

Meeting Notes for BMS ZOOM 6th January, 2022.

Twelve members were present at the January BMS ZOOM Members' Own Meeting. Permission to record the meeting was obtained as well as permission to use photographs of medals discussed and powerpoint slides.

Before the meeting, secretary advised of the arrangements for February and March meetings. These were changed to ZOOM format as the Holiday Inn, Bromsgrove had once again been requisitioned by the Government.

The BMS social ZOOM for 16th January, 2022 was cancelled.

For information, secretary also advised that the 2nd June 2022 BMS meeting fell on the Whitsun Spring Bank Holiday. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday was the following day 3rd June, 2022.

Also, in general discussion, it was noted that the 1921 census information was available from today on the 'Find My Past' website. [note additional fees apply to download information].

Items discussed:

A member had been given a box of medals, which after researching, had comprised three family groups to the 'Spooner' and 'George' families. There were a range of awards including Indian General Service Medals [IGSM Geo V] award clasp Afghanistan, World War I pair and Long Service Good Conduct medals [LSGC] to Indian Army Ordnance Corps [IAOC] and Royal Artillery.

Alfred Spooner, born 1871, had enlisted in the Indian Army Ordnance Corps [IAOC] between 1906-26. His medal group was a WWI pair, the IGSM clasp Afghanistan 1919 and a Long Service Good Conduct medal [LSGC].



Pictured above: Left to right: Medal group of four to Alfred Spooner [IAOC] WWI pair, IGSM clasp Afghanistan 1919 and LSGC. The IGSM far right was with this group of four medals and is named somewhat unusually and rarely to 'Clerk Mrs Spooner Ordnance Corps'. [with apologies for image quality].



Pictured above: Medal group to William Augustus George [Royal Artillery] comprising WWI pair, War Medal 1939-45, India Service Medal 1939-45, Coronation Medal 1937 and LSGC.



Photographs above left: William Augustus George and **above right:** His father-in-law Alfred Spooner [Dates of photos unknown].

Alfred Spooner's daughter had married the recipient of the next medal group a William Augustus George a native of Hereford. The recipient would clearly have been entitled to a World War II War Medal [which the member has added]. He had enlisted in the Royal Artillery in 1911, became a subconductor in 1924, was commissioned in 1939 retiring in 1947 with the honorary rank of Major.

After some further 'Ancestry' research, photos of William George and Alfred Spooner were obtained along with William George's obituary notice. So with some interest, skill and perseverance, the story behind the medals [that no one had wanted..] had been explained.

Next up were awards to RAF apprentices. Many may be familiar with RAF Halton apprentices but they were also based at RAF Flowerdown [near Winchester and the location of RAF wireless and electrical school] and RAF Ruislip [near Harrow and the location of the RAF records office]. RAF Ruislip ran as a base between 1926-41. RAF Flowerdown had service block numbers starting at 590001. At the start of WWII, there were 2080 clerks with significant administrative duties. In the early part of the war, only a few had transferred into aircrew as was pointed out by one officer '*..any fool can fly an aeroplane but it takes years to train a good clerk!!*' The service numbers for RAF

Ruislip are more difficult to trace as they come from the same block as RAF Halton. RAF Flowerdown closed in 1939 and the school was moved to RAF Cranwell.

An early recruit was 590066 Corporal N.E. Hext RAF a Ruislip apprentice whose medals were shown. He was to be MiD, later became a wing commander and was awarded the MBE. The group includes an IGSM clasp 'North West Frontier 1936-39 and LSGC.

Ruislip Apprentice 590066 Corporal N. E. HEXT RAF Later Wing Commander OBE



Pictured above: Medal group to Corporal N.E.Hext RAF. Left to right: MBE, IGSM clasp 'North-West Frontier 1936-39, 1939-45 Star, France and Germany Star, Defence Medal [DM], WM 1939-45 with MID oakleaves, General Service Medal 1918-62 [GSM] clasp 'Malaya' and LSGC.

Next up was the medal group to a RAF Flowerdown apprentice. He was No. 364765 Sergeant [later wing commander] B.J.Stevenson RAF. His awards included two coronation medals for 1937 and 1953 and a LSGC. His career was presented in detail – He enlisted at RAF Halton in 1924 becoming a

wireless operator and mechanic and retired in 1957.

Flowerdown Apprentice

364765 Sergeant B. J. Stevenson RAF

Later Wing Commander



Pictured above left to right: 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, DM, WM 1939-45, Coronation Medal 1937, Coronation Medal 1953 and LSGC.

Reference was made to a Légion d'Honneur book during the next section. A member's recent purchase was a Légion d'Honneur award worn by Napoléon Bonaparte on St Helena. The two other examples recorded in the book were also from St Helena.

One is made of silver although Napoleon would be entitled to a gold award. Napoléon Bonaparte was famous for immediate battlefield awards of the Légion d'Honneur and would [presumably] always carry several ready for this eventuality.

Our member's Légion d'Honneur was a type III with a Paris hallmark for 1809-10. [for more on types of Légion d'Honneur, please see December 2021 meeting notes].



Pictured above: Légion d'Honneur and lock of hair of Napoléon Bonaparte [details in text].

The provenance of the item was discussed in some detail – It had been given to Captain Thomas Poppleton [senior officer of the 53rd regiment on St Helena] by Napoléon during his exile there. In the mid 19th Century, the item was inherited by the Gregory family through Poppleton's niece. The last Lady Gregory to own it had been the sole survivor of an IRA attack in 1921 in which four other occupants of the car in which she had been travelling in had been killed. This happened in Ireland in 1921 and prompted her permanent move to Exeter where she had died in 1979. The item then was owned by a local antiques dealer till 2020.

An unnamed Suffragette's medal was shown. This one was different to the hunger strike medals issued and possibly celebrated women's emancipation legislation of the early 20th century. There have been many fakes in medals issued to Suffragettes. Could this example be a 'one-off' unnamed award as many experts have not seen such a medal? It has original ribbon. Named Suffragette medals realise high prices.

Also discussed was a medal pair GSM clasp Palestine 1945-48 with Cadet Forces Medal to Acting Corporal J.H. Peacock ['Jack']. There was no War Medal 1939-45 as the recipient had not claimed it. Jack's career and character was revealed! [Apologies no photo].

Members were thanked for their contributions! Meeting closed at 21.07hrs.

Meeting notes typed 16.2.22-8.3.22.

My thanks to all for use of photos/PP images and my apologies for any typos or other errors.

Chris Davies BMS Secretary.