Capt. Blackwood's Waterloo Trunk

Thomas Handford

Sold

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REF: 80852

Height: 35.55 cm (14")

Width: 58.5 cm (23")

Depth: 30.5 cm (12")

Description

The history to this New Invented Light Waterproof Leather Travelling Trunk by Thomas Handford is remarkable and its purchase can be dated to a 3 month period.

This in itself is extraordinary but the significance of the events within those 3 months make it even more so. It is highly likely that Captain Robert Temple Blackwood purchased this trunk in the knowledge that he would need it when joining his new regiment to combat the threat of the return of Napoleon. Blackwood enlisted as an Ensign in the 52nd Foot on the 23rd of December 1806; 18 months later he made Lieutenant and was fighting in the Peninsular Wars. It was here that he was severely wounded at the Siege of Badajoz on the 6th April 1812 when there was an attempt to destroy a dam that was flooding the British trenches. He moved to the 56th in 1813 where he made Captain; 5 months later he joined the 86th, shortly before the Battle of Paris and Napoleon's abdication. Blackwood is still shown in the March 1815 Army List as a Captain of the 86th, which had been disbanded in 1814 after Napoleon's exile to Elba. It is probable that he joined the 69th Regiment in response to the return of Old Boney and the start of his 100 Days campaign. This is the regiment that is engraved to the trunk.

As the unfortunate Captain died at Waterloo on the 18th of March he had to have joined the 69th during the 3 month period between the issue of the March Army List and his death. The trunk maker Thomas Handford, also moved to 7 Strand in 1815 which fits in neatly. Blackwood suffered with the 69th at Quatre Bas 2 days before Waterloo, with many cut down by the French Cuirassiers whilst still trying to form a square. At Waterloo the 69th were part of the Allied line between La Haye Sainte and Hougomont. They formed a square with the 33rd and although it was broken by the French, they reformed it after the Life Guards came to their aid. They suffered 41% casualties to the regiment, of which Blackwood was one. After the battle he was buried at the orchard at Hougomont. It is possible that his personal belongings were sent back to his family in this trunk, which would have been a good size for the job and has two compartments to the top for documents. Other baggage would probably have been auctioned off to fellow officers with the money returned to the Blackwoods. Aside from its history, this brass bound leather on pine and mahogany trunk is a good piece of camp equipage. We have written of Handford's history in previous catalogues but suffice to say he is a good maker and these trunks are distinctive and smart in their look. Over the last 200 years the trunk has become detached from the history it has witnessed.

It has now been re-discovered and it has turned it from an attractive trunk by a good quality maker to a piece of officer's baggage from Waterloo, one of history's most significant battles. The date is 1815.

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