

Minutes BMS meeting 1.11.18

1. Welcome to all and guest John Somner by President Roger Bragger.
2. Apologies Martin Harrison and Danny Rees.
3. Numbers. Meal 11, drink 15 and ons 1.
4. New members. Hugh Vaugh.
5. Library requests – None.
6. Functions and visits – Centenary of Armistice event at the Oratory, Hagley Rd, Birmingham 3-10.11.18 – Flyer recently circulated electronically - reminder given.
7. Committee Points. Secretary Chris Davies presented a short analysis of the recent BMS questionnaire results – 19 [61%] responses out of 31 sent out by post and email. Main finding – 100% in favour of continuing the miniconvention. SUVLA venue September – whilst 11 were in favour [58%], whether or not in favour, many members expressed cautious views eg regarding distance to travel, possible busy month and may clash with other events [eg OMRS], location and not representing BMS amongst others. Pricing – 13 out of 19 [68%] in favour of ticket price ranges £10-20 and £20-30. Format – 11/19 [58%] favouring no change to format. Members marginally in favour of NOT including the Drummond lecture in the miniconvention. 16/19 [84%] were in favour of holding the next miniconvention in 2019.
8. Committee point: President informed the meeting that committee member Martin Harrison was returning to the UK and had expressed interest in helping organise the next miniconvention at the Royal British Legion at Knowle with a suggested date in July 2019. Secretary confirmed the possible weekend dates but, as committee members were already aware, this was unlikely to be on a Saturday. Agreed that a positive response to be sent to Martin Harrison for his offer. [NB: This item has since been actioned by Martin Harrison [with full committee approval] and the **date of the next miniconvention will be Sunday 21.7.19 – more details at the December 2018 meeting**].
9. Tonight's meeting : The Drummond Lecture 'Waterloo' by Mick Atkinson.
10. AOB – Secretary requested that members' email addresses could be confirmed in tonight's attendance register as he'd had some 'undeliverable ' messages using the current database. Thanks in advance. Also, secretary raised the possibility of having a 'whatsapp' group – Not much response to this tonight but this could be revisited in 2019.
11. Next meeting 06.12.18 President's cup 2018 and lecturettes/recent acquisitions.

The Drummond Lecture – ‘ Waterloo’ by Mick Atkinson

Mick detailed his theme of collecting a Waterloo medal to each of the seven heavy cavalry regiments. He presented his talk in two parts – initial discussion re the Waterloo medal itself followed by analysis of and guidance on his research method.

The Waterloo medal.

This was the first award to be issued to all ranks in the British army. Prior to this, medals were mainly received by Officers-in-Charge [OICs – those with ‘independent’ command] – Mick referred to the issue of small/ large gold medals and Army gold crosses issued to Officers for service in the Peninsular war as an example of this. The Waterloo medal was also issued to next-of-kin [NOK] although this was not universally the case as will be explained later. They were all issued named.

The ‘military general service medal’ [MGSM] was issued for the ‘Peninsular war’ conflict occurring before Waterloo but the MGSM wasn’t sanctioned till 1.6.1847 and then was only awarded to survivors.

Mick commented on the rapidity of institution of the Waterloo medal compared with his own working experience in the medal office of transit times of 2-3 years for modern awards.

On 28.6.1815, the process started with Wellington writing to the Duke of York [the OIC] so that by the end of August 1815, the medal has been designed, a decision has been made to name all the Waterloo medals and all Regiments were required to submit the names of entitled soldiers. The design was by Thomas Wyon Jr and is based on a coin ‘Elis’ from circa 450BC – one of these can be seen in the British museum.



Waterloo medal to William Fields 52nd Foot. Original steel clip and ring.

By October 1815, all the dies were ready for a bronze medal to be issued [these are rare] but then there was a fire at the Royal Mint – The Prince Regent was involved at this stage insisting the design specification metal to be fine silver. The medal was to be a crown sized disc of weight one ounce and would be issued with a nine inch piece of ribbon. Some 40,000 were ordered, 37,638 were produced of which approximately 36,263 were issued

As there had been no impressed naming of medals before, this presented a technical challenge of designing a machine to do the naming – This was achieved by modifications to a coin milling machine – from early March, 1816, 1000 medals daily [Monday to Saturday] were being produced and named so that by 16 April, 1816, all medals had been named. The London Gazette of 23.4.1816 advised of the issue of the Waterloo medal in a 79 word memorandum dated ‘ March 10, 1816’.

Horse-Guards, March 10, 1816.
MEMORANDUM.
The Prince Regent, has been graciously pleased, in the name and on the behalf of His Majesty, to command, that, in commemoration of the brilliant and decisive victory of Waterloo; a medal shall be conferred upon every Officer, Non-Commissioned Officer, and Soldier of the British Army present upon that memorable occasion.,
His Royal Highness has further been pleased to command, that the ribband issued with the medal shall never be worn, but with the medal suspended to it.
By command of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent,
FREDERICK,
Commander in Chief.
H. TORRENS,
Maj. Gen. and Mil. Sec.

from London Gazette Tuesday 23.4.1816

Regarding issues of Waterloo medals to next of kin, some regiments returned medals issued to those killed in action [KIA]. Not many Waterloo medals to cavalry regiments appear on the market – some will have been renamed – medals to Officers will be naturally fewer in number.

Regarding the medal suspension, Mick challenged a popular view that the original steel clip and ring might have been a weak part of the original design leading to many privately fitted replacement suspensions in Waterloo medals by suggesting, in fact, they simply reflected a more pleasing appearance of the medal. In addition to the variety of suspensions seen, there are also many unofficial bars.

Researching Waterloo medals

Mick advised that documentation from this era may be absent for different reasons. If KIA, the soldier's papers were destroyed. Similarly, if commissioned, papers would be destroyed. A date of birth [DOB] can be helpful but dates from this era often refer to the date of baptism rather than the DOB – It was only in 1837 when a DOB became a legal requirement in England. A DOB can be calculated roughly from the soldiers length of service [a precise calculation] less 18 years.

Other relevant sources of information include Newspaper Archive websites and the muster rolls [previously discussed in the meeting of 5.7.2018 – please see meeting report] which give accurate and detailed information regarding troop movements both in and out of England – these are presented in quarterly format with three monthly columns and also have a ‘remarks’ column.

Other resources for medal collectors include high definition [and free to download] archives of prints eg the Anne SK Brown military collection, the artwork collection of the National Portrait Gallery and the National Army museum [‘NAM’] website.

Cavalry regiments suffered high casualties with killed or wounded rates averaging around 50%. Mick then discussed some of the Waterloo medals in his collection. One issued to Corporal James Allen of the 1st Life Guards showed signs of wear with many pock marks. After the death of Queen Caroline in August, 1821, the Prince Regent George IV wanted her body to be moved on the smaller streets, an arrangement that provoked civil disturbance as the public wanted the cortege to be moved on main roads so they could show their respect [Queen Caroline had been popular with the public]. Two were killed when the first Life Guards were involved in policing the matter. There followed the first identity parade in England for the whole regiment which in turn received a manslaughter conviction.

Medals to Trumpeter Robert Mills and Corporal Will Emmett were discussed – the latter being one of twelve present at the coronation of King George IV – He is buried locally at Tardebigge.

Mick gave a short resume of a single ‘Waterloo’ medal to Joseph Adlam of the 1st Royal Dragoons. This medal’s condition reflected the soldier’s years of service post Waterloo as it had to be worn every day as part of uniform. He’d served in Portugal, Spain and France 1809-1814, then was injured



at Waterloo by shell splinter to leg and musket ball to body requiring 61 days of hospitalisation. Subsequently, he was involved in suppressing the ‘Littleport’ riots of May 1816. As a result of the riots, two rioters had been killed, five were hanged and thirty were transported to Australia. Through the muster rolls, Joseph Adlam’s postings could be tracked over the next 6 years which included a posting to Edinburgh to maintain order after the ‘Great fire of Edinburgh’ of November, 1824. The muster rolls were effectively pay and accounting documents which logged troop movements and allowed soldiers to draw funds for the expenses of the march. Much additional information was obtained from the ‘British Newspaper Archives’

Left: Waterloo Medal to Joseph Adlam.

Mick was pleased with the Waterloo medal in his collection to Private Charles Burgess of the 2nd or Royal North British Dragoons. This had been new to the market in 2015 having been possessed by

seven generations of Burgess' - the first six of whom [Ancestry research confirmed] had all been called 'Charles' However, the final owner in the family of this medal was a 'John'...

Finally, Mick signed off his talk by discussing the Waterloo medal to Hugh McCarthy of the Inniskillings . This soldier had had 28 days in hospital because of a lance wound at Waterloo. The Inniskillings had received their medals on 20.4.1816. Again, further careful research of the muster rolls had established how well travelled this cavalry regiment had been - always an anticlockwise rotation of the countries of England , Scotland and Ireland.

President Roger Bragger thanked Mick for his excellent and entertaining talk which had been very well received.

Bill Walton produced various European Medals of the era and also informed the group that the Belgian Government had produced its own 200th anniversary of the battle of Waterloo commemorative coin with a value of two and a half euro – Their original plan was a two euro coin but this had been blocked by the French government – however, EU member countries are allowed to produce irregular denomination euro coins - Seventy thousand of these coins were minted.

Chris Davies showed a Waterloo and 8bar MGSM to Private William Fields 1st battalion 52nd foot. With the medals had come his discharge document from the Army dated March 1821 – this contained a lot of interesting information including his description, his signing the document by marking an 'X', his 23 years and 247 days of service [All as a private..!] which included two years service for being at Waterloo.



Left - MGSM and Waterloo to William Fields. Right – William Fields. Copy of army discharge document

John Scott produced an incomplete Waterloo/MGSM [just the 4 bar top section with bars Toulouse, Nive , Pyrenees and Salamanca] along with a regimental medal named to Joseph Brothers of the 79th regiment.

Martin Keys showed a Waterloo pair and MGSM [5 bars] to an officer - Captain Charles Gregory of the 13th Light Dragoons

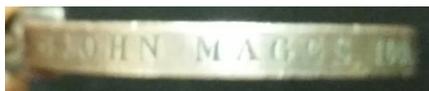


Left: MGSM and Waterloo pair to Charles Gregory

A Waterloo medal named to Maggs of the 10th Hussars was also shown – Its authenticity was uncertain possibly [in the main] because of the naming style but also the thickness of the Waterloo disc itself and maybe the Prince Regent's features seemed overprominent. It remains very hard to tell!!



Left – Waterloo to Maggs [obverse]. Right Waterloo to Fields [obverse]



Waterloo naming to Maggs.



Waterloo naming to Fields.

Typed 15-22.11.18

Chris Davies BMS secretary.