

## The President's Cup 2015

The challenge for the annual President's Cup took place during the Birmingham Medal Society's Annual General Meeting at The Garden House on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015.

There were four entries:

1. The Miniature SAS
2. Of Mills & Mines
3. Prime Minister to Prime Minister
4. Is this a Group or not?

The winner was Of Mills & Mines, second place Prime Minister to Prime Minister and third place The Miniature SAS.

For more details members of the BMS may visit the Members Page on this web site accessible by password only.



**4<sup>th</sup> Place – Is This a Group or Not?**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Place - Miniature SAS**



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Prime Minister to Prime Minister

The First World War trio of medals that were awarded to Major the Honourable Arthur George Villiers Peel Royal Marines. He was the son of Arthur Wellesley Peel the youngest son of Robert Peel who had twice been Prime Minister, founder of the Police Force, the reform of the Corn Laws, the first political manifesto, etc. I had noticed the group in Wellington Auctions catalogue last year. As I am a member of the Peel Society, I knew the recipient's grand son, I informed him that the medals were to be auctioned. When they were listed the following month, I realised that he was not interested in the group, so I put a bid in and was successful in acquiring them.

When they arrived, I was surprised that there was not a photograph of him, this led me on to research him to come up with a photograph of him. First of all I tried the grandson, he had not got one, his father had been married in the Guard's Chapel in Windsor and as it was war time only a couple of photographs were taken and he did not know, apart from his mother and father, who the people were on the photographs.

I then tried other avenues to see if I could find one, I soon found out that someone had already been down this route. He had been in the Oxford Hussars, the Bedfordshire Yeomanry and the Royal Marines, M.P. for Spalding in 1917, D.L. and J.P. for Warwickshire and several other institutions, nobody had a picture or photograph of him!

I had compiled a family tree to prove the lineage of the family tree back to Robert Peel, in doing so I noticed that his father, Arthur whom he had been named after, and whose Godfather was Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, had married Adelaide Dugdale. As the Dugdale family seat was Merevale Hall in Atherstone, I enquired there to see if they had a picture of her? Yes they had and they sent me a photostatic copy of her, so I wondered did they have a picture of her son AGV Peel? Yes they had, it was a 'Eureka' moment especially as it was of him in uniform. Again a photostatic copy of him in the uniform of a Major in the Bedfordshire Yeomanry duly arrived in the post,

I now contacted the archivist of Merevale Hall to see if it was possible to photograph the originals? Yes it was, I arranged to visit her, and on the appropriate day I attended Merevale and was taken to

the archives. This proved to be a mind blowing experience, from having no photographs of him, I now had three! One of him taken at Harrow where he had been a pupil, a group photograph of him in Scotland with his brother the Reverend Maurice Peel M.C., killed in action in WW1 with their wives and of course the one in uniform.

At the Christmas dinner of the Birmingham Medal Society in December, there was an opportunity to purchase surplus medals and books and documents. Whilst browsing through the various items I came across a loose leaved book on Yeomanry Units of the British Army. In it was a print of an original picture of an officer in the dress uniform of the Bedfordshire Yeomanry, on the back was a description of the uniform and two footnotes, the second one stated the Officer was A.G.V. Peel wearing the medals he had been awarded in the First World War, when I looked again at the print, it was indeed my man!



### Winner 2015 – Of Mills & Mines

Major  
Laurence John Mills CBE BSc F.Eng F.I.Min.E CIMEMME CIMgt  
Royal Engineers

Laurence John Mills was born on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1920 in Portsmouth; son of Archibald John Mills, Headteacher of The Beneficial School in Portsmouth and a Freemason, and Annie Ellen 'Nellie' nee Oates. Laurence had one younger Sister Sylvia Joy Mills who was born in 1925 but sadly died in 1927 aged only 15 months and is buried in Highland Road Cemetery. The family lived at 51 and later 54 Lawrence Road, Southsea.

Laurence was educated at Portsmouth Grammar School, and during their speech day in 1939, aged 19, Laurence was highlighted as having been awarded a scholarship award of £60.00 per year to take a degree course in coal-mining at Birmingham University, from which he later graduated with a First Class Honours BSc in Mining Engineering. He entered the mining industry as a scholarship student in 1942 at Houghton Main Colliery in Yorkshire.

During World War II he enlisted as an Officer Cadet in the Royal Engineers, being commissioned as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1943 and during the last quarter of 1944 married Barbara May Warner, a nurse in Spilsbury, Lincolnshire and they had two sons. Little detail is known of his war time service except that he was promoted to Temporary Captain on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1944, War Substantive Captain and Temporary Major on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1946 and awarded the Defence and War Medal 1939-45 and was living with Barbara at 21 Ash Grove, South Elmshall, Pontefract in Yorkshire.

Following the war he returned to Houghton Main Colliery, which became a part of the National Coal Board (NCB) following its nationalisation on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1946. In 1949 he was promoted to manager of Hemsworth Colliery, and two years later in 1951 became Agent to Frickley and South Emshall Collieries. During 1954 he left Yorkshire on being appointed as Deputy Area Production Manager (Reconstruction and Development) of the Edwinstone Area of the East Midlands Division.

By 1963 Laurence and Barbara were living at Lake View, Measham Road, Ashby de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire and in 1964 he was appointed Assistant Area General Manager for North Staffordshire in the West Midlands Division and upon NCB re-organisation made Deputy Director (Operations) to the South Durham area. He moved to the London Headquarters of NCB as Chief Mining Engineer in April 1968, appointed Director of the Board's North Yorkshire area in July 1970 and Doncaster area in January 1973. He was made a full time member of the NCB in January 1974 by the Department of Trade and Industry, his appointment appearing in the London Gazette of 27<sup>th</sup> December 1973. He was made Deputy Chairman in 1982 under Sir Norman Siddall and later Sir Ian McGregor.

Laurence was also a member and of the Institution of Mining Engineers (I.Min.E) having been elected as a student member of the Midland Branch in 1942, and full member in 1945. He also became a member of the North Staffordshire, North of England and Southern Counties branches, being appointed a Fellow of the Institute in 1955.

He was President of the Midland Counties Institution of Engineers in 1958-9 and again in 1962-3, member of the Council and President of the South Midland Branch of the National Association of Colliery Managers in 1961-2 and President of the Nottinghamshire and North Derbyshire Branch of I.Min.E for 1962-3 and was twice awarded their silver medal in 1959 and 1962. He was elected President of the Institute during 1975-6 at its 81<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting in London, January 1975.

In the London Gazette of 31<sup>st</sup> December 1977, Laurence was appointed as a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire as a member of the NCB.

Laurence was also a Companion of the Institute of Mining Electrical and Mining Mechanical Engineers, and of the Institute of Management. Chairman of Osprey Belt Company Ltd, British Mining Consultants Ltd and Specialist Training & Technical Services Ltd. He was Director of Coal Develts (Queensland) Ltd, Capricorn Coal Management Pty Ltd, Coal Develts (German Creek) Pty Ltd, German Creek Pty Ltd, Burnet & Hallamshire Holdings plc and a member of the Mining Qualifications Board, Safety in Mining Res Advisory Board.

He was also awarded the Douglas Hay Medal, Clerk Maxwell Medal, and following his retirement in 1981 was invited to deliver the annual Robens Coal Science Lecture for the British Coal Utilisation Research Association with Peter G Tregelles, the subject was titled *Control Technology in the Coal Mines* for which he was awarded their Gold Medal. He also received the IMinE Medal in 1982.

Little detail is known about Laurence's later life except that he lived at Unit 4, Bowers Parade, Harpenden and 35 Dove Park, Chorleywood, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire and his recreation was coastal and inland waterway cruising. He died on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1994 aged 73 leaving £170,175.00.