

**SOLDIERS' SMALL BOOK**  
**NEWSLETTER OF THE**  
**VICTORIAN MILITARY SOCIETY**  
**DECEMBER 2012 – ISSUE No. 96**

**A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

We start, as is only right, by sending to all members of the Society the Council's wishes for a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.



**THE SOCIETY'S WEBSITE**

After the phishing attack which brought down the Society's website – [www.victorianmilitarysociety.org.uk](http://www.victorianmilitarysociety.org.uk) – the Editor is pleased to report that it is up and running again and being restored to its former glory by our webmaster Michael Scott. The Council, the Society and all those who enjoy a visit to the site, thank him for his hard work. It is much appreciated.

**THE SOCIETY'S COUNCIL**

As well as the elected officers, the Council of the Society includes two members "without portfolio" who hold no office but are there to contribute their wisdom and experience. Currently, there is a vacancy for one of these positions, so, if you would like to join the Council and have a say in how the Society is run but without undertaking any particular duties, please contact our Chairman Chris Kempton at the address in *Soldiers of the Queen*.

## THE DIAMOND JUBILEE

2012 was certainly a year to remember what with Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics. Comparisons are odious someone said, but the 1897 Jubilee could not match 2012 for sporting achievement.

However, what 1897 did have, of course, was a magnificent parade of the troops of the British Empire. The Society's Vice President, Colonel Peter Walton, has produced a magnificent guide to the troops who took part in the 1897 Diamond Jubilee Parade. Called "*A Celebration of Empire*" it has numerous black and white photographs, an account of the parade from the newspapers of the time and a magnificent full colour centrepiece. Copies are available from the Editor price £5 + £2 postage and packing.

## THE MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL ARMY PHYSICAL TRAINING CORPS

Staying with sporting matters, the museum of the Royal Army Physical Training Corps is one of the more unusual military museums in this country. It houses a collection of sporting and military memorabilia including trophies, equipment weapons and photographs and posters all telling the story of how the British Army was kept fit from the founding of the Army Gymnastic Staff in 1860 up to the present day, including those soldiers who have participated in the Olympics. The Museum is in Fox Lines, Queen's Avenue, Aldershot Hampshire GU11 2LB. Phone 01252 347168. **Please note, as the Museum is "behind the wire" on an active military base, it is essential to contact the Museum before visiting and you will need to take some ID with you.** Opening times are 10am – 4.30pm Monday – Thursday and 9 am – 12.30pm Fridays. Other times by appointment.

## NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM – LUNCHTIME LECTURES

The following free lectures take place at 12.30 on the following Thursdays at the National Army Museum, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea. Click on the links for more details or ring the Museum on 020 7730 0717.

- [The War of 1812: Britain's Forgotten Conflict](#) - Keith Downen - 3 January 2013
- [Fashion, Power, and Protection: Army Uniform During the English Civil War](#) - Jennifer Daley - 10 January 2013
- [War in the Wilderness': Chindit Campaigns of 1943-44](#) - Tony Redding - 17 January 2013
- [The Eagle Unbowed: Poland and the Poles in the Second World War](#) - Halik Kochanski - 24 January 2013.

## NEW BOOKS

**The following are taken from the publisher's press releases. The Editor has not seen the books themselves.**

***Unicorns – The History of the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry 1794-1899.*** By Jonathan Hunt. Published by Pen & Sword Books. Hardback. 224 pp. Over 60 illustrations and maps, including 8 pages in colour £35.

## VICTORIAN NAVAL JOKE?

In the 1870s the Colony of Victoria in Australia ordered a guardship for the port of Melbourne. The ship was named Her Majesty's Victorian Ship (HMVS) *Cerberus* and effectively stood guard over the entrance to Australia. Given that in Greek mythology Cerberus is the three headed hound that stands guard over the entrance to Hell, do you think someone at the Admiralty was having a little joke when they chose the name?

Nonetheless she was a fine vessel as the model below shows and on entering the Suez Canal the *Cerberus* became the first Australian warship to hoist her Ensign. (This patriotic moment is only slightly spoiled because the reason for doing so was that warships paid a lower toll than merchantmen to the Suez Canal Company).

She was eventually sunk as a breakwater (see lower picture) and there is a growing campaign to try and raise and preserve her.



### **PETER DUNN LETTERS AND AUTOGRAPHS**

Peter Dunn's latest list of autographs, letters etc. has mostly 20<sup>th</sup> century items (and RAF ones, in particular) this time but it does have the following 19<sup>th</sup> century ones on it:

- A 6-page letter home from an officer – a Major - in an un-named regiment in India at the end of his career c 1873 mentioning various items including (a) military pensions, (b) changes in drill, (c) news of the death of Napoleon III and (d) education of young officers - £25.
- A letter from General Sir Thomas Biddulph, Colonel 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards and Keeper of the Privy Purse to HM Queen Victoria, declining an interview - £20.
- A signed circular letter from Lt Colonel Thomas Chaplin, Coldstream Guards, concerning candidates for commissions in the Guards who must now “*undergo the same examination as those for the line*” - £10.

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 27th November 2012 was the final Militaria sale of the year.

A group of six medals : Army General Service 1902, with one clasp for Somaliland 1902-04 (Engr. Lieut. J.B. Hewitt RN, HMS Highflyer), 1914-15 Star, British War medal, Victory Medal (with Mentioned in Dispatches leaf loose, not shown in the illustration), (Engr. Commr). France: Legion of Honour Chevalier's badge 1870 type, Russia Order of St Anne 3rd class with swords. Although mostly very fine there were minor enamel chips to the French award). The group came with a full set of miniatures. It was bought by a telephone bidder for £1700.



According to the Naval Who's Who 1917 John Benjamin Hewitt was “*present at the Battle of Jutland 31st May 1916, his service in action was 'specially noted' (London Gazette 15th September 1916), decorated Chevalier of the Legion of Honour by the President of the French Republic September 1916*”. Hewitt was also awarded the Russian Order of St Anne in 1917 for Jutland service.

Other than brass bound chests of drawers true campaign furniture seldom comes up for sale these days and often sell well. An example of a good mahogany framed late 19th century folding campaign chair was in the sale.

The chair was made in two main sections, the top with leatherette covered padded back, arms and separate cushion seat, the arms secured by catches underneath, and detachable at the hinges, the uprights and seatback fold forward, the turned legs, which end in brass casters, could be unscrewed. The frame was impressed with crowned VR stamps and it measured 40-inches high. It went to a telephone bidder for £725.



A .577/450" Martini Henry Mark II military rifle, from the Nepalese Royal Arsenal with some service wear but otherwise in reasonable condition sold for £600. It had a 33½-inch barrel, the breech had various ordnance inspector's marks, and deeply stamped to the left of the rear-sight 'N.S Nep', the frame partly re-stamped with a crown over 'VR Enfield 1873 II 2'. Walnut full-stock, the butt stamped with RM Enfield mark, Allahabad Arsenal mark, and dated 1894, with sling swivels and correct cleaning rod.



Finally, among the swords in the sale was a 1912 pattern cavalry officer's sword, often regarded as the best cavalry sword ever designed, with a blade 35-inches long etched with crowned GVR cypher in scrolled panels, regulation plated bowl guard engraved with scroll pattern overall, ornamental pommel, wire-bound shaped sharkskin grip and brown leather knot, in its plated scabbard with opposing rings. The blade had a little light surface pitting and it sold for £450.



Wallis & Wallis's next four sales are:

- 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013
- 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013
- 30<sup>th</sup> April – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 (Spring Fine Sale)

Last date for entries into the March sale is 16<sup>th</sup> February. Last date for entries into the Spring Fine sale is 23<sup>rd</sup> March.

### AND FINALLY.....

Virtually every publication one comes across at Christmas has a Christmas Quiz in it, and there seems no reason why Soldiers' Small Book should be any exception. No prizes this time, and answers in the February Edition.

1. Which infantry regiment was the last one to wear the red coat in action?
2. Which infantry regiment was the last one to take its colours into action?
3. Complete this list: Wellington, Hardinge, Cambridge, Wolseley, .....?
4. Which campaign medal ribbon is white/red/white/red/white, all stripes of equal width?
5. Which infantry regiment traditionally has a ram as its mascot?
6. If you add together the regimental numbers of: "The Emperor's Chambermaids" "The Death or Glory Boys" and the Empress of India's Lancers (a) what's the total and (b) to which regiment of foot does that number belong?

Happy Christmas!

Soldiers' Small Book is published in August, October, December, February, April and June by the Victorian Military Society (Registered Charity No. 1117006). Copyright Hon. Editor, Dan Allen 20 Priory Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 7QN. Please send any items you think may be of interest to the Editor at the above address or by email at [vmsdan@msn.com](mailto:vmsdan@msn.com). The deadline for the next issue is 22nd January 2012 (Isandwana Day). The mention of any book, DVD, CD, other publication (in whatever format), person, firm, organisation or company in Soldiers' Small Book is for the reader's information only and does not imply either a recommendation or an endorsement either by the Victorian Military Society or by the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to edit any contribution received as he sees fit.