

BMS Meeting notes 7.7.22.

Our usual permissions were sought and granted. For one grouping, a photo may be available at a later stage.

Somewhat unusually, I start these meeting notes with a short summary about the contents! Some items may seem familiar and, indeed, several have previously been discussed in BMS ZOOM, informal ZOOM meetings and other BMS meetings in recent years. They are all fascinating parts of what was a superb humorous session which revealed the steadfastness of medal collectors, the serendipity we need [and hope for] and the pleasure of reuniting our broken groups **and speaking to like-minded people who understand!!** Some of the reunites discussed are not yet completely reunited; one pair was a 'unite' as the pair had never been together before: so many were discussed that I do not have photos for them all and many reunites have taken decades to achieve. Two members of our group have been spectacularly successful as will be revealed! **Quite frankly, all the groups discussed were remarkable in their own way.**

Our first contributor referred to 'Ebay' searches for specific recipients' surnames and that success meant regularly reviewing dealer lists/auction house catalogues. Using an internet auction service such as 'The Saleroom' could mean a full inbox! Most of his reunites had come from 'Ebay' purchases.

Our BMS has its very own 'missing medals' section. 'Medal News' has the same arrangement called 'medal tracker'. Also available is 'Facebook' for 'medals sought' and the 'British Medal Forum' [BMF] which is free to advertise – it is for British medals only [up to 20 are allowed per year] but reaches a worldwide catchment.

The first reunite group was to 41897 Sergeant Edwin Ibbotson Royal Engineers [RE]. The member bought the recipient's 1914-15 Star around 1995. A while later, his Distinguished Conduct Medal [DCM] had appeared on 'Ebay' from a seller *in Holland* – needless to say this was rapidly snapped up at the 'buy it now' price! His DCM was awarded for Suvla Bay 12th August, 1915. Ibbotson was also Mentioned-in-Despatches [MiD] for Gallipoli. From his medal index card [MIC], he had also been awarded the Military Cross [MC] for an action when he was a Lieutenant in the Tank Corps 8th August, 1918 in which he was injured. Detail from his service papers revealed he had also served in the Boer War 1899-1902. Other information from the BMF produced a photo and confirmation that Ibbotson was a Sheffield man – He had enlisted in the Sheffield Volunteers Engineers before the RE.

His four clasp Queen's South Africa medal [QSA] was then bought after researching DNW [now 'Noonans'] auction archive and contacting the successful bidder. So, there are still three or possibly more to locate before this group can be considered complete – namely a King's South Africa Medal [KSA], a British War Medal [BWM], a Victory Medal [VM] and possibly a territorial decoration!



Photo above: Partial reunite thus far of Sergeant E. Ibbotson's medal group. Left to right: MC [George V], DCM [George V], QSA 4 clasp [Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Transvaal and Laing's Nek] and 1914-15 Star. The group had started with the single Star in 1995.

Next up was another Ebay purchase of a single BWM to 61810 Sergeant C. Webb RE. He Had been awarded Military Medal [MM] and bar - London Gazette [LG] 12.12.1917. Fast forward to 2013, his VM was auctioned. The catalogue indicated the award of MM and bar. The purchase price of the VM was considerably more the original BWM purchase!! The reunite was complete when his MM and bar were duly purchased at a later auction. Although the MM and bar awards were within ten days of each other, they were gazetted four months apart. **[See photo of Webb's complete reunite below].**



Next featured was a BWM which was reunited with a Meritorious Service Medal [MSM] to recipient Sub-conductor Arthur Shirley Pussey of the Indian Postal Corps. Further research indicated he had been MiD for service in East Africa. His VM is outstanding but as there is no MIC, it's not known if he was entitled to the 1914-15 Star. **[Apologies no photo].**

The awards to Sergeant F.S. Barron of the West Riding Regiment were discussed next. He had a DCM and QSA. He was also entitled to the MBE Military, a BWM for his service in India and a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal [LSGC].

His KSA was added next via Ebay. His MBE was a posthumous award whilst he had been a regular army instructor attached to the Burma Volunteer Rifles. He had been commissioned into the Indian Army Reserve of Officers. He died of heatstroke whilst on campaign in Waziristan 20th July, 1920. The MBE award is gazetted in 1921 but his award is dated is 19th July, 1920. Still missing are his BWM, LSGC and possibly the India General Service Medal clasp 'Waziristan'. Barron is commemorated on the Karachi War Memorial. The MBE award was unknown to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission [CWGC] an oversight which will be corrected in due course. **[Apologies no photo]**.

Non-reunite! The 1914-15 Star of 91193 Sergeant William James Bugg RE *hasn't yet been reunited* with Bugg's MSM which our member has. It was apparent that the Star's Ebay 'buy-it-now' price [initially £439 but now has fallen to £119] had factored in this information!

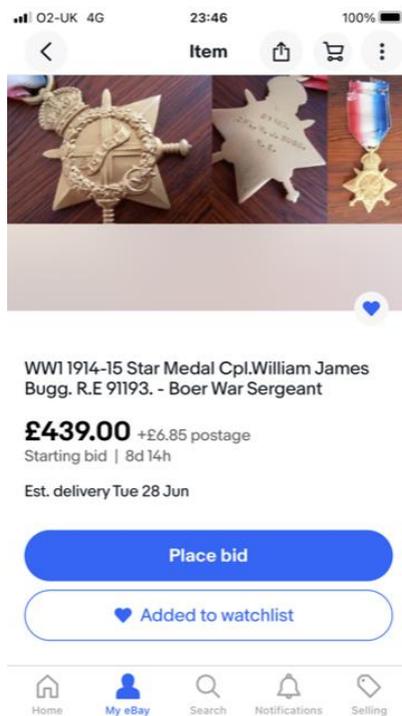


Photo above left: MSM to 91993 Sgt W.J. Bugg.

Photo above right: Ebay sale notice of Bugg's 1914-15 Star.

There followed a true modern 'unite' of a pair to a Zimbabwean Soldier 806165Q Private B. Ngwenya. Some twenty years ago, Ngwenya had been awarded the Bronze Cross of Zimbabwe during the 1998-2002 Congo War. Six foot three inch Ngwenya had won this during the siege of Manono in Katanga Province in 1999. The award had been presented by President Robert Mugabe in person on their Defence Forces day.



Photo above left: Obverses of the Zimbabwean Bronze Cross of Valour and Zimbabwean campaign medal [details in text] A 'unite'!

Photo above right: Reverses of the same medals. Both named to Ngwenya.

After parting with his award in 2001, Ngwenya had been awarded the Zimbabwean campaign medal for 'Operation Sovereign Legitimacy' in 2003. This was named to rank of Corporal as his earlier gallantry award had conferred a promotion as well as a gratuity. The second award had been offered for sale to the member's family. These two medals had never been together previously!

Our next contributor took us to the 'Hejaz' campaign 1916-17 and reunites involving not just individual recipients' medals but also linking medal groups to officers involved in that campaign. The awards of Captain Thomas Henderson MC, AFC [Air Force Cross] which had been purchased but missing from the group was the Order of Al-Nahda 4th Class. Following contact with Henderson's relatives, a remarkable reunite followed of ephemera *and* Henderson's missing Order of Al-Nahda 4th Class [for more details on the Hejaz campaign, please see Roger Bragger's presentation 'More Henderson research' 4th February, 2001 ZOOM meeting].



Photo above left : Photo of Captain Thomas Henderson MC, AFC.

Photo above right: Captain Thomas Henderson MC, AFC medals and miniatures. Left to right: MC, AFC, Trio with MiD oakleaves and Territorial Decoration. The Order of Al-Nahda 4th Class is top centre of this picture.

In amongst the photographs had been the *original* last desperate message dated 22.6.1917 of Fl. Lt. W.G. Stafford MC, DCM who had become lost in the desert. [see images below].

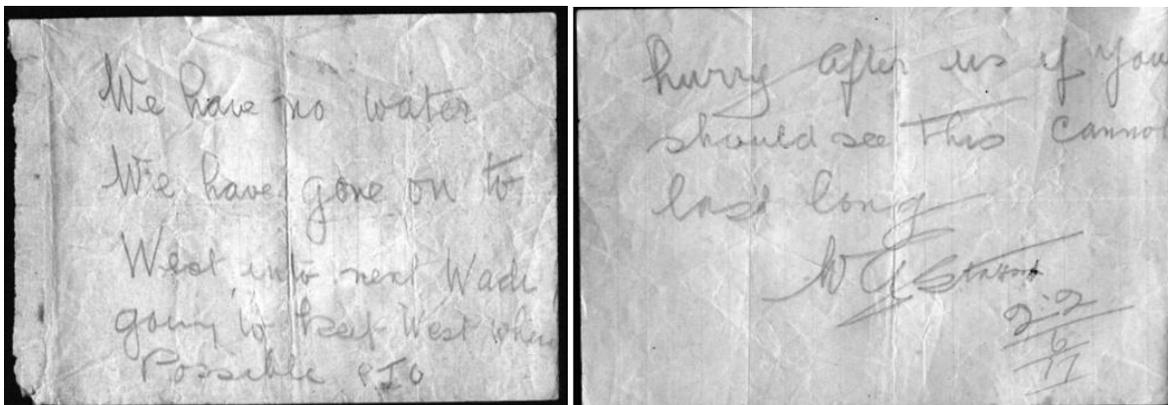




Photo above: Hardacre's South Africa 1853 [reverse] single clasp 1877-8 reunited with Indian Mutiny medal [obverse]. Third medal ribbon is that of the Cape of Good Hope medal.

Next up was a collector who had achieved no fewer than thirty-five reunites mainly from the WWI period and featuring Memorial Plaques, scrolls, Silver War Badges ['services rendered'], BWMs and VM's. *[Secretary's note : there should be an award for this!]*

Some interesting stats were revealed about the member's thirty-five reunites: the average time for a reunite was 2771 days; The fastest was 6 days with next quickest 24 days [for a trio of a casualty who was buried in Bolton]; The longest interval for a reunite was 10832 days!! *[Secretary's note: there could be an award for this!]*.

For the purposes of the talk, our contributor concentrated on the 'longest', the 'latest' and the 'shortest' time intervals as examples of his successes. *For the 'longest'*, this reunited a 1989 purchase of a China Medal 1900 awarded to 25444 Bombadier Ernest Hill of 15th Company Royal Garrison Artillery [RGA] to his 3 clasp QSA [Clasps Cape Colony, Paardeberg and Driefontein] some thirty years later. Hill had died on campaign in Hong Kong 28th June, 1901 - a photograph of his grave in Hong Kong [which was available on the internet] was shown. Other RGA soldiers were to return to South Africa and so be eligible for the KSA.



Photos above left [obverse] and right [reverse]: Reunited medal pair of China medal 1900 and 3 clasp QSA to 25444 E. Bombadier Hill [details in text].

The short one: Next were the reunited awards to 6279 Sergeant Joseph Phillips [North Staffs Regiment] purchased in 2008 comprising VM, Defence Medal [DM], War Medal 1939-45, LSGC, Corps of Commissionaire's Medal and a 5th Division intercompany hockey medal. A separate group of QSA two clasps [Cape Colony and South Africa 1902], BWM and MSM to the same recipient and same regimental number were purchased later in 2008.



Photo above left: Reunited Phillips group of medals [see text for details].

Photo above right: Phillips' Corps of Commissionaire's medal and Interdivisional Hockey award [reverse].

The most recent reunite: A 2004 purchase of VM Royal Berkshire Regiment to 4339 Private Wallace Lees from Tamworth was reunited with a Wilnecote tribute medallion to the same man in 2005. Lees' BWM was reunited in 2022 some seventeen years later. Lees was KIA 20th September, 1918. There is no plaque with the medals.



Above photo: Left to right WWI pair and Wilnecote Tribute Medallion to 4339 Private W. Lees.

Next featured a GSM 1962-2007 with clasp 'Borneo' awarded to an RAF recipient Lofthouse [who had been an Air Training Corps cadet from his service number] and purchased in the 1990's which was eventually reunited with his GSM 1918-62 with clasp 'Arabian Penisular'. **[Apologies no photo]**.

A purchase of 1982 featuring a DCM, BWM, VM, IGS [clasp Afghanistan 1919 clasp] to Percy G. Wells was discussed next. His career was discussed in detail.

In 1911, Percy George Wells had been in the 2nd Battalion Cameron Highlanders in India. He was awarded the DCM whilst with the 2nd Queen's [West Kent] Regiment in Mesopotamia – His citation from 1915 was quoted. After recovering from a major shoulder wound from the DCM action, he returned to India and was commissioned into the King's Liverpool Regiment. Thereafter, he joined the Royal Flying Corps.

Sold with the medals were his photo and his 'ghoolie' chit [written in a local language and shown to members tonight] which for him turned out to be an important and necessary document because **he had to use it**. After he was shot down and captured by the natives, he had been handed to the women of the tribe – then the tribal elders then realised the monetary value of the ghoolie chit which not only secured his release but also rescued his genitals from an uncertain outcome.

His retirement from the RAF after the end of the war was not uncomplicated!! The army had been unaware of his commission and even his own regiment thought he was still an unattached sergeant in India!!

After the war, he was a constable in the Royal Irish Constabulary for three years before becoming a taxi driver. Only in the late 1920's, did he apply for his medals. He had been MiD in Mesopotamia. There was no 1914-15 Star with the group but he was entitled to this. His Medal Index Card [MIC] states that it was to be issued by the India Office [but they never issued it]. Then, in a great coincidence, the 1914-15 Star was located around 2015 – it has been in the possession of Wells' nephew having been issued by the India Office with the medal roll stating 'Sjt P.G. Wells S & T Corps' [Indian Army issue!] So a very happy reunite after some 35 years! Wells' DCM was the only one to the Cameron Highlanders for Mesopotamia. **[Apologies no photos]**.

Next up was a reunite by a 'surrogate' featuring the six medals of Lt. Col. Charles Edward De Lisle Solbé of the Indian Army. They were the India General Service [IGS] two clasps [Burma 1887-89 and Burma 1898-92], India Medal 1897 four clasps [Punjab Frontier 1897-98, Samana 1897, Tirah 1897-98 and Waziristan 1901-2], IGS 1908 with single clasp North-West Frontier 1908 and trio **[Image next page]**. Born in 1865, Solbé's father was a priest to HM Forces. Solbé progressed in rank from Lieutenant in 1890, becoming a Captain in the Tirah campaign 1897. He served at the Battle of Dargai Height's 20th October, 1897 being in command of Reserve Company A – the remaining 3rd Sikhs Infantry companies were tasked with storming the heights with the Gordon Highlanders after the initial assaults of Gurkhas, Derbyshires and Dorsets had been held up. The 3rd Sikh Infantry became 51st Sikh infantry after the Kitchener reforms of 1903 and became known as the 'Frontier Force'. He was a Major in the 1908 campaign in Waziristan. The 51st Sikh Infantry served in served in Palestine and Mesopotamia in WWI – Solbé's MIC theatre of war is left blank but he now has the rank of Lt. Col.

However, the six medal group actually consists of seven medals with the reunite being the return to the group of the original VM [whose whereabouts were known to a local dealer who'd done the reunite] – hence, the 'surrogate' reunite. The renamed VM along with its correctly accented 'e' in the surname Solbé has stayed with the group.



Photos above left and right: Lt Col C.E. de Lisle Solbé BWM, VM naming and renamed VM.



Photo above: Solbé medal group [Obverses] with reunited VM [details in text].



Above photo: Reverse of the Solbé group with top right the renamed VM being his 'seventh' medal].

There followed a Zulu medal issued to Henry Skinner of the 17th Lancers who took part in the charge at Ulundi. There was a letter confirming he had been in the charge. After the Zulu War, he was recalled to the 4th Dragoons serving at Tel-el-Kebir. His Egypt Medal 1882 and Khedive Star had been sold at auction some years earlier. At another dealer, these medals turned up in a group of renamed medals. The Egypt Medal to Skinner appears to have the correct regimental number but had been partially renamed being engraved in the style of the Zulu medal.



Photo above left: Group to Skinner 17th Lancers Zulu Medal clasp 1878, Egypt Medal dated 1882 clasp Tel-El-Kebir and Khedive's Star dated 1882 [Obverse].

Photo above right: Reverse of the Skinner medals.

Photo below: Naming of Skinner's Zulu War medal. His Egypt Medal 1882 was named in exactly the same style.



Next up was an Ashanti Medal to a gunner in No. 2 Battery, 2nd North Nigeria Artillery Regiment. There is a medal roll for the silver Ashanti medal but not yet for the bronze medal.

His East and West Africa medal was named to the Royal Niger Company. He was also entitled to a bronze Royal Niger Company medal and an Africa general Service [AGS] 2 clasp [Northern Nigeria 1902 and Northern Nigeria 1906] so the group is half-reunited. He was KIA in 1906.



Photo above left and right: Reunited East and West Africa medal clasp 1898 with Ashanti Medal 1901 clasp Kumassi [Obverse and reverse]. Apologies as I have not recorded the recipient's name.

Our member had also bought a seven clasp AGS to the Southern Nigeria Regiment some years ago – the recipient was entitled to an eighth clasp but was KIA shortly after. Recently at the workplace, a chance look at an old 'Spink' archive catalogue of 2006 made the next reunite possible! The archive auction information had confirmed the sale of the same recipient's East and West Africa medal with two date clasps. Long story short, the owner still had the medal he had purchased in 2006 and was happy to transact an exchange. What is more extraordinary is that both the old and new owners were present at tonight's meeting but had been unknown to each other until chatting just before the meeting had started. The previous owner was not expecting to see the medal again!!

A photo may follow in due course.

Several items followed concerning the issue of medals and ephemera to those serving in ambulance units in the French army in WWI.

A member had bought a British Ambulance Committee discharge certificate dated 27th May, 1918 issued to George Johnston who joined the Army in May, 1918. Volunteer Ambulance driver George Johnstone's VM [his MIC indicates correct spelling of his surname was '**Johnstone**'] was reunited with his other WWI medals comprising 1914-15 Star, BWM, erased VM and Croix de Guerre with Star purchased in a separate sale. Johnstone served with the British and French Red Cross Service [BRCS] with an embarkation date of 6th November, 1914. He served at Ypres and the Vosges joining

SSA No1 [Section Sanitaire Anglaise No 1] in November, 1916.



Photos above left: Johnston's certificate and Trio with Croix-de-Guerre featuring the reunited VM.

Photo above right: Reverse of Johnston's 1914 Star and BWM.

The next item concerned the reunite of some 40 letters [with some photographs] written by conscientious objector Richard Acland Armstrong. The letters were originally sold as a single lot in 2013 but when resold, had been marketed as individual lots over several months during 2015 and 2016. They had been written from the front during WWI. These were painstakingly reunited but why a vendor should sell such a collection of ephemera separately was pondered. Armstrong had been a BRCS chauffeur before being commissioned in 1916. His 1914-15 Star was reunited with the ephemera in 2016.

Received Nov 27

Friends' Ambulance Unit
 Army Post Office S 10.
 British Expeditionary Force
 November 17th 1915.

Dear Mother & Father,

I only had to stay in Folkestone one more night. I went to the Harbour Office to report at a little after 10 o'clock on Wednesday & they said that my Ford had been brought to the pier & that I was to go on the boat leaving at 10:30! I had to shift some - but the boat was 40 mins late so I got on board comfortably. We arrived at Boulogne about 12:45. I then had to hang about till 2 o'clock waiting for the Ford to come ashore by torch if the luck is all! I then went to report at the ^{Red Cross Headquarters} B.R.C.S. Hqs, where of course they knew ^{me} me.



Photos above: Example of one of Armstrong's letters and his photo.

Photos below: Obverse and reverse of Armstrong's 1914-15 Star.





The memorial plaque and 1914 Star of Howard Dale 1st Battalion Worcester Regiment who had been KIA aged 22 years 18th November, 1914 was reunited with his parchment statement some years ago! **[Pictured above]**. Only three months ago, Dale's family had been in touch to say they had found his BMW and VM and did our BMS members still have the Star?! – By generous gesture of the BMS members, the plaque, 1914 Star and parchment were returned to the family.

A Zulu War medal to 'Howland' was up for auction but, some lots later in the same sale, our member noticed there was a LSGC to a 'Howlind' one letter different and with a different service number. It would appear likely to be the same soldier. His LSGC was issued in 1890. Clearly, the nuances of collectors and how they store their medals combined with a large collection sale can lead to errors and oversights in cataloguing. **[Apologies no photo]**.

Next shown was an Operational Service Medal for Sierra Leone with rosette for 'Operation Barras' [the rescue of Royal Irish Regiment soldiers from the 'West Side Boys' militia group in 2010 by British Special Services]. The medal is hoped to be united with its recipient who'd served with the Special Boat Service. **[Apologies no photo]**.

Finally, some more reunites from the WWI era concerned casualties with the same name 'Evans'. Many WWI sale items in this era had been separated into boxes of BMW, VM and Stars. Careful viewing identified a trio to 'John Lawrence Evans' 16th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment who was KIA on the first day of the Battle of the Somme 1st July, 1916. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial. There was another surname 'Evans' medal spotted this being the 1914-15 Star to 955865 Driver William Edmund Evans [Royal Field Artillery] which was still missing its pair. He was also KIA later in the war on 28th May, 1917. He is buried at Leper Cemetery, Belgium. The Evans' were brothers from Battersea in London.

Their memorial scrolls were sold by a *different* dealer and both purchased. [See photo below].



Photo above left: Trio To J.L.Evans Middlesex Regiment.

Photo above right: Single 1914-15 Star to Driver W.E. Evans Royal Field Artillery.

However, both their plaques had been already been sold on. It is not known what happened to W.E. Evans' pair. These important reunites were achieved by good observation and persistence!

President Paul Handford described the meeting simply as 'very inspiring' and at 21.43hrs, the meeting finally closed!

Typed 27.7.22 – 2.8.22.

With my usual apologies for all the typos and errors.

Chris Davies.

BMS Secretary.

www.birminghammedalsociety.com

PS - Three medals are keenly sought by a member to complete reunites are as follows: *[Please message the secretary if you can assist].*

A WWI Military Medal [MM] to 13265 Lance Corporal Arthur Brocklehurst 1/6th North Staffs.

A WWI BWM to a casualty 2438 Private William Lee 1/6th North Staffs.

A WWI [MM] 197760 Sapper Thomas Young of the 197th Tunnelling Company RE.