

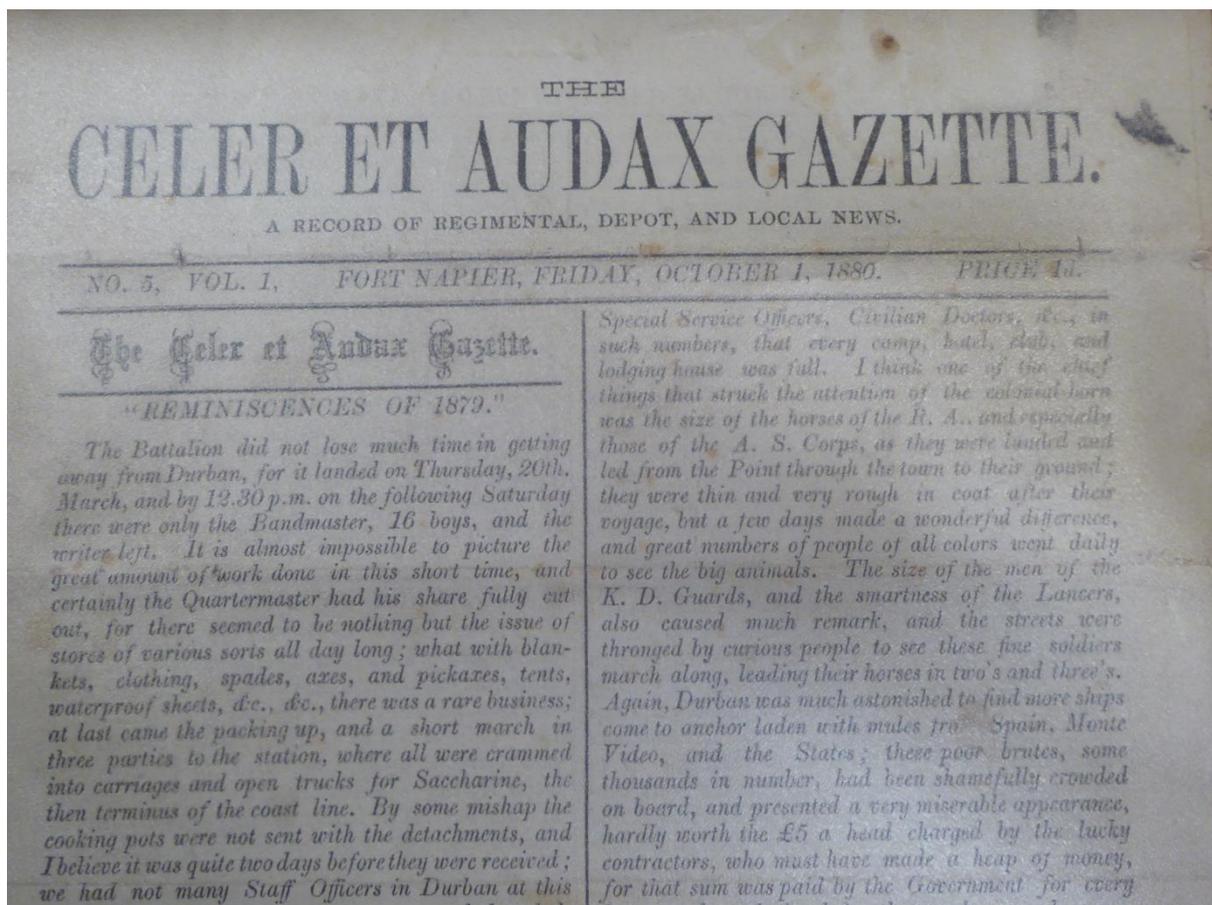
Minutes of BMS meeting 2.8.18

1. Welcome President Roger Bragger welcomed all to tonight's meeting
2. Apologies P Wilson and M Harrison.
3. Numbers Meal 15, drink 5 and ONS 1.
4. New members Pete Fisher, Martin Keyes and David Walters.[Your secretary will update the members' attendance record book in due course].
5. Library requests None.
6. Functions and visits Suvla barracks heritage weekend 8.9.18 – all welcome.
7. Research questions An Imperial Service medal - ? non-gazetted. Dave Seeney unable to locate a relevant entry - Membership suggested would need to view this medal. Also John Barker discussed 'eagle boats'[picture shown] and the U234 which, at the end of the war, was carrying enriched uranium
8. Committee point Secretary read out letter of thanks received from Roy Painter following his receipt of honorary BMS membership. Roger Bragger also congratulated Phil McDermott whose company [Worcester Medals] had been recently awarded the official UK medal supplier contract.
9. Committee point Miniconvention options and viability – membership questionnaire to be circulated [Secretary to action].
10. Committee point - Committee has two vacancies – President invited volunteers from the membership.
11. Committee point – The 2019 research trophy –President requested all entries to John Scott by December 2018 [Thank you].
12. Committee point - Programme amendments proposed. Drummond lecture if available [Simon Peale] to be on 1.11.18. If not available, Mick Atkinson's talk on 'Waterloo' to move to 1.11.18. Dave Seeney's talk on Easter uprising, [previously scheduled for 1.11.18] to move to AGM date of 4.4.19.
13. Committee point President's Cup For 2018 – to be held on the members' 'recent acquisitions' meeting 6.12.2018 – For 2019, to be held on the members' 'recent acquisitions' meeting 6.7.19.
14. Tonight's meeting 'Letters from South Africa 1879-1881 Pte Watts 3/60th Foot' by Paul Murray.
15. Next meeting 'A memorial plaque - the Worcestershire Regiment and Salonika' by Jeff Taylor.

Private Watts refers to the general hardships being experienced as 'slavery' and reports the bad water as a cause of much illness amongst the troops. The Zulus were also starting grass fires. There are still floggings in the British army whilst on campaign.

Ulundi falls in July, 1879 and King Cetawayo is in hiding – by September 1879, the fighting against the Zulus is all over. Private Watts' letters contain a lot of narrative regarding the terrain, plant and insect life.

By 17.10.1879 the Regiment is based in Harding, Natal where they receive orders to go to Pondoland a march of 1000 miles – Watts describes this as 'better than Zululand'. He reports, on 9.2.1880, he is reading the newspapers printed some five weeks earlier in Great Britain and at Fort Napier, the great southern comet is visible in the night sky. Watts expresses hope to be transferred to Gibraltar or Malta in the Summer of 1880. In the meantime, he is occupied in a printer's shop at Fort Napier, Pietermaritzburg with production of the regimental newsletter called 'Celer at Audax'. ['Swift and Bold'].

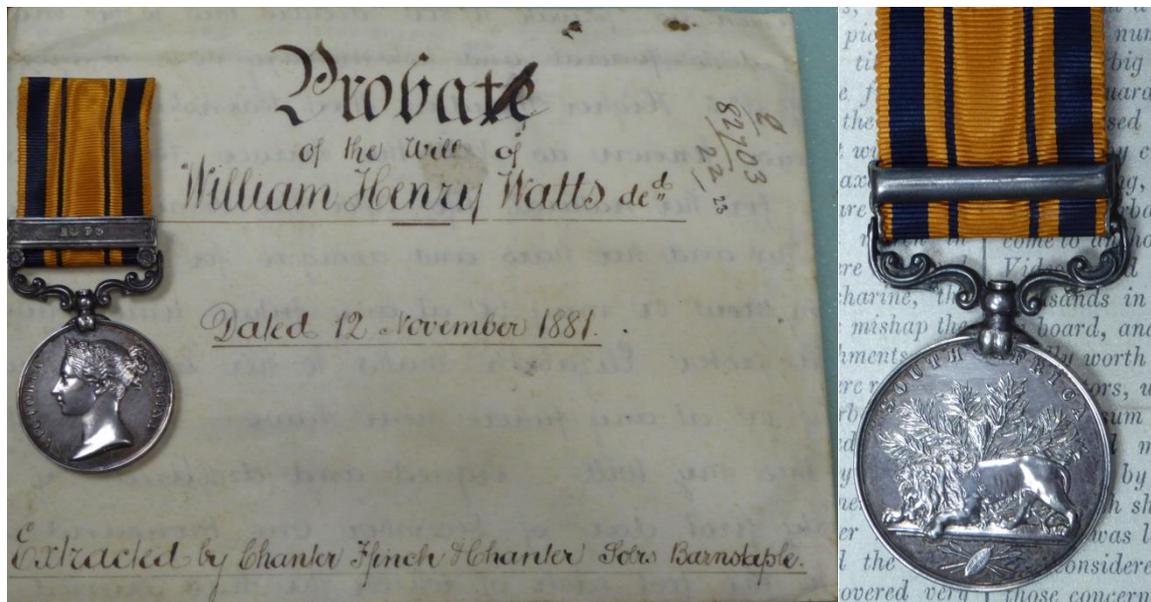


Above: Celer et Audax regimental magazine No 5 dated 1.10.1880

August 1880 brings wintery weather with snow, poor health for the soldiers because of a dysentery outbreak and unrest in Basutoland.

On 22.9.1880, he is moved to the Transvaal as part of the NFF [Natal Field Force] to tackle the Boer disturbance. One of his letters to his grandmother encloses his will. The regiment finds itself besieged at base with the increasing boldness of the Boers. They provide an escort of five companies with guns for the protection of the mail wagon and some field ambulances and are positioned for the defence of the River Ungogo crossing - The Boers duly attacked the Ingogo heights – all the Royal Artillery gunners were killed requiring the Rifles to man the guns – It was in this battle of the Ungogo River that Private Watts is killed on 8.2.1881 - British losses were 67 killed [9 drowned] with a similar number injured. Boer losses were 10 killed and 4 wounded.

Photographs of the grave site and modern memorial were shown along with his probate document.



Left : Probate document of Private W H Watts and South Africa medal bar 1879 [obverse].

Right: South Africa medal {reverse}.

In summary, Private W Watts 3/60th Foot was killed in action at the battle of Ungogo River, never returned to Great Britain or saw his South Africa campaign medal. This was a very stimulating presentation with some of the original letters and documents available for members to view.

C Davies.

BMS secretary. Typed 11-13.8.2018.