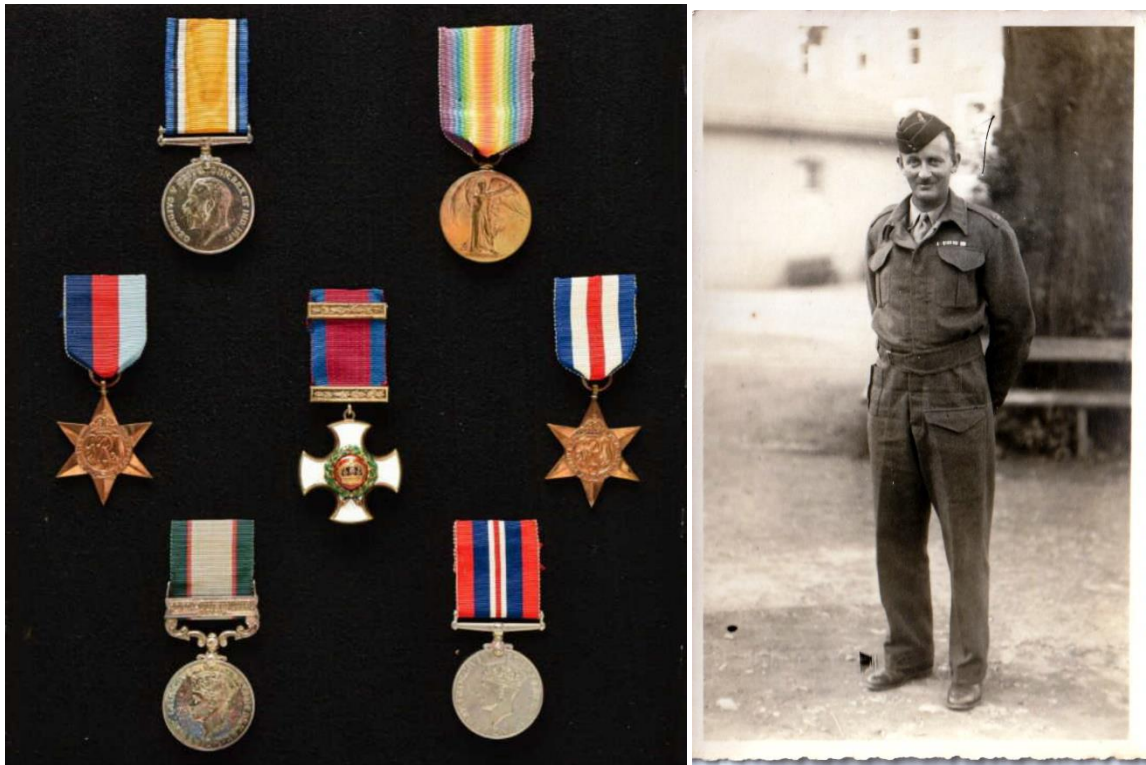


Meeting notes 2nd April, 2026. Birmingham Medal Society:

First up was the group to Harold Henry Merton Royal Artillery, a veteran of both World Wars who achieved a final rank of Lt. Colonel on retirement in 1956. He was unaware of his Distinguished Service Order [DSO] until *after* his five years as a POW ended in 1945. Merton's DSO was awarded for 'recognition of gallant and distinguished services in the field' at Saint Valery-en-Caux 10-12th June, 1940 before being obliged to surrender along with 8000 other troops.



Medal group above left: To Lt. Col. H.H. Merton., RA: [All obverses and described from left to right] top row: British War medal [BWM] and Victory medal [VM]; middle row: 1939-45 Star, DSO and France and Germany Star [not entitled] lower row: India General Service medal 1936-39 [IGS] one clasp 'North West Frontier 1936-37'.

Photo above right: H.H. Merton RA. [Photos: Roger Bragger].

There followed the extensive awards and medals to Brigadier-General A.E. Borton RAF, [also RFC and the Black Watch]. His Air Force Cross [AFC] had been awarded for the first flight to Egypt in August, 1918 in a Handley-Page bomber [see photos below]. **The full listing of medals and awards is as follows [see photo below]** top row: DSO, AFC, 1914 Star with Clasp 5th Aug-22nd Nov 1914, BWM, VM [with MiD Oakleaves], Order of St Stanilaus 3rd Class [Russia] and Defence Medal [DM]; Orders – lower row - left to right: Order of the Nile 3rd Class neck badge [Egypt], The Most Honourable Order of the Bath [CB], The Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George [CMG] and the Order of Al Nahda 3rd Class [Hedjaz].



Photo above: The orders and medals of Brig-Gen A.E. Borton [Photo Roger Bragger].



The proud crew of the Handley Page on arrival at Aboukir on 7 August 1918. From left to right: Major ASC 'Archie' Maclaren (with his pet 'Tiny'); Flight Sergeant Goldfinch (Fitter); Air Mechanic Francis (Rigger); and Brigadier-General A.E. 'Biffy' Borton.

Photo above: The crew of the Handley-Page bomber at Aboukir Egypt [Photo: Roger Bragger].

Borton knew and worked with Lawrence of Arabia in Palestine and Egypt knowing him better after the war as 'Aircraftman T.E. Shaw.'!!

The next five medals were to two recipients but, only after research, was any connection established. There were medals [BWM and VM – no Memorial Plaque] to 469497 Corporal Joseph Patrick Connors 4th Battalion Canadian Infantry who was KIA 1st October, 1918.

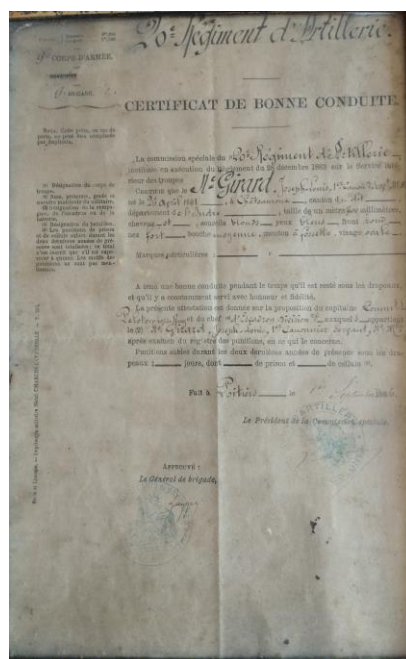
The other medals were the Military Medal [MM] and pair to 435190 Private Ernest Moran RAMC.

Joseph Connors had married Ellen Newman in January, 1918. After being widowed, Ellen had remarried [in 1923] Ernest Moran MM. They had a son and daughter [Sheila] who was sadly killed in a German bombing raid over Nechells, Birmingham when their 'Anderson' shelter was hit by a bomb.



Medals above [left]: Pair to Joseph Connors and **[right]** MM and pair to Ernest Moran - details in text. Obverses shown for all medals except Moran's BWM [Photo: Roger Bragger].

Next up were the ephemera and photos of your current BMS President's more distant French military heritage! Photos were shown of Cannonier [Gunner] Joseph Louis Girard and his good conduct certificate dated 1st September, 1886. [Photos below: Chris Davies].



His son [my great uncle] Raymond Gilles Girard had been captured in WWI. Somehow, a piece of 'PoW Camp woodwork' has survived in the form of a simple wood carving memento bearing the name of the PoW camp 'Heuberg' and dates of captivity. Girard junior wasn't to return to France until late 1918 as confirmed by his POW message cards. Girard senior had been widowed in 1902 and remarried Marie Périnet in 1906. One of the Girard senior's two stepchildren Private Auguste Périnet was killed aged 21yrs on 20th July, 1916 on the Somme battlefield. [See photos: Chris Davies].



Photos above: On the left is 11143 Prisonnier R.G. Girard at Heuberg POW Camp 1915 or 1916. Pictured above right, some POW correspondence from WWI.



Photos above left: Carved Memento of POW Camp, Heuberg in Germany with dates 1915-1916
Above right: the reverse side of the wood showing Cyrillic lettering.

The medals to William Penman Commandant City of London Special Constabulary were discussed next. His first service as a 'Special' was in the Great War. He was in post as Commandant 1944-52. Our member was able to confirm the recipient's fifth long service clasp to his Special Constabulary Medal [SCM]. In T.P. Brewster's book 'For Faithful Service - A history of the Special Constabulary Medal', the author refers to only seeing two five-clasp examples making this very rare indeed! **[For the talk 'The Special Constabulary Medal' please see the BMS website June 2025].**



Photo above left: Commandant William Penman.

Photo above right: Medal group to William Penman – obverses shown - left to right: Civilian MBE 1939, Order of St John of Jerusalem 1946, DM, Coronation Medals 1935, 1937 and 1953 and five clasp SCM. [Photos: Martin Harrison].

Next up were two gallantry groups with citations for the Battle of Tug Argan fought against Italian forces in Somaliland, East Africa in August 1940 [See photos below].



Photo above left: Group to 40011 Sgt A. Finn. Left to right – [obverses] Distinguished Conduct Medal [DCM], 1939-45 Star, Africa Star and War Medal 1938-45 with MiD Oakleaves. [Photo: Rhys Fitter].

Photo above right: Group to 40025 Sgt D. Hunt MM. left to right – [obverses] MM, 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Burma Star and 1939-45 War Medal. [Photo: Rhys Fitter].

The first Battalion North Rhodesia Regiment was formed in 1933 with black troops commanded by white officers.

The battle of Tug Argan was the first major action in Africa in WWII. Amongst the Allied Forces [commanded by General A. Wavell] were the 1st Battalion North Rhodesia Regt defending the Tug Argan. They were overrun by superior numbers of enemy troops.

Sgt Finn's citation explains his DCM was awarded for conspicuous gallantry as his mortar detachment inflicted heavy casualties as they defended their position until it was overrun...he showed '**splendid conduct in the face of hopeless odds**'.

Sgt Hunt's citation refers to '**continuously meritorious service and fine leadership at the Battles of Hargeisa and Tug Argan. At Hargeisa August 5th, Sgt Hunt's party after a stout defence, was surrounded by the enemy. This NCO collected his own party and another platoon and after dark piloted them to the Company R.V. - distance of 30 miles through enemy lines...**'.

Sgt Finn was awarded the DCM in 1943. Only four awarded to the regiment.

The six clasp Military General Service Medal [MGSM] awarded to local man William Capewell, a needlemaker from Old Swinfen featured next. He had enlisted in 1811 aged 18 into the 7th Foot and had served for three years in Spain, the United States and France.



Photos above: left: Obverse of MGSM to William Capewell six clasps 'Vittoria', 'Pyrenees', 'Nive', 'Nivelle', 'Orthes' and 'Toulouse'. right: MGSM reverse [Photos: Guy Marshall].

He had been pensioned 1832. In 1841, he is listed as a 'needlemaker' again, in 1851 'Head of household', 1861 'pensioner' and 1871 'widower'. Capewell had died in 1875.

RMA 7553 Arthur Barton's Royal Navy Long Service and Good Conduct medal [LSGC - obverse] is shown below with summary of his career.



[Photo: John Scott]

Barton was born in Portsmouth 15th October, 1880. He enlisted RMA 12 July 1898 being awarded Royal Navy LSGC medal 3rd December, 1913. On 24th December, 1913, he is posted to the Royal Flying Corps (Naval Wing) and then on 1 July 1914, transferred to the Royal Naval Air Service as Air Mechanic 1.

He served in France 1914 qualifying for the 1914 Star Trio. His promotions were as follows: PO Mechanic 1st February, 1915, advanced CPO III (G) on 1st January, 1916 transferring to Royal Air Force 1 April 1918 as a Flight Sergeant. He was discharged 19th October, 1920.

Next was the British Empire Medal [BEM] William John Davies, Leading Fireman, Royal Ordnance Factory, Hereford. [Photo below: BEM obverse. John Scott].



His BEM was announced in the London Gazette 9th January, 1945:

“When a fire broke out in the evening at the Royal Ordnance Factory, Hereford, the Factory was involved in 3 consecutive major explosions. The fire started with a large filled bomb and spread to other bombs, mines and an incorporator filled with explosives.

‘After burning for 20 minutes the bomb split and exploded and 10 minutes later, in one long roar, the remainder of the bombs and mines exploded, sending up a sheet of flame 2,000 ft., high. The Filling Shed was completely demolished, adjoining buildings were severely blasted and white hot girders, metal, concrete blocks and debris of all kinds were flung over large area’.....‘Assistant Fire Brigade Officer Lewis was in charge of the R.O.F. Fire Brigade on the evening of the explosion and, with a Leading Fireman and a crew of four men, went to the Filling Area where the bomb was on fire’...‘Whilst foam was being applied, Leading Fireman W.J. Davies got 2 crews to work with hydrants and they were cooling down bombs adjacent to the burning bomb when the first explosion occurred. He was blown about 20 yards through the emergency door. He picked himself up and went after more hose. These he took into the house where the filled and exploded bombs would have been an even greater danger to the Factory had they overheated. He was cooling down these, when the second and major explosion occurred. This knocked him unconscious.

Leading Fireman Davies’ steadiness and quiet courage set an example to his men which was invaluable in the maintenance of discipline. He displayed a high degree of personal bravery in continuing his job of cooling down the dangerously charged bombs until the moment of the second explosion, after having been blown a considerable distance by the first explosion.”

Unsurprisingly, there was much glass breakage in Hereford that day!

Other awards for this incident were as follows: One OBE and one MBE to factory officials! Five George Medals, nine BEMs and fifteen King’s Commendations for brave conduct.

A selection of assorted medals [for a good price], some wrongly ribboned, revealed a Lt F.L. Webb who served 18 years in the Army before being discharged with the rank of Captain in 1938. In 1939, Webb is called up for AA battery gun service – his medal cards confirm entitlement to DM and WM 1939-45. He was demobbed with the rank of major in 1945. His subsequent Cadet Forces Medal has no postnominals [ACF or CCF] is on the medal.



Photo above: Medal group to F.L. Webb [obverses] DM, WM 1939-45 and CFM [Photo: Chris Davies].

From a bag of oddments, three medals were of particular interest: The IGS 1854-95 with single clasp 'North West Frontier' and LSGC to John Taylor 1st Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment



Photo above: left [obverse] and right [reverse]. IGS single clasp 'North West Frontier' and LSGC to John Taylor [Photo: Chris Davies].

The third medal referred to here belonged to A. Taylor [John Taylor's son] a casualty of the South African War in April, 1900. It was a Queen's South Africa medal [QSA] with three clasps 'Relief of Kimberley', 'Paardeberg' and 'Driefrontein'.



Photo left: 3 clasp QSA to casualty A. Taylor – details above. [Photo: Chris Davies].

A Great War pair to Hector Leo Jack Redmond [b1887] featured next. On 12th October, 1915, he had volunteered for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force [NZEF]. His various promotions, arrival in France and subsequent multiple misdemeanours of drunkenness were discussed, the latter being dealt with by Field General Court Martial. His initial sentence of 'dismissal from the service' was commuted to 'severe reprimand' only for the original sentence to be enforced after another offence. For this, he forfeited any medal entitlement and returned to New Zealand in 1917.

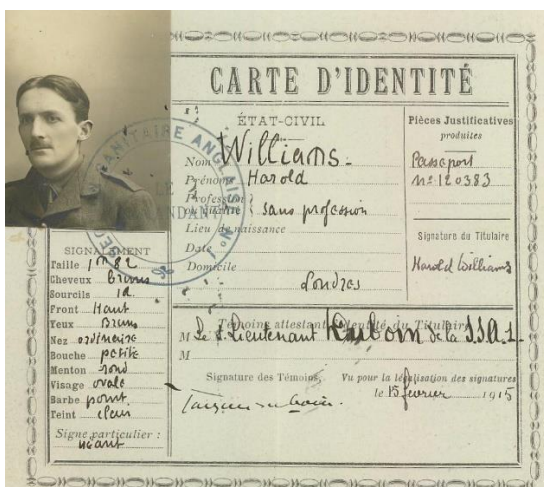
However, Hector Redmond 1918 re-enlisted as a private soldier with service number 22691 till his discharge on 11.10.1919. *For this period of service, he was never in a field of conflict but was still awarded the BWM and VM!!*



Photo left: [obverse] WWI pair to 22691 Hector Redmond NZEF [Photo: Chris Davies].

Next presented were the career and ephemera of Harold Herbert Williams [born 1880] of the British Ambulance Committee, Section Sanitaire Anglaise 1 [SSA1] and French Red Cross.

For some while, our member had had many original photos of this unit on its journey to the Vosges. By some more detailed research, some precise locations of these WWI photos were identifiable by the shape of the original buildings and comparing with modern photos.



Photos above left: H.H. Williams French Red Cross identity card [Image : Paul Handford].



Photo above left: Ambulances in transit at Le Havre 4th January, 1915. [Photo: Paul Handford].



Photo above right: WWI pair to H.H.Williams [Photo: Noonans].

A 'poste de triage' [field dressing station] in La Croix aux Mines was shown as a remarkable montage of 'then and now' superimposition of images.

In 1904, in his earlier career, he became a priest but had resigned in 1909.

Williams had been an original member of the first BAC convoy. For his valuable service in WWI, Williams was awarded the MBE. He became a Justice of the Peace [JP] in 1920 and, for services to local Government, had been knighted in 1951 [CBE]. *This story ends with a reunion of his ephemera with his medals purchased in March 2026!*

Finally, another document which has somehow survived the last eighty years was the statement of military service of Private Kumbota White of Southern Rhodesia Forces. Clearly, this had been a treasured item needing 'Sellotape' repairs over time and important as it was a reference to his good character. In the top right corner is his left thumb print. He had enlisted 1941. Discharged in 1946, he had served in East Africa and SE Asia so would be entitled to the 1939-45 Star, the Burma Star and 1939-45 WM although there is a paper crease over the line 'Medal and Decorations'.

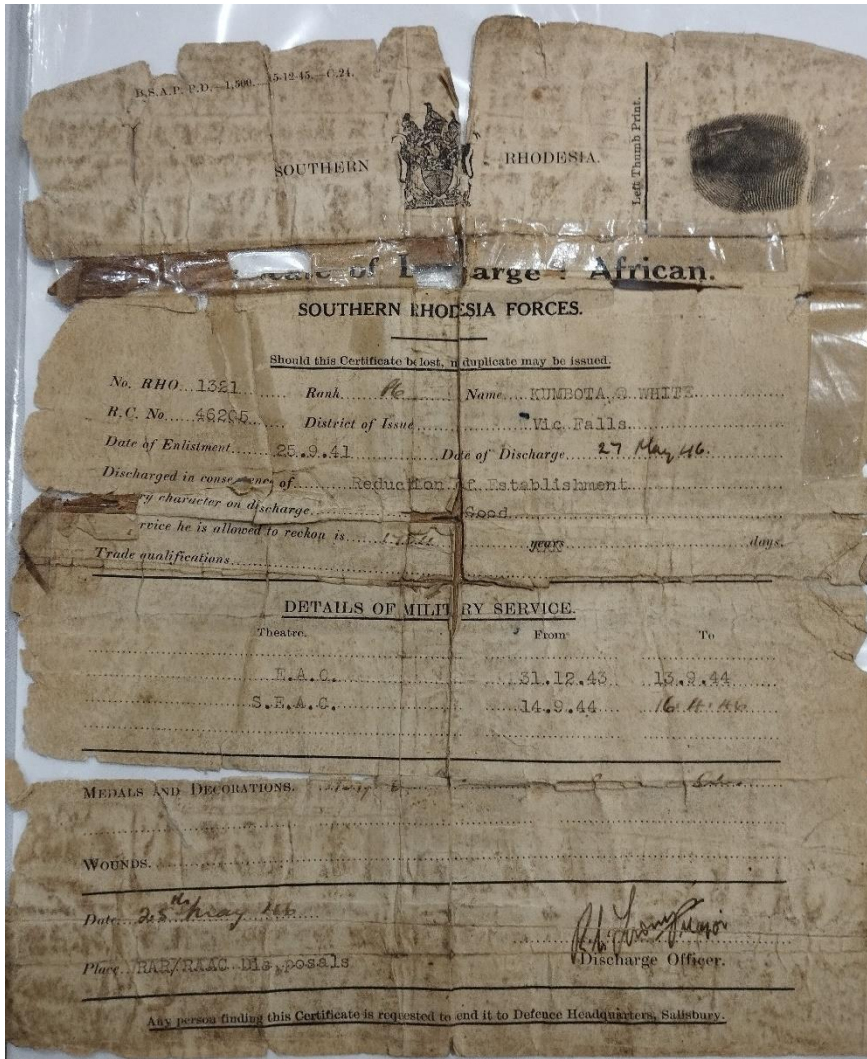


Photo above: Private Kumbota White's certificate of Army Service 1941-46. [Photo Chris Davies].

The President closed the meeting at 21.20hrs and thanked all participants.

Typed C Davies 26.4-4.5.2026

BMS Secretary

With my usual apologies for any inaccuracies or other errors of content.

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