

SOLDIERS' SMALL BOOK
NEWSLETTER OF THE
VICTORIAN MILITARY SOCIETY
DECEMBER 2011 - ISSUE No. 91

SEASONS GREETINGS

First, obviously, the Editor must carry out the pleasant duty of wishing all members and their families a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Previously, the Council of the Society met once a quarter in the Board Room of the National Army Museum in London. With effect from the March 2012 meeting, the Council will in future meet three times a year in March, June (i.e. immediately before the Society's AGM) and October. Council meetings will still be held at the National Army Museum.

FUND RAISER

The Council has decided that it would be advantageous if the Society had a Council member who was a designated as Fund Raiser for the Society. This is a brand new post that has not existed previously so the first incumbent would, to some extent, have to devise his or her own way or doing the job (to say nothing of a better sounding job title). If you are interested, please contact our Chairman Chris Kempton in the first instance.

GUEST SPEAKER AT THE SOCIETY'S AGM

The Society's Annual general meeting will be held on Saturday 9th June 2012 at the National Army Museum in London and the formal notice will appear in the March issue.

Members may recall that some years ago we used to invite a guest speaker to give a talk after the business part of the meeting (which never took more than 20 minutes) was concluded.

The Council has decided to revive this practice and is happy and proud to announce that Dr Rodney Attwood author of "Roberts and Kitchener" (see below) and winner of the Society's Browne Medal in 2008 will give a talk to members after the AGM. Copies of Dr Attwood's book will be available at the meeting.

SOCIETY VISIT TO THE BERKSHIRE YEOMANRY MUSEUM

The Society has been able to arrange a private tour of the Berkshire Yeomanry Museum in Windsor on Saturday 16th June 2010 from 2.30pm to 4.30pm.

The Museum's collection covers the role, arms and uniforms of the Regiment since its beginnings in 1794 including its activities during the Anglo-Boer War, the First World War, and Second World War.

For those unfamiliar with the regiment, in full dress it wore a dragoon style uniform and is easily distinguished by the fact that in full dress the regiment wore their sword slings over the tunic.

In the Great War it served in the Middle East. Private Frederick Potts was awarded the VC for bravery at Gallipoli and the actor David Niven's father was an officer in the regiment.

Today the regiment is represented by 94 (Berkshire Yeomanry) Signal Squadron, part of 39 (Skinners) Signal Regiment. One of the Squadron's troops is their old neighbours the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars.

The Museum is housed in the TA centre at the junction of Bolton Road and Bolton Avenue in Windsor. There is some limited parking.

The trip is free BUT numbers are limited so if you would like to come please let the Editor know in good time. He can be contacted at: 20 Priory Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 7QN or by email at vmsdan@msn.com.

APPEAL FOR HELP – THE MARTINI-HENRY

The Society has received the following email which the Editor gives as it was received:

"I have been commissioned by Osprey Publishing to write a history of the Martini-Henry rifle. I am on the hunt for contemporary photos of the weapon (all Marks and the carbine) to include in the book. I am especially interested in images of colonial troops with the rifle. If any contacts or members of the society can help can they please contact me via s.manning@eclipse.co.uk "

Can any member help? If you do not have email access, the Editor will happily forward items on.

ZULU – THE TRUTH BEHIND THE FILM

Paul Raby has written a new book with the above title which looks not so much at the action at Rorke's Drift itself, but at how those actions were portrayed in the film "Zulu". It is a fascinating read (*the Editor read the book with the film on DVD at the same time fast forwarding and pausing at appropriate moments – it drove his family mad!*) and should appeal not only to those with an interest in the Zulu War but also those with an interest in cinema and how movies are actually made.

Copies are available from the author at paulouisraby@yahoo.co.uk or by ringing 07970 365 260. The price is £7.99 plus postage.

NEW BOOKS

The following is based on the publisher's releases. The Editor has not seen the books themselves.

Roberts and Kitchener in South Africa by Rodney Attwood. Published by Pen and Sword. Hardback. 272pp. £25.

The British Army was shocked by three military defeats in a week in South Africa in late 1899. Field Marshal Lord Roberts and Major General Kitchener spent their first five weeks in South Africa restoring morale, reorganizing their forces and deceiving the enemy as to their intentions. In the next four weeks their offensive transformed the war: Kimberley and Ladysmith were relieved from Boer sieges and an enemy force of 4000 under General Cronje was captured on the Modder River. A long and bitter guerrilla war followed in a terrain ideally suited to fast-moving Boer commandoes. Roberts and Kitchener, their differing yet complementary personalities, their strategic and tactical decisions are described and assessed using a wide variety of sources including, personal papers and official correspondence. By these men's resourcefulness the British Army, despite its unpreparedness and poor leadership at many levels, won a remarkable victory in its first war of the twentieth century.

Wingate Pasha: The Life of General Sir Francis Reginald Wingate 1861-1953 by R. J. M. Pugh. Published by Pen and Sword. Hardback. 320 pp. £25

Wingate Pasha is the first biography of an eminent Scottish soldier-statesman who contributed much to the development of the Sudan and Egypt. In 1884, Wingate joined the expeditionary force to relieve Khartoum. As Kitchener's Military Intelligence Officer, Wingate was instrumental in assisting Kitchener to recover Sudan from Dervish domination. As Governor-General of the Sudan, Wingate's enlightened administration brought unprecedented political, social and economic prosperity to the Sudanese people. In the First World War, Wingate played a leading role in organizing the Arab Revolt against the Turks. After the war, he was High Commissioner of Egypt at the Paris Peace Conference. He retired from public life to Dunbar and had a successful business career until he died in 1953.

Hill of Squandered Valour: The Battle for Spion Kop, 1900 by Ron Lock. Published by Casemate Publishing. Hardback. 288 pages. £20.

The Battle of Spion Kop was fought during the campaign to relieve Ladysmith. It was the single bloodiest episode in the campaign, as well as a harbinger of the bitter and desperate fighting still to come in the Anglo Boer War.

Spion Kop, just northeast of Ladysmith, was the largest hill in the region, being over 1,400 feet high, and it lay almost exactly at the centre of the Boer line. If the British could capture this position and bring artillery to the hill they would then command the flanks of the surrounding Boer positions.

On the night of 23 January 1900, a large British force under Major General Edward Woodgate was dispatched to secure the height, with Lt. Colonel Alexander Thorneycroft selected to lead the initial assault. However, the Boers refused to give up the position and a bitter two days of fighting ensued. In the initial darkness the British mistakenly entrenched at the centre of the hill instead of the crest, and suffered horribly from Boer marksmen clinging to the periphery. Suffering badly themselves, the Boers were finally inclined to admit defeat when they discovered that the British had retreated, leaving behind their many dead. Yet, in light of the devastation wrought on both sides, the British were finally able to rally and relieve Ladysmith four weeks later.

Echelon: The Light Brigade Action at Balaclava by James W. Bancroft. Published by The History Press. Hardback. No pp given. £16.99.

Lord Cardigan's cavalry charge on 25 October 1854 at the Battle of Balaclava is surely one of the most famous actions in military history. In the 19th century it was immortalised in poetry and art, and later found a place in modern music and cinema. Much has been said regarding the commanding officers Lucan, Cardigan and the fatal actions of Nolan. But there were 670 men in the charge and by collating the evidence from the many eyewitnesses James Bancroft offers a new and more accurate appraisal of events.

QM'S LOCKER MILITARY MUGS

QM's Locker produces and sells a unique range of mugs on a military theme. Each mug has emblazoned around it up to 10 figures in historically accurate uniforms of the period. The figures are created by uniform artist Tim Reese and are very detailed and often very colourful, as you would expect from the uniforms of the 18th and 19th centuries.



The mugs are mostly based on British regiments, campaigns and battles but a few American Civil War mugs are about to be added to the collection. Details of the range of mugs can be found at www.qmslocker.co.uk

The mugs are £7.95 each and the website is linked to PayPal for secure online ordering.

ODD FACT

Members of the French Marine Corps of Napoleon III (1852 – 1870) were nicknamed *marsouins* (porpoises) by the sailors of the Imperial Navy. This was because they used to hang around ships, eating and doing no work!

PETER DUNN LETTERS & AUTOGRAPHS

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

- A signature of Field Marshal Sir John Fox Burgoyne (1782 – 1871). Son of General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne who raised the 16th Lancers (Burgoyne's Light Horse) and surrendered at Saratoga. Father of Captain Hugh Burgoyne VC who commanded the revolutionary turret battleship HMS Captain and who went down with her in 1870 (the shock of the loss is said to have been what killed the old Field Marshal). The first Royal Engineer to reach "5 star rank". Chief Royal Engineer in both the Peninsular and the Crimean Wars. An amazing man with an amazing career. £15.
- Two letters from Admiral Sir Charles Napier, who bombarded Acre in 1840 and was C-in-C Baltic Fleet during the Crimean War, accepting an invitation to a City event and forwarding a petition from a man discharged from Greenwich Hospital. £35.
- Original "Inspection State" card dated 1886 of the 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps signed by Colonel (later Maj. Gen.) Astley Terry CB. £20.

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 and Wallis's auction of arms and militaria on 18th and 19th October 2011 achieved what the report calls a "dramatic success" with many "staggering prices". With the economy still in a precarious state it is encouraging to see one area of the antiques and collectors market that is booming. The full report is available from Wallis and Wallis, this is simply an extract concentrating on the Victorian military items.

A scarce Prussian officer's Model 1897 Pickelhaube of the 1st Battalion 1st Garde Regiment of Foot bearing the owner's name Oberst (Colonel) von Friedeburg together with several letters relating to von Friedeburg sold for £4000.

A Belgian Cuirassier's helmet dated 1849 with a white metal skull, brass binding, black 'shaving brush' hair plume and a falling black hair back plume made £1150. Staying with "cuirassiers" but closer to home, a post 1902 officer's silver plated helmet of the Life Guards in excellent condition it made £2000.

Finally for the headgear a Victorian officer's full dress lance cap of the 5th (Royal Irish) Lancers with the officer's name "Major Jardine" went for a healthy £3400.

A beautiful pre-1855 officer's gilt and silver plated rectangular shoulder belt plate of the 17th Foot (Leicestershire Regiment), bearing the Regiment's famous tiger and the scroll with "Hindoostan" all on a cut silver star sold for £950.

Moving on to swords, an elaborate levee pattern officer's sword, circa 1850 of the 16th (The Queen's) Light Dragoons (Lancers), with 32" curved flat blade finely etched with crowned VR cipher, 'XVI Lancers', crossed flags and trophies of arms etc. sold to a South African bidder for £2100.

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