

Meeting Notes for BMS meeting 2.1.25:

'Members' Own and Recent Acquisitions'. Held in the Fairfield Suite, Bromsgrove.

A nice variety of items were on show tonight, lots of photos, not much text, please enjoy!

Memorial Plaque:

First up was the memorial plaque with unique name awarded to 40131 Private Mark Stevenson, 10th Battalion Worcester Regiment, who was a native of Smethwick. When Stevenson was part of a work party of twelve, he had been killed with three others 13.7.1917. His Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWVG] information was minimal so our member has now sent amendments to include family information and address.



Photo left: Memorial Plaque to Pte Mark Steveson.

Also, sold with this plaque and unknown to the successful bidder until collection [!] was a box of miscellaneous collectibles which included a King's African Rifles [KAR] cap badge, a trench art lighter and some sweetheart brooches.

WWI pair to a Staff Nurse:

Next was the British War Medal [BWM], Victory medal [VM], nursing badges and identity wristbands of Staff Nurse Henrietta Georgina Ballard. She had served overseas for 7 months during WWI and had a long nursing career post-war. Of note, Ballard had contributed several papers to nursing magazines based on her WWI experiences and knowledge. [Apologies no photo].

Air Force Cross group:

The Air Force Cross [AFC] group to 205931 Wing Commander [final rank] L.T. Coleman was shown next. His AFC, thought to be for meritorious service [but not yet fully researched or confirmed], was awarded in 1961. As a South African recipient, our member had expected Coleman's WWII 1939-45 and Africa Stars to be named but they were not. His Africa Service Medal and War Medal are correctly named. The member's rapid research established the answer to this which was that *Coleman was not entitled to them!* More research led to discovery of his Wedding Day photo [where

he is wearing all four medals!). By then, he had transferred to the Royal Rhodesian Air Force. His pilot training had been completed after the end of WWII. There was much discussion about what to do with the 'non-entitled' Stars in the group. Permission to contact the vendor for any clarification was denied.



Photo above: Medal group to Wing Commander L.T. Coleman., AFC. Left to right: Rhodesian General Service Medal, Rhodesia Exemplary Service Medal, AFC, 1939-45 Star, Italy Star, 1939-45 War Medal [named] and Africa Service Medal [named].

Royal Australian Air Force group with RAF LSGC:

There followed a Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] group to R.G.Brown with an RAF Long Service and Good Conduct [LSGC]. The LSGC was based on 15 years of RAF service [1947-62] and three years RAAF with one year foreign service in Vietnam whilst attached to 35 Transport Squadron. The RAF LSCG was issued by four countries other than Great Britain, namely, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Southern Rhodesia.



Photo above: Medal group to R.G.Brown. Left to right: obverse: Vietnam Medal, Defence Force Service Medal [no clasp], RAF LSGC and the South Vietnam Campaign Medal with clasp '1960'.

An anticipated reunite!

The next item was a reunite hinted at in the October, 2024 BMS meeting [‘Single British War Medals without a Victory Medal’ see www.birminghammedalsociety.com]. C. H. Webster, a Captain on the Indian Army Reserve of Officers, had the unusual forenames of ‘Cyril Heathcock’, had service in the Burma and North-Western Railway in the interwar period. Through some negotiation via an auction house, Webster’s Volunteer Long Service Medal [Bengal and North-Western Railway Battalion, Auxiliary Forces, India] had been purchased. To make up the group, an unnamed Delhi Durbar 1911 [to which he was entitled] was added. Webster, born in 1890, was fluent in several languages and his career was discussed in some detail with emphasis on his WWI duty as a Divisional Recruiting Officer and his interwar occupation in the opium trade [with Job Title: ‘District Opium Agent’!].

Photo below: Captain C.H. Webster’s full medal entitlement of [left to right] BWM, War Medal 1939-45, India Service Medal, Delhi Durbar and Volunteer Long Service medal.



Recent acquisition, acquired but not yet received!

There followed a family medal group ‘reunite’ to the Ardley family. Three of the Ardleys had featured in the December, 2024 talk, namely Alan, Basil and Thomas who were all conscientious objectors from Norfolk. Another member had spotted the medals for sale to a Corporal Edward Geoffrey Ardley, St John Ambulance Brigade. The medals were the Serving Brother’s breast medal, St John’s Service Medal with five additional bars [5 year’s extra service per bar]. Sold with this group was a bronze star with no fewer than thirty-six individual bars one for each year of service. His ‘Serving Brotherhood’ medal award was gazetted in 1951. Unfortunately, although posted some weeks before, the items are not yet delivered...Also, it transpires that there are two E.G.Ardley’s so which one was for sale?! This was solved by a newspaper cutting about a St John Ambulance competition trophy, the winning group being the Ardleys from Sheringham, Norfolk and *including* E.G.Ardley!!



Photos above left and right: Medals to Cpl E.G.Ardley St John's Service Medal and bronze star with 36 individual bars for years of service [Courtesy vendor].

D-Day + 1 DSO group

The next item was a D-day+1 Distinguished Service Order [DSO] in a group of six medals with India General Service [IGS] 1936 with MiD oakleaves, 1939-45 Star, France and Germany Star, Defence Medal and 1939-45 War Medal to Major Robin Grey Kreyer 2nd Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment [photo below courtesy Noonans].



He had received his MID as an Officer in the 12th Frontier Force for distinguished service in Waziristan, North-West Frontier but had then resigned his commission possibly because of minor misdemeanour. Later, having returned to England, he re-enlisted as a private in the Warwickshire Regiment and became part of the British Expeditionary Force [BEF]. The full DSO citation was deservedly read out which, in summary, states that on 7.6.1944, when the C/O had been killed, Kreyer took charge, organised and had repulsed an enemy attack and then withdrew his force from an untenable position. The Warwickshire Regiment had won five DSO's in WWII. Of note *for the issue of a DSO, the recipient had to have received an MiD beforehand* sometimes but not necessarily in the same action.

Battle of Dargai Heights items:

The meeting resumed after a small break with two items relating to the Battle of Dargai Heights 18th and 20th October, 1897 in the Tirah Campaign 1897-98, North West Frontier. This action is sometimes known as the 'Storming of the Chagru Kotal'. It was deemed necessary by the Tirah campaign C/O General William Lockhart to stop the Afridi and Orakzai's long-range sniping on engineers attempting to improve the road over the Chagru Kotal [the access to the Tirah region]. The first medal was a three clasp India medal to Rifleman Karanbir Thapa 1st/3rd Gurkhas involved in the first assault of 18th October, 1897, a successful action with modest casualties. Many reasons are given for the decision to withdraw from the Heights that day.



Photo above: India Medal [obverse] three clasps 'Punjab Frontier 1897-98', 'Samana 1897' and 'Tirah 1897-98' to Rifleman Karanbir Thapa 1st/3rd Gurkhas.

More tribesmen quickly arrived being drawn in by the noise of battle. As a result, the second assault on the Heights was a considerably harder and more sanguinous battle in a well-defended position. The terrain presented steepness with limited cover for the attackers. The initial tactics of company-sized rushes of the 1st/2nd Gurkhas, the 1st Dorsets and the 2nd Derbys were to suffer heavily in the hail of bullets. Late in the day, the battalion rush of the 1st Gordon Highlanders supported by the 3rd Sikhs was successful. Next shown was the Distinguished Conduct Medal Group [DCM] to 579 Sgt Joseph Keeling of the 2nd Derbys who was severely wounded in the second assault. His was one of two DCM's to the Derbys that day when overall four VC's were won.



Photo above: Medal group [obverses] to 579 Sgt Joseph Keeling. Left to right: DCM [QV], IGS single clasp 'Sikkim 1888', IM 2 clasps 'Punjab Frontier 1897-98' and 'Tirah 1897-98' and LSGC [Edw VII].

Reference was made briefly to medallic terminology as the 'India Medal' [1895-1902] *here is often referred to as an 'India General Service' medal in many sale and auction catalogues, a potential confusion for newer collectors.* Across the hobby, there are similar and longstanding populisms eg the 'South Africa Medal' 1879 is generally known as the 'Zulu War' or even 'Zulu' medal; The 'Memorial Plaque' is commonly called the 'Death Penny' or 'Death Plaque'.

Assorted Rhodesian items which included a British South Africa Company Medal:

Next up were some mixed Rhodesian medals and badges to three generations of the Harley family. Of particular interest was a no-clasp British South Africa Company Medal [BSAC] reverse 'Rhodesia 1896' to Telegraphist C. Harley but he was not listed on the medal roll for the award. Could he have been left off the roll or was his medal a late issue? The provenance of the item with the other family items would support it being a correct issue.



Photo above left and right: BSAC medal obverse and reverse [Rhodesia 1896]. The striking reverse of the medal is by celebrated artist R. Caton Woodville.



Photos above left and right: BSAC medal naming to Telegraphist C. Harley.

There was also a South Rhodesia Volunteer medal to Sgt E.C. Harley and an unnamed undated 'Best Shot' medal of the 'Post and Telegraph Staff' Bulawayo presented by a 'G.B. Shakespeare'. A general point made was that the medal roll for the BSAC medal is not totally reliable and collectors need to take care purchasing such medals. Also, in the 1970's, a group of unnamed BSAC medals [reverse Mashonaland 1897 – all BSAC medals were originally issued unnamed] became known as 'Lovatt's specials' – Lovatt had identified recipients who *hadn't* claimed their medals and had their names engraved. These then appeared on the market... 'Caveat Emptor'!

The next medals were to Alistair C. Maclean who had enlisted in Rhodesia with a wartime commission later becoming a field reservist and being issued a Special Constabulary medal. Outside of Great Britain, only Rhodesia had issued Special Constabulary medals. His wartime actions were not yet researched. [Apologies as no photo].

The Order of Al-Nahda and the Hejaz Campaign:

The 'Order of Al-Nahda' was discussed next. Members were shown two adjacent images of the 3rd Class of the Order and asked which they preferred! The audience was split 50:50 on this one but they were then told it was the same award pre and post cleaning!!

From further research into 14 Squadron in the Hejaz campaign, Lt Harold Hindle James RFC had been issued the Order of Al-Nahda 3rd Class but the award should have been the 4th class, the same as four other RFC members receiving this Order as announced in the LG.

The full group to Lt H. H. James was the Order of Al-Nahda 3rd Class, OBE [mil], 1914-15 Star [named to Somerset Light Infantry], BWM [named to RFC], VM [named to RFC], General Service medal 1918-62 with two clasps 'Iraq' and 'Southern Desert Iraq' and the 'Italian Cross of War'. [see photo below].



Also shown were photos of the recipient wearing his awards and another where he is wearing Arab dress. With this group was an Austrian trench dagger found by the recipient in Italy at Canove 22.11.1918 where the recipient had served after Hejaz in 1917.



Photos above left and right: Lt H. H. James RFC wearing his medals and his gravestone.

British Empire Medal and General Service Medal pair to the RAF:

Next shown were the medals to AC1 A.C. Vickers, RAF, of British Empire Medal [BEM] and GSM 1918-62 with clasp 'Palestine 1945-48'. From his number 659202, this was from the 'block' between 655000 and 679999 indicating he had been a transfer from the Army in 1939. His WWII medal entitlement is not yet unconfirmed. He had transferred back to the Army after the war.



Photo left: Pair of BEM and GSM clasp 'Palestine 1945-48' to AC1 A.C. Vickers [details in text].

His BEM citation was gazetted 29.10.1948 for 'gallantry and good services in Palestine prior to the evacuation' in 1948. In one action when he was attached to a maintenance unit, Vickers had foiled an attempted theft of equipment by Arabs by attacking them unaided. The unit was evacuated and the equipment saved. There were four BEM's in this LG issue referencing the final days of the British in Palestine. The simple words 'Good Services' in a citation might cover much bravery and courage as

had been heard earlier in the meeting.

There followed the Air Force Medal [AFM] and WWI pair to 232626 Sgt Observer Hector Archibald McDonald Balls. As discussed in previous BMS meetings, the naming on the BMW and VM depended on when a person transferred to the RAF. If transferred by the RFC or Royal Naval Air Service [RNAS] to the RAF on or after 1.4.1918 [the date the RAF was founded], a servicemen's medals would be issued by the RAF. If the person had then served overseas in a theatre of war, both medals would be named to the RAF but in this particular case, the BWM is named to 'Boy Mechanic' RNAS and the VM

to *Sgt RAF*. Balls had enlisted under the age of 18 years as a 'Boy Mechanic'. He had been sent to RNAS Cranwell to train as a wireless operator his final posting being to HMS Daedalus at Dover. 'Daedalus' was one of the Royal Navy's 'stone' frigates of WWI.



Photo above: Medal obverses of group to Sgt Observer H.A.M. Balls. Left to right: AFM [Geo V uncrowned head 1919-30] and WWI pair. [Details in text].

Balls' citation for the AFM [LG 3.6.1919] was read out but members were asked 'why hadn't the Distinguished Flying Medal [DFM] been awarded'?! After all, Balls had done 250 hours of antisubmarine patrols and work laying mines operating out of Dover *which covered the channel area of Dunkirk*.

Intriguing WWI photo!:

The final item was an intriguing original WWI photo of an 'éclusier' [a canal lockkeeper] wearing his two medals. In the undated photo, thought to have been taken in Flanders, he is flanked by four British soldiers. One of the medals is the Croix-de-Guerre [CdG] but there was much discussion the other which could be a DCM. No other details are known at present but, early in the WWI, it was

known that some parts of Flanders had been deliberately flooded by the opening of sluice gates in the canal system. This was done by the Allies for strategic reasons. Quite reasonably, the éclusier could be a foreign recipient of a the DCM. There was much discussion about the possibilities! *If any member can contribute to this debate as a result of reading these notes, Paul Handford will be pleased to hear from you!*



Photos above: Left and right: Left: The éclusier wearing a possible DCM and CdG. Close-up taken from the photo on the right, the éclusier flanked by four Tommies.

Mr President thanked all contributors – another good interactive meeting!!

Meeting closed at 21.42hrs

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With my usual apologies for any typos or errors of content.

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