} Class, on 23\textsuperscript{rd} June 1820\footnote{7}

*Lieutenant T Fox-Strangways* was awarded:

1. The medal in gold “For brave conduct in the field” on the battlefield or very soon after it.
2. The rank of Captain in the Swedish Army on 6\textsuperscript{th} January 1814
3. The Swedish Military Order of the Sword, 4\textsuperscript{th} Class, on 23\textsuperscript{rd} June 1820
4. The Russian Order of St Anne, presented to him by the Tsar on the battlefield.\footnote{8}

Placed on the Napoleon Series: November 2018
1 Austria-Hungary 1792 -1814 : Tapferkeits Medaille
2 Captain Richard Bogue commanded the Rocket Troop.
3 Name written in pencil on the original. Observation: this could suggest that Wright did not include Strangway’s name as the request had been for a list of ‘NCO’s and men’ and that it was added later.
4 The group of two medals (i.e. Waterloo and one of those struck Swedish decorations) awarded to this man has been recently purchased by the officers of “O” Battery RHA. This group has been well-known to collectors for a great number of years and in Colonel Palmer’s private catalogue it is stated “I have a note that this pair was purchased from a relation of Thomas Wadkis; see catalogue 20th February 1905 – Glendinings.”
5 I cannot help thinking that this second award of these decorations was to commemorate either the fifth anniversary of the battle of the coronation of Bernadotte as king of Sweden. But this is only a surmise and I am unable to explain it in any other way. Observation: he became King Charles XIV on 5 February 1818.
6 One of such engraved medals is in Lord Cheylesmore’s collection in the RUSI. The group awarded to Corpl Marks, now the property of the RA Institution, includes one of these cast medals in addition to the struck medal that he was awarded.
7 Observation: Lieut Amhurst Wright appears to have done rather well, considering that he was not actually present on the day of the battle. It is perhaps interesting to record that, when the two Rocket Troops were reduced to just one in 1816, Wright was transferred to the infamous Corps of RA Drivers!
8 He had, in addition, the Waterloo Medal and the Crimean War Medal with three clasps, Alma, Inkerman and Sebastopol, plus the Turkish Crimean War Medal, if it was ever sent to his next of kin. Observation: It is somewhat ironic that as the commander of the Royal Artillery in the Crimea, he was killed in 1854 at the Battle of Inkerman by the Russians, by whom he had been decorated, and alongside whom he had so bravely fought as an ally 41 years earlier at Leipzig

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