

SOLDIERS' SMALL BOOK

NEWSLETTER OF THE

VICTORIAN MILITARY SOCIETY

MARCH 2011 – ISSUE No. 88

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

First, the Editor would like to thank those members who were kind enough to say how much they liked the electronic version of SSB.

Adrian Whiting suggested that the three column format should be abandoned as being difficult to read when scrolling down a screen. As you can see, the Editor has done so (and also increased the font size) but feels he must apologise for not having thought of this himself!

There is something of a South African flavour to this edition (including real biltong – see below) plus the Editor is venturing into including pictures again and in colour too!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Military Society (Registered Charity No. 1117006) will be held at in the Board Room of the National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 on Saturday 11th June 2011 at 12.30pm.

Any member, who wishes to propose a motion at the AGM, or stand for election to the Council, should notify the Society's Secretary, Ted Herbert in writing by 11th May 2010. Ted's contact details are in *Soldiers of the Queen*.

THE COUNCIL

The Society is run by a Council of officers whose names appear in the back of *Soldiers of the Queen*. While it is a happy and efficient body of men (and one woman) we really could do with some new members to joins us and provide a fresh view of how the Society should be run.

The duties of an ordinary Council member are not heavy – a quarterly Council meeting, always on a Saturday, at the National Army Museum in London (NB: free parking in the Museum car park if you have to drive in) and after that it is really about how much you want to do.

The Society has a growing membership. Do any of our new members want to play a part in running the show? If so, let Ted Herbert know.

THE BROWNE MEDAL

Each year the Council of the Society awards the Browne Medal to the contributor who, in the Council's opinion, has produced the most original contributions to *Soldiers of the Queen* in the previous 12 months. The Council is pleased to announce that this year's award goes to. Dr. Harold E. Raugh jr.

2011 FAIR AT CHATHAM

The Society will be running a stand at the Royal Engineers' Museum in Chatham at a two day event the Museum will be holding on 26th and 26th June 2011. No further details are available at this time, but full details will be in the June issue.

NEW BOOK

Graham Gilmore, best known to us all in a redcoat as a Diehard, has written a book about his time in the South African forces. Called *Pathfinder Company - The Philistines* it is the story of 44 Parachute Brigade, which was formed of professional veterans from the UK, USA, Australasia and elsewhere. The book is a collection of stories about the founding and

deployment of a unit of "Foreign Legionnaires", from different parts of the world who became welded together into a remarkable combat unit, unsurpassed by any other South African Defence Force unit.

The book, which is published in South Africa by 30° South Publishers costs 250 Rand [= £22.60 or US\$36.19 as at 17th March 2011 Ed.], has 160 pages and many photos, both in colour and black and white, and maps.

The book can be obtained from <http://www.30degreessouth.co.za/index.php> or through any bookshop using its international book code number ISBNL 9781920143480.

If you have an interest in South African history the publisher's website has a large number of books on the subject – many never seen outside South Africa before. It is well worth a look.

ANGLO BOER WAR QUERY – A REQUEST FOR HELP

Mr Peter Spence has contacted the Society to see if we can help with an enquiry relating to his grandfather, William Spence, who was a storekeeper at Lindley in the Orange Free State, when the Anglo Boer War began.

He was recruited by British Military Intelligence and given the code name "Tom". His role was not so much to be an agent or courier but to provide a safe house where messages could be delivered or held and passed on. He was mentioned (by trade rather than name) by Winston Churchill in his book about the war when he stopped for a night in Lindley.

In the summer of 1900 "Tom" was contacted by a local Boer farmer and commando leader named Piet de Wet. De Wet had had enough and was ready to surrender and told "Tom" this in the presence of one of the clerks at the town bank, Charlie Moses, who recorded this in his diary which was published a few years ago.

As a result "Tom" and Moses carried a letter to the nearest British commander (possibly a General Broadhead) but no action seems to have been taken.

What Mr Spence is looking for is any information from military archives that would shed some light on his grandfather's activities. He has no idea where to start looking.

(Incidentally, and in fairness to Mr Spence, the above is the Editor's very brief summary of Mr Spence's Grandfather's story which is more detailed and much better told in the original.)

Mr Spence has only one more piece of information. His grandfather's Army contact was a Colonel Fradon. That is an unusual name, but searches of censuses and births and deaths records have not yielded any useful information. The spelling came from Mr Spence's late father so cannot be confirmed.

If any member can help Mr Spence find out more about his Grandfather's activities, their assistance would be gratefully received.

Mr Spence can be contacted at fordside@btinternet.com or via the Editor.

MAKE YOUR OWN BILTONG

Staying with matters South African, the following is reproduced, with acknowledgements, from the newsletter of the Springbok Club – a club for expatriate South Africans. It may be of use to any re-enactors who want to get their Zulu or Anglo-Boer War displays "just right".

"Biltongmakers.Com has, for over 10 years, put a smile on many a South African face. No longer do they have to pay exorbitant prices for biltong that in most cases is not even to their liking!

Now you can make your own Biltong at a fraction of the price you pay right now and you can make it the way YOU like it! Please visit www.biltongmakers.com and see all they have available.

You will never be without some REAL South African Biltong again!"

For those who have not tried it "biltong" is a form of cured and dried meat with the look, and sometimes the taste, of very old shoe leather.

NEW BOOKS

The Rifles (Berkshire and Wiltshire) Regimental Museum at the Wardrobe in Salisbury has published three new books that should certainly be of interest to members.

- *Soldiering Fifty Years Ago - Australia in the Forties* by Major George De Winton 99th Regiment (£7.50 plus postage) [*That's the 1840s, of course, not the 1940s, Ed.*]
- *From Calcutta to Peking* by Captain J. H. Dunne 99th Regiment (£8 plus postage)
- *The Life and Recollections of E. M. Davenport, Major in 66th Regiment.*

The first of these is particularly welcome. There is very little available on the British Army in Australia in the 19th century.

Copies are available from The Rifles (Berkshire and Wiltshire) Museum, The Wardrobe, 58 The Close, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2EX or at www.thewardrobe.org.uk.

For those interested in Afghanistan in the early 20th century, Michael Parker writes to recommend *Frontier Fighters - on Active Service in Waziristan*, the memoirs of Major W J Cumming, covering the period from 1916 until the start of the Second World War.

Cumming served in two Frontier units, the South Waziristan Scouts and the Corps of Guides and the book is published by Pen and Sword Books at £19.95.

HER MAJESTY'S RESERVE REGIMENTS

In a previous issue, the Editor asked for information about these and a number of members kindly responded with information about when, where and why they were raised.

In January the Society had a stand at a family history fair held at Bracknell in Berkshire.

A lady came along with a query which, she said, had so far defeated everyone she had asked. She had papers which showed her Great-grandfather as serving in "HM Reserve Regiment of Lancers". Nobody seemed ever to have heard of them. Could the Society give her any information?

Thanks to those of you who wrote in, we certainly could. So, to those of you who replied to the Editor's original query, please add this lady's thanks to those of the Editor.

MORE ON FOOTBALLERS' VCs

The last issue of SSB had a note about the sale of the VC awarded to Donald Simpson Bell who played for Crystal Palace (among others).

Dave Nash has written to say that Bell was not the only professional footballer to win the VC, nor even the first!

Lance-Corporal William Angus (1888-1959) enlisted into the Highland Light Infantry from the books of Glasgow Celtic on the outbreak of war and, serving with 8th Royal Scots, won his VC at Givenchy on 12 June 1915. He later became President of Carlisle Rovers FC.

UNIFORM QUERY

The Society has been contacted by Guernsey Museum which has a mess jacket (illustrated) in their collection catalogued as being that of a Colonel in the Royal Guernsey Militia (Light Infantry). However, there are discrepancies in the cuff braid (which is that of a Major) and the shoulder pips (there is a pip missing on the right shoulder and the second pip on the left should be of a different design to its partner).

Can any member of the Society help with a positive identification? One suggestion is that it belongs to regular officer – not a Militia officer – and possibly of the Royal Welch Fusiliers

In addition, the Museum is desperately seeking a contemporary image of a tunic of this kind being worn. Again can any members help? If so, please contact Matt Harvey at Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery, Candie Gardens, St. Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 1UG or at matt.harvey@cultureleisure.gov.gg.



SUDAN WARS STUDY GROUP

Zeriba 34 has been completed and will be sent out soon. Among the contents are some very interesting letters by an officer of the Black Watch, the *Four Feathers* film, and museum and auction reports. If you have not yet sent you subs for 2011 will you please do so as soon as possible, (same as last year £5) to Ralph Moore-Morris, 5 Sunvale Close, Haslemere, Surrey, GU27 1PY.

ROYAL SMALL ARMS FACTORY ENFIELD

There is an excellent short film on the history of the RSAF at Enfield which produced and gave its name to so many British weapons at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayHSF7FDaZI.

CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

The Imperial War Museum has launched a photography competition. It takes the form of giving HMS *Belfast* into her very own beauty contest!

The winning photographer will win a private tour for four people with Chief Yeoman Kevin Price on the sixty-seventh anniversary of D-Day, Monday 6 June 2011, which includes a simulated firing of the ship's 4-inch guns.

To enter, just upload up to five photos to the *Beauty and the Belfast Flickr group* by 11.59pm on Friday 6 May 2011. The best ones will be shown on the IWM website or visit www.iwm.org.uk/belfast-comp. To see the competition rules and find out how to upload photos, go to the Beauty and the Belfast Flickr group.

PETER DUNN LETTERS & AUTOGRAPHS

Peter Dunn's latest list of autographs, letters etc has the following Victorian items on it:

A patriotic poem originally published in a Herefordshire newspaper c1856 entitled "*Ich Dien – Welcome the Herefordshire Heroes Home from the Crimea*"

*Brave Herefordshire, lift up thy head, and let the Nation know,
The conquering heroes have returned, who nobly beat the foe,
There's honourable gentlemen, the noble deeds have done,
They are the warriors bold and brave , and many battles won*

This and a further 9 verses can be yours for £25

A signed photo of Lieut. General Lord Methuen of Anglo Boer War fame is £38.

A letter signed by Fitzroy Somerset (later Field Marshal Lord Raglan) while military secretary to Lord Hill the Commander in Chief is £85.

Finally, a letter from General Sir Charles Hay Ellice Quartermaster-General in 1871 and later Adjutant-General and Colonel of the South Wales Borderers, written from Horse Guards is £18

For the full list, contact Peter at 32B Bow Road (Basement Flat), Bow, London E3 4LN. Phone 0208 981 8844 between 8am and 8pm.

AUCTION REPORT

Wallis & Wallis's January sale was marked by what is probably a world record for the most expensive cap badge of all time. This was for an officer's 1902 pattern silver cap badge of the 19th Hussars. Said to be the rarest of all British army cap badges. Bearing hallmarks for Birmingham 1902 and with maker's mark 'B&P'.

There was a huge interest in the badge before the Sale with a number of bidders on the telephone and many commission bids. It finally sold to a bidder on the telephone for an incredible £1550.

Another rare cap badge, but not quite in the same league was an Other Rank's cap badge of the 21st Lancers, dating from 1896/97. In good condition, but with the lugs missing, it was sold for £220.

Moving from badges to actual headwear, a Victorian officer's lance cap of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers was sold for £1900.

WALLIS & WALLIS SALE DATES FOR 2011

4th & 5th May 2011 (last entry 26th March 2011).

14th June 2011 (last entry 7th May 2011).

26th July 2011 (last entry 18th June 2011).

6th September 2011 (last entry 30th July 2011).

18th & 19th October 2011 (last entry 10th September 2011).

22nd November 2011 (last entry 22nd October 2011).

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