

BMS minutes for 4.3.2021 ZOOM meeting 19.30hrs:

Apologies received from P and S. Handford, D. Rees, P. Wilson.

Twelve members and four non-members were present.

President welcomed our guests and invited John Scott to present his talk:

'Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. Odd Men and Detachments'.



John introduced his talk with a short summary of the regiment with its beginnings as the '79th Foot' in 1793 and becoming the '79th Cameron Highlanders' in 1806. In 1873, Queen Victoria referred to the regiment as 'her own highlanders' and gave them a new title 'the 'Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders'. After the Cardwell reforms, the regiment stayed a single regiment having refused to become the 2nd battalion Black Watch [a 'refusal' probably facilitated by their being based in Gibraltar!]

History

- 1793 Regiment formed as 79th Foot or Cameronian Volunteers by Alan Cameron of Erracht, Kinsman of Cameron of Locheil (Head of Clan Cameron).
- 1806 Name changed to 79th Cameron Highlanders.
- 1873 Queen Victoria grants the Regiment the title of The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders.
- 1881 Regiment refuses to become 2nd Battalion The Black Watch as part of Cardwell Reforms.
Remains a Single Battalion Regiment.
- 1897 2nd Battalion Formed.
- 1948 2nd Battalion Disbands.
- 1961 Amalgamated with The Seaforth Highlanders to become The Queens Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons).

After various other name changes, they are current called 'The Highlanders' resulting from a merge of the 'Queen's Own Highlanders' and the 'Gordon Highlanders'.

John listed their main campaigns and referred to two standard texts Major L.L. Gordon's 'British Battles and Medals' and 'Historical Records of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders' a record of the regiment up to 1890 approximately [and available quite cheaply as a reprint]. He commented that through his research, some of the numbers of clasps issued stated in a text can sometimes be at variance with his findings [eg Egypt Medal clasp Suakin 1884]

John's presentation was methodical and detailed. I will try to give a range of images and information to give a flavour of the meeting. In general, the 'oddmen' [or 'short men'] numbers referred to is less than 50 but as high as several hundred on occasion.

The first battle clasp referred to was 'Talavera' on the **Military General Service Medal** [MGSM] Gordon's states 12 men survived to claim this the clasp out of a total of five officers and forty-nine men.

Next up was the **India General Service Medal 1854-1892** ['IGSM'] – For the clasp 'Sikkim' one Officer was entitled and two for the clasp 'Umbeyla' but both these newly commissioned officer recipients were KIA.

India General Service Medal 1854 - 1895

- 1 Officer qualified for clasp **Sikkim** and 2 Officers qualified for clasp **Umbeyla**.
- **North West Frontier**

Expedition against
5 Dec 1863 to



the Mohmands
2 Jan 1864

The clasp 'North-West Frontier 1863-4' for the actions against the 'Mohmands' had only been authorised in 1884. The 1st battalion had sent four companies [half an infantry battalion in that era]. There were only 4 officer and 134 other ranks [OR] recipients. The senior surviving Officer checked all the claims for the clasp. The two non-qualifying companies actually saw more of the fighting!

The last clasp was claimed in 1912 by Private James Galbraith – he had been awarded the Indian Mutiny medal clasp ‘Lucknow’ and the IGSM [Pictured below].

Private James Galbraith



The next campaign involving small numbers of Camerons was the **Ashantee campaign** of 1873-74 their being attached to the 42nd Foot [Black Watch]. Private Wilson is entitled to the Ashantee Medal 1873-73 along with two Officers and 130 OR – casualty details were given. Very little else is known about Galbraith and Wilson other than their names being on the medal rolls.

Somewhat oddly, all the OR ranks medals are named as ‘Private 42nd Foot’ on these medals regardless of their existing retained rank when transferred. All but seven received the clasp ‘Coomassie’.



Pictured left: Ashantee medal clasp ‘Coomassie’



Above: Photo [from the mid 1920's] and medal group of Corporal Robert Finlay later Canteen Sergeant. Left to right: Ashantee medal, Egypt medal clasps 'Tel-El-Kebir' and 'The Nile 1884-85', Army Long Service and Good Conduct, Meritorious Service Medal and Khedive's Star.

Corporal Robert Finlay didn't qualify for clasp Coomassie. He contributed much to the regimental journal about the Ashantee campaign. His Meritorious Service Medal [MSM] was awarded in 1923.

For the **Egypt and Sudan Campaign**, 28 no clasp Egypt medals were issued [Reference 'Gordon's']. The detachment of odd men consisted of two Officers and 30 OR who were responsible for guarding the kit at the battle of 'Tel-el-Kebir'. Amongst the 'odd men' with a no-clasp Egypt medal was a Private Clarke. He was entitled to a later clasp but had possibly been discharged from the army and didn't bother to claim [The applicant had to return the medal for additional clasps to be fitted].

No Clasp 1882 Medal



- 2 officers and 30 other ranks left guarding Regimental and personal equipment on morning of Tel-el-Kebir. These all received the 1882 medal without clasp. 1 officer and 3 men qualified for clasps after 1884 to their medals.

For the clasp 'Suakin 1884' clasp, there are some discrepancies in the numbers in Gordon's book.

**Capt. PWN Fraser DSO
attached 1st Bn. Hampshire Regiment**



Fraser qualified for the Delhi Durbar Coronation award by virtue of being on the Indian Civil List [he was a temporary replacement in the Indian Civil service covering leave] Note again the pre WWI convention of wearing coronation awards before campaign medals. Fraser was KIA at the Battle of Loos in 1915.

India General Service medal IGSM 1908-35:

Only 4 of these were issued with clasp 'Afghanistan NWF 1919' of which one is awarded to Lt John Farquharson Cameron Highlanders attached 2/4th battalion The Border regiment in India.

**Lieutenant J. C. Farquharson
attached 2/4th Bn. The Border Regiment
formerly/latterly Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders**



He is also entitled to the Territorial Efficiency Medal as he is likely to have re-enlisted in the ranks after having resigned his commission [this information not yet confirmed].

Small numbers of Camerons received the clasp 'Waziristan 1919-21' or 'Waziristan 1921-24' [seven and sixteen clasps respectively].

Clasps for 'North West Frontier 1930-31' [one issued to Captain D.N.Wimberley MC: later Major General CB,DSO and MC] and 'Burma 1930-32'[small numbers issued -possibly 6 but two sheets are missing from medal roll].

2925998 Private D.M. Squire attached Indian Army Corps of Clerks late Major, Burma Army Corps of Clerks



Above: 2925998 Private D.M. Squire medals – attached Indian Army Corps of Clerks and later Major Burma Army Corps of Clerks. Left to right IGS 1908-35 clasp Burma 1930-32, 1939-45 Star, Burma Star, Defence Medal, 1939-45 War Medal and the rare 'Burma Long Service Medal' far right.

General Service Medal 1918-62 [GSM]:

For the General Service Medal 1918-62 , only 1 clasp 'North West Persia' to a SNCO is known.

For the 'Iraq' clasp, at least 4 clasps were issued. Two from Royal Irish Fusiliers [RIF] block of numbers and two from Machine Gun Corps [MGC] but these entitlements could be prior to their transfer to the Camerons. [The precise regimental naming on these medals is currently not known].

For the clasps 'Kurdistan' and 'North Kurdistan', 3 officers qualified with the Iraq Levees.

Four staff officers qualified for the clasp 'S.E. Asia 1945-45'.

Details were given re the clasp 'Palestine 1945-48' clasp awarded to various attachments totalling 14 officers and 8 OR. One recipient Captain H. Owen, by profession, a Solicitor in North Wales but commissioned into the Cameron Highlanders[!], will transfer to the Army Legal Services becoming its head and a Major-General, CB.

Canal Zone

16 October 1951 to 19 October 1954

- This clasp was only authorised in October 2003.
- Although the 1st Bn. served as a whole unit, up to 3 December 2004 only 51 medals & 7 clasps had been issued.
- The medal shown is to 19040321 Pte. (later Sgt.) A. Peters.



Above: Close-up of the 'Canal Zone' clasp.

Cyprus and Near East clasp:

Small numbers are entitled. Sergeant MS Watt quite probably has a unique 4 clasp GSM to regiment with clasps 'Malaya', 'Cyprus', 'Near East' and 'Arabian Peninsula'.

Queens's Korea medal

Six Officers and 39 OR received this. Only two Officers qualified for the United Nations Korea medal.

Pictured below: Queen's Korea Medal to Private Abel

14435497 Private K.A. Abel



- Served in Korea from 2 August 1951 to 12 August 1952 attached to 1 Bn. King's Own Scottish Borderers.
- Abel is also entitled to the General Service Medal (GVIR) clasp Malaya attached to 799 Company RASC.

Next discussed was the Queens Korea and Military Medal [MM in 1944] to Corporal J King MM. His medals are named to Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. [see below].

2753755 Corporal J.King MM

The Queen's Korea medal is named "2753755 CPL. J. KING. MM. ASH".

The medal roll shows King as attached to 1st Bn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. There is also a note referring to the Argyll's roll.

Did he receive 2 medals?

One named Camerons & one named Argylls?

King also received a clasp Malaya to his pre war General Service Medal clasp Palestine.



Finally, there was much discussion about the ‘most highly decorated Cameron Highlander pre WWI’ who was Lt Thomas Henry Heeley whose medals and photo were shown. He was a triple Distinguished Conduct Medal [‘DCM’] winner. As a Cameron highlander, he had been seconded to the Egyptian Army through the campaigns of the 1880’s and 1890’s and then commissioned into the Cameron Highlanders [see medals below].



President Roger Bragger thanked John Scott for a good, well researched and informative talk and all contributors to the post talk discussion for yet another excellent ZOOM meeting.

With my usual apologies for any errors and typos. My thanks to John Scott and other contributors for the reproduction of their Powerpoint slides and photos in this summary.

Typed 16-22.3.2021.

Chris Davies

BMS Secretary.