

SOLDIERS' SMALL BOOK

NEWSLETTER OF THE

VICTORIAN MILITARY SOCIETY

JUNE 2011 – ISSUE No. 89

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We open with apologies for the delaying in sending June's issue out – this was due to problems, now happily resolved, with the Editor's day job.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Military Society (Registered Charity No. 1117006) was held in the Board Room of the National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 on 11th June 2011. The Chairman's and Treasurer's reports are attached. You can read them for yourselves but, in essence, the Society continues and the Council is looking at ways to expand its activities.

THE COUNCIL

The Council of the Society was re-elected unopposed and a full list of the various office holders appears in *Soldiers of the Queen*.

PIERRE TURNER

With regret we report, belatedly, the death of Pierre Turner, the military illustrator. The son of a senior civil servant and his French wife, Henri-Pierre Robert Delacroix Turner was born in 1943 and educated at Kingston Grammar School and Wimbledon College of Art. He had varied employment and became known as a fine military illustrator. He was also, briefly, the Society's acting Treasurer.

Some of his best work was for books by Major Michael Barthorp, and continues in print. He also wrote and illustrated "*Soldiers' Accoutrements of the British Army 1750-1900*" (2006) a book that cannot be recommended too highly as not only are the vast majority of the items drawn "from life", but it also shows interior details which are almost impossible to find in old drawings or photographs.

RICHARD HOLMES

Members will also have been saddened to have learned in the press of the death of Professor, Brigadier Richard Holmes the noted military historian and broadcaster at the end of April.

Born on 29 March 1946 Edward Richard Holmes was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Northern Illinois University and the University of Reading. He enlisted in the Territorial Army in 1964 in the Essex Yeomanry (then a field artillery regiment) and gained his commission two years later eventually to rising to Brigadier and Colonel of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

Between 1969 and 1985, he was a lecturer at the Department of War Studies at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, becoming Deputy Head of the Department in 1984.

In June 1991 he was appointed Aide-de-Camp to the Queen and in February 1994 Brigadier Territorial Army at Headquarters Land Command. In 1995, he became Professor of Military and Security Studies at Cranfield.

From 1997 until his retirement from the Territorial Army in 2000, Brigadier Holmes was Director Reserve Forces and Cadets, as well as being Britain's senior serving reservist.

He was Professor of Military and Security Studies at the Royal Military College of Science, Shrivenham at the time of his retirement in 2009.

Space prevents us from listing his many distinctions, whether academic, military or civil, but he was JP for the County of Hampshire, an accomplished horseman and, as those of us lucky enough to have met him will testify, a superb raconteur.

Professor Holmes's books are many and well known but, in the Editor's opinion, the one that seems to contain most of the man, as opposed to the academic, is "*Riding the Retreat*" in which, on horseback, he traced the route of the British Army's retreat from Mons in 1914.

2011 ARMED FORCES DAY AT CHATHAM

The Society ran a stand, provided a speaker and organised a wargame at the Royal Engineers' Museum in Chatham over a two day event held at the Museum on 26th and 26th June 2011 to mark Armed Forces day. The stand made a profit and the speaker, whose subjects were "*The VC Facts and Fancies*" and "*The Pig War of 1859*" were well received.

Our Secretary Ted Herbert organised the wargame on the theme (very appropriate at the RE Museum) of the Relief of General Gordon with some inspiration from the film *The Four Feathers*.

The game was played with 54mm, matt painted figures generously donated by Wm Britains Ltd, and comprised Dervishes complete with green banners covered in verses from the Koran, Arabs on camels, the Black Watch, the Camel Corps (mounted and dismounted), Egyptians in white coats for the Khartoum garrison and, of course, a personality figure of General Gordon himself. They were magnificent figures. In particular, the level of detail on the tartan of the Black Watch piper was amazing.

Unfortunately, in every game, the relieving force failed to get through, even with the help of Lt. Harry Faversham disguised as a Dervish, and Khartoum fell to the hordes of the Mahdi.

It is hoped to have some pictures of the game in the next issue.

MAJOR BARTHORP RECOMMENDS

Many of our readers know the books of a veteran member of the Society Major Michael Barthorp. He has written to us strongly recommending the military fiction trilogy by Patrick Mercer: 'To Do and Die', 'Dust and Steel' and 'Red runs the Helmund', all set in the Victorian period. Major Barthorp writes that 'the author has done a very sound and readable job on each campaign'. We pass on his recommendation.

DONALD McBEATH DCM

Member John Breen has produced a brief biographical booklet of Sergeant Donald McBeath of the Scots Fusilier Guards. A gamekeeper from the Blair Atholl estate, McBeath originally enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders in the 1850s, had a change of heart and bought himself out. He then changed his mind again and re-enlisted, this time in the Scots Fusilier Guards.

As a corporal in the Crimea he was one of the Guards' sharpshooters and won a DCM. If you want to know how, you will have to read the booklet.

It seems that McBeath was recommended for the VC but turned down – in spite of strong support from the Duke of Atholl - and this part of the story makes fascinating reading.

On leaving the Army, McBeath returned to the Blair Atholl estate to become a gamekeeper once more and also Sergeant Major of the Duke of Atholl's private army The Atholl Highlanders. The frontispiece is a splendid picture of McBeath in his Atholl Highlander's full dress – a magnificent, bearded typical Victorian highlander.

"*Donald McBeath DCM – Sharpshooter from Blair Atholl*" costs £5 plus £1 postage and is available from the Editor.

APPEAL FOR HELP

One of our Members – Denise Love - has been trying to contact the Queen's Own Hussars Regimental Museum in Warwick but having no success. What she wishes to know is what

papers they have relating to the history of the 3rd The King's Own Hussars, in which one of her great grandfathers served during the Great War.

Phone, email and a personal visit have all been tried but without success. Does any member have a contact at the museum? If so please let the Editor know and he will pass the details on.

NEW ON-LINE MAGAZINE

Pen & Sword Books have launched a free bi-monthly online magazine entitled *Warfare*. The magazine can be viewed online, downloaded and even printed off – all free of charge.

According to the publishers, the contents include military, family and general history, wargaming, modelling and re-enactment. There is also a new release and review section for books, computer games and films as well as model kits, wargames and miniature models.

To view the magazine visit www.warfaremagazine.co.uk.

NEW DISPLAY AT THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

The National Army Museum has opened a new display illustrating the Army's role in creating and defending the nation state of Great Britain we know today.

Called "The Making of Britain" it tells the story of the Army from the medieval era through to the early 18th century; a period that witnessed the forging of the modern nation state, civil war and the ultimate creation of a distinct British national identity.

The display includes portraits of two of Britain's' greatest commanders, Oliver Cromwell and the Duke of Marlborough, as well as life-size figures of a Royalist cavalryman, a Parliamentarian pikeman and a Parliamentarian musketeer.

If you cannot get to Chelsea, the display can be viewed on-line at:

<http://www.nam.ac.uk/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/making-britain>

PETER DUNN LETTERS & AUTOGRAPHS

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

- A letter from Prince Albert's Private Secretary regarding a proposed visit by the Queen to the wounded returning from the Crimea saying it was unlikely the Queen would commit herself to an engagement so far ahead - £18.
- A letter dated 1876 from Viscount Castlereagh regarding barrack damages (which may sound familiar to some old soldiers):
"... with regard to the dilapidations, all my men are ready to swear that they broke nothing, for the simple reason there was nothing in the rooms to break, and they say that the rooms were in a most filthy state ..." [His Lordship's emphasis] - £2.
- A letter from Admiral Sir Erasmus Ommanney RN, noted Arctic explorer who searched for the missing Franklin expedition, inviting the recipient to hear his Hunterian Oration - £60.
- A letter dated 1889 from General Sir William Lockhart, C-in-C India discussing an officer's career - £34.
- Autograph ("Byng of Vimy") of Field Marshal Lord Byng. Commanded Canadian Troops in the Great War, Governor-General of Canada, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police - £8.

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

AUCTION REPORT

Wallis & Wallis's Arms & Militaria Auction on 22nd March 2011 was their third Sale this year and prices show no signs of following other areas of the collectable world in slowing down.

A South Africa 1877-79 medal, with clasp for 1879 (45 Brigade 656 Private E Hamilton 2/3rd Foot) sold to a bidder in the room for £400. It was in excellent condition and came with four copies of attestation and other service records.

Not Victorian, but very unusual, this Great War hat badge of the Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train, 1915-1917 sold for £500.



The main items of Victorian interest, however, were a number of items relating to the Zulu Wars.



Zulu knobkerries – the plaques referred to in the text can be seen on the shafts of the two on the left hand side.

A carved wooden staff from the N'guni Tribe with the top was carved in the form of a head, making it very unusual and extremely scarce. It had large ears and an open mouth with traces of red paint and white teeth. There was a small trade bead to one eye (the other was missing) and a ring to the top of its head.

It was mounted with an engraved silver plaque inscribed 'Taken from Cetywayo's Kraal 1879' and probably depicts a likeness of the great Zulu Chief. It was 45-inches long and came with another plainer staff, 37-inches in length, which was also mounted with a similar plaque. They sold together in the room against a number of other bidders, for £1600.

A Zulu dark hardwood knobkerrie with the top of the haft engraved "H.R.O. Cross, A.M.D. Natal April 4th 1879" sold for £275. It belonged to Horatio Cross entered the army as a Surgeon in 1878 and served throughout the Zulu campaign of 1878-9. He became Surgeon to the 1st Life Guards in 1894 and retired at Lt Colonel in 1901.

Another knobkerrie, this time in an unusual yellow hardwood circa 1875 made £420.

Finally there was a presentation Zulu knobkerrie and whip relating to Cecil Rhodes. The two-colour hardwood knobkerrie was 26-inches long with a heavy ball head. The rhino hide whip was 50-inches long and each object was bound with bands of copper wire and mounted with a small silver disc engraved 'Cecil Rhodes to J.H. Lawley'. The hammer fell at £950.

WALLIS & WALLIS SALE DATES FOR 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).

DRILL MOVEMENTS OF THE VICTORIAN ARMY



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